

Pure, Strong and Sexless

the Peasant Woman's Body
and Gleb Uspensky

HENRIETTA MONDRY

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AND GLEB USPENSKY

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Henrietta Mondry



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Table of contents

Introduction	7
Chapter 1	
“Daydreams”: the quest for social gender changes or a new type of beauty?	29
Chapter 2	
“In a Woman’s Position”: truncated sexuality in young women and teenage boys	49
Chapter 3	
How ‘straight’ is the Venus de Milo? Shaping gender in stone sculpture	65
Chapter 4	
“A Good Russian type”: in search of a new masculinity	81
Chapter 5	
Peasant sexuality and demonic possession	95
Chapter 6	
“ <i>She Stopped!</i> ”: moral rebirth through hard labor	113
Chapter 7	
Children: necessary evil or product of divine will?	133
Chapter 8	
The sacred egg: a symbol of human procreation	151
Chapter 9	
The final testimony: “Peasant Women”	167
Conclusion	181
Appendix:	
The Diary of Doctor B. N. Sinani: a record of Gleb Uspensky’s illness	
Translator’s introduction by Henrietta Mondry	189
Preface to the Diary by publisher Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich	193
The Diary of Doctor B. N. Sinani	195
Bibliography	273
Index	285

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Introduction

Within the study of the representation of peasant gender in Russia there is a clear area of neglect: the portrayal of peasant women's bodies in the work of the *narodniki*, or populist, writers.¹ Their writing offers fertile ground not only for an exploration of the life and belief systems of peasant communities, but also for an investigation into sexuality and gender in Russian culture.

Especially conspicuous in studies of body politics, peasant gender and sexuality is the absence of work on Gleb Uspensky (1843–1902), an extremely prolific writer who devoted all of his numerous stories, sketches and notes to the representation of the lives of peasants in the 1870s and 1890s.² This book aims to help fill this lacuna in Russian cultural history.

In the history of Russian populist thought Gleb Uspensky occupies a unique position. Unlike other populists of his time, who sought to educate the people of rural Russia, he reversed the process and brought information about the life, language and customs of peasant communities to the Russian intelligentsia, disseminating knowledge through his numerous stories and sketches of peasant life.³ These prose pieces were highly valued by his literary contemporaries for their detailed accounts of the lifestyle, customs, habits and socio-economic problems of the Russian village, and for the totality of its *byt* presented there.⁴ Since the reading public was largely unfamiliar with life in rural Russia in the period following the great reforms of 1861, Uspensky's writings, grouped into series such as "Krest'ianin i krest'ianskii trud" ("The Peasant and Peasant Labor", 1880), and "Vlast' zemli" ("The Power of the Soil", 1882), were studied closely for their ethnographic content. His work was favorably received by many members of the contemporary intelligentsia because, while illustrating the negative effects of free market enterprise on the agricultural communities of the 1870s and 1880s, they avoided the ideologically dominant viewpoint of the early Russian populists and their romanticization of the Russian *muzhiks*. In particular, his sober skepticism regarding the motives behind the economic choices made

by the peasantry distinguished Uspensky from contemporaries such as Vera Figner and Vera Zasulich who invariably idealized the Russian peasant.⁵ Unlike these well-known revolutionary activists, Uspensky combined emotional identification with objectivity. So respected were Uspensky's *ocherki* (sketches) that they became an important source of information even for Georgii Plekhanov and Lenin⁶ who based their ideas of the economic situation of the Russian peasant partly on these works.⁷

Perceptions of Uspensky the man have previously been dominated by the political and socio-economic aspects of his *ocherki* and by the legend which arose around his mental illness, which occurred towards the end of his life. This legend, which claimed that the illness had been brought on by his deep compassion for the "insulted and humiliated" people of Russian society, may have added to Uspensky's fame, but it did not contribute to an appreciation of the literary qualities of his oeuvre, nor their thematic variety. His status as a glorified political persona, combined with the classification of his *ocherki* as purely journalistic accounts and social tracts, ultimately led to the neglect of the deeper and genuinely creative layers of meaning in his work.⁸

Central to this text are Gleb Uspensky's ideas on the woman's body, which put him at the vanguard of contemporary discourse on Russian sexuality, in which his work can be viewed as a precursor to more well-known debates on this subject. As a writer he systematically addressed a range of issues linked to sexuality—abortion, prostitution, infanticide, venereal disease and adultery, long before matters of sexuality were articulated by the culture of the Russian Silver Age (Vasily Rozanov, Nikolai Berdiaev, Pavel Florensky, the symbolists). In addition, Uspensky addressed the topic of gender differences, using the relationships between the sexes in peasant communities as source material.⁹

Yet his interest in the status of the women of rural Russia remains an understudied aspect of Uspensky's work.¹⁰ Uspensky often depicted peasant women as strong, energetic, hard working and manly in their physique. Bourgeois women, on the other hand, were presented as "feminine" to the point of helplessness. Uspensky believed that, in order to develop their economic independence and escape male tyranny, bourgeois women should aim to be as physically strong as their peasant counterparts. He developed this view in a number of his *ocherki* and stories, in which he pointed out that bourgeois women's lifestyle—with its lack of exercise, its reliance on

domestic help and its frequent dieting to maintain the approved body shape, combined with the lack of financial independence that necessitated what he regarded as the sexual slavery of marriage—had created a class of women which was completely dependent on men. On the other hand, he claimed, peasant women were practical, strong and able to support themselves and their children even in widowhood.¹¹ Uspensky's interest in the women of rural Russia went beyond socio-economic concerns, however. He also expressed an intense preoccupation with the gendered body. This study will demonstrate that Uspensky attempted to resolve a whole complex of problems linked to human sexuality through a process of de-sexing the peasant woman's body. Quasi-androgynous, these bodies stand as precursors to the much favoured androgynous bodies of Silver Age culture (Matich 1979, 2005). Uspensky's peasant women's bodies can also be construed as prototypes of the utopian bodies of early post-Soviet discourse on sexuality, which explored the sublimation of sexuality and the channelling of energy for the common cause (Naiman 1997). Uspensky criticized Vera Figner's idealization of the Russian peasant, and dubbed her ideal a "chocolate *muzhik*". However, while he noted the sentimentalization of peasants in his fellow populists, he himself was involved in the project of creating utopian peasant women bodies, and the search for an adequate substitute for the flesh.

Not only did Uspensky focus on such topics as peasant prostitution, the spread of venereal disease and the moral disintegration of the peasant community, but also his own biography presents a life affected by venereal disease: that his own mental illness was caused by syphilis has been well-established (Grombakh 1939). His contemporaries, including his psychiatrists, censored information about his having contracted syphilis as a young man, and so great was their admiration for his deeds and his contribution to the populist cause, that they refused to recognize the link between the syphilis and his mental illness to which he succumbed in the last ten years of his life.¹² Instead, the accepted view was that his illness was caused by his compassionate nature and exhaustion from hard work. This view is promulgated by commentators up to the present day, as seen in Orlando Figes' cultural history of Russia, *Natasha's Dance* (2002). Indeed, so little is known of Uspensky's case that Irina Sirotkina's monograph *Diagnosing Literary Genius: A Cultural History of Psychiatry in Russia, 1880–1930* (2002), which describes Russian

psychiatrists' preoccupation with such nineteenth-century writers as Nikolai Gogol, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy, completely omits the case of Gleb Uspensky.

Extended biography

Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky was born on 13 October 1843 in the province of Tula, where his family was part of a well-established community of government officials. Uspensky's father, Ivan Iakovlevich Uspensky, was a member of the clergy (Uspensky's father and uncles were all educated in seminaries but, while his uncles became priests, his father chose the career of a civil clerk). His mother was Nadezhda Glebovna (née Sokolova) Uspenskaia. Uspensky's family was extremely loving toward him and introduced him to Russian literature through the works of the great poet Aleksandr Pushkin. In his autobiographical pieces, however, Uspensky claims that, from early childhood, he was exposed to government corruption, so becoming sensitive to the social ills that he saw around him. He witnessed the exchange of gifts and the acceptance of bribes by members of his own family as well as those of their circle. In addition to encountering the injustices prevalent in peasant life—including the exploitation of illiterate peasants for the purpose of army recruitment—Uspensky also observed prison life on a daily basis. As a boy, he often watched prisoners marching up his street from the nearby jail, many on their final journey to execution. Uspensky's relatives thought he was an impressionable and sensitive child who cared deeply for the poor. According to a family legend still told today, he gave his shirt away to beggars when he was a child.

Uspensky spent his secondary school years in Chernigov, to where his family had moved in 1856. As a well-read, perceptive boy, Uspensky knew the works of Aleksandr Herzen, Vissarion Belinsky, Nikolai Chernyshevsky, and Nikolai Dobroliubov. These writers and publicists all promoted the development of political awareness in the Russian youth of the period, and their writings assisted the rise of a generation of populists. Gleb's cousin, writer Nikolai Vasil'evich Uspensky, encouraged the young Uspensky's interest in literature. Nikolai Uspensky was a contributor to the democratic journal *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*, the most radical democratic publication circulating in the 1860s) and so directed his cousin's literary taste in a similar direction.

Uspensky graduated from the Chernigov secondary school in 1861 and entered St. Petersburg University in the same year. Because he was interested in justice, he enrolled as a law student. His student life, however, was brief: he was expelled from the university in the year of his admittance for his involvement in student unrest. After enrolling at Moscow University, his studies were interrupted again in 1862 when his family was beset by unexpected financial difficulties resulting from his father's sudden illness. Ivan Iakovlevich's death in 1864 left the burden of supporting his large family to Uspensky.

Uspensky soon began to make an income from the publication of his literary sketches. From the time his first work, "Mikhailych", was published by Tolstoy in his journal *Iasnaia poliana* (*Bright Meadow*) in 1862, Uspensky became a writer of some repute. Nikolai Nekrasov noted his work and invited him to contribute pieces of writing to *Sovremennik* (under Nekrasov's editorship, *Sovremennik* helped establish the reputations of Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov, and Dmitrii Pisarev as leaders of the revolutionary intelligentsia). The first four chapters of Uspensky's renowned work "Nravny Rasteriaevoi ulitsy" ("The Manners of Rasteriaev Street", 1872) were published in *Sovremennik* in 1866. As the title of this work suggests, Uspensky followed in the tradition of the *natural'naia shkola* (natural school) by dissecting the morals and everyday behavior of the Russian middle classes. In "Nravny Rasteriaevoi ulitsy" not only the characters—the inhabitants of Rasteriaev Street—but also the street itself acquires the status of a typological model of the life of Russian provincial towns. The story reflects the author's concern with both the low social and economic conditions of the inhabitants of the street and their meager moral and spiritual dimensions. Even those characters who had suffered in the past became tyrants when their social circumstances improve. Thus Uspensky clearly linked economic disintegration with disintegration of the minds and souls of provincial Russians.¹³

In the second half of the 1860s Uspensky led a lifestyle typical of the bohemian group of writers in Moscow to which he belonged, all of whom were involved in heavy drinking. It is during this time that Uspensky most probably contracted syphilis.¹⁴ Eventually, however, Uspensky was forced to look for a more stable means of income. In 1867 he sat professional examinations to qualify as a teacher of Russian language and literature in the rural districts. He passed these exams successfully and took up a teaching position at the school in Epifan, a town situated in the province of Tula. A couple of months later, on finding the provincial atmosphere intolerable, he

resigned. Shortly afterwards, he accepted a job as clerk to the public prosecutor, Prince Aleksandr Ivanovich Urusov, in Moscow; however, he remained in this position for less than one year.

In 1870 Uspensky married Aleksandra Vasil'evna Baraeva. Aleksandra had literary interests and, knowing French well, translated works from French into Russian, yet their marriage was overshadowed by constant economic worries. The couple had five children.

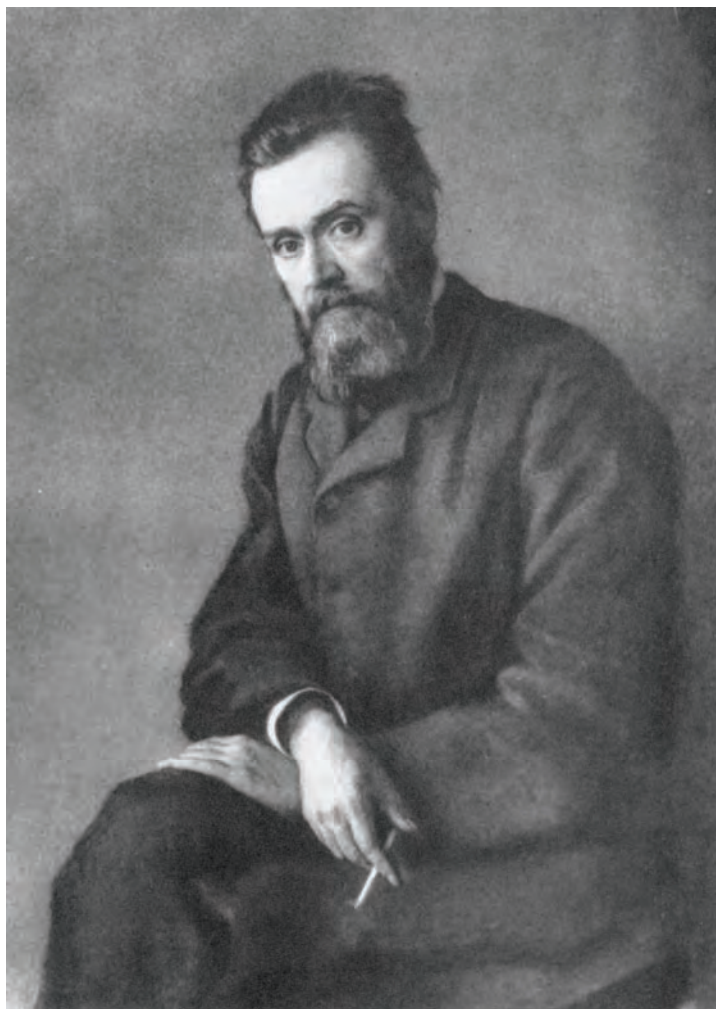
Uspensky's second important work, "Razoren'e, Nabliudeniia Mikhaila Ivanovicha: Povest'" ("Ruin, the Observations of Mikhail Ivanovich: a Novella", 1872), first appeared as "Razoren'e" ("Ruin", 1869–1871) in *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*), which had recently reappeared; Uspensky also included this work in a trilogy of the same title, *Razoren'e*, in 1883. The theme of the trilogy is the financial decline of the class of people whose business was founded on the oppression of peasants. Uspensky examines the crisis facing those who clung to the old views, and the subsequent collapse of family relations and social conventions following the abolition of serfdom.

Uspensky toured Europe in 1872 and again from 1875 to 1876. He considered these tours a major watershed in his life and career. He arrived in Paris several months after the fall of the Paris and the events that he saw made a huge impression on him. His recollections of the executions that had taken place in close proximity to his family home during his childhood—and the effect they had on him—were deepened when he witnessed the executions of the Communards. In London Uspensky met with the exiled leader of the revolutionary *narodniki*, Petr Lavrov. Uspensky was drawn to the ideas espoused by Lavrov and other theoreticians of *narodnichestvo* (populism). Lavrov agreed with Aleksandr Herzen's belief that the future of Russia lay in the hands of Russian peasants. He developed this idea further by arguing that Russia could bypass the capitalist stage of social development; a peasant revolution, he argued, would rid Russia of serfdom and the bourgeois system in a single stroke. Such an event, Lavrov believed, would allow the people of Russia to embark on the road to socialism.

It was while he was in London, a city he later described as rife with outrageous social and economic injustices, that Uspensky decided to live his life as a *narodnik* and to dedicate himself to the cause of the movement.

Narodnichestvo reached its peak from 1874 to 1875, when *raznochintsy* (non-noble intellectuals) went to the countryside—this movement was called *khozhdenie v narod* (going to the people)—to spread socialist ideas in the hope of organizing a peasant revolt. A mood of disappointment arose, however, after the young educated members of the *raznochintsy* “went to the people” only to discover that the peasants were more interested in obtaining land than in following socialist ideals. Uspensky’s concept of *vlast’ zemli* (the power of the soil) comes from this moment of disappointment and realization. This expression is also the title of one of Uspensky’s most important cycles of *ocherki*, “Vlast’ zemli”.

Uspensky himself “went to the people” in the summer of 1877. He stayed in the Valdaika junction in the province of Novgorod. From March 1878 until the summer of 1879 he lived in a village near Samara where he worked as a bank clerk. He was able to buy a small house for his family in Siabrinittsy, situated in Samara province, in 1881. Uspensky’s choice of location was influenced by his links with the populist terrorist organization *Zemlia i volia* (Land and Liberty). In 1879 an ideological split resulted in the emergence of two separate factions within the organization: *Narodnaia volia* (The People’s Will) and *Chernyi peredel* (Black Partition). *Narodnaia volia* became a terrorist organization, while members of *Chernyi peredel* opposed terrorist activities. The revolutionaries Vera Figner and Angel Bogdanovich were two of Uspensky’s personal friends. The influence of *Zemlia i volia* on Uspensky is evident in his *ocherki* “Krest’ianin i krest’ianskii trud” (“Peasant and Peasant Labor”, 1880) and “Vlast’ zemli” (1882).



Portrait of Gleb Uspensky by narodnik painter N. I. Iaroshenko

The politics espoused by Uspensky in his *narodnichestvo* period differ from those that he embraced before coming into contact with *Zemlia i volia*. In *Razoren'e*, Uspensky's protagonist Mikhail Ivanovich travels from his village to the large city of St Petersburg in order to acquire political self-awareness. An opposite trend is evident, however, in Uspensky's cycles of village sketches. In these works Uspensky's hero, the urban *raznochinets*, searches for truth by looking

to the Russian village. In these works Uspensky expresses his concern at the lack of desire for self-improvement among the peasants, who appear happy to live in poverty without material comforts. To him, peasant culture reflects a total lack of progress: previous generations have not passed any valuable knowledge on to the younger generations, nor have they introduced any technical innovations. Uspensky has the uncanny feeling that the primitive equipment used by peasants in his day is not different from that used by their forebears a thousand years ago. In “Krest’ianin i krest’ianskii trud”, Uspensky notes the peasants’ complete lack of collective feeling—that is, their failure to understand that more economic success could be achieved through united effort. He also comes to realize that peasants draw inspiration from their contact with nature and animals, and that they develop emotionally and intellectually on the basis of such contact. In “Vlast’ zemli” Uspensky shows how the peasant, on losing his dependence on nature, would lose also the main support of his dignity, of his unique culture, of the tradition that gave him his special character.¹⁵

Uspensky, however, did not blindly follow the doctrine of the *narodnichestvo*. In his search for truth he expressed profound doubts about the ideas set down by members of the movement. His contact with Russian villagers gave him some bitter disappointments. Uspensky believed that the “erosion” of the poetic relationship between the peasant and the soil resulted from the encroachment of capitalism into the village. The economic implications of this encroachment were in obvious conflict with populist and Slavophilic ideals. Uspensky shattered the main tenet of the *narodniki*, which classified the peasant as a natural socialist. He could not, however, relinquish his hope that one day the spiritual needs of the poor would take precedence over their material striving for daily bread.

During the 1880s, at the height of the *narodnichestvo* movement, Uspensky was immensely popular with truth-seeking youths who found an honest and authentic perception of Russian peasant life in his *ocherki*. In his nuanced understanding of human subjectivity, Uspensky was significantly ahead of his time. He was one of the first Russian male writers to address gender issues, including physiological and psychological stereotypes of the masculine and feminine. Professional revolutionaries such as Petr Tkachev, however, reproached Uspensky for his lack of stable paradigms and character types. Such revolutionaries criticized his evasive and ever-changing attitude toward peasants. Maxim Gorky

labeled Uspensky a “hysterical realist” (Prutskov 1972: 4). This categorization can be read as a reflection of the dominant culture’s bias against any indication of infirmity, and a sign of this culture’s patriarchal nature.

Uspensky’s body politics and the peasant woman

The focus of this book is primarily the sexuality and gender of Russian peasant women in Uspensky’s work. This topic is reviewed in the context of turn-of-the-century Russian anxieties around women’s bodies and contemporary discourses on sexuality, including the views of Leo Tolstoy, Arthur Schopenhauer and Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s seminal work *Psychopathia Sexualis*¹⁶ as well as in the context of the belief systems of popular culture. This study shows that Gleb Uspensky was a writer who systematically addressed a broad range of issues linked to sexuality, and that he attempted to devise a system of body politics based around addressing the socio-economic, physiological, medical and moral issues of human sexuality—with peasants as the chosen object of his experiment. Uspensky’s aim, however democratic and sociological it appears on the surface, was to create a re-formed body paradoxically constructed on the Christian anxiety around corporeality. This study shows that Uspensky’s physically strong maidens turn out to be fantasies in the image of Christ.

My approach to the subject of this book is based on feminist theories of the body. For the last two decades the subject of the body has been at the center of cultural theory and art practice as a phenomenon that has previously been ignored within the changing scripts of society, history and culture. Post-structuralist theory has also helped to reinstate the body as a vital part of our cultural inscriptions, in opposition to the separatist theories propounded through natural science and medicine. Such critical interpretations of the body also involve a recognition of the concept of the “other” as an intrinsic part of the cultural differences (Grosz 1994).

Uspensky’s interest in the peasant woman’s body resulted in part from the growing popularity of biological discourse on women in Russia in the 1880s. As Uspensky’s contemporary, L. Obolensky, the author of the article tellingly entitled “Biologi o zhenskom voprose” (“Biologists on the Woman’s Question” in *Russkaia mysl’*, 1893) suggests, debates around love, and matters of women’s emancipation and liberation, moved away from the spheres of literature and metaphysics and became part of the scientific discourse of biology,

medicine and anthropology.¹⁷ While Obolensky admits that the older generation of biologists was guilty of exaggeration, resulting in excessive conclusions about human sexuality in general and women's sexuality in particular, he nevertheless calls on the Russian public to accept some of the conclusions reached by recent biological thought on issues relating to sexuality. The biological theories in vogue in the 1880s were related to the crises of *vyrozhdienie* (degeneration), believed to result from the limitations of the institution of marriage in western societies. These new theories linked economic issues to biological concerns. While debates about women's emancipation in the 1870s were dictated by the new economic realities in Russia, resulting from the impoverishment of the families who lost their privileged status after the abolishment of serfdom and the subsequent rise of competition in various professions, in the 1880s new theories appeared that increasingly gave biological answers to economic problems.

As Obolensky points out, it has been argued by British biologists, such as Alfred Russel Wallace and Grant Allen, that, because women in European societies were put into relationships based on total economic dependency on men, they could not choose their partners according to their sexual instinct. Instead of choosing the most physically strong, and the most intellectually and morally superior individual, women had to choose a partner based on his economic and political status in the society. Because of the peculiarities of the evolution of European societies, such status was not achieved as a result of natural selection and survival of the fittest. This theory, of the degeneration of European society due to the lack of sexual competition, was seen as a logical continuation of Darwin's views on natural selection, and it was stressed that Darwin in his later years warned of the dire consequences of the institution of marriage in the western world. The need for women's emancipation was argued from the idea that it was necessary for a woman to be an independent agent, so she could base her choice of partner not on reasons of financial support but rather on reasons dictated by her sexual preference. Whether the woman decided to have children from a partner of her choice or whether she decided not to get married and have children at all was seen as equally positive results of women's emancipation, since in both cases she would be contributing to the healthy state of the human race. By giving birth to children resulting from a sexual relationship, based on her healthy sexual instinct and rational attraction, or by choosing not to give birth at all because of a

lack of desire to have children per se or to have them with the wrong partner, emancipated women were acting out of choice, which was presumed to be a result of both healthy instincts and an educated mind.

Obolensky's article focuses on the same issues that were addressed by Uspensky in his works from the 1880s to the early 1890s. Indeed, Uspensky's last piece on women, "Krest'iasnkie zhenshchiny" ("Peasant Women", 1890), appeared in the same journal as Obolensky's article.¹⁸ Uspensky explored the subject of women's economic independence as a condition of their sexual independence. For him, peasant woman provided what he believed to be a resolution and solution of the woman's question. But his attempts to tamper with women's biology were characterized by the same excesses as those referred to in Obolensky's article. Since Uspensky was influenced by the views expressed by the biologists of an earlier generation, he internalized their bias against the woman's body. Although influenced by the opinions of Herbert Spencer and Cesare Lombroso, which had been widely disseminated in the Russian press, Uspensky struggled against biological determinism and the sexual prejudices of their views.

The extent to which it was acceptable to view a woman's body and mind as limited by nature becomes especially evident in a work written by woman author E. Mikhailova on the biological theories of the "woman's question". This article, "Neskol'ko slov o fiziologii zhenshchiny v sviazi s ee obshchestvennoi deiatel'nost'iu" ("A Few Words of a Woman's Physiology in Connection with her Social Role") published in *Drug zhenshchin* (*Women's Friend*, 1883), illustrates the arguments used against women's emancipation, and sheds lights on the reasons behind Uspensky's involvement in the topic of the female body. It also explains how, in a society where a woman could accept the biological arguments for the limitations of her role in society, a male writer could not help but become influenced by these arguments, despite his commitment to social justice.

In this article, Mikhailova also reflects on the issue of *vyrozhdenie* (degeneration), but approaches it as an argument against the emancipation of women. If Obolensky's 1893 article reflected the biologists' viewpoint, in which women's emancipation was a positive factor in the struggle against degeneration, then Mikhailova's 1883 article illustrates the views of an earlier generation on the same issue, in which women's emancipation was considered a threat to the future of humanity. Mikhailova argued that an educated woman, who

achieved economic independence and who got involved in political life, was in fact abandoning her main duty to society: to fulfill her procreatory and nurturing function. However, Mikhailova's article is interesting not so much because it contains a mention of the *vyrozhdienie* argument against women's emancipation, but because it also reflects another biological reason used in discussions on women. The aim of this argument was to show that women should not get involved in the intellectual and social spheres of society because, due to their physiological characteristics, they are impaired intellectually when compared to men. Such an argument relates to the alleged link between the frequency of a woman's pulse, the high speed of blood flow, and her intellectual mode of reasoning – a state which supposedly created short impulses in the brain and lead to women's short spans of concentration. A woman's thinking was thus characterized by "concreteness" (88), attention to detail, and the lack of ability to generalize or think abstractly. Mikhailova exposes the gender bias of this argument by drawing attention to the physiological similarities in the velocity of blood flow in a woman and that in a small man. She stresses that, while biologists have found it impossible to conclude that smaller men have smaller intellectual energy, they have reached negative conclusions regarding the intellectual abilities of women. Mikhailova challenges the biological argument not on the grounds of their scientific validity but rather on the grounds of their one-sidedness, which does not take into account factors outside of physiology, such as the formative influence of education, upbringing and environment on the female body and mind. She thus accepts women's biological peculiarities and limitations, but does not accept the "fatal" (88) and determinist nature of these conclusions:

Is it true that the specifics of a woman's physiological functions make up something that is undeniable, fatal; something by which she is assigned only with family duties by the enemies of women's emancipation? With the current state of the development of neurophysiology and psychology this question is often viewed in the light of subordination of the intellectual organ to purely physiological functions. We are being told: processes of blood circulation, breathing, blood creation, metabolism, have a bigger velocity in a woman's body, and this is why women's thinking is characterized by concreteness. According to this entrenched viewpoint, a woman thinks only by acquired images, the pulsation of her thought being too quick to concentrate on specific elements and to be able to combine them into abstractions" (88).

The aim of this biological argument concerning women's mental abilities was to prove that women were lacking in abstract thought. This conclusion had grave implications for the acceptance of women in the fields of science and technology, since it is precisely this ability to concentrate, and to synthesize thought into abstraction, that the logocentric ideal of western civilization viewed as a necessary component of a creative and analytical mind (Douglas 1999). It was this alleged lack of creativity in a woman's brain which the young Anton Chekhov, then a medical student, noted as fact in the same year that Mikhailova's article was published. In his plans for a research project entitled "History of Sexual Authority", Chekhov wrote "The history of universities for women—curious: in all the 30 years that they have existed, women medics (excellent medics!) have not produced a single dissertation, which proves that they are *schwach* in the creative line" (117).¹⁹

These views, which were widely promulgated in anti-feminist scientific and quasi-scientific discourse, were countered by Mikhailova. She stated that the human brain was yet another physiological organ which became impaired in women only as a result of lack of use and exercise: "It is well known that an organ that is not well fed and not exercised, weakens and becomes atrophied" (98). Mikhailova maintained that, once women's circumstances changed and she was liberated from her limited conditions, her organism, including her "central nervous system" (98), would strengthen as a result of exercise. The woman would no longer be fatigued from pregnancy and childbirth, and she would be able to direct her energies to the development of her brain. In Mikhailova's optimistic but biologically argued scenario the "*refleksivnyi*" ("instinctive", 100) mode of thinking would be replaced by the "*soznatel'nyi*" ("conscious", 100) way of thinking, and women would become truly equal to men. Mikhailova based her discussion on the work of Wundt and Spencer who, among others, maintained that "people with weak mental development are perceived as having an instinctive character and not being capable of controlling their attention span" (96). She repeats the scientists' opinions that, in a woman's upbringing, the development of attention plays a minimal role. She thus arrives to the controversial conclusion of the existence of biologically determined women's diseases: "This is why, for women, diseases are typical which are based on the lack of will power and their inability to control their concentration, such as hysteria and catalepsy which effect mainly women" (96).

This article is an important document which illustrates the internalization of gendered concepts of contemporary science by an educated woman. It serves as a powerful reminder that even women authors, in their polemics with biological biases against women, nevertheless relied heavily on biological arguments. The woman's body, with its procreative functions, raised questions on intellectual ability and physical limitation – questions that were at the center of the discourse on women's emancipation in Uspensky's time. This biological aspect, with its problematics of biological determinism, as well as power of circumstance, religious and traditional views on procreation, are all topics which Uspensky addresses in his representations of peasant women: indeed, the body of the peasant woman becomes a site where the issues of the woman's role in the changing society are played out. It is also the site of Uspensky's personal discontent and his anxieties surrounding human sexuality, often concealed under his verbose narrative on the economic problems of the Russian countryside.

Gleb Uspensky's own body is also part of this study, both because of his mental illness and because of the impact this illness had on his perception of his own body in relation to the bodies depicted in his writings. His little known mental illness caused his institutionalization in the last ten years of his life and has remained largely unresearched. His condition, which manifested itself in religious mania, vegetarianism, and fantasies around the incorporeality of his own and his son's body, is brought into analysis where relevant and theorized using the tools of feminist criticism and, where appropriate, Freudian psychoanalysis. In addition, the record of Uspensky's illness, kept by Uspensky's psychiatrist Dr Boris Sinani (1851–1920), is used as an intertext and a source for extra-textual evidence of Uspensky's concerns about issues linked to human sexuality. *The Diary of Doctor B. N. Sinani* is remarkable as a physician's personal document written by a populist who admired and respected Uspensky. Sinani was well informed on psychoanalysis and treated his famous patient with hypnosis. He preferred to see Uspensky's mental illness as psychological in aetiology rather than resulting from physiological disintegration caused by syphilis, and for three years he refused to give up the hope that he would be able to return Uspensky to sanity. The *Diary* is a fascinating text that illustrates how cultural taboos and prejudices about sexuality can affect medical science. It helps to expand the history of sexuality in

which Russia has received little attention (in Foucault's *History of Human Sexuality*, the author does not address Russian culture) and adds to existing case studies of other Russian authors written by various scientists (Lombroso, Freud, Chizh, Bazhenov) a record that has previously not been part of academic discourse (Sirotkina 2002). An English translation of this little known document is published for the first time as an Appendix to this book.²⁰

Contents

Chapter 1 exposes the main problematics of the representation of women's bodies in Uspensky's work. It provides a reading of his story "Daydreams" (1885) in which Uspensky experiments with the construction of a new type of woman's body. This chapter shows how Uspensky used the work of three women writers, A. Alekseeva (A. A. Sorneva), A. Shabel'skaia and V. Lesnitskaia (V. I. Belenko), to promote a new ideal of woman: physically strong and economically independent. But in his juxtaposition of bourgeois women and peasant women Uspensky is interested not only in the social and economic independence of women, but also in sexuality and procreation.

Chapter 2 analyses two stories: "In a Woman's Position" (1886) and "Varvara" (1881), in which Uspensky explores issues of sexual transgressions such as incest and adultery. In the first story, a woman is unjustly accused of having an affair with her stepson, while in the second a virgin appears to lose her semi-magical gifts of strength and aptitude when she loses her virginity in an adulterous liaison. These stories are analysed against the Leviticus prohibitions on incest, the *Domostroi* rules on the relationship between the mistress of the house and her servants, and the biologically deterministic views of Lombrosian anthropology regarding female sexual promiscuity.

Chapter 3 gives a reading to Uspensky's best-known but much misunderstood story devoted to the Venus de Milo statue: "She Straightened Out" (1885). The story deals with the ethic, rather than aesthetic, effects that the statue has on the male hero of the story. In interpreting this work I use a feminist psychoanalytical approach and show how Uspensky reconstructs the statue's bodily characteristics—which have been considered the epitome of feminine beauty in the Western world—into a figure of masculinized androgyny. I demonstrate how the statue of Venus de Milo becomes, in Uspensky's hands, a replica of the crucified body of Christ.

Chapter 4 demonstrates Uspensky's search for a male ideal from the traditional readings of the lives of saints—a male that is non-

aggressive, submissive, saint-like and asexual. This ideal is defined in his story “A Good Russian Type” (1885). This chapter places Uspensky’s male ideal in the framework of contemporary discussions on masculinities as a cultural construct, and adds to the knowledge of Russian masculinities in peasant society. It also provides a balanced picture of Uspensky’s construction of peasant gender.

In Chapter 5 the superstitious beliefs of peasants—in this case, possession on a wedding night and its association with sexuality—are examined. In Uspensky’s interpretation, this superstition is linked to the bridegroom’s lack of virginity. Uspensky critiques the young man’s behavior and explains his demoralization and his young wife’s hysteria by the couple’s lapse from peasant values founded on honest labor and the subsequent moral transgressions. The chapter delineates the tensions evident in Uspensky’s arguments, which are based on social criticism while also referring back to the moral principles of the Russian Orthodox faith. This chapter also contains a discussion of the views of his contemporary culture on female hysterics.

Uspensky’s model for an ideal peasant family is explored in Chapter 6. Uspensky held up the peasant family as a pattern to be emulated by the educated classes on the basis of the peasant woman’s contribution to the economic wellbeing of the family. However, his narration of this story about a peasant couple discloses Uspensky’s sympathy with his male counterpart in his rather harsh treatment of a “strayed” woman. A reading of “She Stopped!” reveals its controversial message: it is a man who gives a woman lessons in discipline and control. This story is particularly disturbing since the lesson taught to the strayed wife includes episodes of beating that echo some of the *Domostroi*’s most sinister recommendations. The chapter also offers an analysis of “Baby” (“Peasant Women”) by Anton Chekhov as a response to Uspensky’s “Perestala!”.

Uspensky’s approach to the issues surrounding unwanted children in turn-of-the-century Russian society—namely infanticide, abortion, and orphanages—are explored in Chapter 7. Focussing on the texts “Receipt” (1888), “A Note” (1887), and “Working life and the life of a ‘toiler’” (1887), as well as Uspensky’s autobiographical piece “My children” written in the clinic in 1893, I show that Uspensky was not only concerned with the social aspects of these problems, advocating the necessity of state involvement in solutions to these social ills; underlying his social concerns there was also an anxiety surrounding women’s sexuality. Here Uspensky again

juxtaposes city and village life, maintaining that the problems of “unwanted children” are characteristic of the (capitalist) city. Here I use inter-textual links with the theme of infanticide in the work of Uspensky’s contemporaries who created a platform for public debates on this set of issues.

In Chapter 8 Uspensky’s charming story “Incubator Chicken” (1888) is analyzed as a humorous critique of scientific experimentations with reproduction in the context of a peasant discussion about chicken farms and the artificial incubation of eggs. This chapter is a logical continuation of the debate on infanticide and procreation, which is here moved from the social domain to the religious and philosophical sphere. The peasant narrator philosophizes on the divine nature of conception and birth, and maintains that chickens hatched artificially do not go on to procreate. His concluding thoughts on divine intervention and the concept of chicken souls reveals Uspensky’s attempt to cross boundaries between animals and people as part of his pantheistic system of beliefs. I interpret Uspensky’s views on procreation here as deeply religious and interestingly similar to the latest monist theorizing of Gilles Deleuze. This chapter confirms that Uspensky was one of the first Russian thinkers to construct a system of body politics.

Chapter 9 deals with Uspensky’s final piece on women, “Peasant Women” (1890), written before he finally succumbed to mental illness. This piece contains journalistic polemics in its approach to issues related to sexuality—such as prostitution—and the socio-economic disintegration of rural communities as a result of the encroachment of capitalism into agriculture. Uspensky maintains that social and economic trends have a devastating effect on rural women, who have to give up their traditional involvement in agriculture and become victims of the cruder aspects of city life. Uspensky’s programmatic view that peasant women are better off than middle and upper class women due to their economic self-sufficiency prompts him to conclude that, with their skills becoming increasingly redundant, they will join the communities of classless city women and thus become victims of alcoholism, prostitution and venereal disease.

In the Conclusion I examine the little-known facts of Uspensky’s personal and family life and create links between the themes of sexuality and gender in his work and in his biography. The relationship between Uspensky and his wife is explored within the context of the themes established in previous chapters. His religious mania, fear of contamination and of infecting his family with syphilis,

his hallucinatory visitations by his favorite female revolutionary Vera Figner in the guise of a white, winged angel, and his imagined conversations with the non-existent nun Margarita—all the details of which have been either censored or omitted by Uspensky's previous commentators—are contextualized in order to expose the complex interrelationship between contemporary cultural formations and his personal experiences and subconscious.

Uspensky's views on sexuality and gender as they appear in his work and his own life experiences are viewed as products of the cultural discourses of his time. While he tried to influence and change his culture's views on peasant women's gender and sexuality, he was at the same time informed by the prejudices, stereotypes and prohibitions of this same culture. This conclusion serves as a platform for understanding the contents of Sinani's *Diary* in the Appendix.

Notes

1. In the volume *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture* (Costlow, Sandler & Vowles 1993), peasant gender is not explored. Although Christine Worobec's recent monograph *Possessed: Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia* (2001) covers aspects of gender differentiation and sexuality, and their link with the phenomenon of possession in rural communities in turn-of-the-century Russia, she examines only historical documents. Similarly, in recent books on Russian women, issues of peasant women's sexuality are only dealt with in documents—literary texts are not discussed. See Barbara Alpern Engel and Robin Bisha et al 2002.
2. The recent volume *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture* by Barbara Evans Clements et al (2002) does not mention Uspensky despite masculinity and gender having a strong presence in his work. Laura Engelstein's *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in the Fin-de-Siecle Russia* (1992) also makes no use of Uspensky's work nor his biography. Although the editors of the 1992 edition of *Russian Peasant Women* note that there is no full-length history of Russian peasant women in either Russian or English, their volume contains no mention of Gleb Uspensky. Editor Beatrice Farnsworth maintains that "a major contributor to the literary image of peasant women was Nikolai A. Nekrasov" (1992: 103). Although Uspensky can be considered an antecedent to the Village Prose writers, inasmuch as they chose the village as the object of their study and, in some cases, showed a preference for the genre of the sketch, or *ocherk*—the form that Uspensky mastered—Kathleen Parthé (1992) mentions Uspensky only in passing as a member of the nineteenth-century canon used by the Village Prose writers.
3. See Korolenko, 1961: 331-345.
4. See Prutskov, 1958.
5. In her memoirs, Figner later admitted that she was idealizing a Russian peasant in her youth at the beginning of her career as a revolutionary populist. She wrote: "[W]hat was characteristic for my relationship with Uspensky was his realistic understanding of the Russian peasant on the one hand, and my sentimental populism on the other. With an offended smile and kind irony, he complained that Vera Nikolaevna demands from him a 'chocolate *muzhik*'. And indeed, I did not know the people and awfully wanted chocolate and more chocolate" (Cheshikhin-Vetrinskii 1929: 254). Vera Zasulich also admitted in 1902 that Uspensky's depiction of peasants was unique as it was truthful and devoid of sentimental idealization (Zasulich 1961: 449-452).
6. Lenin wrote of Uspensky, "Gleb Uspensky stood apart with his skepticism, answering with an ironic smile to general illusions". See G.I. Uspenskii. 1957. *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 8: 678.
7. See V. I. Lenin. 1961. "V. I. Lenin o G. I. Uspenskom" in *G. I. Uspenskii v russkoi kritike*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 49-56.
8. It is interesting that even symbolists like Dmitry Merezhkovsky failed to notice the hidden layers of meaning in Uspensky's work. See Merezhkovsky, 1973: 207-306.

9. I use here the derivatives of 'sex' and 'gender' as discussed by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990, which challenges the binary 'biology versus culture' interpretation in favour of a more fixed culturally-specific definition.
10. Joe Andrew's study of women in Russian literature does not include Gleb Uspensky as it ends with the 1860s (Andrew, 1988).
11. These themes are fully developed in his lengthy piece "Mechtaniia" ("Daydreams", 1884).
12. The main *narodnik* writer N. Mikhailovsky denied the rumor that Uspensky was addicted to drinking. There is no mention of Uspensky's illness in the critical literature of the 1920s and 1930s. See Bush, 1927 and Kamegulov, 1930.
13. I. Riabov noted that the "literary work of Uspensky is clearly divided into two periods. In the 'sixties and the first half of the 'seventies Uspensky wrote about the city and city people. From the second half of the 'seventies the topic of the village takes an exclusive place and the peasant becomes the central hero of his work" (Riabov, 1954: 49).
14. See Rubakin, 1908.
15. See Fanger, 1968: 231-307. See also Rubakin, 1908 I-CIII.
16. Uspensky was familiar with the work of Richard Krafft-Ebing, the sexologist who had an impact on Russian turn-of-the-century culture. Uspensky also knew the work of Schopenhauer, particularly those aspects which related to issues of procreation.
17. L. Obolenskii. 1893. "Biologi o zhenskom voprose" in *Russkaia mysl'* 2: 64-78.
18. E. Mikhailova. 1883. "Neskol'ko slov o fiziologii zhenshchiny v sviazi s ee obshchestvennoi deiatel'nost'iu" in *Drug zhenshchin* 4: 87-101.
19. Gromova-Opul'skaia, L. M. et al (eds). 2000. *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchetsva A.P.Chekhova 1860-1888*. Moscow: Nasledie: 1: 117.
20. The English translation of this document also provides a contribution to the growing interdisciplinary field of disability studies, in particular those relating to mental disorders.

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“Daydreams”: the quest for social gender changes or a new type of beauty?

In his *ocherk* “Mechtaniia” (“Daydreams” 1885)¹ Uspensky approaches the topic of gender from both sociological and aesthetic perspectives, building a polar model of the differences which exist in gendered roles and characteristics among the two classes of the Russian society: the educated and bourgeois class on the one hand, and the peasant class on the other. Gender characterization of Russian peasant women is manifested in special physical features that Uspensky openly admires: his peasant women are masculine and capable of performing physical labor. They are strong, healthy and vigorous—attributes that lead to their aestheticization in the eyes of Uspensky. A new ideal of feminine beauty is thus established, an ideal which is then juxtaposed to the bourgeois ideal of a submissive, meek and physically fragile beauty. In “Mechtaniia” Uspensky introduces terms such as “*zhenshchiny-muzshchiny*” (women-men, 215) which can be considered a precursor to the term “*muzhe-devy*” (98) which the philosopher and writer Vasily Rozanov (1856-1919) used in his revolutionary turn-of-the century work, *Liudi lunnogo sveta* (*People of the Moonlight*, 1909, 1912)² – a book which became a landmark in the history of sexuality in Russia.

Uspensky’s usage of such terms went hand in hand with his explorations of both gendered and sexed bodies, and was motivated by this search for a new physical type of a woman. In this capacity, Uspensky was at the vanguard of the continuum of the Russian history of sexuality in which his work can be viewed as a precursor to the turn-of-the-century debates on human sexuality.

The corrupting influence of the city on peasant morality

Uspensky starts his *ocherk* as a development of his thoughts on the topic of physical labor, on which he had elaborated in a previous piece entitled “Trudami ruk svoik” (“By the Labor of One’s Own Hands,” 1884). In this piece Uspensky tells the story of the sectarian peasant T.M. Bondarev (1820-1898), the author of a treatise on the necessity to make a living through labor on the soil in accordance with the laws of the Scriptures.³ Bondarev’s life and work had an impact not only on Uspensky, but also on Leo Tolstoy who started a correspondence with this peasant-philosopher. Bondarev’s main concern was the decline of moral standards among peasants, which he saw as a result of socio-economic changes and the end of religious piety among the rural communities. In his 1884 piece Uspensky quoted liberally from the peasant’s manuscript which he had studied during his trip to Siberia. This manuscript gave Uspensky the opportunity to quote passages from the Bible via Bondarev’s text. He does so with support and sympathy, showing his empathy for the peasant’s desire for an honest and simple life based on the principles of hard work which, in combination with the adherence to the laws of the Bible, would lead to a healthy body and psyche.

The expression *trudami ruk svoikh* (by the labor of one’s own hands) becomes a topos in “Mechtaniia”, and Uspensky repeatedly uses this phrase as an explanation and motivation for his search for a special “human type” (208) that underpins his desire to daydream and to “*poprobovat*” (experiment). Uspensky introduces the theme of the disintegration of the old peasant life style that was based on the principle of labor on the land through focusing on the effect the new economic changes has on the peasant family. Following the logic of Bondarev’s treatise, Uspensky maintains that the economic disintegration of the rural community which followed the emancipation reforms of 1861 lead to the moral and physical collapse of the peasant family. In order to make a living former landowners started building factories on their land, and peasants had to give up agricultural labor for factory work. Factory life, with its lack of contact with the soil and lack of freedom offered by labor in the fresh air, introduced working conditions which oppressed both the soul and the body. Uspensky presents the scenario of the moral and physical disintegration of the peasant family in which all its members—the peasant, his wife, his daughter and his son—experience a degradation which leads to the demise of this very physical type of Russian peasant:

The factory unceremoniously starts changing Ivan Kuzmichev and his wife in its own mode; it is governed by unchanging laws to which they must be obedient—Kuzmichev is not allowed to sit in a tavern and sing songs in a loud voice (this would break the iron laws of the invested capital), it is not possible to sleep late, it is not allowed to be absent, one cannot be absent-minded. It is no longer possible to drink vodka or to chat freely—one will be penalized for all this by a fine and with this fine comes anger in Ivan Kuzmichev; and together with the anger comes both the need to suppress it (there will be nothing to eat otherwise) and the skill to cheat on these iron laws, to do secretly things which one is not allowed to do [...] Thus comes a spiritual debasement which is then followed by a physical debasement—there is no wife, no family, no children, everything is boring, nauseating and frustrating; there is vodka and everything that follows from that, including the hospital. The same happens with Ivan Kuzmichev's wife: the depravity of the factory women-workers is well known and there is no need to prove its existence. And what about the children? Mishan'ka, a little lonely boy who is left without his father and mother and who has no home, worked as a messenger, delivering money to his boss, and became frustrated: there was no end to this tedious life! He became upset and thought of an idea [...] he thought and thought and once noticed a wallet containing money which a drunk merchant had in his pocket. He took it from under a seat [...] and ended up in the Butyr'skaia prison [...] And what about their daughter? First her landlord paid her attention when the landlady was out of the house, then one of the guests of the house started winking at her, and asked her to go out for a walk onto Tverskoi Boulevard [...] And slowly, slowly the Tverskoi Boulevard became her place, and the police issued her a special permit, and she ended up in 'a hospital' (198).⁴

Thus, following in the footsteps of Bondarev, Uspensky identifies prostitution, drinking, sexually transmitted diseases, theft and homicide as the results of economic changes in the Russian rural community. Such changes, he believes, happen because the peasants no longer live *trudami ruk svoikh* (198).

The problems of prostitution and venereal diseases are at the center of Uspensky's focus in as much as they are linked with human sexuality and its manifestations in different classes of Russian society. Sexuality in the lives of peasants is presented positively in as much as it resides within the confines of the patriarchal family. Procreation and childbirth in the ideal peasant family is viewed by Uspensky in the same way as it was presented in Bondarev's treatise—as an integral part of nature's cycle, as part of a healthy lifestyle in which children are born from healthy parents so they can help them in their old age and take over from them the hard but gratifying labor on the earth. Sex within the peasant family is accepted as a means of procreation and not pleasure, as sex in the urban community is construed. Uspensky's belief that venereal diseases such as syphilis, which achieved epidemic proportions in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, spread from the city to the village is typical of the views espoused by the populists. Laura Engelstein, in her discussion on the reception of syphilis in turn-of-the-century Russian culture, demonstrates that Russian populists and intelligentsia believed that the rural population was sexually innocent, and that the contamination of the peasants came from city workers.⁵

Once peasant men and women moved from the village to the city, they became at risk of contamination by syphilis through sexual contact. This view of the chastity of peasants shaped the belief of the medical profession that syphilis among peasants was a disease acquired not through sexual contact but through other forms of transmission, such as dirty linen, the sharing of wooden spoons during communal meals as was practised in peasant households, the usage of common towels and other unhygienic practices. Thus, while city dwellers were believed to acquire syphilis through sexual contact, the peasant population was viewed as contaminated through the lack of education and prophylactics. The city dwellers were the victims of their own sexual desire while the peasants were the victims of social injustices. The medical scientists echoed the cultural sentiments of the Russian society by dividing syphilitic contamination into two forms: a biological form and a class form. Peasants were regarded as innocent as children, inheriting syphilis from their mothers without sinning themselves. As a populist, Uspensky supported a view of sexually transmitted diseases that left peasants sexually innocent, with their transformation into the diseased Other taking place only once they had left their native village and had come into contact with the city and factory work. Statistics, however, contradicted such a view, with

syphilis in rural Russia no less rife than in the cities. In spite of statistical evidence, Uspensky, alongside his liberal contemporaries, continued to demonize the city and factory work as the source of all forms of sexual corruption, including sexually transmitted disease. The irony of Uspensky's elaborations on venereal disease is that within a few years his own syphilis would achieve its final, third stage, and Uspensky would become a victim of the progressive paralysis that developed parallel to congenital schizophrenia (in his biography of Uspensky Cheshikhin-Vetrinsky uses the term *progressivnyi paralich*, 1929: 238).

In 1892 Uspensky's psychiatrist, Boris Naumovich Sinani, confessed in his diary that he would not have invested so much of his personal time into the very special treatment of Uspensky at the Kolmovo institution if he had been sure that Uspensky's condition was nothing more than a form of progressive paralysis resulting from his syphilis.⁶ Sinani wrote that Uspensky told him, when he contracted the disease in the 1870s, that he had a chancre. However, Sinani wanted to believe that Uspensky's mental illness was a result of the circumstances of his life which were harsh, based on self-sacrifice for the sake of the simple folk, and had an exhausting effect on his nervous system. Sinani's own self-delusion about the nature of Uspensky's illness speaks volumes about the cultural archetypes of the time when the medical profession struggled to reconcile scientific evidence with the cultural beliefs concerning the eternal goodness of peasants shared by people like the populists who devoted their lives to the betterment of the conditions of the poor and the insulted.

Defining peasant sexuality and *snokhachestvo*

From his reference to Bondarev's work Uspensky moves on to a sociological article by Iakov Ludmer "Bab'i stony" ("Women's Moans") which appeared in *Iuridicheskii vestnik (Legal Digest)* in 1884 (nn.11, 12). Uspensky, who was familiar with Ludmer's work in its manuscript form before its publication (which was delayed for censorship reasons), develops Ludmer's argument on the poor economic and moral state of the peasant family which the author of the article sees as a result of the encroachment of capitalism upon the rural society. Ludmer, a justice of the peace in one of the Russian provinces, turns the attention of the educated public to the new situation of the disintegration of the peasant family. The number of cases of bitter disagreements and violent arguments among the peasant families had grown into an identifiable social and legal

problem. The number of divorces among the Russian peasants was also on the increase. Ludmer openly describes the custom of *snokhachestvo*—when the head of the peasant family forces his daughter-in-law into a sexual relationship with him—as another form of sexual debasement and transgression common among peasant families. His discussion of *snokhachestvo* acts as an illustration of the unruly sexual behavior of peasant men and the suffering and humiliation such behavior instigates amongst peasant women who had to put up with this century-old tradition within peasant households. Ludmer advocates the peasant woman's right to divorce as a necessary escape from domestic tyranny and physical beating:

In his paper "Bab'i stony" there is an enormous number of cases relating to domestic conflict, some of them truly horrific. The picture which he [Ludmer, H. M.] draws is awful: here you are witnessing how people perish, how they eat each other alive, and disappear from the earth, giving place to others—and your hair raises on your head! And when you look at this picture you notice that through some kind of law these people have been deprived of the opportunity to live by the labor of their own hands, to live the way they want to live and how they knew how to live—and here you have a calamity which effected the *muzhik*, the *baba*, and their child (204).⁷

These thoughts on the disintegration of the peasant family lead Uspensky into a discussion on the fate of peasant women. Uspensky's description of Ludmer's article tones down the excesses of insult and transgression, while the subject of *snokhachestvo* is not mentioned at all. This lack of commentary on one of the most common sexual transgressions among peasants is conspicuous. *Snokhachestvo* was a phenomenon which put pressure not only on the *snokha* (daughter-in-law) but also on the wife of the head of the family who, while insulted by her husband's behavior, made the life of her daughter-in-law even more difficult. The young and the old women in the extended family were both subjected to the abuse and despotism of the *bol'shak* (the head of the family), while existing in a relationship of hatred between themselves as a result of the patriarchal *snokhachestvo*. *Snokhachestvo* was legally considered to be an offence, and a penance of 15 to 20 lashes was prescribed by the regional courts (*volostnoi sud*). However, it was not always possible for a young woman to prove the offence as witnesses were not easily obtainable in these circumstances.⁸

Uspensky does not develop a discussion on *snokhachestvo* here as he had already partly expressed his views on this issue without taking any strong moral stance. In his famous work “Vlast’ zemli” (“The Power of the Soil” 1882), Uspensky discusses the custom of *snokhachestvo* as a phenomenon in need of understanding in the context of peasant men’s physiology and sexuality, as well as in relation to rural marriage customs. Uspensky argued that peasant men also deserve sympathy since they too are a part of a traditional approach to marriage which does not take into account young men’s feelings, desires and preferences in the choice of the partner. In fact, peasant men are as much victims of the custom of arranged marriages as are young peasant women.

Uspensky thus argues for a fair and understanding appreciation of *snokhachestvo* as the only opportunity for a peasant man to choose a woman of his liking. While he admits that in the *snokhachestvo* relationship a man abuses his power by choosing a concubine from his young daughters-in-law, he nevertheless appeals to the need to acknowledge the emotional and physical needs of the mature peasant man. Uspensky’s discussion of the peasant man’s virility and desires are structured around the differences between peasant men’s sexuality and the sexual behavior of bourgeois city men. This structure, recurring time and again in Uspensky’s work, is based on the juxtaposition of the village and the city, with peasant men appearing in a more positive light than their city counterparts. In his discussion on the differences between the sexuality of peasant men and that of city men, Uspensky develops a comprehensive body politics based on the understanding of the different contributing factors such as economic and labor conditions, the impact of religious beliefs and parental authority within family structures. In Uspensky’s interpretation, two types of bodies emerge as a result of the sexual behavior of city men and peasant men: first, the diseased body; and second, the healthy body. The first type is called a “*myshinyi zherebchik*” (mouse stallion, 166)⁹ characterized thus:

What is a mouse stallion, what is his biography? By the will of fate the mouse stallion comes from a well-to-do class and is a man of means. He is well fed, and his easy life leads to early maturity. From the age of 16 or 17 he has already started to indulge in sexual pleasures; as he grows his pleasures become more varied. He finds them in St Petersburg, Paris, Vienna etc. Thus, the older the mouse stallion grows, the more exhausted he becomes, more worn out, turned into an old piece of cloth. Having

reached the age of fifty, he is a complete wreck—he has to apply blush, to wear a corset. He has nothing left to do but to get involved in business, to get a post, to invent a project on ‘the health of roots’, resting from work only in his corrupt dreams (167).

This definition is followed by a characterization of the second type, the “*snokhach*”:

What is a *snokhach*? What is his life story? First of all, as a peasant, as a member of a peasant family, he started thinking about business not at fifty but when he was five or eight years old. While the physical strength of the mouse stallion was wasted on evil pleasures, the strength of the future *snokhach* went into work, and the further he developed, the stronger he became. The young physical constitution of the stallion wore out while the young physical constitution of the peasant, on the contrary, strengthened (167).

Uspensky explains that a peasant male reaches his physical apogee at the age of fifty, by which time all his children are grown up and able to make a sizable contribution to the economic well being of the extended family unit. Uspensky regards the laws of serfdom as contributing factors to the institution of *snokhachestvo*. During serfdom, peasants who have reached their peak of physical strength and who have experienced the emotional need to love and be loved, were unable to find an object (a young woman) because the landlord made sure to find a husband for every single woman. With the end of serfdom the institution of *snokhachestvo* comes to an end—this is Uspensky’s optimistic prognosis. Now, peasant men could afford to get emotional gratification and to fall in love with young spinsters. Uspensky admits that peasant women who age early and who supposedly lose their sexual drive can be of no attraction to their husbands—he thus creates his model of peasant sexuality where men reach their sexual maturity by the age of fifty while women lose their sexual drive much earlier. This model is a product of Uspensky’s rationalization of peasant bodies based on his desire to give credibility to his idea of a woman’s body as desexed. This model also betrays a preference for granting sexual liberation to men, while assigning women with asexuality. In the context of Uspensky’s opinions on *snokhachestvo* as expressed in “Vlast’ zemli”, it is only understandable that he abstained from developing this topic in relation to the views expressed in Ludmer’s article.

In S. Shashkov's *Istoria russkoi zhenshchiny* (*History of the Russian Woman*, 1879), the historian gives a critical overview of the Russian woman's destiny from pagan times to the present situation when city women were undergoing emancipation. In Shashkov's book, the future of the Russian woman lies in her education: only through education can women gain liberation from the constraints that had held Russian women over the ages. According to Shashkov, the history of Russian women from all classes was a history of suppression and patriarchal tyranny. The sexual history of Russian women was similarly marked by abuse. Shashkov notes such examples of sexual violation of women as *snokhachestvo*, landowners who demanded the right of the first night with a new bride, and even brother-sister incest. Shashkov considers these transgressions to be especially characteristic of the rural communities. In his evaluation of the situation with *snokhachestvo*, he stresses that the entire family of in-laws, including the woman's own husband, put pressure on the young daughter-in-law to enter into sexual relationships with the father-in-law as an act of submission to the despotic demands of the patriarch of the peasant family. Such is the fear of the patriarch by his household that a young woman refusing to become a *snokhachka* is tyrannized and humiliated by the rest of the family.

According to Shashkov's history of Russian peasant woman, the same is true of the forced incest between a brother and sister. He refers to ethnographic evidence of the survival of brother-sister incest in the Viatka district. Shashkov explains that pressures for young women to enter into sexual relations with her brothers come from the mother of the family, who tries to protect her sons from the consequences of sex with prostitutes:

One of the famous Russian ethnographers gave me the following scene from peasant life in the Viatka district. A young lad lies on the stove and moans. His mother asks him why he is moaning. It turns out that he has contracted an illness as a result of a love liaison. His mother reproaches him for entering into relationships with whores. "Here, look, we have our own mares," she says, pointing to her daughters" (29).

For the historian, such practices illustrate the abuse which a young woman suffers in her own household, due to the survival of the inhumane practices of the past. Such practices serve as evidence of the widespread abuse of women in rural communities, especially in the

more remote parts of Russia. According to Shashkov, peasant women are victims of lawlessness to a larger degree than their city counterparts. In the historian's pro-educationalist analysis, unlike that of Gleb Uspensky, there is no evidence of the idealization of the status of women in peasant communities, where all the facts point to the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of young women both by their own families and by their in-laws. Shashkov, however, stresses that forced marriages in rural communities similarly lead to the unhappiness of young males who, like their female counterparts, were expected to view marriage as a loveless relationship of bondage offering no emotional satisfaction. In this point, Shashkov's views on the peasant male's situation in marriage echo Uspensky's sentiments. But Shashkov rightly stresses that, while males found an outlet for their emotional and sexual needs in illicit liaisons, females were deprived of such opportunities and, when found guilty of extra- or pre-marital relationships, were severely punished and ostracized by their community.

All alone: the ideal peasant woman

Uspensky avoids any discussion of *snokhachestvo* in Ludmer and attempts instead to find a way to rescue the peasant woman from her misery and the life of humiliation she is subjected to while married, thus evoking a positive prognosis for the future of the peasant woman once liberated from marriage. He discovers, however, that peasant women cope remarkably well with divorce. Being physically strong and skillful, they show enthusiasm and entrepreneurial and survival skills under the new conditions. Arora Mandakini's research into the gender roles in Tver' province in Russia's post-emancipation period shows that peasant women did indeed take upon themselves various roles performed traditionally by men. The fact that women performed men's tasks, however, did not remove hierarchy within the division of labor. Women were not empowered as a result of performing men's duties either in agricultural work or in running the economy. Mandakini states that the sexual division of labor must be considered not only as the technical distribution of tasks but also as the values and symbols that go with it (1995).¹⁰

Uspensky describes a divorced peasant woman in a highly optimistic tone but, alongside his enthusiasm for the young peasant woman's propensity for economic survival, there is a special interest to be observed in the way Uspensky approaches matters of gender:

And it is only for the sake of this modest wish that I want to point not only the practical, but also the aesthetic side of things, to touch upon the beauty of the human type which can satisfy all its needs, the type which provides a good motivation to go along with my modest desire “to try”.

Once in the country I went out onto the porch from having nothing else to do. It was early morning, the sun was bright and the frost was strong, and it was very quiet. In front of the porch a worker was clearing the road of snow and, on the wooden board already cleared of snow, there walked a peasant woman; she walked freely, briskly; she looked unusually clean and bright, and she was so well-built, light, strong and merry, that I also cheered up while I studied her. Her clothes and her boots were strong and well-made: her jacket was so well sown that one could not cut it with an axe, and it was buttoned up on the slender chest so tightly, as if together with the jacket she was cast out of bronze, but cast finely, slenderly, lightly and for some reason pleasing to the eye” (208).

Uspensky here searches of a new “type” of “human beauty”, and is open-minded in his quest for experimentation with such a new “type”. His use of the word “*poprobovat*” (to try, to experiment) is highly significant. The fact that Uspensky speaks in this passage not of a new type of woman but of a new type of human (“*chelovecheskii tip*”, 208) when describing an independent-minded and physically strong peasant woman, and the fact that he avoids identifying the new aesthetics for this “new woman type”, shows that the writer is experimenting with crossing gender boundaries. This new type of beauty is statuesque, as if “*vylyta iz medi*” (“cast out of bronze”, 208). Aestheticization of the human body moves here from the world of the organic to the world of strong metal, from the world of perishable and corrupt human matter into the fantasized world of non-corrupt shiny metal—a cold inorganic matter that is resistant to the destructive influence of passion and biological determinism. Such a metallic body in its very coldness presents an aesthetic object good to gaze upon, but not to desire. Such a new body is good for physical labor, but does it succumb to the call and downfall of the flesh? We might remember that Turgenev’s statuesque beauty, the cold Madam Odintsov from *Fathers and Children* (1862) whose body was compared to that of a marble statue, was emotionally and physically frigid. She could not

respond to human love with its physical demands laid upon her by Bazarov.¹¹ Indeed, not unlike Madam Odintsov whose surname derives from *odin* (one, lonely, solo), our peasant heroine with the bronze body is depicted by Uspensky as somebody who can survive in the world “on her own” (209). Although Uspensky’s text develops an argument based on the economic independence of this new type of woman, who does not have to rely on men for financial support, there is also a strong hidden subtext based on a woman who can function without a partner and who is not in need of a partner for any sort of physical relationship. Just as the stone-cold Madam Odintsov did not need a male partner for economic support—she was managing her estate with great acuity and proved to be an excellent manager—so the peasant woman shows remarkable entrepreneurial skills which secure her independence and her right to be “*na belom svete odna*” (alone in the whole world, 209):

This woman will never be at a loss—she will do men’s labor if the need emerges. Even when she was a little girl fit to play with dolls she already knew how to perform a number of various tasks: in the morning she played and sang songs, and in the evening she stood in the queue in the place of her father and mother. She collected wood in the forests, she knew how to make hay, she worked as a warden on the railway—in other words, she is knowledgeable of any kind of women’s labor, and she will not be at a loss if fate expects her to do men’s work (209-210).

The “ugliness” of the middle class woman

In contrast with this type of woman from the peasant class, Uspensky develops a story of the misfortunes of women from “the Russian bourgeoisie”, or “the middle class”. In describing the gender differences between men and women in this class, Uspensky makes an aesthetic judgment. If in discussing a new type of woman in the peasant class he spoke of the “beauty of the human type” (208) then, in application to middle class men and women, Uspensky uses the word “*urodstvo*” (ugliness, 210) on the verge of monstrosity. This ugliness is described as “*ogromno*” (enormous, 210), and the reason for this is the concocted differences in the manners and features of men and women:

Let us move now to a different class of people, to the so-called ‘society’ of the middle sort, our so-called Russian

bourgeoisie, and you will see to what degree [...] ugliness is enormous both in men and in women for whom perfection has developed as separate male and female qualities, and to what extent the rough peasant woman, who manages in her one face to consolidate both male and female qualities and specialities, is desired and beautiful (210).

The expression “*v odnom svoem litse*” (in her one face, 210) is interesting in that it refers here not so much to an individual, where ‘*litse*’ can be used to denote a person, but rather to a ‘face’, thus putting emphasis on the physical characteristics of the human face. In this characterization physical features become as important as the manners and occupations which differentiate male and female sexes. And indeed, it is the physical and biological features and characteristics of sexed bodies which are of interest to Uspensky in no lesser sense than the acquired gender characteristics and mannerisms. Uspensky moves his discussion into the field of sexuality and procreation by bringing into his text references to three stories devoted to the problem of the status of women in the contemporary family. These three stories are written by women, and Uspensky makes a special point of reminding his reader that, because the stories are written by women, they contain a special insight into women’s issues. Uspensky maintains that female authorship warrants a special angle in its approach to aspects of a woman’s life—an approach which male writers either avoid or approach with the excesses of Zolaesque naturalism. Uspensky refers here to the three stories published in the journal *Russkaia mysl’* (*Russian Thought*) in 1884 and 1885: “Doshutilas” (“She Joked Too Much”) by A. Alekseeva (A. A. Sorneva), “Magistr i Frosia” (“A Professor and Frosia”) by A. Shabel’skaia and “Moi vdovy” (“My Widows”) by V. Lesnitskaia (V. I. Belenko).¹²

Uspensky avoids giving a direct definition of the problematics of women writers as dealing with matters of sexuality and physiology, and uses euphemisms such as the “hell of the bedroom” (211) to describe the general topic of the three stories: “All such scenes are written by the authors of the named stories not in such a way and not with such an aim as it is done by the Zolaist gentlemen, but quite chastely, open heartedly, cleanly and thus very seriously and touchingly: this is not a juicy ‘strawberry’, but a torment of the human being, a true ‘hell of the bedroom’” (211).

Uspensky's use of terms such as "*klubnichka*" (a little strawberry)—a Russian cultural euphemism for sexuality—not only betrays his shyness but also indicates an important phenomenon in Russian culture; the lack of terminology for designating matters of human sexuality. As was pointed out by I. S. Kon in his study *Sexual Culture in Russia: Strawberry on the Birch* (1997), the Russian language does not have polite, civil words to denote sexual activities or sexual organs.¹³ Instead, it has either medical terms which the scholar identifies as sterile, or rude swear words which are not to be uttered in polite society. This lack of vocabulary to signify the sexual side of human existence is explained by Kon as a result of the fact that sex education and sexual culture in Russia have not become a part of the public or artistic discourse. Uspensky's use of euphemisms such as "*klubnichka*" and "*Zolaizmy*" is indicative of this problem. While Uspensky tries to break the taboo on the discussion of the sexual aspects of human relationships, he at the same time remains a victim of the same taboos and prejudices. He approaches the problem of human sexuality both with the courage to start a discussion and with great caution when it comes to identifying the issues in more direct terms.

The first theme which Uspensky discusses is taken by him from A. Shabel'skaia's story "Magistr i Frosia". This story is devoted to the question of childbirth in a Russian middle class family, and the woman author shows how different the attitude to a born child is between the sexes. Shabel'skaia approaches the topic of unwanted childbirth as one of the major conflicts in a contemporary family. The woman writer problematizes the theme of pregnancy and childbirth as an unavoidable outcome of sexual relationships which is seen as a burden on the contemporary family. Shabel'skaia depicts women's physical suffering in pregnancy and childbirth in great detail, demonstrating the psychological insights into the mechanisms of rejection/acceptance of a newly born child which operate in the mind of a new mother. Her heroine, Frosia, is so exhausted by the torments of childbirth that, as the writer suggests, "in the first minutes after the birth the news of the death of the infant could not have upset her" (211). However, this temporary reaction changes into a healthy acceptance of the child as soon as her newly born child, washed and wrapped, is brought to her and put near her on the bed. This reaction of the mother is contrasted by the attitude towards the child by the father, "Magistr" Petr Ivanovich. Uspensky gives the following quotation from Shabel'skaia's story:

This, this which he feared most of all, had happened. He put his head on his arms and almost gritted his own teeth, and while a victorious midwife busied herself near the little girl, trying to wrap her into a feather blanket, her father was in desperation: he could curse the hour of conception; he did not want the infant and had been sure that fate would be merciful to him and that the child would be born dead. And here, such a terrible disappointment! (211).¹⁴

Uspensky proceeds to retell the plot of Shabel'skaia's story, concentrating on the topic of the new father's rejection of the child. Although Frosia cannot breastfeed the child as she does not have milk, Magistr refuses to hire a wet nurse. This infanticidal act culminates in Magistr's remorse and his final appeal to the doctor to save both the child from death by starvation and his wife who is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. Having accentuated the problematics of the story, Uspensky gives his own interpretation of the conflict as described by Shabel'skaia. He insists that it is not only Magistr that is to blame for the tragedy. While Shabel'skaia makes it clear that it is the learned scholar with the Masters degree who causes the torment in the family because he sees the new child as an obstacle to his career, Uspensky insists that Frosia is equally to blame in this situation. He uses the same term "specialization" to characterize the occupations of Magistr and Frosia: if Magistr's specialization is too narrow and demands from him all-consuming intellectual and emotional effort, then Frosia, too, is narrow in her *spetsial'nost*:

Frosia too is a specialist in that she is only Frosia, and nothing else. If Petr Ivanovich is narrow because he is absorbed by his dissertation and wants nothing else but that the whole academic world said about him: 'Well done, Petr Ivanovich!', then Frosia also is absorbed in being a woman—she needs to be loved, she must not be left alone for long, she has to have a life, and she, Frosia, can't be 'on her own' (212-213).

Significant here is Uspensky's use of the word *odnoi* (on her own) which we have already encountered in relation to peasant women. Uspensky's ideal peasant woman is not afraid of being 'on her own', while Frosia dreads this condition.

Gender roles as they are lived out in the Russian middle class family are described by Uspensky very astutely: "a man has to be

energetic and firm, while the woman has to be as pale ‘as a lily’—these are the specializations in the bourgeois relationship” (213). The perception of a child is also seen as a dividing line between a husband and wife: while the child represents the whole purpose of life for a woman, for a man the child is a threat. Not only will his career suffer, but also, according to Uspensky, the real possibility exists that the exhausted father will lose his job, which will in turn lead to the economic collapse of the family. The woman in the middle class is “*slishkom zhenshchina*” (too much a woman) while a man is “*slishkom muzhchina*” (too much a man, 213): “Everyone is developed too much in the direction of one’s own sex” (231). Uspensky thus introduces two sets of issues in his interpretation of “Magistr and Frosia”: one related to gender roles and the other related to aspects of sexuality. While the family’s economic dependence on the man, and the woman’s lack of education and skills, relate to issues of gender, aspects of sexuality are seen by Uspensky as a phenomenon related specifically to women. He avoids discussing the sexual needs of Magistr, but focuses his attention on Frosia’s need to have male company: she needs “constant attention, constant walks with leaning on the arm, constant talks ‘about everything’” (213).

Childbirth is an apogee of a woman’s life not only because it enables her to perform her gendered role, but also because she is naturally bonded to the child in spite of the physical pain of childbirth. While the man is associated with the world of the intellect, the woman is identified with the world of the body.

This description is followed by Uspensky’s reference to A. Alekseeva’s story “Doshutilas”, which is given as an example of a childless bourgeois family in which love exists for love’s sake in the same manner in which “art is for art’s sake” (214). This sexual bonding which is not sanctified by childbirth is criticized by Uspensky, who characterizes such life as “empty and ugly” (214). In this criticism of sex for sex’s sake Uspensky follows in the footsteps of the peasant Bondarev, whose work he praised in his *ocherk* “Trudami ruk svoikh”. As was mentioned earlier, Bondarev was a sectarian who, in his search for a truthful life, entered the sect of *subbotniki* (judaisers) and for this act of leaving the Russian Orthodox faith he was exiled for life to Minusinsk in the Eniseisk region of Siberia. Bondarev believed in a patriarchal rural lifestyle with childbirth a part of this authentic, pious and honest way of living. Uspensky clearly condemns sex as an entertainment—his moral stance here is similar to that of Leo Tolstoy who was also influenced

by Bondarev's work and deeds. In addition, Tolstoy was impressed by Uspensky's *ocherk* "Trudami ruk svoikh" in which Uspensky disseminates Bondarev's ideas.¹⁵

What Tolstoy's hero Pozdnyshhev articulates in "The Kreutzer Sonata" (1889) on the topic of the excessive sexuality of the overfed and bored upper classes, Uspensky criticizes in an oblique way in his *ocherk* "Mechtaniia". But, unlike Tolstoy's hero who approaches the issue of human sexuality and relationships between the sexes with a Tolstoyan quest for openness and authenticity,¹⁶ Uspensky's function within the narrative of the *ocherk* makes no differentiation between the author and the narrator. Characterized by Dmitry Merezhkovsky as an ascetically shy person,¹⁷ he puts across his message in an oblique way through euphemisms, through plots taken from the stories of women writers, and from the work of the sectarian peasant, rather than as his own invention. Before "The Kreutzer Sonata", when the debate over the *polovoi vopros* (question of sex and sexuality) had yet to be brought into the public debate on sexual morality, Gleb Uspensky was showing tremendous courage. In following in the footsteps of women writers, he was using women as authorities not only on women's issues (*zhenskii vopros*) but also on issues of sexuality in general. He isolates and separates the question of sexuality from the problematics blurred by the aegis of women's questions, while at the same time paradoxically conflating the issue of sexuality with that of women's sexuality.

The peasant model: a bourgeois woman transformed

In contrast to the two plots of marriage with their sexual bonding and sharp gender differentiations, Uspensky offers the plot of Lesnitskaia's story "My Widows". He describes this story as "a work remarkable in the originality of ideas" (214). The plot of this story centers on the transformation that takes place in a woman from the educated classes. She witnesses the two lifestyles of women from two different classes—a widow from the upper class and a peasant woman whom she observes during her frequent visits to the Russian countryside. During a prolonged stay in a village she gains knowledge and a new insight into the life of peasant women. She learns to appreciate that in "these dirty peasant women there is something that is worth feeling envious about" (214). Her attitude towards peasant women bares traces of a form of quasi-Orientalism: both the educated woman heroine and Uspensky, following in her footsteps, regard these women as an Other, and the description of "*griaznye krest'ianki*"

(unwashed peasant women, 214) is indicative of an Orientalist approach to the peasant as an alien subaltern species, an idealized noble savage who possesses knowledge which has been closed to the educated classes due to their artificial upbringing and limited education. These social laws of beliefs and behavior are identified by Uspensky as iron laws (*“zheleznye zakony”*, 213), which form the basis of the strict gender differentiations in the middle class milieu. The heroine of Lesnitskaia’s story in Uspensky’s retelling is struck by the “independence of the peasant woman, by this beauty of the justice of such an existence, by the moral fulfillment, which allows her to understand life broader, calmer and lighter” (214). In contrast to the admired peasant women, the heroine’s female friend from the upper class ends up, once widowed, in a situation of total dependence on her relatives. She would have completely perished (*“dolzhna by propast”*, 214) if it were not for the chance of a second marriage. Uspensky’s vocabulary in describing this remarriage is significant as it betrays his identification of the woman from the upper classes with sexuality: the widow’s family will find her a new husband and “will put her into a new bedroom for the continuation of an especially female existence” (215). Marriage of a society woman is equated with sexual activity, while the society woman herself is an embodiment of carnality.

Uspensky continues to use the word ‘type’ in his description of both peasant women and society females. This usage is significant, as he is looking not only for a new social type but also for a new gender species, one which has undergone not only a psychological, but also a physical metamorphosis. The meaning he attributes to the word ‘type’ is evident in his description of the heroine of “Moi vdovy”:

Soon the heroine of the story who acts as a narrator becomes a widow. For her, as for a woman of the educated society, the future is the same as that of the depicted high society lady; as a woman she will be taken care of, they will find a place for her. It is easier for her to follow this path: she has children, they have to be looked after [...] but she is a woman [...] a weak creature [...] But she had already seen women who were not weak, she already understood the beauty of this type, and she deliberately prefers this type; she is already suffocating in the high society, where it is obligatory ‘to serve’ the women; she experiences the flow of energy which gives her the right to be self-ruling, independent, not enslaved by attention, or despotism, and she decides

to live as the peasant widows, these women-men (*zhenshchiny-muzhchiny*) (215).

The quasi-Orientalist aspect of Uspensky's fantasies about this new "type" of woman modeled on peasant women manifests itself strongly in his *ocherk* "Mechtaniia" ("Daydreams"). The 'women-men' are fantasized as a cross-gender species endowed with the physical features indicative of a special "type" of humanity. These women do not have to live with men or share bedrooms with them and thus do not have to engage in sexual activities. While the gender issues are on the surface of Uspensky's readings of the three stories devoted to the woman's question, his readings at the same time betray a certain anxiety around the question of women's sexuality. Significantly, women's sexuality is the only type of sexuality which is discussed in his text. Sexuality in this way becomes conflated with women, and women's bodies become symbols of sexuality. Uspensky's search for a model for a new kind of female body leads him to the *zhenshchiny-muzhchiny*, the peasant women. The *ocherk*'s title "Mechtaniia" is extremely indicative of Uspensky's concealed fantasy: to create a new type of woman, a type which will have very little of the feminine physique in it.

Whether such a type will procreate remains to be seen—the answer to this is to be found in Uspensky's stories which do not take the form of the *ocherki* and where his fantasies are expressed in visions drawn from his imagination. In the meantime, the ending of "Mechtaniia" betrays a quest for a religious and probably aescetic ideal of life. He ends his *ocherk* by inviting his readers "to draw courage not only to think and dream on the topic of 'how to live piously', but to try in real life to piously live" (215).

Notes

1. G. I. Uspenskii, G.I. 1956. "Mechtaniia" in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 192-218.
2. Rozanov. V. V. 1990. *Liudi lunnogo sveta*. Moscow: Druzhba narodov: 98.
3. See more on Bondarev in Chapter 8.
4. This translation, as with all the translations in Chapters 1-9, is mine.
5. See Laura Engelstein, 1992. *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
6. See Sinani B. N. 1939. "Dnevnik doktora Sinani" in *Gleb Uspenskii. Letopisi*. A. S. Glinka-Volzskii and G. A. Leman (eds). Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi literaturnyi muzei: 4: 515-598.
7. For a discussion of Ludmer's paper see Engelstein 1992: 125-126.
8. See Beatrice Farnsworth. 1986. "The Litigious Daughter-in-Law: Family Relations in Rural Russia in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century" in *Slavic Review*: 45: 1: 49-64.
9. See G. Uspenskii. 1988. "Vlast' zemli" in *Sochineniia*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 2: 91-190.
10. In her study of the rights of peasant women within the peasant community, Rose Glickman demonstrates gender asymmetry, noting that women's signatures in documents of village assembly meetings should not be seen as evidence of "women's real participation or influence in the commune" (Glickman 329).
11. On a discussion of the statuesque nature of Odintsov's body see Irene Masing-Delic. 1992. *Abolishing Death: Salvation Myth in Russian Twentieth Century Literature*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
12. Uspensky here makes a mistake in dates. "Doshutilas" appeared in *Russkaia mysl'* in 1883, nn 7 and 8; "Magistr i Frosia" in *Russkaia mysl'* in 1883, nn 8 and 9; "Moi vdovy" in *Russkaia mysl'* in 1884, n 3. For a bibliography of women writers and feminist discourse, see Irina Iukina 2003. *Istoriia zhenshchin Rossii 1850-e – 1920-ye gody: materialy k bibliografii*. St Petersburg: Aletia. On Sorneeva see Charlotte Rosenthal. 1996. "Carving out a Career: Women Prose Writers 1885-1917, the Biographical Background" in Rosalind March (ed.). *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP: 129-140 and Adel Marie Barker and Jehanne Gheith (eds). 2002. *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
13. See I. S. Kon. 1997. *Seksual'naia kul'tura v Rossii: klubnichka na berezke*. Moscow: OGI.
14. Uspensky quotes from *Russkaia mysl'*. 1883: 9: 111.
15. See Muratova, K. D. Primechaniia to 'Trudami ruk svoikh' in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 166-67, 399-403.
16. See Peter Ulf Moller. 1988. *Postlude to The Kreutzer Sonata: Tolstoj and the Debate on Sexual Morality in Russian Literature in the 1890s*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.
17. See Dmitry Merezhkovsky. 1973. "O prichinakh upadka i o novykh tekhnikiakh sovremennoi russkoi literatury" in *Izbrannye stat'i*. Munich: Fink: 249-312.

“In a Woman’s Position”: truncated sexuality in young women and teenage boys

A close investigation of Uspensky’s texts reveals his determination to liberate women not only from the social restrictions of their milieu (*sreda*), but also from the determinism of the sexualized and gendered female body.¹ It was this concern that motivated his dealings with all aspects of female sexuality: prostitution, child abuse, incest and other issues that affect women and society in general. In the women of the peasantry he saw creatures of strength and ability who were able to conceive and give birth, but who nevertheless possessed a muted femininity and sexuality. Unlike their bourgeois counterparts, they could manage without a man. In Uspensky’s view, because peasant men and women were less sexually promiscuous and, above all, less preoccupied with sexual matters than their urban counterparts, they were as a result freer human beings. It is logical therefore that he presented peasant women in his stories on gender issues as vehicles to develop his ideas on a less sexed body that would enable women to pursue other activities. By depicting peasant women as self-sufficient economically and able to live on their own, he was presenting an alternative to the state of marriage in which women were obliged to exchange sexual favors for economic support. Economic independence could enable a woman to live alone, which in turn could make a celibate life possible.

Bleeding men, hysterical women, and the temptation of incest

Long before Uspensky, the Ancients had connected the desexualized female body with greater freedom. Commentators on the story of Iphis in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* have pointed out that, in the change of Iphis from a girl to a boy, the addition of masculine

secondary sexual characteristics (darker complexion, short hair, physical vigor) are integral to the sex change. The loss of female genitalia is also strongly implied in the later medieval retellings of this story. All versions of Ovid's story suggest that the masculine woman is a sexually inactive woman, even if she has a prior history of womanly behavior (Davidson 1997: 59-74).

The solution that Uspensky offers to the problem of women's sexuality can be found in his exploration of androgyny in those texts in which he writes about characters whose behavior crosses gender boundaries. In the two stories analyzed here—"Na bab'em polozhenii" ("In a Woman's Position", 1886) and "Varvara" (1881)—Uspensky depicts two characters of ambiguous sexuality: a young woman of extraordinary physical strength in one story, and, in the other, a teenage boy with feminine characteristics. He also deals with illicit sexual behavior—incest, adultery and pre-marital sex—within the framework of the crossing of gender boundaries. In depicting these parallel transgressions—gender-crossing and illicit sex—Uspensky attempted to reconfigure a new type of female body, shaped along the lines of an ascetic, martyred and inescapably Christ-like figure whose sexuality is concealed and sublimated. One would expect a *narodnik* writer to promote a program of emancipation for women including a liberated sexual morality (Engel 2002:113-130); but it was not sexual liberty that Uspensky wanted for women; rather his ideal woman had control over her body and her sexuality, just as a man (supposedly) did. Physical self-control was perceived as a masculine prerogative in the author's culture.²

In "Na bab'em polozhenii" Uspensky recounts a "moving story"³ that he heard from a certain Ivan Nikolaevich, the main protagonist of this tale. The author made the acquaintance of Ivan when he witnessed him saving the life of a drunkard lying unconscious by the side of the road. After performing an almost miraculous resuscitation, Ivan explained to the author that his readiness to help the stranger was the result of his sentimental and compassionate nature—feminine characteristics that he believed he had developed while fulfilling a woman's role at home for a period of time in his youth. He goes on to explain that, when he was eleven years of age, his mother died and he took on all the housework and cooking as well as the care of his three younger siblings. Describing his activities as "life in a woman's position" (*na bab'em polozhenii zhit'*, 47), Uspensky's peasant brings elements of gender and sexual ambiguity into the description of his adolescent past:



Illustration from Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh, 1957. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 7, from a painting by N. I. Kostrov

And so I began women's activities: cooking, looking after the cattle, looking after a child, making clothes—everything with me started to happen as with a woman. From here originates my compassionate heart. At times I really had to struggle with my one-year-old brother—give him a pacifier, tell him a story, sing a song—everything had to be done! And I had to wash him and dress him, and comb his hair, and feed him, and give him something to drink, and do the laundry. And in addition, there were chickens and cattle to look after—everything depended on me. And here I learned of women's sad destiny, I learned it only too well! And in this way I single-handedly managed the household in the position of a woman up to the age of fourteen (48).

For the adolescent boy, being in a woman's position included not only gender-defined activities but also certain acts that are linked to the biological functioning of a woman's body. There is biological ambiguity in the state described above as "*vse u menia stalo proiskhodit' po-bab'emu*" (48), as well as in the act of feeding a 12-month-old child. The storyteller's choice of words in describing his "woman's position" reinforces this hint of ambiguity. When explaining how, in "this way", he ran the household like a woman until he was fourteen, he uses the awkward expression "*i takim rodom*" (48), which has definite biological overtones, the word *rod* (kind, manner) being homonymous for "giving birth" (perpetuating humankind). This mixture of acquired and physiological sexual and gender characteristics is further reinforced by the narrator's description of his relationship with his new stepmother after his father remarries.

Arriving with three children of her own, the young widow Agrafena divides the burden of "motherhood" between herself and the teenage boy in a symmetrical fashion—she cares for her children and he cares for his siblings. Young Ivan's relationship with Agrafena becomes close from the outset, founded as it is on their shared responsibilities and apparent psychological similarities: "And I had such a good feeling for a woman's lot and suffered in my heart, that from the first day Agrafena and I became, not like a brother and sister, but as two sisters—truly as real sisters; we had the same womanly worries, duties and thoughts" (49). The two "sisters" even develop their own gender-coded language, a jargon closed to outsiders. The extreme closeness of these two family members does not elude the jealous gaze of those excluded from the "sisterly" bliss. When the boy reaches the age of sixteen, rumors regarding the physical closeness between him and Agrafena spread though the village. Their innocent kisses begin to be perceived by Ivan's father as far from being so, which is not surprising since Ivan, by his own description, had achieved sexual maturity by that time: "And I was in my sixteenth year and I was in the full form of a man" (49). On discovering that his father plans to poison him out of jealousy and outrage at this (perceived) unnatural behavior, the boy turns to the local priest for help. The cleric receives Ivan's account with suspicion: "He was not able to understand this, that is, about my being in a woman's position, my womanly thoughts, my womanly friendship—these things he could not comprehend!" (50).

The suspicion of incest and adultery culminates in a community trial, following the priest's suggestion that a public act of confession on the cross and the Bible would resolve the conflict. While the boy, shaking and trembling under the threatening gaze of his father, manages to kiss the cross and repeat after the priest the required incantation without stuttering, Agrafena fails the test. At this critical moment the boy mimics his father, turning a threatening and accusing gaze on Agrafena. Under pressure from the insinuating and aggressive gaze of both Ivan and his father, Agrafena breaks into hysterics. In my interpretation of this scene, it appears that the boy passes the gender test to which he was subjected, so proving himself a male and thus above unnatural desires, while Agrafena's behavior remains psychologically and biologically determined; she is shown to be inescapably a woman and as such also capable—at least in the eyes of those present at the trial—of incestuous desire. Ivan describes her behavior as “*Zatriaslas'! zalilas'! zavyla'!*” (shaking, screaming and howling like a beast, 51) so reducing her to the level of an animal without self-control.⁴ The homonym “*zalilas*” is highly emblematic since it can denote both screaming and uterine bleeding. This scene thus functions as an act of initiation of the boy into manhood; it is accomplished when he attacks Agrafena, beating her until she bleeds, then marking himself with the blood of his ritual victim. The alleged sinner, Agrafena, is left bowed down and bleeding from her injuries, but the word “*zalilas*” suggests that she is also bleeding from her uterus. Her female weakness manifests itself in her inability to control either her emotions or her body. Her incestuous feelings towards her stepson—itself a sign of an inferior psyche—is thus betrayed by her female body functions. Agrafena, therefore, can be seen as a metaphor for what was considered to be the animal constitution of women, in great need of the redeeming and straightening influence of the superior male spirit. And, in the end, Agrafena is deemed to be fortunate to experience an ennobling influence. When asked by the author where Agrafena is now, the narrator-protagonist explains that he has taken her in to live with him in her old age. Her love for him has remained unchanged; and the folkloric expressions of gratitude that she uses when addressing him are phallic, according to the symbolism elaborated on by psychoanalysis: “*Zolotoi ty moi! [...] solnyshko krasnoe!*” (My golden one! My shining sun! 52). We may interpret this sun-imagery as conveying the notion that rays of support and care are poured upon her old body by Ivan, who has forgiven her attempt of long ago to extract other manifestations of love from him.⁵

The story ends with Ivan Nikolaevich saying: “So, that’s the kind of sin that occurred!” This statement, left ambiguous by Uspensky, may be referring to the incestuous and adulterous love in the story that at least was potentially there, but it is also possible to see this as a reference to his own attack on the innocent Agrafena during the trial. The relationship between a son and his stepmother, although not consanguineous, is prohibited in both the book of Leviticus and the Byzantine Orthodox canon. The boy Ivan is asked to swear on the Bible, where incest and adultery are listed with other prohibited actions in Leviticus Chapter 18 and, in Chapter 20, said to be punishable by death under Jewish law: “And the man that lieth with his father’s wife hath uncovered his father’s nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev.20: 11).⁶ Both the Russian Code of Iaroslav and canon law also deemed the sexual relationship between a man and his stepmother as incestuous; the former regarding it as incest with a mother, the latter as incest with a half-sister. A penance of up to ten years’ exclusion from communion could be imposed.⁷

It is significant that the young Ivan runs away from home after Agrafena’s failure to prove their innocence. In doing so, he imposes upon himself a punishment compatible with the code of conduct taken from both Biblical and patristic sources. Agrafena, on the other hand, whose description at the trial evokes pagan imagery, belongs to the archaic and primitive domain of the pre-Christian. Although both are covered in blood at the trial, it is Agrafena’s blood alone that covers them. Her impurity is expressed through the image of her bleeding, as suggested by the word “*zalilas*” with its suggestion of an unstoppable outpouring of blood that is condemned as shameful by a culture which deems a person’s capacity for self-control to be the ultimate achievement of culture.⁸ Uspensky’s comments on the outcome of the trial are ambiguous: perhaps Ivan’s violence towards Agrafena at the trial caused his feelings of guilt at a later time—he may have considered the possibility that she was innocent of any improper desires, even though her behavior was that of a seemingly guilty woman. More likely, however, his behavior at the trial indicates his desire to put right a potentially dangerous domestic situation and to identify with his role as a man in control of his sexuality.

The fall of a virgin maiden and the Domostroi script

While in “Na bab'em polozhenii” Uspensky explores gender boundaries as they apply to a feminized male protagonist endangered by female sexuality, in “Varvara” a female character stretches the barriers of gender in the direction of masculinity—until, of course, her sexuality betrays her. A young servant-woman of Herculean stature, strength and prowess is depicted as losing all her power when she yields to seduction and her own weakness—in short, to her all too womanly nature hidden beneath her masculine appearance. With the loss of her virginity this young woman, while still physically strong, suffers the loss of her semi-magical power over her surroundings—she becomes just an ordinary woman.

Varvara's might is apparently inherited from her father, as are her other masculine features. Not only is she tall and strong, but her capabilities and skills also defy gender boundaries; she is a worker who labors proverbially “*za semerykh*” (for seven people, 280),⁹ but she is also capable of the tenderness needed to soothe a crying child. Uspensky frames Varvara's physique in the tradition of the Russian *bogatyr*, but her female sex brings a volatility to her make-up that eventually leads to her downfall.¹⁰ Rather paradoxically, Varvara's strength, stature, excellent health and physical energy are presented by Uspensky as incorporeal (she is said to be “*bestelesna*,” 280), and in her company one is said to feel the presence of a ethereal creature (280) whose spirit activates the physical body. Thus Uspensky theorizes Varvara as a Cartesian creature whose spirit is responsible for activating the organic matter of her body.

Descartes is viewed as the philosopher who gave scientific legitimacy to the classical dualism in which the body and the mind are held to be completely separate, the body being merely a machine operated by the superior mind/spirit. Descartes denied any metaphysical component to the body itself, since he regarded nature as soulless. This classical dualism is fully expressed in Uspensky's story when Varvara allows herself to be seduced by her master, the rich peasant Demian Ilych; she immediately loses the spiritual energy or force that had provided her body with the heroic strength and agility it had when she did not understand “this” (283), i.e. carnal knowledge. But her fate is drastically changed when she accepts her master's invitation “to go fishing”—a colloquialism for a sexual encounter in the open air. While in “Na bab'em polozhenii” it is the jealous husband who plots revenge, in “Varvara” it is the jealous wife who arranges the downfall of the heroine, and most cunningly so. While

the trial and punishment scene of the first tale invokes both Old Testament law and the Orthodox canon, the punishment in this tale of rivalry between mistress and servant-woman is based on another authoritative source: the sixteenth-century book of normative conduct in the family household, the *Domostroi*. Varvara's mistress—and the wife of her seducer—humiliates her by ensuring that she fails in one of her most important routine duties—the baking of bread. Three times in succession Varvara's bread comes out of the oven hard and virtually inedible. As a result, the workers' brigade begins to criticize her and her popularity within the community dwindles to nothing. The bread baking is now taken over by the mistress herself, although this was seen as a task normally done by hired labor. Not surprisingly, she bakes wonderfully risen loaves, since while she gave Varvara old yeast she herself uses fresh yeast, without giving any indication that she knows of her husband's infidelity. Seeing her work sabotaged, Varvara decides to leave her job with the brigade and heads for the city. There, according to rumors, she becomes either a prostitute or a kept woman.

The bread plot functions on two levels in this story. On the symbolic level it is linked to the folklore motif whereby supernatural forces are involved when matter, such as dough, is made to rise. On this level, the fall of the bread dough, as the yeast fails to expand, is linked to the notion of the archetypal fall from innocence, as part of the dualistic struggle between the powers of light and darkness. We have learned from Claude Levi-Strauss that paradoxes inherent in myths and symbols often hide what culture and society cannot resolve (Levi-Strauss 1963). Implicit in the idea that special female gifts are needed to make dough rise is a tension between good and evil powers.¹¹ Varvara's virginity is the positive power behind her ability to perform "miracles," such as consistently making dough that rises and never flops, but, in the case of her mistress, that same gift can be ascribed to the dark forces of sorcery. Uspensky, of course, has the mistress trick Varvara so that the competition between the two women ends with the victory of the "virtuous" (by patriarchal standards) mistress of the house and the downfall of the deflowered maiden. With the loss of her virginity and thus her virtue, Varvara loses her ability to overcome trickery and evil; perhaps as her name indicates, she now proves to be linked to the barbaric world of darkness in the pagan concepts of Russian peasant culture.

Leaving behind the symbolic aspects and turning instead to the level of peasant morals and ethics, it may be stated that the bread plot operates as a Christian code, and is linked to the household and economics of peasant life. It is on this level that the relationship between the mistress and the servant enters into a patriarchal script. There are two chapters in the *Domostroi*¹² which specifically relate to the duties of the mistress of the house. These duties include the mastery of the art of bread making and baking, and contain instructions on passing this knowledge on to her workers. Chapter 33, “How a husband must educate his wife so that she can [...] teach the servants”, explains in great detail the complexities of dough making for various types of breads. In line with the hierarchical structure of the *Domostroi*, Chapter 37 deals with “how the mistress of a household should look after her servants”, which includes her obligation “to punish, or to teach a lesson” (173) the servant who spoils something while cooking. What the wife does to Varvara clearly goes beyond lessons in cooking, but may still be defined by the *Domostroi* word “*prouchit*” (to teach a lesson, 173)—an act that implies didactic elements in an imaginatively composed punishment. It is fitting that Varvara is made to fail at bread making, as this highly symbolic task is connected to the patriarchal structure of society and the deepest mythopoetic substrata of peasant folk beliefs.¹³ Uspensky appears to be saying that Varvara failed to internalize proper patriarchal values and that she was therefore justly punished.

In addition to the dichotomies imposed by the simultaneous operation of folk beliefs and Christian codes, Uspensky is caught in a paradox of his own making. In the writer’s views on the body politics, Varvara is a powerful “creature” (280) while still a maiden and endowed with the masculine features inherited from her father, thus conforming to the values of patriarchy. Once she allows her body to function as a sexed female body, however, she becomes an ordinary woman, so losing her status as an admired “incorporeal being” (280). As an ordinary woman she can be tricked by female wiles and, in Uspensky’s view, rightly so.

A one-sided androgyny

In his best-known story, “Vypriamila” (discussed further in Chapter 3) incorporeal spirituality in a woman is equated with masculinity. Uspensky presents the statue of Venus de Milo as a quasi-female ideal, on the basis of its “*muzhitskie*” (coarse, male, 361) facial features. In Uspensky’s anthropology, the head and face are

construed as the seats of the spirit, while the body is linked to the chthonian sphere.¹⁴ Both the anonymous sculptor from Melos and the ‘First Sculptor’, who molded Adam, carved their creatures in his own male image. Varvara, the powerful virgin, is depicted as possessing both a certain spirit and a plain face that is “haphazardly molded” (277). Her body is conflated with femininity while her spirit, lost along with her virginity, is a marker of masculinity. In Uspensky’s androcentric model, only men and man-like maidens can conquer carnality.

Uspensky’s stories attempted to prove that, as in Varvara’s case, it was a combination of circumstances, tradition and biology that caused women to succumb to such ignoble occupations as prostitution and that, given greater awareness, this danger could be avoided. The prevailing nineteenth century views on prostitution as a form of women’s sexuality fell into two categories: one, the school of thought that explained prostitution as the result of economic and social determinism; and two, the belief that prostitution was a result of biological determinism. Uspensky’s views on women’s sexuality are most vividly seen in his reaction to the writings of Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) on prostitution. Uspensky was familiar with Lombrosian “criminal anthropology,” one of the most dominant anthropological models of his time. He was particularly interested in Lombroso’s theory on the congenital nature of degeneration as it applied to female prostitutes. The biological and deterministic nature of Lombroso’s theory was ideologically and emotionally offensive to Uspensky. When he addressed the issue of female prostitution in his own sketches and stories, he demonstrated compassion towards the women concerned.

According to V. Korolenko (1961: 332-4), Uspensky visited brothels while staying in small provincial towns, conversing at length with the women working there, and making financial donations to assist young women who were supporting their families through the sex trade. Uspensky’s dismay at the Lombrosian approach to prostitution reached its apogee when he attended a public lecture by a female doctor who had utilized the statistical methods of criminal anthropology in order to study Russian prostitutes (Korolenko 1961). The lecture, given in St. Petersburg in 1887, presented the results of a study in which prostitutes’ facial bones were measured. The researcher’s conclusion was that, on average, the jaws of prostitutes stood out one and a half millimeters further than those of “normal” women. Uspensky was particularly offended by the fact that the

doctor making these conclusions was a woman; her lack of solidarity and sisterhood were as offensive to him as the biologically deterministic nature of the theories that underpinned her research. The issue is complicated, however, by the fact that Uspensky found women's sexuality problematic in other ways. In the stories examined here we can see that he believed all women were, as sexual beings, in bondage to their biology and it was from this predicament that Uspensky wanted to liberate them.

Some commentators have viewed Uspensky's contempt for biological explanations of prostitution simply as an example of the ideological clash between populism and deterministic phylogenetics (the belief in inherited, congenital and biologically determined types of body and psyche).¹⁵ However, this perception of Uspensky as a *narodnik*-materialist (Bialyi 1990: 491-536) who believed that changes in the economic and social environment would bring about changes in the mentality of humankind overlooks the religious and ascetic undertones of his interest in women's sexuality. Further, his focus on the role and status of both peasant women and women in the sex trade has been interpreted without exception as his championing of the political and economic liberation of women. In a purely political approach to his work, the dilemma of the story "Na bab'em polozhenii," for example, has been perceived sociologically as the dilemma of a woman's "position", rather than psychologically as the dilemma of a woman's "condition"; this has obscured the anthropological aspects of the work.¹⁶ Similarly, his writing about abortion, infanticide and the unhappiness attending the birth of unwanted children has been seen only as an exposé of social ills, not as an indication of his interest in sexuality per se.

On a superficial level, Uspensky seems to demonstrate that gender on its own does not determine a person's physical, spiritual and emotional make-up. But this notion operates only at the level of plot in his stories. Each of his attempts to blur gender-boundaries as a solution to biological gender determinism paradoxically fails to demonstrate the validity of his solutions, or suggests at least that androgyny works only for women. Uspensky's very attempts to deconstruct biological gender characteristics end up reinforcing essentialist views of gender. Despite his opposition to Lombrosian anthropology, Uspensky falls into the trap of biological determinism in as much that his women characters are biologically determined and can avoid their biological fate only if they became more like men.

Uspensky's work also reveals another kind of determinism, one inherent in cultural beliefs. While he inverted paradigmatic dualisms in the hope of escaping their rigid and binding content, he only succeeded in reinforcing the split: that is, by assigning women men's features as a way out of biological bondage, he left them to function only at the level of an incorporeal, asexual, non-procreative body which ultimately does not exist in nature. His way of avoiding contemporary anthropological theories of biological determinism was to abandon the body altogether. His culture had only one such example of a paradoxical incorporeal body—the body of Christ on the cross, with its perpetually veiled groin.

As described by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (1994), the androgynous body of God does not propagate, and while Adam was made in the likeness of God he could not procreate either. Uspensky's gender indeterminate characters lose their state of innocence, as did Adam, by ceasing to be asexually androgynous – but, of course, Adam still remains on a higher level than the temptress Eve in a world that is inevitably sexual. Her task is therefore to at least approximate the male part of humanity. That such notions indeed dominated Uspensky's cultural models is confirmed by the real life models of womanhood that inspired him. One such model was the populist revolutionary Vera Figner (1852–1942), whom he used as the prototype for Venera Miloskaia (Venus de Milo) in his "Vypriamila," and whom he described as an ascetic maiden with short-cropped hair—indeed as a woman who had the sense to behave and look like a man. When she was imprisoned for her revolutionary activities, Uspensky sent her a note in which he stated that he was extremely envious of her situation.¹⁷ This was misunderstood by Uspensky's contemporaries to mean that he wanted to make a personal contribution to the revolutionary cause in the form of self-sacrificial political activities. However, when read within the context of the works discussed here, his message can be interpreted as a manifestation of the fact that he saw his theories on how to overcome gender determination confirmed, and as a mimetic desire to transcend the "all too human" in an act of martyrdom that castigated the body.¹⁸ Figner was confined in the Schlisselburg fortress for twenty years. Uspensky's contemporary, the fellow writer V. Veresaev, commented that Uspensky "worshipped [Vera] with almost prayerful devotion" (1946: 406-08). As much as the cause of her struggle, Schlisselburg's dark monastic architecture may well have contributed to Uspensky's exultant wish to serve time in one of its solitary cells.

Figner took Uspensky's words as an expression of his perception of her as a "*tsel'nogo, nerazdvoennogo cheloveka*" (holistic, undivided human being).¹⁹ While Figner used the emancipatory rhetoric of revolutionary language, she at the same time alluded to the very essence of Uspensky's psychological and anthropological dilemma: he was fixated on the idea of an undivided human being whose differentiation into one sex or the other had not taken place. Shortly before Uspensky was placed in the solitary ward of a psychiatric institution, he had visions of being visited by a nun, Margarita, whom he described as "*zhenshchina—chistoe sushchestvo*" (a woman—a pure creature). Strangely superimposed on her face in these visions were the faces of victims of the revolutionary cause. While he did not specify the names of the suffering victims, we can guess that the faces of his favorite maidens with short-cropped hair, like Vera Figner and Vera Zasulich, could well have been blended with the ascetic face of the nun.²⁰ Neither the *narodniks* alone, nor the Russian peasant life with all its exoticism, were able to supply Uspensky with the pure and yet hybrid creatures for which he longed. His paradoxical desire had its final realization in the fluid symbiosis of the metamorphic images generated within his hallucinations.

Uspensky's anxiety about his own body, even before mental illness took full possession of his mind, shows a strong somatophobic current and a conflation of the body with femininity. In 1891, when preparing for an operation to stop hemorrhoidal bleeding that was causing significant blood loss and exhaustion, he describes the operation as his chance to be "resurrected from the dead" (641). He also writes that the sensation of anal bleeding was like blood coming out of his brain, leaving his body cold and his mind weak, and he expressed the hope that the operation would improve blood flow to his brain and thus make it work better. These medically absurd views establish, for the purposes of this discussion, highly symptomatic taxonomies: in the desired redirection of blood flow from the bowel to the head, Uspensky clearly affirms the priority of brain over lower body. This type of change, encoded as an upward movement, he then equates with "resurrection" or immortality. This change is achieved by abandoning the state of bleeding, a state which may be viewed as the equivalent to women's menstruation. The shift of emphasis towards the head works here as a metaphor for the abandonment of the procreating animal/menstruating female body. In addition, by displacing his site of discharge, he fails to take up the opportunity of becoming a hybrid being through the "neutral" medium of

hermaphrodite bleeding.²¹ The longing for purity proves to be stronger than the creative urge to configure creatures that combine characteristics of both genders. It would seem that Uspensky's experiments at crossing gender boundaries encountered a stumbling block when it came to the interests of his own male body.

Notes

1. In his novella “‘Pinzhak’ i chort” (“A ‘Jacket’ and the Devil”, 1889) Uspensky uses the term “zoologicheskii” (zoological) to describe sexual relationships between peasant men and women. *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*, Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 265-301.
2. Elizabeth Grosz in her important work *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* stresses that European culture puts special value on the categories of firmness, tightness and solidity, which are markers of masculine control, as opposed to feminine softness, submissiveness and lack of self-control (Grosz 1994).
3. See G. I. Uspenskii, “Na bab'em polozhenii” in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 7: 45-52, esp. 45.
4. On the gender specific categorization of *klikushestvo* in Russia at the turn of the century see Worobec 2001.
5. On the masculine nature of the sun gods in Russian pagan pantheon see Rybakov 1988. On the psychoanalytic interpretation of the phallic nature of the sun's rays in the mythopoetic structures of folklore see Sigmund Freud. 1949. “Psychoanalytic Notes Upon An Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia” in Alix and James Strachey (eds and trans.). *Collected Papers*. London: 3: 390-472. Feminist philosopher Helene Cixous views the sun as a masculine symbol in the chart of juxtapositions where “moon” is a feminine symbol (Cixous: 2000: 578).
6. Quoted from Francoise Heritier. 1999. *Two Sisters and Their Mother: The Anthropology of Incest* (trans. Jeanine Herman). NY: Zone Books: 65.
7. I use these canonical sources as reflecting the “sin” side of sexual transgressions in peasant belief systems, rather than using what is formulated as incest in Russian criminal law of Uspensky's time, which deals with these matters in a less religious vein. On incest prohibitions in Old Russia see Eve Levin. 1989. *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900-1700*. Ithaca: Cornell UP. On incest in Russian jurisdiction in the 1880s see Engelstein 1992.
8. On fluidity and the unstoppable flooding of menstrual blood as a marker of women's essence see Grosz 1994.
9. “Varvara” in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 5: 277-296.
10. The female *bogatyr*s of the *byliny*, who match men in strength until they marry them and then sink into the feminine role thereafter, are relevant here.
11. In Russian literature the dual structure of the rising bread motif was explored in Beliaev's well-known science-fiction piece “Vechnyi khleb” (“Eternal bread”, 1958). An ever-growing dough is invented, which first saves the world from starvation, but then threatens to flood the world and kill both men and animals. See Aleksandr Beliaev, “Vechnyi khleb” in *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 4: 241-318.
12. See Kolesov, V. V. (ed.). 1994. *Domostroi*. St. Petersburg: Literaturnye pamiatniki.

13. Rybakov describes the baking of large loaves and *pirogi* as part of the rituals related to the wellbeing and prosperity of the old Russian agricultural communities (1988: 467).
14. On the face/head and body dichotomy in the history of art from a comparative anthropological perspective see Otto Rank. 1989. *Art and Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development* (trans. Charles Francis Atkinson). NY: W. Norton & Co.
15. Here Uspensky refers to Tarnovskaia. See P.N. Tarnovskaia. 1889. *Étude anthropométrique sur les prostituées et les voleuses*. Paris, s.n.
16. Dykhanova, for instance, does not problematize women's issues as separate from peasant topics in Uspensky's work. See Dykhanova. 1988.
17. For these issues, see his story "Vozmutitel'nyi sluchai v moei zhizni" ("An Exasperating Event in My Life," 1884) in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 56-80.
18. See Veresaev 1946: 456-458.
19. Here Uspensky follows the well-known phenomenon of nineteenth-century male revolutionaries who believed in the saintliness of women revolutionaries. See on this discussion Wood 1997: 21-26.
20. See Veresaev 1946: 456.
21. This much-loathed condition was ascribed to Jewish men who, in European belief, were viewed as being of indeterminate gender. See Gilman. 1993. I use the Deleuzian terminology of "becomings": that is, becoming-woman, becoming-animal, as a manifestation of the desire to dissolve into elements, becoming imperceptible. See Deleuze and Guattari 1984.

How ‘straight’ is the Venus de Milo? Shaping gender in stone sculpture

According to Nikita Prutskov, Gleb Uspensky’s story “Vypriamila” (“She Straightened Out”, 1885) about the statue of Venus de Milo is one of his most “programmatically” works (Prutskov 107). In this story, Uspensky propounds the democratic value of art as part of a wider debate on the role of art in society, so extending his democratic ideals from the sphere of real life to the domain of creativity.¹ This work shows that it was not only in real life that healthy, strong, versatile, and self-supporting Russian peasant women constituted Uspensky’s economic and aesthetic ideal; when it came to the representation of the ideal woman in art the same democratic principles were applied. The “*muzhitskie*” (peasant-like, 361) features which the hero discovered in the statue of Venus de Milo make her appearance democratically appealing; thus art and aesthetics are both seen to serve the ideals of justice (Prutskov 1958: 108-9). The unusual topic of this story was thereby employed to support the main themes of Uspensky’s writing.

The sociological (mis)readings of the story

Despite the confused and confusing nature of Uspensky’s narration, which has been explained by various factors including lack of time (Merezhkovsky 1973) and his mental illness (Korolenko 1961), “Vypriamila” is consistent in its attempt to reconcile principles of social justice and aesthetics. The ideological problematics of the story can be summarised as follows: the first person narrator, the modest school teacher Tiapushkin, explains the “straightening” (356, 358, 359, 360, 362) and enlightening qualities of the statue of Venus de Milo as a result of his experience of the spiritually elevating effects of the sculpture (I deliberately emphasise the loaded meaning of the word “straight” in English to stress the ambiguous sexuality of the

statue of the ancient goddess in the polysemous image employed by Uspensk, since one of the purposes of this reading of “Vypriamila” is to demonstrate the writer’s interest in gender boundaries of human and divine bodies. This pun is possible in English only, as in Russian *priamoi* cannot be used to denote heterosexuality).

The narrator of this story maintains that not only are refined gentlemen such as Ivan Turgenev, Afanasy Fet and Heinrich Heine capable of perceiving beauty in art; less well-born people, like Tiapushkin, can also experience refined feelings when brought into contact with such masterpieces as the statue. But if the statue has aesthetic appeal to aristocratic admirers of art, for Tiapushkin it carries an additional and more significant meaning. The statue is more than a woman; it is first of all a *chelovek*, a person free of the seductive bodily qualities of the numerous statues of Venus found in the Louvre. When viewed not as a woman but as a *chelovek*, the statue’s “straightening” qualities help the hero in his life’s work dedicated to the difficult role of a Russian populist in the 1880s. Thus the Venus de Milo and “the principles of [seventeen] eighty-nine” are reconciled and rendered axiomatic in their “*nesomnennost’*” (341). Ethics and aesthetics are thus united in a harmonious synthesis by an insistent narrator.

Despite the importance of “Vypriamila” in the history of Russian aesthetic thought (Veresaev 1946: 406), Charles Moser fails to mention the story in his monograph *Esthetics as Nightmare*. A revival of interest in Uspensky among the *derevenshchiki* in the 1970s and 1980s in the Soviet Union was due to Uspensky’s rural rather than aesthetic muse, and the place of the “*derevenskie* baby” in the problematics identified by the village prose writers as “Muzhiki i baby” overshadowed the place of the ancient goddess (Dykanova 1988: 6). For the few who spent time on “Vypriamila”, the biographical fact of Uspensky’s visit to the Louvre in 1872 and 1875 was sufficient explanation for the choice of plot. For these commentators the meaning of the story was clear—it showed that, in addition to its aesthetic value, art can also have an ethical, utilitarian value, and the *chlovecheskii* appeal of the statue with her “*muzhitskie*” features was viewed as proof of Uspensky’s democratic ideals both in life and in art (Bialyi 1990: 532-3).

Through an investigation of gender boundaries of the female body in this story, however, there is a different interpretation. Rather than equating the *chlovecheskie* qualities of the female statue with *obshchchelovecheskie* ideals, the statue’s “*muzhitskie*” features can

be seen as an attempt to replace feminine attributes with masculine features. My reading exposes the exclusionary nature of the female and male components of the statue, an interpretation that links Uspensky's interest in the female body to the taxonomic anthropological theories of the time, while also explaining his formerly unnoticed interest in creating "new bodies", free from biological necessity (among Uspensky's contemporaries Mikhailovsky spoke of the "kinship of his artistic ascetism with asceticism in real life" (1961: 290) and Merezhkovsky similarly spoke of the "ascetic shame of beauty" (1973: 18)).



Illustration from Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh, 1957. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 7, from a painting by N. I. Kostrov

The fallibility of women in the flesh

Uspensky's hero Tiapushkin has a number of visions before he is "straightened" by his recollections of the statue of Venus de Milo, which he had observed some twelve years before in the Louvre. In these visions, there is a succession of female images, only two of which have been previously noticed by commentators (Mikhailovsky 1961: 305-7; Bialyi 1990: 532). The first vision is a recollection of a healthy peasant woman in harmonious alliance with nature. She is one and the same as the sunny day, with its blue sky, its landscape, and the earth whose fruit she harvests. The figure of the working woman, with her exposed "*golye nogi*" (naked legs, 345), is described as caught in an act of "life" rather than work, as she "lives" (345) with nature. Her body and soul are in harmony not only with each other but also with nature, or so it appears, "*kak ia dumal*" (as I thought, 345) to the recollecting hero as he is awoken in his cold room by this image and the preceding physical sensations of a "*goriachaia kaplia*" (hot drop, 344) and "*radostnoe plamia*" (joyful flame, 344) that fill his body. But if this impersonated pagan goddess with her naked legs appealed to the body of the hero, the second image evokes a different mood. In contrast to the sun and light of the village goddess, and to the libidinal sensations of "hot drops" in his body, a dark, grey background appears, and in this murky atmosphere emerges the monastic figure of a young maiden. This figure is also said to be in harmony with the surrounding grey atmosphere and the air of woefulness which she epitomises. This harmony, according to the hero's explanation, is achieved by the maiden's quest for self-sacrifice. This vision has an equally comforting ("*uspokaivaiushshii*", 345) effect on Tiapushkin. In both, he perceives elements of equilibrium and harmony within the inner selves of the images and between them and their external surroundings.

The comforting effect of these two visions increases the hero's concentration. He begins to recall his trip to Europe twelve years earlier. The narration moves into a description of the real, rather than the dreamed, world as the chapter describes, like a travelogue, the tourist attractions which Paris and London had to offer a Russian visitor in the middle of the last century. But in addition to Versailles and the Houses of Parliament, the gastronomic delicacies and the architectural monuments, it is women that particularly attract the attention of the Russian traveller. His interest in women is more symptomatic (for the purpose of this investigation) than the interest which some earlier Russian writers had demonstrated. Goncharov in

Fregate Pallas (1858) mused on comparisons between the complexions of British women vis-a-vis their Russian counterparts, and Dostoevsky in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1863) depicted abused children and bruised little girls. Both Goncharov and Dostoevsky commented on the beauty of British women, with Dostoevsky, one of the first Russian travellers to raise the question of child abuse and child prostitution, stressing the contrast between the beauty of some prostitutes and the moral degradation of their situation. While following this literary tradition of interest in foreign prostitutes, Uspensky polemicized with the views of his predecessors by showing that, in the enlightened and democratic European capitals, the life of prostitutes is less harsh than that of their Russian counterparts. The travelling Uspensky went on to focus his attention not only on prostitutes, but also on the foetuses of unborn and aborted babies, and dead female bodies in the Paris morgues. These images of women had not received attention from previous commentators of this story, who failed to see their place in the series of female images preceding that of Venus de Milo. Even the most sensitive readers of “Vypriamila”, such as Mikhailovsky, limited the images of women to the visions of the earthly *baba* and the monastic maiden. The latter was viewed in the light of Uspensky’s sympathies with the young revolutionary Vera Figner, thus reading into the ascetic maiden a female counterpart of Rakhmetov in the story (Veresaev 1946: 406-8).

From dead marble to the ideal in stone

Prostitutes are the only living women which interest Uspensky’s hero on the streets of London and Paris. These living Venuses receive sympathetic appraisal by the democratic writer. English and French prostitutes receive from Tiapushkin the same approving epithet as that bestowed on Venus de Milo—they too are “*cheloveki*”: “Cocottes, the damsels of the boulevards, also seemed to me to be not only prostitutes but also human beings” (347). As an ardent supporter of human rights, Uspensky was familiar with the debates on the role of prostitutes in the family life of European middle and upper classes and on the issues of women’s rights to which these debates were linked. His sympathies towards the prostitutes had an additional polemical significance since Uspensky was familiar with the views on prostitutes espoused by the Lombrosian school of criminal anthropology.

But it would be premature to conclude that Uspensky was completely free from the prejudices of his time. On the contrary, this investigation aims to demonstrate that both on the level of the text continuum and in the subtext Uspensky displays signs of cultural schizophrenia (Baty 1995: 152) in his treatment of female bodies in this text in the same way as he does in the stories analysed in the previous chapter. Thus, in the sequence of visions that I have described, there is an earthly woman who is first mistakenly, as the hero admits (“*kak ia dumal*” 345), taken by him to be an example of harmony between body and soul. Then there is a virginal monastic maiden, followed by the enlightened prostitutes who, although engaged in “*eti dela*” (these matters, 349), retain their “*chelovecheskoe dostoinstvo*” (human dignity, 349). They are deemed to be enlightened in that they read books, their intellectualism thus counteracting their fleshliness. In Uspensky’s anxious quest to establish a balance between body and soul, between flesh and intellect, he counters representations of women’s bodies with non-bodily pursuits and attributes. In this I perceive a trend to negate the female body.

This trend is reinforced in the description of the female corpse in the Paris morgue. As the narrator stresses, there are “masses” of corpses exhibited daily in the morgue for identification by relatives. However, the narrator chooses one woman’s corpse for detailed description: “One of the young cocottes had the soles of her feet, which were turned towards the public, covered by calluses—the poor thing had obviously worked so hard during her life!” (354). The feet of the working woman links her to the Russian working peasant woman whose *golye nogi* (naked legs) were as photographically exposed by the narrator as were the *podoshvy nog* (soles of her feet) of the dead body of the anonymous French woman. Uspensky’s interest in feet and legs (both *nogi* in Russian) carries a polyvalent meaning in the story, one of them of a taxonomic nature. Not only were the chins of prostitutes, as measured by Lombrosian investigators, a sign of inborn criminality, but so too were the feet. A year after Uspensky attended the lecture on the measurement of prostitutes, Lombroso argued at the 1886 International Congress on Criminal Anthropology that prostitutes’ feet have a distinctive shape (Gould 1981: 129). Lombroso based his conclusions on statistical data which he had accumulated from anthropometric surveys of the heads and bodies of dead criminals and prostitutes. According to Lombroso, prostitutes’ features had more atavistic anomalies than the features of hardened

criminals, and the conclusion was drawn that it is more difficult to reform prostitutes than the most hardened of male criminals. The deterministic inevitability of Lombroso's theories resonated in contemporary Russian literature, with Tolstoy polemicizing with Lombroso's views on the criminality of prostitutes in the figure of Katiusha Maslova in *Resurrection* (1889). Chernyshevsky's attempt to solve the problem of prostitution by making it normal, for physiological reasons, for women to behave like cocottes, as in the example of the Parisian woman Julie in *What is to Be Done?* (1863; Paperno 1988), was clearly unacceptable to Uspensky with his ascetic shyness of beauty. Chernyshevsky's radical position proposing free love rendered prostitution superfluous. The solution which Uspensky offered was even more radical: to de-sex and regender women's bodies, to make them non-functional in the sphere of sexuality and procreation.

In my reading of the text, the anonymous woman's corpse is de-feminized by the sign of the callus on her foot, which becomes a trope for the masculine type of labour which she had to perform. The anonymous laborer with the manly foot, as with the prostitutes who read books, is regendered on the basis of an inversion of the binary opposition of masculine and feminine. The motive for this masculinization is suggested when the narration moves into the sphere of the procreatory functions of the woman's body. The Parisian catacombs are full of "tens of thousands" of unborn and aborted babies:

I would like to visit famous slums, but the tourist guide book described them in such a way that it was simply breathtaking: can you imagine, the guide book counted the numbers of aborted human bodies that float in the stinking waters (do forgive me for this unnatural picture) in the tens of thousands? (354).

The picture of the masculinized woman's corpse and the description of the "*nerodivshiesia*" (unborn, 355) "*vykidyshi*" (aborted babies, 354) inhabiting the non-uterine waters, directly precedes the description of the hero's first encounter with the statue of Venus de Milo.² Disturbed by his experience with corpses and unborn babies, the hero decides to undergo the therapeutic and healing effect of art on his battered body ("*oblipshee drian'iu telo*" 355) and depressed soul. The last time the hero experienced the state of joy was during his two encounters with the female images in his trance-like state: the earthly

woman and the monastic virginal maiden. From the moment the hero sees the statue he experiences a similar “great joy” (355). The statue makes the hero’s body come to life (“*zastavilo khrustnust*”, “*ozhivaiushchee telo*” 356), metaphorically shaking off its state of sleep before it “straightened” him (“*vypriamilo menia*” 356). Paradoxically, this “stone creature” (356), this “*kamennaia zagadka*” (stone riddle, 356), possesses a “*zhivotvornaia taina*” (life-creating mystery, 357) and has an invigorating effect on the hero. In this reversal of the Pygmalion myth (Masing-Delic 1994: 51-81), the stone goddess breathes life into a human being devoid of vitality (356), who compares himself with the “*skomkannaia perchatka*” (355). Once the stone goddess breathes life into the creased glove of the soul of Tiapushkin, his glove-like human soul strengthens and acquires the “straight” shape of a “human hand” (356, 358, 360, 362, 363). Although the metaphor of the soul as a shapeless glove, acquiring the shape of a hand through the breath of life, carries phallic connotations, the sexuality of the stone goddess is not as “straight” as her “straightening” effect on Tiapushkin.

The ideal woman is like a man in stone

The libidinal effect the goddess has on Tiapushkin does not cause her to belong to the opposite sex. On the contrary, Venus is phallisized. The author re-sexes the Greek statue through the masculinization of her features. As with her predecessors, the process is twofold: the stone goddess is first desexed and her femininity denied, it is then ‘repaired’ and restored to a new wholeness through the assignation of masculine features.

To desexualize the Greek goddess of love, whose very name in Greek, *Aphrodite*, meant sex and whose Latin name entered the Russian language as the medical term for sexually transmitted diseases (*venericheskie zabolevaniia*), was for Uspensky a Herculean task, aimed at dismantling one of the major cultural beliefs in European societies. To tackle a task of such magnitude the author decided to attack the very core of this belief: the representation which this ideal of feminine beauty received in the most influential of all languages of love, the language of poetry. The narrator purportedly read Fet’s poem *Venera Miloskaia* in 1855 or 1856 in *Sovremennik*. By juxtaposing all the lust-evoking and sexually explicit epithets of Venus de Milo in Fet’s poem with the narrator’s own arguably physically unresponsive reaction to the statue, the narrator rejects the bodily (“*po chasti tela*” 359) qualities of the goddess of love. He

insists that this particular statue has nothing specifically feminine (“*zhenstvennost*” 361) about it. The narrator hastens to admit that numerous other statues of Venus in the corridors of the museum indeed have features of explicit “*zhenskie prelesti*”, not dissimilar to those seen in the real Venuses on the streets of Paris, but the statue of Venus de Milo has nothing representative of the “*krasota zhenskogo tela*” (361). In order to prove that this Venus is not like the others, Uspensky interprets her features as masculine. In the binary world of the writer, the Other, that which is contrary to the seductive and the bodily, can only be masculine: “Look, I repeat, at this nose, at this forehead, at these I’m ashamed to say almost man-like curls of hairs in the corners of the forehead” (361). In the supposedly non-taxonomic world of an opponent of Lombrosian theories, this description stands out as a phrenological script. Not only are the features assigned masculine qualities, but the very choice of features is highly taxonomic: nose, forehead, sides of the forehead are features which combine phallic connotations and masculinity through intellectualism. Russian literature explored the phallicism of the nose and the phrenological intellectualism of the forehead in the figures of Nikolai Gogol’s *kollezhskii assessor* Kovalev and in Turgenev’s Bazarov. In this quasi-scientific and literary blend of masculinizing the face or head, the rest of the woman’s body did not have to undergo transformation. Metonymy completed the metamorphosis. One more aspect of the statue’s body made Uspensky’s transvestizing task easy to complete: a sculptor from Melos thoughtfully draped the body of the statue with a cloth (361). The only uncovered part of the statue’s body was the feet, a detail exposed by the narrator. This time “*piatka kakaia-nibud*” (the old soles of the feet), “*siiaiushchaia neuviadaemoi krasotoi*” (shining through imperishable beauty) are presented as a quotation from Fet’s poem. In fact, the poem *Venera Miloskaia* (1856) contains no mention of *piatka*. Uspensky illicitly, under cover of a falsified quotation, introduces this detail of the woman’s body which he then develops into a polyvalent topos in his story.³

The real statue of Venus de Milo has two bare toes protruding from under her wrap (Smith 1991: 303). In representations of the bodies of holy women such as the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene in Christian art, the toes are the only body part which can remain uncovered. This canon is strictly adhered to in the depiction of the Virgin Mary both in Western and Eastern Orthodox Christian icons and religious paintings. To have the bare feet exposed in icons was a privilege of Christ and holy men. Feet of holy women are rarely

exposed, and then only partially, most of the foot being covered by a garb.⁴ Three-dimensional statues of the Virgin Mother in Western Christianity also have only their feet showing from under their clothing. When Uspensky makes Fet have his Venus de Milo expose a fragment of bare foot (*piatka*), he does not, on my reading of the text, introduce an erotic image, but rather neutralises the bodily aspect through association with a divine body. Uspensky undoubtedly studied representations of women's bodies in art. In "Nakonets — nashli vinovatogo!" he describes three paintings depicting scenes from Roman patrician life. In each of them naked women's bodies are regarded as representations of pagan culture, and their appeal to contemporary middle class tastes is discussed. Although the narrator stresses that the bodies are unclothed, there are no descriptions of nudity. The only fragment which is described is a naked toe which a Roman woman dips into the water of a swimming pool (44).

In one of its functions the polyvalent image of the foot serves to render a visual image of a woman's body as pious and acceptable. It neutralizes the erotic imagery in the representation of the statue of Venus de Milo in poetry. Through the association with Christ's body, the fragment of a bare foot continues the process of regendering the statue. Through this trope Uspensky facilitates both the conversion of the statue from pagan to Christian as well as from feminine to masculine. The first is synchronous with the succession of images of the pagan *baba* and the monastic maiden in the narrator's dream. The second is in line with the regendering of the anonymous woman's corpse through assigning her foot with a callus. All are allegories of the re-formation of women's bodies into masculine spirituality.

The fragmentation of the female body through the foot topos in Uspensky's story shows that in his desire to oppose the treatment of women's bodies in Lombrosian anthropology, the author creates a body which is free from biological necessity. His methods, however, were heavily indebted to those of the anatomists and anthropologists. While the anatomists dissected women's bodies and turned them into museum exhibits by freezing their flesh in formalin,⁵ Uspensky too freezes women's limbs by turning them into stone:

Like them, he chooses feet, covers them with a mineralized callus, turns them into the dead matter of rock, and thus takes care of voyeurs in the morgues and museums. When confronted by a body turned into stone and covered by a garb with only the feet exposed, visitors experience a beatific sensation akin to a visit to a church or cathedral (Miles 35).

Uspensky-the-sculptor, having created his “stone riddle”, passes responsibility for his creation to the “real” artist from the Greek island. The narrator insists that the anonymous sculptor had a higher purpose (“*vyssshaia tsel*” 362) in mind when he created the statue as a combination of “*chelovecheskie*” features, with both “*muzhskuiu krasotu i zhenskuiu*” and “without thinking about the gender” (362). This statue has a “straightening” effect on the human soul, as such art opens up “*risuet v vashem voobrazhenii beskonechnye perspektivy chelovecheskogo sovershenstvovaniia, chelovecheskoi budushchnosti*” (limitless possibilities of human improvement, of the human future, 362) in one’s imagination.

As three-dimensional statues of neither Christ nor the Virgin Mother are permitted in orthodox Christianity (Kirillov), Uspensky has to further change the image into an acceptable form. This permitted form is the icon. The final Christianization of the statue is achieved through its formerly unnoticed iconization. In the final paragraph of the story Tiapushkin purchases a photograph of the statue to put on his wall and thus secure the continuous “straightening” effect of his recollected vision. The Venus de Milo is not even named as such in the process of the hero’s decision to immortalize the effect of the experienced vision. In the phrase “*kupliu sebe fotografiu, poveshu ee na stene*” (I will buy a photograph of it and put it on the wall, 364), “*ee*” is ambiguous, and relates both to the image and to the iconic photograph (*statuii, ikonu, or fotografiu*). Roland Barthes speaks of the shifting ambiguity between ‘alive’ and ‘dead’ in photography, as even a photograph of a corpse can testify to two things: that the flesh is dead and yet that it is also alive. The photograph also contributes to the confusion of the concepts of “the real” and “the live”: “By attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive, but by shifting this reality to the past, the photograph suggests that it is already dead” (Barthes 1981: 79). The desired aim of the deconstruction of the woman’s body has been achieved: as flesh it is turned into a corpse and then, as a Christianized “*sushchestvo*”, it is immortalized. The photograph of the re-gendered god(dess) can be read as an icon, while a desexed body remains a photograph which, like a necrologue, attests its death. The latter symbol brings together images of the photographically exposed corpse in the morgue and the fetuses in the catacombs. This link between the statue and the corpse is made not only through the ambiguity of photography’s shifting

realms of the “dead and alive” and the “real and alive”, but also through one of the most productive myths in Russian culture. As Jakobson says, it is in the form of statues that corpses come to life in Russian literature, always in patriarchal images such as the Bronze Horseman, incorporating the apocalyptic imagery of an anti-Christ. The latter’s misleading similarity to Christ makes him a quasi-Christ, as *Antikhris*t and *Lzhechristos* are synonymous in Russian. Uspensky thus creates a Christ-like visual image.

From a crippled body in stone to a Christ-like figure

Uspensky has thus created his antecedent in stone, paving the way to this creation of dead, desexed and re-gendered women’s bodies. In his baptizing and reforming crusade he created a new body which does not produce human waste in the form of fetuses and embryos. It is for this reason that he had to assign the statue quasi-androgynous features. In his reforming endeavor he makes intentional “mistakes” by silencing a number of well-known facts related to the gender of statues. He ignores the established view of Venus de Milo as a matronly version of the Hellenistic Aphrodite created alongside the rise of middle class women to social prominence (Smith 1991: 81). He silences the fact that in the Louvre there was a sculptured representation of androgyny in the form of the famous statue of Hermaphrodite; he also ignores the existence of a statue of Venus Barbatus from Cyprus (Matich 1979: 167). There was, therefore, no need for Uspensky to re-create the woman’s body as sexually ambiguous—such a form already existed.

The reason for Uspensky’s reshaping of women’s bodies in flesh and stone lies in the fact that Uspensky, in spite of the claim of his narrator, did not attempt to create a balanced, “democratic” (Prutskov 1988: 108) body of a statue with equal representation of female and male features; rather, he was inspired by a futuristic fantasy of a ‘new body’. The current (“*tepereshnii*” 362) human being is imperfect (“*nesovershenen*” 362), and Uspensky creates in stone a model for a perfect, supposedly sexless “*chelovek*” of the future. His allegedly sexless ideal of “the future” (362) is achieved through the representation of women’s bodies in the process of transformation into a male morphology.⁶

To understand the complicated representation of the woman’s body as a manifestation of the body politics within the structure of tensions between flesh and spirit, asceticism and procreation, paganism and Christianity, masculine and feminine, it is necessary to

view the story in the cultural and historical context of its time. What was a perfect androgyne for Hellenic art and Hellenistic culture clearly was not what a perfect “*zagadochnoe*” “*sushchestvo*” was for the Russian culture of Uspensky’s time. In the macro-culture of Russian Christianity only the naked body of Christ could be exposed and gazed on with admiration in all the unclothed nudity of an agonizing and admittedly ecstatic masculinity (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1990: 140). Naked bodies of men and women in statues were strictly forbidden by the Russian Orthodox Church, which held statues to be pagan and sinful. Even the most enlightened of Russian minds, when exposed to Ancient Greek art in European museums, confessed to having experienced the sensuous impact of the “*mramornye i bronzovye tela*” (marble and bronze bodies, 57) of statues. Chaadaev, for one, in his immensely influential *Third and Fourth Philosophical Letters*, admitted that the “nude bodies” (56, 57, 68, 69) of Ancient Greek statues made him blush during his visit to the museums in European cities. To the depraved art of the Age of Antiquity, Chaadaev juxtaposed the spiritually enlightening art of the Hebrews and of subsequent Christian culture. The division between the body and the soul was kept intact, and the line between Christian and pagan seemed uncrossable. In the symbolic language of culture, the body was feminine, the spirit, masculine (Butler 1990).

Within this macroculture there emerged a microculture of art in which the blurring of borders between the binary gender categories was perceived as both possible and desirable. In this microculture Russian artists were forming their own myth of “creating life” (Paperno and Delaney Grossman), in which the androgynous was assigned post-apocalyptic importance. In the writings of Vladimir Soloviev androgyny was viewed as the ultimate end of humankind, and the perfection of the human race was to be achieved by perfect unity of male and female (Matich 1979). But although this unity was perceived as a harmonious reunification of the heavenly and the earthly, the male part was stubbornly associated with the soul and the sphere of the spiritual, while the female part was attached to the body and the flesh. Moreover, in this microculture, at least two powerful voices—those of Tolstoy and Fedorov—were calling for the necessary end of procreation, which led to the anathemizing of the female body and its reproductive components (Mondry 1988).

In the subculture of reshaping human bodies the lonely voice of Rozanov spoke of the substitution of bisexuality, or “*oboiudopolost*” (Rozanov 8), with true androgyny of the “*tretii pol*” (third

sex, 29) as it was understood in Jewish mysticism and antiquity, through asexuality in the quasi-androgynizing search of his Russian contemporaries. In *Liudi lunnogo sveta* (1912) Rozanov describes the ascetic desexualization of perfect bisexual androgyny by Soloviev in the context of Christian mainstream and sectarian suppression of the body. For Rozanov it was quite clear that contempt for the body in Russian culture was an expression of a phobia against women's bodies. This phobia receives a powerful interpretation in Naiman's study explicitly titled "Historectomies", in which the author extends the chronological boundaries of the study of androgyny into twentieth century Russian Soviet culture (Naiman 1993: 255-76). Naiman shows that the feminine component of the futuristic body was paradoxically acceptable only on condition of ultimate castration. In a given subculture in search of the new body, even the latest eugenical aspirations of Russian writers had to resort to the culturally specific measures of "remaking" female bodies in the quest for a better humankind.

In Uspensky's model of creating a new body, the masculinization which the statue undergoes and which puts it "on the same line" (341) with the "*nesomnennye*" (ethical principles, 341), is based on the metaphor of baptism and conversion. When wrapped around the "*chresla*" (groins), described as "*kaleka bezrukaia*" (an armless invalid, 360), assigned with the man's head and made to represent the principles of social equality, the "*sushchestvo*" (creature) stands for an icon of justice brought about by self-sacrifice and suffering. Aesthetic and ethical principles are reconciled not in a statue of a Venus Barbatus, but in a Christ-like statue with broken limbs and short cropped hair.⁷

By working within the allegorical schema of holy and sinful bodies, projected into the social domain of female virginity and prostitution, Uspensky demonstrates the cultural and historical prejudices of his time (Chadwick shows that, in the 1860s, the images of women prostitutes in painting began to increase: "In the age obsessed with virginity and prostitution, themes of the prostitute and the fallen woman found a wide audience" (1992: 176)). Uspensky's intention to counter contemporary scientific theories on women's sexuality ended in conformity to these very theories. Within his futuristic universe the woman's body is not needed in its present form, as it is not a "*tepereshnii chelovecheskii tip*" (current human type, 363) destined to live in an 'endless' tomorrow. In this "*beskonechno svetloe budushchee*" (unlimited bright future, 363) a new form of life

will dominate, one which will be created by the straightening powers of the new god(dess). ‘Straightened’ mankind will find a new way to create new bodies, without producing biological uterine waste.

“Vypriamila” and the art of sculpture is not Uspensky’s only attempt to create a new form of life. In his short story “Po povodu odnoi kartinki” (“On Account of One Painting”, 1884) he turns to the art of painting to accomplish his re-gendering mission. In this story an adolescent girl on canvas is chosen as suitable material for Uspensky’s trans-gender endeavour. As a counter to the taxonomic arguments that a “woman’s brain is small” (242), Uspensky draws a picture of a girl with a pile of books under her arm on her way to attend classes. But this *obyknovennai* girl has rather unusual features: “purely feminine, girlish features on her face” imbued with or penetrated with (“*proniknuty*”) the presence of “boyish, clear thought” (242). The result of this realistic fusion, or interflow (“*slitie*” 242) of girlish and boyish features in “one face and one figure”, leads to a transformation into a “a newly born and luminous image of humankind” (243). Uspensky’s lexis suggests that such an ‘image’ was not born biologically, as it was not “*rodilsia*”, but “*narodilsia*”, the word denoting birth from an uncertain source. The penetrating brush of the creator of this image on canvas is unmistakably identical to the metaphor of the “straightened” crease.

Uspensky chose the world of dreams and the domain of art for conveying his regendering fantasies. He thus became involved in a complicated relationship with women’s bodies: he is both creator and created. He establishes an exchange of visual energy between himself and his object, akin to a ‘two-way’ flow of inner energy between a person and a religious object.⁸ A representation of the object returns the energy to the eye of the observer, and is “bonded to the soul and remains in memory” (Miles 1985: 7). The peculiar title “Vypriamila” (sometimes given as “Vypriamila!”) implies an action directed onto an object by a third person of feminine gender. The present reading of Uspensky’s story shows that the action is directed by a masculine subject onto feminine objects which, when ‘improved’ to perfection, return the “straightening” effect onto the master-creator. The problem is that by the time the improved object possesses its “straightening” powers, it is no longer “she”—neither physically nor grammatically. In fact, the object does not even stay alive; the ending —*a* becomes as disposable as the exclamation mark at the end of the title.

Notes

1. Prutskov speaks of the social content of the image of the statue, and stresses that it evokes "*obshchestvennye mysli i chuvstva*" (social consciousness, thoughts and feeling). He insists on the following sociological reading of the statue: "*V traktovke obraza Venery Milosskoi u Gleba Uspenskogo est' cho to ot muzhitskogo demokratizma*" (In Gleb Uspensky's interpretation of the statue of Venus de Milo there is something from peasant democracy, Prutskov 1988: 108).
2. Roman Jakobson showed the link between the corpse and the statue in Russian literary culture in his much-quoted essay "Statua v poeticheskoi mifologii Pushkina" (1987).
3. Uspensky's obsession with feet is open to a psychoanalytic interpretation of foot fetishism as phallicization of women. Freud showed that feet, both in the perception of female and male hysterics, are taken to be a substitute for the penis (Freud 1949: 13-178). Karl Abraham understood the piercing of Oedipus' feet as an act of symbolic castration. (Abraham 1922: 71-72).
4. In the visual images of the Virgin Mary on icons the ends of the toes are exposed but very rarely and never as explicitly as the feet of Christ and other holy men. Christ's bare feet were always exposed in detail, often put on a pedestal to be admired in the pre-crucifixion stages and then to be lamented when covered with streams of blood. See the following icons: "Pecherskaia Bogomater'", "Nikita i Anastasiia", 16th century; "Blagoveshchenie", 17th century; "Uspenie Bogomateri", 15th century (Onasch 1961: 119, 127, 140).
5. Gould (1985: 292) describes, among the exhibits on the shelves of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, a bound foot and a lower leg of a Chinese woman, preserved in formalin by Broca.
6. It is interesting that when Dostoevsky described in a letter to Peterson (1878) the way in which he imagined new bodies as a result of Fedorov's ideas about new humankind, he stressed the likeness of those "*innye tela*" (different sorts of bodies, 13) to the body of Christ. Thus, when imagining new bodies, which were understood not as allegorical, but as real bodies after the real resurrection, juxtaposed to "*tepereshnie tela*" (our current bodies, 13), Dostoevsky does not mention the body of the Virgin Mother, but only the holy male body of Christ (Dostoevsky: 1988: 13-14).
7. Uspensky's modelling of the statue into a Christ-like figure by the process of masculinization does not exclude interpretations of Christ's visual (and written) representations as a "phallic mother" (Ash).
8. In a study devoted to the interpretation of religious visual images in Christian art, Miles (1985: 7) describes the psychological and metaphysical impact of the visual image on an observing subject. According to a popular belief inspired by fathers of the Church, such as St. Augustine, a "two-way street" is established between the observer and the object, involving the exchange of energy which first passes from the observer into the object, and is then returned "to the eye and is bonded to the soul and retained in the memory."

“A Good Russian Type”: in search of a new masculinity

In the same year that “Vypriamila” was written, Uspensky wrote “Khoroshii russkii tip” (“A Good Russian Type”, 1885), a short piece in which he elucidates his on-going concern with the need for a new positive type of Russian man.¹

While Uspensky's stories and *ocherki* examined in the previous chapters demonstrate his preoccupation with issues of female gender and sexuality, his *ocherk* “Khoroshii russkii tip” reflects his ideas on the moral and physical status of his contemporary male population, which he dubs “*nasha muzhskaja chast*” (our male part, 257, 258). Uspensky's ideas on the “good Russian type” of male confirm the findings of our previous readings on his views on gender and sexuality which privilege chaste and celibate behavior: his ideal “male type” is modelled on the Russian ascetic peasant saint Stephan Permsky whose life was a story of self-sacrifice and active struggle for the betterment of the poor. Rather than stressing the examples of martyrdom in the life of the peasant saint, however, Uspensky highlights the moral dimensions of the saint's life and the amount of sheer physical energy which he put into the struggle against *kulaks*, landlords and other oppressors of the poor and uneducated peasantry. Questions of masculinity and maleness are resolved in this piece through Uspensky's discovery of a role model in the life of this hard working, truth seeking, community-engaged, albeit ascetic and asexual, peasant male.

Changes in peasant masculinities

As has been pointed out in other scholarly studies, masculinity exists as a construct that functions as part of the dual model of gender, and is based on the oppositional femininity-masculinity. According to Barbara Evans Clements, “values defining European masculinity have asserted the innate superiority of the male to the female.” (Clements 2002: 1-14).

As a historical construct Russian masculinity has features in common with the Christian European types of masculinity, as well as the culturally specific elements of its own. Russian masculinity was certainly shaped by attributes common to European ideals of manliness, such as the blended warrior-citizen of Greece and Rome, the Judeo-Christian patriarch, and the pagan warrior from the Old Slav culture. These ideals co-existed with the humbling influence of the Christian church, as well as with the passive ideal of the crucified Christ. The masculine ideal of the nineteenth century was defined by man's ability to fulfill his functions as a moral citizen, an achiever in the workplace, and a provider for the family. In this last function his masculinity was formed by his relationship with women and with his family. This is how Barbara Evans Clements describes the forging of masculinity at the end of the nineteenth century:

The growing significance of women, or at least of wives and daughters, to men's sense of achievement may explain, in part, the arrival of a 'crisis of masculinity' toward the end of the nineteenth century [...] Feminism arose to challenge patriarchal power, with increasing success [...] A sense of newly constructed opportunities and female challenges to male prerogatives brought forth profound doubts about the masculinity of middle-class men (2002: 9).

As a chronicler of the social and economic changes in his contemporary society, Uspensky reflected on the effects of the advancement of capitalism not only on the economic, but also on the moral conditions of the peasants and their middle class urban counterparts. His concern with matters of gendered lifestyles and behavior were related to the economic problems confronting most of his heroes in the difficult time of new economic policies by which every man and woman from the lower classes had to become more proactive, enterprising and street smart in order to make a living. At the same time, he was preoccupied with the moral effects of these new types of behavior. Not only did he want to see Russian women undergo a successful change within the new economic reality in order to preserve their moral integrity, but he also wanted to see men adhering to higher ethical standards. This concern expressed itself in Uspensky's anxiety over a new type of sexual promiscuity emerging in both sexes. If chaste maidens formed his ideal of the new femininity, then his aspirations for the new type of masculinity were balanced by ideals of self-restraint and subdued sexuality.

The story “Khoroshii russkii tip” is structured around the description of two types of masculinity as described by different narrators: one offered by an educated and emancipated old woman, the second given by Uspensky as an afterthought to the woman’s arguments. The first type of ideal masculinity suggested by the society woman is based on the premise that “maleness” and masculinity are shaped by an integral blend of physical build and appearance, behavior, thoughts and emotions, all forming a set of characteristics that create a man who is worthy of the physical love and admiration of women. This type does not exist in isolation, but is part of the dynamics of male-female relations. The existence of this ideal man requires and determines the existence of the equally ideal female with whom he can form a unit that contributes to the functioning of society and which secures high moral values and spiritual ideals. This type of male is said to no longer exist in a Russian society deprived of high moral values. Opposing this ideal is the contemporary middle and upper class city man, highly sexed and therefore amoral, with petty thoughts and selfish behavior. This type forms an integral part of the dynamics in the relationship with his equally shallow, highly sexed and egotistical female counterpart. The masculinity of this depraved contemporary male type is equated with his sexuality and is depicted as devoid of any form of spiritual ideals. This type represents Otherness in opposition to the cherished type and can be seen as an inverted model of the ideal. While ideal masculinity and maleness in its self-controlled form are revered, the uncontrolled combination of the same qualities is reviled.

In contrast to the image of maleness/masculinity that the woman constructs, Uspensky comes up with his own type—one made not from real flesh and blood but born out of Uspensky’s hagiographic reading. Uspensky’s model is a counter to middle and high class society’s ideal of masculinity and maleness—a peasant saint devoid of maleness altogether since the biological dimensions of his life are paid no attention. His disembodied masculinity is interpreted by Uspensky as symptomatic of his courageous and heroic struggle against the oppressors of peasants. He is both above and beyond regular masculinities, representing a new type of quasi-Christian masculinity which transcends boundaries of gender and sexuality.

There are three narrators in Uspensky’s story: a peasant traveller, the educated woman and Uspensky himself. They hold a conversation in a third class train compartment in an otherwise empty train which Uspensky boarded during one of his habitual escapes from

St. Petersburg. The depression which took hold of him in the capital city normally disappeared during his visits to the countryside and Uspensky starts his story with a declaration that he was fleeing St. Petersburg in a state of low spirits and the need for fresh rural impressions. His depressed state of mind is explained as the result of “*npravstvennyi ispug*” (a moral shock, 245) and a “*dushevnyi ispug*” (shock of the soul, 245) which he experienced during his stay in the capital. Uspensky describes his two traveling companions as a peasant returning to his village and an older educated woman with whom he begins a conversation. The tone and the topic of this conversation, in Uspensky’s characterisation, is typical of the kind of conversation which he had encountered lately on his journeys—people no longer became engaged in cheerful chatter about concrete daily events, but rather expressed general anxiety about the current times: “What is it that we saw and heard in the capital? [...] we all left with frightening thoughts about our mutual spiritual degradation, moral humiliation, the fall and even extinction of spiritual life and generally, in anticipation of something evil for all of us, something dull, severe and even deeply shameful” (246).

The peasant companion begins to relate events that depressed him during his stay in St. Petersburg. This story relates to the degradation of morals among the former village people once they had become city residents. The peasant had not visited St. Petersburg for eight years, and the differences which he witnessed spoke of a tremendous change in the morals of his former peasant-fellows. One of his friends who had done well in St. Petersburg, and who had his own house and a wife and children, invited him, to the peasant’s dismay, to join him on a visit to a brothel. Another friend’s daughter dressed fancifully, and would visit a German Club where she danced and drank with married men and, what’s more, desired to become the kept woman of a married man rather than do any work. Both accounts demonstrate the peasant’s shock at the debasement of sexual morality in a city he sees as suffering “*npravstvennyi iz’ian*” (a moral handicap, 248) in formerly uncorrupted and honest village people.

Historians of Russian peasantry in late imperial Russia have commented on the change in the construct of masculinity which occurred with the migration of peasants to the capital cities. S. A. Smith in his work “Masculinity in Transition: Peasant Migrants to Late-Imperial St. Petersburg” writes:

The Russian peasant family was a patriarchal institution in which men held power over women, elders over youth, adults over children and mother-in-law over daughter-in-law. The male head of the household was responsible for maintaining order within the household and had the right to dispose of the labor power of its members and to take crucial decisions concerning their lives. Within the household the *bol'shak* was expected to assert his authority and to control female sexuality" (2002: 94).

The description by the peasant narrator of the amoral behavior of his male friend and his daughter is aligned to the changed gender constructs that occurred in the transition between village and city life. The father no longer regards his own masculinity as patriarchal and authorial, he does not assert moral rights over his daughter's behaviour and he relinquishes his control over her sexuality. While, according to Smith, heavy drinking constituted an integral part of traditional peasant masculinity, it gradually gave way to a new type of masculinity which was expressed by skill rather than by forceful behavior. This new type of masculinity was an urban construct appropriated by younger generations of migrant peasants. The old peasant combines in his behaviour elements of both the old and new types of masculinity as was characteristic of peasants in late-imperial Russia once they became city dwellers: an old style asserted through heavy drinking and fighting, and a new style which relinquished patriarchal authority and acquired new sexual license.

The peasant narrator's example reflects the complex dynamics in the transition between the old peasant masculinity, implicitly represented by his own ideals, and the new type of gendered behavior represented by the former peasant family in the capital city. This new type of masculinity is defined by the relationships with women: renouncing moral authority over one's daughter and breaking the taboo of one's own sexual promiscuity in front of one's wife and daughters. This new type of masculinity gives sexual freedom to children whose economic well-being no longer depends on the subordinational structure of the peasant family, so allowing the paterfamilias to experience sexual liberation. This new masculinity is no longer strictly patriarchal and is no longer based on the principles of control and self-control.²

Gender construct across classes: the case of the aristocracy

In part two of this *ocherk* Uspensky recounts the story told by the educated woman companion, a story which he characterizes as crucial in explaining the general low state of morals in all strata of contemporary Russian society. Her story focusses on the issues of maleness and masculinity, and she is significantly introduced by Uspensky as the daughter and granddaughter of the owners of a highly prestigious private boys' boarding school which prepared graduates for entry into universities and other higher education institutions. Her links with the pedagogical circles of St. Petersburg and her membership of an educationalist family make her an expert in matters of male education. She is thus used by Uspensky as an authority on issues of male morality and behavior. Uspensky draws attention to the appearance of the "*pochtennaia dama*" (respected lady, 250) whose short hair he describes as a feature that is perceived by his contemporaries as a sign of being a "woman nihilist" and a "female student" (250). The fact that Uspensky highlights this feature also points to his special emphasis on cross-gender characteristics in a person's appearance. In addition, the woman is described as somebody who had retained a "*iunosheskaia bodrost*" and "*vpechatlitel'nost*" (youthful cheerfulness, impressionability, 250) where "*iunosheskaia*" can be interpreted as a cross-gender attribute. In Vasily Rozanov's seminal *People of the Moonlight*, adolescence is interpreted as a physical stage in human development before differentiation between the sexes had yet taken place. In Rozanov's mystical sexology the state of adolescence is compared to the state closest to androgyny which, in turn, was seen by turn-of-the-century Russian sexual discourse as a state closest to the divine being. Rozanov stresses that God, Elohim in Hebrew, is a plural word which denotes God's his/her-ness.⁵ Uspensky-the-author thus introduces his woman-conversationalist and her story about gender and sexuality in a light which reveals his special interest in issues of gender.

The woman makes a chronological analysis of amoral behaviour, and divides the society that she has witnessed during her life into three parts. Contemporary society, which both of her traveling companions have labeled as amoral, she dubs as a society with "*prostye vzgliady*" (simple, 250) views on the relationships between men and women. She describes the excessive abundance of "the naked woman's body parts: shoulders, backs" (250) which are exhibited in social gatherings as an illustration of this simplicity in the relationships between men and women. For her this period is one of

bland pettiness that is devoid of soul: “terrible simplicity, passionless simplicity in the relationships of masses of men to masses of women. It is lousy, bad, boring, painful, but this is not a depravity. No. This is the fall of the soul. The soul has stopped, it does not function any more, as if the clock has stopped and does not go any more” (251).

This contemporary state of mass morals is juxtaposed to two previous stages in the sexual behavior of the Russian middle and upper classes: the not-so-remote stage which occurred after the Reforms of 1861 and the emancipation of the serfs; and the type of behavior which existed some fifty years ago. The post-Reform behavior is linked to the economic consequences of these reforms, which lead to the sudden increase of free money in the hands of former landlords and landladies who sold and mortgaged their estates. This sudden access to money and freedom to embark on a new lifestyle lead to all kinds of extravagant behavior amongst land owners who, according to the woman on the train, allowed their fantasies to run amok in choosing amusement and entertainment. This type of behavior she calls “*razgul i razvrat*” (revelry and depravity, 250) in which life was lived to the utmost:

Here landlords and landladies [...] went out freely into the world of railroad money and vouchers, burning their lives to the full; in their native nests they accumulated wealth, idleness, fantasy, free will, laziness, wildness. You could not see the light for the smoke. One lady rides a troika of horses, dressed in a coachman’s jacket and trousers like an old debaucher. Or, having escaped her native Manilovka, she makes a splash in Petersburg, Moscow and abroad. All this was. Now there is something different (250-251).

The woman’s account of the post-Reform type of morality is linked to the issue of freedom of sexual expression. She focuses her attention on the behavior of woman landowners who feel the liberating effect of the end of the patriarchal lifestyle which reigned on their estates. The fact that the woman chooses a story of cross-dressing as an example of the liberated behavior confirms the leitmotif of Uspensky’s *ocherk* – his interest in the issue of gendered behavior. While the cross-dressed landlady enacts what Judith Butler calls “gender performance” (Butler 1990), she performs this act in a carnivalesque, upside-down fashion—having played the role of the lady for so long she now assumes, in riding the carriage and wearing

men's clothes, the oppositional persona of masculinity. She simultaneously crosses not only gender, but also class boundaries, as her performance enacts the behavior of both a male and a coachman. This reversed behavior subverts the values of a society based on class divisions and strict gender role boundaries. But, in addition to this subversive behaviour, the cross-dressed landlady reinforces stereotypes of gendered behavior—when acting as a man she also engages in a behavior marked by sexual promiscuity. Why? Because there is only one type of free behavior known to her society; that is, the behavior of a man who enjoys the freedom from monogamous constraints granted by access to unlimited funds. In this type of behavior a woman performs a gendered role based on her society's perception of masculinity.⁴

This type of behavior, however, is condemned by the woman (and Uspensky himself). The ideal type of gendered behavior is presented by the woman-educationalist as belonging to the epoch of the 1830s, Russia under Nicolas I.

The woman argues that the epoch of Nicolas I, represented by the reign of men in military uniforms with its total lack of democratic freedoms, paradoxically gave rise to more spiritually developed men. She maintains that the stiffness of behavior and manners, which was assumed alongside the tightness of military clothes and the regimental nature of everyday behavior, constituted only an appearance, while the emotional and intellectual inner world of the individual was richer and deeper than what could be read on the surface. She uses Mikhail Lermontov, a famous romantic poet and writer, as an example of such a personality in which military bravado was combined with a delicate and elegant inner world concealed from the rest of the world. Lermontov was killed in a duel with his rival, an officer in the regiment. An aristocratic man, whose behavior is divided between public and private conduct, is presented by the woman-conversationalist as an "interesting male type" (251) under whose "tight collars" (254) and close-fitting military uniforms there is an authentic and caring heart. Such a type evokes in women a feeling of admiration which leads to her developing an emotional attachment that guarantees happiness in the "intimate relationships" (254) between men and women. It is thus the spiritual qualities of a man, his high ideals and aspirations to freedom and democracy, which are hidden from the public eye and which manifest themselves only in the special relationship of trust which develops between a man and a

woman in their private sphere. In the highly regimented and censored world of Russia in the 1830s, men in military uniform had dreams of the emancipation of peasants, freedom of speech, and democratic reforms in government. This constituted their “*taina*” (secret, 254); that is, the “holiness” (254) in their souls which attracted women to them. Young men of that generation had a goal to serve people, to contribute to the betterment of society, and their choice of profession was motivated not by financial considerations, but by idealistic motives. Such high ideals triggered in turn the rise of consciousness in young women, and partnerships between men and women that were based on respect and which in turn lead to harmony in “the most intimate relationships” (254). The woman-educationalist maintains that a woman in such a relationship had a reason to love a man, to admire him as “the source” (256) from which comes the articulation of questions and problems relating to the “real” meaning of life (256).

The reference to costume in the portrayal of the men in uniform as the ideal male type asserts a definite vision of masculinity. As Olga Vainshtein points out in her study of Russian dandyism and clothing as an expression of various types of masculinities:

[...] assessments of the gender value of masculine costume are typical of the responses of many members of the nineteenth-century Russian elite. Dandyism was received as a stable virtue if it emphasised masculinity, but with suspicion, if not negativity, if it invoked any shade of effeminacy. In these circumstances practically the only way for the Russian dandy to promote himself was [...] to appear in full dress uniform. Many young noblemen served in privileged military units [...] The military uniform has long been considered prestigious and fashionable, and there were not a few devotees of fashion in the milieu. ‘Officers went about strapped into corsets; to look more imposing, staff officers fashioned artificial shoulder pads, with thick epaulets firmly bristling on them’. Corsets stayed in fashion for military men even after they had disappeared from civilian men’s wardrobes (2002: 60).

The ideal “male type” (251) is taken from Russian history at a time when a military career was the only type of career open to members of the Russian aristocracy. This phenomenon of Russian culture at the beginning of the nineteenth century received detailed treatment by Jurii Lotman who chose this specific example of career choice by the Russian aristocracy in his characterization of the

semiotics of behavior of a specific class during this period.⁵ The strict divisions between the private and the public spheres and between censored and uncensored speech and behavior are viewed by Lotman as the most characteristic features of Russian culture and constitute the essence of what he and Boris Uspensky call this culture's "dual model" (Lotman & Uspensky 1984: 3-35).

In this culture there is a semiotics of collective group/class behavior characteristic both for men and for women. Lotman stresses that the everyday behavior of the Romantic era—the era to which the woman refers—is modelled on a kind of behavior fashioned by literature, the work of Mikhail Lermontov being a prime example of such trend-setting behavior. In Gleb Uspensky's woman narrator's analysis, the semiotics of everyday behavior by men and women is acknowledged as a kind of behavior which leads to the development of a special type of relationship based on friendship and trust between the sexes. The very duality between the censored world of the oppressive public sphere and the authentic and open self-expression in private relationships helps to create a special microcosm between partners. The woman-companion's model, however, reinstalls the binary nature of the model of culture in which the dynamics within the relationship between men and women are based on male leadership. Women adore, admire and emulate men in their thoughts, and men are characterized by a set of archetypes such as firmness, tight lips, and other markers of self-control represented in her description of tight collars and taut military jackets. This culture, which holds in high esteem the qualities of firmness and tightness identified with masculinity, at the same time loathes the qualities of softness and fluidity identified with femininity.⁶ Women are regarded as achievers only when and if they become like men. It is this model of gendered behavior, with its firm set of masculinities performed and lived by both men and women, which the educated woman with the short-cut hair articulates as the ideal in Uspensky's *ocherk*.

Uspensky's ideal male: sublimated sexuality for the common cause

Uspensky devotes the third part of this *ocherk* to his own answer to the challenge presented by the woman-conversationalist on the absence of honorable men in contemporary society. The woman concludes that the fall of morals among men and women is explained by the lack of high ideals set by noble men. Uspensky admits that he could not find arguments to contradict this point of view at the time of

the conversation, as he could not think of an example of truly honorable behavior by “*nasha muzhskaia chast*” (our male side, 258). Only when Uspensky arrives at the village does he suddenly, through an accident, think of an alternative noble type of Russian man which he could offer as an example of highly moral behavior. He finds this type in a small book which he comes across in the village. This book is a short hagiography of St. Stephan of Perm (Stefan Permsky) written by T. Tolycheva.⁷

When Uspensky read the thin book (a cheap edition of the lives of saints narrated in a simple form for peasants and sold in the marketplace for only three kopecks), he regarded its hero, St. Stephan of Perm, as an example of a type of positive man. According to Uspensky, this “disappeared Russian type” (258) can nevertheless serve as an example of high moral behavior. The fact that Uspensky chooses a canonised Christian saint as a model of high morality in the context of a conversation on the low standards of sexual morality is highly significant. In his interpretation of the life and deeds of St. Stephan, Uspensky transforms an ascetic life based on the sacrifice of the flesh and lived out for the sake of pleasing the ego and God, into a life committed to serving the people. Uspensky explains that the old Kievan saints, as well as some of the early Christian saints in Greece and Syria, sacrificed their lives in order to pacify the flesh. He goes on to explain that, through this abuse of the body they not only served God but also wasted their energy in an egotistical manner in order to achieve personal salvation. Uspensky shows that in modern life saints no longer have the need to conquer their flesh, since they know that their flesh is perishable anyway. Uspensky insists that there was now a new type of “*mysliashchii russkii chelovek*” (thinking Russian person, 260) who sacrificed his flesh in the name of active work as an alternative to passive self-sacrifice: “And here he starts to destroy his flesh not on a pole, but in everyday labor for the help of those next to him” (260). Uspensky thus rewrites the hagiography of the Russian saint, and insists that the didactic purpose of hagiographies has been misconstrued by their writers.

Uspensky believes that the simple Russian man needed to learn about the “practical benefit, clear, visible and tangible good and useful deeds” (259) of a holy person:

A Russian holy person is quite a remarkable type. Stereotyped hagiographies usually attempt to put his biography into the stereotypical confines of the ‘life of a saint’, presuming that the less in the biography that is

devoted to practical, real deeds on earth the more will be told about fasting, night prayers and temptations of the devil, and the more respectable will be the saint's life to a reader from simple folk, and the more spiritual joy this reader will receive from reading the biography. The reality, however, is different [...] The desire to please God in the Russian saint was always manifested in labor, most real and most simple labor for the good of those beside him, who were ignorant, uncultivated, and poor (259).

Uspensky offers an interpretation of the life and deeds of St. Stephan which is markedly different from the hagiography composed by Tolycheva. In Tolycheva's version St. Stephan was a pious man who, as a young man, came to the Rostov monastery to become a dedicated reader of religious literature. Uspensky insists that St. Stephan was not a "*postnik*" (a fasting man, 261), nor a man who "worries about personal self-improvement" (261), but rather he was a man actively dedicated to helping those who needed him. Uspensky emphasizes the social aspects of St. Stephan's deeds and, through this interpretation, St. Stephan becomes a type of *narodnik* who spent his life disseminating the knowledge he gained from books among the poor folk:

[his] study of books gave him the idea to disperse his acquired knowledge amongst the milieu of those poor zyrians, whose suppressed lives he had been familiar with since his childhood. And here started this realization of knowledge. It was an active, practical struggle against evil, and people's ignorance which was purposefully maintained by those who gained from this ignorance (261).

St. Stephan is thus acting as a typical *narodnik* of the 1880s who brought education and enlightenment to the uneducated and suppressed masses in the hope that, through education, the liberation of the poor people will eventuate. Uspensky chooses an episode from the saint's life in which he helps the illiterate zyrians to get better prices for their fur—the main commodity by which they sustained themselves.

This interpretation of a saint's life as the life of a *narodnik* is interesting in the context of the debate on the low sexual morality explored in this *ocherk*. As a response to the two descriptions of various types of masculinities, Uspensky's counter-story does not contain explicit examples of sexuality, but it nevertheless offers as an

ideal hero a man who sublimated his sexuality and channelled his energy towards achieving higher goals of service to the oppressed peasant community. Of interest here is not only the link between St. Stephan and the life of the ascetic Rakhmetov from Chernyshevsky's 1863 novel *What's To Be Done?*, which was emulated by generations of *narodniks*, but also the explicit link between the monastic self-sacrifice of the religious saints and the revolutionaries.⁸

The liberated energy saved through sexual abstinence is rechannelled and sublimated into a positive energy which can be used for the constructive purposes of the common cause. Uspensky thus develops a model of sexual morality which will be articulated in the early years of post-Revolutionary experimentation with the sublimation of human sexuality. Eric Naiman showed that early Soviet discourse on sexuality contained a strong element of "the discourse of castration" (1997: 127), in which sexuality was viewed in class terms as a marker of an undesirable bourgeois mentality and lifestyle. Excessive sexuality was seen as a force which saps the energy that could be channelled for more constructive purposes: "Sexuality was 'feeding upon the drastically reduced collective powers of the human organism'" (127). All energy had to be preserved, saved, and devoted to socialist ends.

Uspensky's ideal masculinity as espoused by him in his contribution to the debate on the low status of morality emerges as a desexed form of masculinity. It praises the body which is activated by love towards the insulted and the humiliated, and which devotes all its energy to the fight for social justice. At the same time, his ideal masculinity is fashioned on the model of the discourses on a Christ-like masculinity which is sexually passive. Although Uspensky re-narrates St. Stephan's hagiography by making him not a passive martyr but a pro-active warrior, the link to Christ-like behavior is seen in the peasant saint's desire to preach and suffer for the sake of the poor, uneducated and deprived. Although Uspensky insists that St. Stephan sacrificed his life not on the "*stolb*" (pole, 260—alluding here to crucifixion) but in active struggle, the life on which St. Stephan modelled his own is based on the emulation of the life of Christ. Uspensky's struggle against his own reverence for Christ as an ideal man, although carefully concealed, betrays his culture's dependence on the figure of Christ for any kind of socially responsible, spiritually motivated and flesh-tempering behavior, as is evident in the views of Chernyshevsky and other revolutionaries/seminarians.⁹

Notes

1. G. I. Uspenskii. "Khoroshii russkii tip" in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 244-264.
2. See Worobec 2001: 76-93.
3. See the discussion of androgyny in Rozanov and turn-of-the-century Russian culture in Henrietta Mondry 1999. "Beyond the Boundary: Vasilii Rozanov and the Animal Body" in *Slavic and East European Journal*: 43: 4: 651-673.
4. The cross-dressed woman also reinforces the stereotype of sexed behavior, since cross-dressing in the European cultural tradition was perceived as a license to sexual freedom. See Davidson 1997.
5. See Jurii Lotman 1985: 95-149.
6. See Grosz 1994.
7. The full title of the book is: Tolycheva, T. *Permskii apostol*. Moscow: 1883.
8. On the theme of new sexualities in Chernyshevsky's novel see Paperno 1988.
9. It must be remembered that Uspensky came from a family in which the men received education in seminaries. See Sokolov 1968.

Peasant sexuality and demonic possession

As an expert on Russian peasant life Uspensky was well familiar with peasant belief systems and superstitions. As a *narodnik* writer he was both an educationalist who tried to rid peasants of their superstitions while also expressing reverence towards peasant beliefs. As a result he aspired to treat the views of peasants with utmost respect and seriousness, refusing to treat them in a patronizing manner in the belief that educated classes and city dwellers had a lot to learn from the wisdom of the Russian peasants. Uspensky believed that honesty and a sense of justice were among the qualities preserved only in the peasant communities, and that the gradual disappearance of these qualities was a result of the encroachment of capitalism on the rural economies.

As part of the peasant belief system, superstition, too, was treated with utmost seriousness. Among the dominant beliefs that were widespread in the rural community was the belief in *porcha*—possession, the making of a bad omen, the casting of an evil eye, or the utterance of prayer by a witch.¹ As was described by Christine Worobec in her seminal study *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (2001) *porcha* was considered to be a state of possession by the devil or other evil powers and manifested itself in convulsions, barking, the screaming out of obscenities, involuntary blasphemous utterings and gestures, and trance-like states of delirium. Worobec collected statistics on gender in cases of peasant possession in late-imperial Russia. The results of this statistical analysis show that there were more women possessed than men, with the group most affected being women in their twenties to early forties, this age bracket being the usual period of sexual activity (Worobec 2001).

Possession: cause or effect of sexual promiscuity?

In his story “‘Pinzhak’ i chort” (‘Jacket’ and Devil, 1885),² concerning an incident of possession of a newly wed couple, Uspensky portrays the notion of *porcha* as coupled to the issue of peasant sexual morality. The hero of his story, the young peasant Mikhailo, becomes “*isporchenyi*” (bewitched, 300) on his wedding night. The same happens with his innocent young wife, who is contaminated through contact with her new husband. As a result of their seizures the rest of the family becomes affected by *porcha* in an epidemic state of contagion described by Worobec as one of the most intriguing and scientifically unresolved features of this phenomenon. While studies by psychiatrists especially assigned to the villages where collective fits of possession were taking place, as well as studies of the effect of specific diets on the physiological and psychological state of the possessed, did not facilitate firm conclusions on the cause and effect of possession, church clergy believed that possession was linked to the invasion of the body of the community by an evil spirit. This evil spirit was believed to have been invoked by a male or a female witch, and church functionaries were often enlisted to practise ceremonies of purification involving prayer, holy water and crosses which lead, in some cases, to the recovery of the possessed. This cure was regarded by non-believers as proof of the psychosomatic nature of possession, while believers saw the outcome as a miracle, a conquest of the holy spirit over the devil’s pranks. Because the villagers always “knew” who cast the bad omen, one member of the community would be immediately ostracised, and Worobec describes numerous cases of complaint on behalf of many innocent people who were accused of being witches. The epidemic nature of possession, when a large part of the village community was simultaneously affected by *porcha*, made the nature of ostracism of the supposed witch extremely harsh due to the collective pressures applied to such a person.

In “‘Pinzhak’ i chort” the description of the possession of the peasant family contains all the elements of the “possession” scenario described in Worobec’s socio-historical study. There is the witch who casts a bad spell, there is the epidemic nature of possession in which *porcha* is treated as a spreading disease, and there is the belief that the devil is constantly present among the living. There is also Uspensky’s specific emphasis on matters of peasant sexuality and gender. At the beginning of the story Uspensky declares that, on the second day after the wedding, a *porcha* affected the young wife, then the husband, and

then the rest of the family. At the end of the story, when Uspensky describes the episode of *porcha* and the physical manifestation of this process, he states that the young woman had a hysterical fit, which in turn led to convulsions and a fit of *porcha* in her young husband. The aim of Uspensky's narration is to reveal the reasons for this *porcha*, which he sees as a result of the discrepancy in the states of sexual purity between the husband and wife: while the husband has lead a debauched sex life, his wife was a virgin. This tension, resulting from the husband's feelings of guilt and the terrifying effect of failing to enter into marriage as an honest and moral person, is regarded as integral to their *porcha*. Uspensky thus constructs a psychological and moral argument around the episode of demonic possession. At the same time, as a *narodnik* narrator with a mission to give a socio-economic framework to the events of peasant life, he devotes his story to a "materialist" explanation of the occurrence. In Uspensky's narration the young male peasant's *porcha* is the result of low sexual morality which, in turn, is the result of his choice of a new lifestyle which is no longer linked to noble agricultural labor and the spiritually elevating closeness to the soil but which is based instead on questionable enterprise. The encroachment of capitalistic ways upon rural Russia is thus linked to peasant sexuality which is depicted as diseased not only metaphorically, but also biologically.

Like most of Uspensky's stories and *ocherki*, "'Pinzhak' i chort" is built around a case study. Uspensky describes the sudden misfortune of the Firsanov peasant family in whose house the incident of possession took place. The head of the family, Afanasii Firsanov, tries to understand the reasons for the series of misfortunes but cannot work out a plausible explanation. The misfortunes apparently started when the seventy-year-old peasant's wife, a dexterous and highly capable manager of the prosperous household, took ill. As a result of her incapacitation the younger son, Mikhailo, had to marry in order to bring a young, strong woman into the house to take over the household duties. After the marriage takes place, possession sets upon the family:

[...] generally speaking, Firsanov's misfortune consists of the fact that last autumn in his house a possession occurred. He had seen his son married. Both his son and his wife were young, both were healthy and strong. But on the second day after the wedding a possession took hold of the young wife, and after that of young husband; after that it started to 'beat' all the relatives against the floor, to break into pieces all the family; even the

neighboring women were writhing, thrown and rolling on the floor—in a word, something weird happened. The whole household lost its spirit, gave in and started deteriorating, a gnawing melancholy not known to this household before started to gnaw at it, and everybody became consumed by sorrow” (271).

Uspensky explains that, in Firsanov’s understanding of the event, possession signifies the doings of the devil. The fact that the possession takes place during a wedding is a reflection of a well-recorded medieval superstition that a bride and a groom are especially vulnerable to the attack of demonic forces during their wedding. The widespread custom of covering the bride’s face with a veil was originally intended to hide her from spirits: “In addition, the wedding ceremony contained several instances of presenting gift offerings to the spirit. To scatter wheat or salt over and around the bridal pair has also been interpreted as both pleasing the spirits and driving them away. The custom of breaking a glass at the wedding was also intended to give the accuser [Satan] his due” (Trachtenberg 1939: 173).³

Uspensky admits that this is a “dark story” (272) and offers to give his own explanation for the occurrence based on the “collision of two trends of life” (272) which took place in this case. By “trends of life” Uspensky understands two ideologies: the peasant ideology and lifestyle based on old traditional relationships in the family, and the new trends which come from the advancing capitalistic developments in Russian society. The peasant ideology is manifested by *trudami ruk svoikh* (by the labor of one’s own hands)—a motto which Uspensky took from peasant writer T. M. Bondarev.⁴

This ideology was built on the belief in patriarchal relationships within the family with its supportive structures and strong partnership between husband and wife. It is thanks to this partnership that Firsanov’s family prospers. It is only when the wife becomes incapacitated and stops contributing to the household economy that disaster sets in. The second “trend” is represented by the life of Afanasii’s son, Mikhailo, who has been thrown out of the equilibrium provided by peasant work by embarking onto a different way of making a living. Money becomes an abstract entity rather than the concrete and tangible products of peasant labor, and is viewed as an agent of demoralizing and corrupting force. This new, non-peasant world is dubbed by Uspensky as the world of “jackets”—where

‘jacket’ represents the young man who no longer wears peasant’s dress but a city jacket of western cut.

As a “jacket”, or a *pinzhak*, Mikhailo becomes engaged in various shady deals and learns to make money through participation in entrepreneurial ventures. Many of these are described by Uspensky as dishonest. As Mikhailo’s access to money develops, so too does his easy access to the pleasures which money can buy. Drinking and dining out are among such activities, as well as involvement with easy women. Of special interest is Uspensky’s description of the peasant’s change in diet once he starts participating in an urban lifestyle:

At first, Mikhailo was telling his parents, at the balls I used to fill myself up with all those foods, like chocolate, shoulder bacon, ice cream, smoked sausage, oranges, and I would swallow all other things, but then I would develop such a headache as if my head was split as if hit by an axe [...] I used to stand by the fence outside and wait until this would end [...] (Ball! Quite a ball!... Kha-kha- kha!) But now I can eat all of those things without problems: give me an orange and I will have it, chocolate—I will have chocolate, fish—I will have fish, anything you like! Now you can throw at me and pour into me all sorts of things and it will not show! [...] (Kho-kho-kho! You are now smoked throughout, Mikhailo)! (279).

Uspensky follows the logic of “you are what you eat” and develops a connection between the new body of Mikhailo, filled with processed food and alcoholic drinks, and his lowered moral standards. When Mikhailo used to eat wholesome peasant food he was not only physically healthy, but also morally strong. Now that he is “*prokoptel*” (smoked throughout, 279), i.e., recast by the new foods into a physiologically altered being, he is no longer the honest and simple man that he would have been had he remained a peasant. In the new environment a total change of values has taken place and “that which for him as a peasant would have seemed to be a dishonest and unthinkable act, now, here, started presenting itself in a different light. To lie, even by saying ‘don’t know’ when he ‘knew’, or ‘I was not there’ when he ‘was there’—all this had become for him an embarrassing thing to do, but nevertheless a necessary thing to do” (279). This new, recast Mikhailo also develops a new attitude towards women. Uspensky stresses that in the peasant community there is a certain code of conduct shown by men towards women and young maidens in particular. Outside of their role as objects of desire,

women are viewed as important members of the peasant household who contribute to the communal economy. Young girls are viewed as future members of economic and social units, and young men do not enter into premarital sexual relationships with them. The situation in the urban communities is different, with a whole class of young women making their living from offering their services to young men. Once the peasant community disintegrates, there are not only men, but also women migrants traveling to cities in search of new ways to make a living. These new de-classed peasants now regard sexuality as a commodity. Uspensky thus links economic prosperity, the “*sila deneg*” (power of money, 281), with a new state of sexual morality:

By the way, his attitude towards the female sex, which has a big significance for our story, acquired a totally new meaning in comparison to the meaning which it has among the peasants. If he was a peasant lad, although he would have been involved in pranks with young maidens, [he] would have never thought of anything bad [...] because one cannot treat these girls without respect as future housewives, workers, mothers, continuers of the population and customs of ‘our’ village. The new trend totally changed his views on this matter: he viewed local girls as alien (281).

Woman witch: the sexed culprit

Uspensky emphasises that issues of peasant sexuality constitute the subject matter of his story. Before his narrative will return to the story of the possession of the newly wed couple, Uspensky tells the story of the woman witch doctor believed by the villagers to have put the curse on Mikhailo and his family. Uspensky describes how the *znakharka* (witch doctor) Afimia was invited to look after Mikhailo’s mother when she became ill. Mikhailo’s mother was the woman head of the household, a *bol’shukha* as they were called among peasants, and she was an extremely capable and hardworking woman. Alongside Afanasii Firsanov she built a viable and prosperous family. The elder children were equally hardworking while Mikhailo, the youngest, had an idle life because his contribution to the family economy was not necessary. Praskovia Firsanov alone managed the household, looking after the dairy farm, sheep and vegetable garden, and saving a significant amount of money for the family. What is more, because there was no need to have additional female labor to help in the Firsanov family, there were fewer mouths to feed and so savings could be made. All this prosperity based on the

equilibrium of labor distribution came to an end when Praskovia becomes ill. Afimia's failure to cure Praskovia had economic as well as moral consequences. Mikhailo has to get married urgently in order to bring a woman contributor to the household, but due to his compromised moral and sexual integrity he was doomed to fail in the important endeavor of peasant marriage. Afimia becomes highly unpopular with Afanasii Firsanov's family for her unsuccessful treatment of Praskovia and the further deterioration of Praskovia's health. Eventually Firsanov chases Afimia out of the house with the threat to beat her if she approaches the old woman again. It is at this moment that Afimia promises to avenge herself and makes the threatening remark: "You will remember me!" —a remark considered to be a bad omen by the Firsanov family.

Uspensky inserts the episode from the life of *znakharka* Afimia into his narration as it relates to questions of women's sexuality, illicit pregnancy, and infanticide. Although he had announced his intention to address the issue of the link between the impact of capitalism and the lowering of sexual morality among the male peasants, Afimia's story relates to the issue of peasant women sexuality. In her story peasant women are shown as mercilessly disposing of newly born infants and aborted fetuses. The period that the story covers relates to the time of serfdom, and there are no indications that peasant women behavior is affected by the encroachment of capitalism to the Russian village. Uspensky writes of Afimia:

[D]uring the times of serfdom she was the favorite and close associate of a very cruel and crude landlady. Afimia was seen as quite malicious in the young women's quarters: as a troublemaker, a snake, a viper—such were the epithets that every serf gave her. She made a lot of evil in order to please her mistress, but, as a living creature, she was not without sin, and if she persecuted serf girls, accusing them of secret love affairs and mercilessly proving their guilt, she herself sinned in secrecy, as 'a thief at night', and used well the times of the landlady's prolonged absence.

And then, in the spring, when a corpse of a drowned infant would come to the surface of the pond, or a similar corpse would be found in the woodpile, Afimia, as a hawk, would attack serf girls, and there was no mercy from her in those moments (284).

After the emancipation of the serfs Afimia was given some money by her landlady. She managed to convince the peasant community to allocate to her a piece of land and a small bath house which she converted into a hut. The bath house in Russian folk beliefs is often a place where demons live, and Afimia's place of habitation serves as a marker of her association with dark powers. At this time a certain transformation takes place in Afimia—she starts to be haunted by visions of the dead infants murdered by her and found in the pond and in the wood piles. She goes into a coma which lasts for a full four days. While the peasant community is witnessing Afimia's clinical death, inviting the priest to say his final prayers, Afimia travels to heaven and hell. Uspensky narrates the episode without showing any sign of irony or disbelief in the "trip" which Afimia undertakes. Instead, he narrates the story in the tradition of the apocrypha which does not cast any doubt on the true nature of supernatural phenomena. Afimia ascends to heaven and enters the doors of paradise. She sees young cherubs playing in a beautiful garden and in those small angels she recognises her own children whom she has murdered. There she hears the voice of Christ who announces that he forgives her her sins since he knows that she has gone through suffering and that she has repented. However, he orders saints to show Afimia the sufferings of those whose sins have not been forgiven. In the following scenes she witnesses the tortures of sinners, the cruelest of which is assigned to women who have murdered their children—they are being boiled in smelting copper. Similarly terrible tortures are imposed on men who were involved in illicit sexual liaisons—they sit in boiling tar with the tar flowing into their throats. In some of these men Afimia recognises her former lovers.

It is after this experience, which the peasant community considers to be one of "death and resurrection" (268), that Afimia's status as *znakharka* emerges in the local community. Peasants start asking her whether she saw their relatives while in heaven and Afimia confirms that she saw them and that they were doing well. In one case a woman asks her how long she is going to live and Afimia predicts that she would die in a year. This prediction materialises, with the unfortunate woman dying exactly in a year's time following Afimia's prediction. From that moment on Afimia is considered to be a witch by the locals.⁵ Her casting of a bad spell over the Firsanovs takes place at this time.

Afimia's witchcraft is linked to two motives: her sinful transgressions related to her illicit sexual behavior (non-marital sex, promiscuity, abortion, infanticide) and informing on members of the community, and her abuse of God's pardon. If we consider that God allowed her to return to earth to live a remorseful and sin-free life, then her practice of witchcraft—such as making oracular predictions, supplying false information about the fate of the dead in the afterlife, curing people by shamanic practices and exorcism—make her a double sinner. Not only does she sin before the revelation, but she also abuses the power of revelation to her own advantage. Her habitation in the bath house in this new context acquires additional significance and confirms her involvement with the dark forces.

In a non-mythopoetic interpretation of Afimia's clinical death and travel to paradise and hell, which occurred during her "death and resurrection", there is another, less mystical explanation of her mysterious behavior. Afimia's four-day coma can be viewed as yet another manifestation of a curious physiological and psychological behavior which occurs amongst women in peasant communities. In the context of medical investigations conducted by psychiatrists in various peasant communities where cases of mass possession had taken place (as documented in Worobec's study), Afimia's behavior can be interpreted as yet another case of devious behavior by a woman ostracised by the rest of the community. Worobec notes that elder women who did not have family support and who fell out of the community structures constituted a large proportion of the victims of possession and were treated with particular suspicion by the rest of the community. Worobec reports that psychiatrists treated cases of possessed women with particular hostility, explaining their actions as fake simulations of symptoms. In this context Afimia's actions, including her four-day trance-like state, can be interpreted as an intentional faking of the "death and resurrection" experience. In this light, her subsequent behavior can be explained by a malevolent intention to trick the community and exploit peasant superstition for her own financial gain. In this interpretation Afimia becomes a trickster and an impostor, and Uspensky, who allows for this interpretation of his story of Afimia by constructing a narrative strategy that is open to various interpretations, contributes to the discourse of hostility towards de-classed peasant women.

This story was written during a period of his writing characterized by the growing cult of the land and peasants,⁶ when he juxtaposed honest, hardworking peasant with the devious Others. As

an outcast in the laboring peasant community, Afimia falls squarely into the category of ostracized Other. Here then, Uspensky adopts the same hostile and cruel treatment of elder women outcasts as the members of the peasant community itself.

Afimia's transgressing sexual behavior as a young woman can be seen as a reason for Uspensky's hostility towards her, and her choice to exercise her powers over the young couple during their wedding night further links Afimia to the sphere of the sexual while also accentuating Uspensky's preoccupation with matters of sexuality. In preparation for the denouement of his story—the scene of the possession during the wedding—Uspensky returns to Mikhailo who describes his inner fears about the approaching wedding. The combination of two factors haunt Mikhailo: his understanding of the discrepancy between the purity and “*bezukoriznennost*” (being unimpeachable, 297) of the bride and his own depravity, and Afimia's promise to avenge. As was pointed out earlier, Uspensky linked the first situation to the devastating impact of capitalism on the rural community. But, in addition to this socio-economic and materialist explanation of Mikhailo's behavior, Uspensky gives an additional reason for Mikhailo's fears, based on the traditional folk belief system. Uspensky describes how Mikhailo feared that his wife, on intuitively sensing that Mikhailo was not celibate, would start to hate him. The result of the young woman's hatred would be felt for posterity as it would be turned against Mikhailo's children. Here Uspensky tells a number of stories of how such maternal hatred could affect children during pregnancy and could also result in child abuse. Uspensky tells these stories using his own authorial voice—his strategy being not to separate folk beliefs from his own. As an example of a mother's hatred toward her own child, Uspensky describes a case reported in a newspaper. It is a report of a teenage boy who attempted to poison his mother who showed no emotional warmth towards him. Uspensky explains that the mother's inability to experience natural love is due to the lack of a component which he calls “*zoologicheskaja bezukoriznennost*” (zoological impeccability, 298) or instinct. Once the demoralizing influence of a new materialist culture sets in, the ties which link husband to wife and mother to child are destroyed. Children are subsequently emotionally abused, so leading these innocent creatures to criminal behavior. The woman's inability to love her child is explained by her emotional trauma, the roots of which may lie in the lack of equilibrium between the woman and her husband.

Folk beliefs in the power of maternal impression

The second example of the consequences of a mother's hatred towards her children is linked to the belief system that is known in the history of European thought on procreation as *telegony*, or the theory of maternal impression. As has been pointed out in the studies of Marie-Helene Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (1993), and Clara Pinto-Correia, *The Ovary of Eve* (1997), from the times of Antiquity it was believed that the power of women's imagination was responsible for the birth of monsters. In his story Uspensky shows how Mikhailo was worried about the possibility of the birth of deformed children as a result of his wife's unhappiness. Mikhailo thinks that his faulty nature ("iz'ian", 298) will affect his wife and she will start cursing his children while they are in her womb:

Feeling in him a fault in zoological impeccability, Mikhailo sensed that this fault could not avoid affecting the impeccability of Var'ka. And if this is the case, then everything can 'go to waste'. Why are people born cripple, blind, without hands? Why are creatures born with two heads who are neither human nor animal? One mother cursed her child when he was still in her womb, she said meanly: 'Here one more dog's mouth will be born! [...] will ask for bread—let him choke on the first piece!' And what do you think? Now this child is a tailor, his mouth like that of a dog. He cannot eat bread, he is kept alive only by drinking milk, and can barely speak in a human language [...] Another mother said: 'Let the devils take you!' and again everything happened word by word: when the boy had barely grown up the devil took him away, making him set fires to granaries, until the boy was sent to the prison in Siberia [...] And why did all this happen? All such terrible happenings came to Mikhailo's mind the moment he started thinking as a peasant, and the fear of Var'ka entered his heart as sharp as a nail. (298-299).

Of importance here is Mikhailo's belief that only through the female medium can the faulty progeny be born. Although Mikhailo's theory acknowledges that his own "faulty nature" is the root of the problem, he also believes that this *iz'ian* can have not only a psychological, but also a physiological ("zoological", 295) effect on his wife. Mikhailo's influence thus becomes contaminating not only metaphorically, but also in a real physical and organic manner. His folk theory espouses the belief that through the physical closeness of a man and a woman, male humors enter the woman's body and affect

her both physically and psychologically. The physical manifestation is not so much the pregnancy in this case, but a state similar to possession, since it is from this moment that the woman might start cursing and hating the embryo. Her hatred of the forming foetus is linked to a certain contamination which makes her behave as a bewitched person. While the notions of physical contamination remain ill-defined in this story, the negative role of the woman in the birth of a monstrous child is articulated very strongly. Uspensky, with his shy attitude towards any description of physical closeness between a man and a woman, must have obscured the notion of physical contamination because any discussion of such a process would have involved reference to semen and its effects on a woman's body. While no such evidence on the polluting effects of the entry of a man's fluids into a woman's body is provided by Uspensky's text, there are ample examples of the bad effects a woman can have on the child. Implicit in Uspensky's descriptions of the effects of a curse of a pregnant woman on the physical and mental characteristics of the child, there is the popular view on the power of maternal impression. The belief that a woman's imagination and psyche can leave a physical imprint on the newly born child, which was popular in European thought in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, survived the Scientific Revolution. Such beliefs were popular in Petrine Russia and, as Uspensky's story attests, in late-imperial Russia they were still rife in the countryside. As is pointed out in the work of Huet and Pinto-Correia, the result of this widespread belief was that women were held responsible for the birth of monsters. This belief was linked to the gender power struggle since it was based on the prejudice that deemed women to have a more vivid imagination than men and to be untrustworthy in matters of conception. In Uspensky's story there is an additional burden laid upon women in connection with the birth of monsters: by the logic of his text, women themselves become sorceresses and are responsible for the formation and birth of monstrous creatures. Pregnant women are thus viewed as being in liaison with the dark forces and are seen as capable of bewitching the children they bear out of revenge. In doing this they are no different from Afimia who avenges by casting a bad spell. Pregnant women thus become conflatable with witches. They are truly possessed and their possession is contagious.

The wedding night and the hysteria

The story ends with the description of the possession which takes first the bride, then the groom, and then the whole family. The

fact that the possession took place during the wedding and that it acquired proportions of an epidemic, is quite significant. According to Worobec's *Possessed: Women, Witches and Demons in Imperial Russia*, the same set of circumstances—possession during wedding and the spread of that possession—was a common feature in incidents of mass possession in Russia in the 1890s. In Uspensky's story, Mikhailo and his family wait anxiously for the wedding day, fearing that during this time the spells of the witch Afimia will strike. Uspensky writes that this expectation of bad omens also affected the young bride for whom "the thought alone that something will be done to her was sufficient to strike at her [...] body" (299). Uspensky's choice of words to describe the young woman's state of fear is quite telling, as he depicts her convulsive body as a manifestation of her fears, rather than describing other possible effects of fear. There is no suggestion of other manifestations of emotional stress such as a pale face or cold sweat, nor the more metaphoric conventions of fear manifestation such as raised hair, or goosebumps on the skin, but only the symptom of shrieking. Uspensky further proceeds to describe how, during the wedding night, the young woman had a hysterical fit, which in turn affected Mikhailo in such a way that he too started shrieking:

They entered the bedroom shaking from fear with all their bodies. The bed seemed to them not a bed but an open devil's mouth, and when they lay down they felt as if they were petrified from cold. Both husband and wife chattered with their teeth. From fear the wife had a hysterical fit. And this affected the husband in such a way that having fled the bedroom and being convinced that the misfortune had struck, he could not even open his mouth in order to ask for help as at that moment he dropped to the floor, and started shrieking, writhing and beating (301).

Uspensky chooses to describe the sequence of shrieking in a gendered way: the wife has a hysterical fit while the husband has a fit of possession. Because the *porcha* takes place during the wedding night Uspensky is able to emphasize sexuality as a medium through which the possession occurs. The belief that weddings are especially susceptible to acts of possession is further valorized by Uspensky's own description of the possession episode; the image of the bed which is taken for the mouth of the devil is a vivid trope of a conflation of sexuality with demonic powers. The fact that the young woman's fit is

defined by the medical term hysteria, rather than possession, is of a special interest due to its connections with the scientific beliefs of fin-de-siecle culture. In Freud's and Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria* (1893-1895), Breuer points out that hysteria in women especially is linked to the repression of memories concerning sexual trauma, and describes the most common aetiology of hysteria trauma incurred during the wedding night: "Marriage brings fresh sexual trauma. It is surprising that the wedding night does not have pathogenic effects more frequently, since unfortunately what it involves is so often not an erotic seduction but a violation. But indeed it is not rare to find in young married women hysterias which can be traced back to this and which vanish if in the course of time sexual enjoyment emerges and wipes out the trauma" (Breuer 1991: 326-327).

Breuer shows sympathy towards the female patients and explains the aetiology of hysteria as trauma acquired from ill treatment at the hands of men. He also emphasizes the positive effects of sexual gratification which a woman might experience from an understanding partner. In Uspensky's treatment of the episode of the first wedding night, the carnal knowledge of a young husband is viewed as a negative factor contributing to the wife's fears. While his former sexual experience might have been viewed positively as a skill which would enable the young wife to experience pleasure from the sexual encounter in the wedding night, in Uspensky's presentation his sexual knowledge becomes a reason for the wife's hysteria. In this episode hysterical fits occur before the sexual encounter, in its anticipation, and become a form of rejection of sexual encounter. Unlike Breuer, Uspensky is not willing to admit sexual drives in a peasant woman.

At the same time, this fit of hysteria out of fear raises the question of women's innate proneness to hysteria. Worobec points out that in the Russian medical profession possession and hysteria in women were regarded as a single phenomenon: "The fact that most of Russia's possessed were women also prompted doctors to diagnose the illness as a form of female hysteria, which underscored nineteenth-century medicine's misogynistic discomfort with the female body and its attribution of hysteria's causality to women's sexual organs" (2001: 166). Russian psychiatrists "declared that men were susceptible to possession only under exceptional circumstances, such as weddings, which led to an excess of the masculine behavior of drinking. Women, on the other hand, were biologically predisposed to

hysterical episodes” (2001: 167). In addition, Worobec refers to one psychiatrist’s report of the 1895 possession epidemic which “cast the bride as the culprit in sparking the epidemic as she was the first to experience hysteric symptoms” (2001: 167). In Uspensky’s story the lack of any full explanation for the reasons for the wife’s fit of hysteria is striking. One reason proffered is her feeling of fear which overcomes her as a result of the warnings of the bad spell by Afimia. The second reason is given by Uspensky at the beginning of the story: he maintains that Mikhailo feared that his own low sexual morality and new “urbane” mentality would cause a repulsion in his bride and a sort of contamination. While Uspensky is extremely vague in his descriptions of the contamination, the phenomenon itself—the contagious nature of *porcha*—is based on real life cases of possession in Russian villages. Worobec reminds us that possession in Russian villages normally had epidemic effects. And while Uspensky explains Mikhailo’s possession as a result of “external” circumstances such as drinking, the eating of fancy foods and other “urbane” behavior, as well as being rooted in beliefs concerning the casting of evil spells, in the case of the young woman the set of reasons has an additional biological component. Paradoxically, it is not Mikhailo who has been morally corrupt and has the “*iz’ian*” (flaw) to be the first to break into symptoms of possession. Rather, it is the woman who is the first to experience symptoms of hysteria and thus it is she who becomes the source of contamination and hence the epidemic. After Mikhailo, other members of the family experience possession. And although Uspensky ends the story by saying that the events of the possession were a combination of the doings of the devil (*chort*) and the external circumstances which changed Mikhailo from a good peasant lad into a morally compromised and displaced peasant (“*pinzhak*”), he leaves the way open to a third interpretation of the events: it is not only the (belief in) the devil and the moral disintegration of the male peasantry, but also the unpredictable and irrational nature of women which can be viewed as responsible for the start of the epidemic of *porcha* in the family. The young woman’s hysteria is linked to the sphere of sexuality in the same way as the term “hysteria” is etymologically linked to the word “uterus”.⁷

As Sander Gilman has demonstrated in his work on gender and race, in the case of the diseased Other the aetiology and symptomatics are identical in turn-of-the-century scientific discourse. All Others form a part of a single group because they all have some form of anomaly, and because this anomaly is expressed in the sphere

of the sexual: "The inherited diseases, whether masturbation, hysteria, neurasthenia, congenital syphilis or even incest, all had one thing in common. In all cases aetiology and the symptomatology are identical" (215).

Uspensky's confusion in looking for both the aetiology and the source of the disease of possession within the sphere of sexuality shows that his approach to possession was on the one hand typical for a Russian intelligentsia in believing that circumstances are a contributing factor to the phenomenon, but, on the other hand, it shows that he was also affected both by folk superstition and scientific prejudice. Congenital and biologically determined phenomena form a construct in his discussion on possession which he tries to rationalize without completely relinquishing the prejudices of folk wisdom or the misconceptions of medical knowledge.⁸

A devoted *narodnik*, Uspensky nevertheless was not free from the estranging effects of perceiving peasants as a subaltern species⁹ on whom he could project his own anxiety about human sexuality. In the psychiatric institution, Uspensky imagined himself to be a saint and referred to himself as 'St. Gleb', yet he had had problems with sexed bodies long before his mental illness emerged.¹⁰ He projected his anxiety about sexuality on to women's bodies as well as on to men who had been corrupted by the influence of capitalism and black magic. While he created an ideal peasant Other, he demonized those aspects which can now be regarded as a projection of his own fears.

Notes

1. See Ivantis 1989.
2. G.I. Uspenskii. ““Pinzhak’ i chort” in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 265-301.
3. On the blend of folk beliefs and orthodoxy in the perception of women’s magical powers in the turn of the century Christian village see Chylos 2003.
4. See more on Bondarev in the chapters on “Mechtaniia” and “Parovoi tsyplionok”.
5. Scenes of punishment of sinners observed by Afimia’s during her “travels” are depicted in the apocryphal tradition of travels to paradise and hell, the best known examples of which are “Khozhdenia sviatogo ottsa nashego Agapiia” (recorded in the XVII century), “Khozhdeniia bogoroditsy po mukam”(recorded in the XIX century), and “Slovo o mukakh gienskikh” (recorded in the XIX century). See Rozhdestvenskaia 1987: 463-465.
6. This attitude is recorded by Uspensky’s contemporaries. See Glinka-Volzhskaia 1935.
7. Rachel Maines reminds us that “The term ‘hysteria’ comes from a Greek word meaning simply “that which proceeds from the uterus.” (1999: 21).
8. I use the word “knowledge” here in a Foucaultian sense, where “knowledge [...] is made up of perspectives, ideas, narratives, commentaries, rules, categories, laws, terms, explanations and definitions produced and valorized by disciplines, fields and institutions through the application of scientific principles” (Danahar 2000: 21).
9. On the viewing of the peasant either as an infantile Other or a dangerous villain in late-imperial Russia see Worobec 2001: 76-93.
10. One of the apprentice doctors in the mental hospital, Osip Aptekman, writes in his memoirs that Uspensky called himself “Sviatoi Gleb” (Saint Gleb) and that he hallucinated about white angels flying above him. This imagery has definitive virginal connotations and serves as evidence to Uspensky’s preoccupation with pure bodies. In addition, his friend Nikolai Mikhailovsky reports that Uspensky claimed that his son’s body did not have physical weight since he was an angel. See Glinka-Volzhskaia 1935.

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“She Stopped!”: moral rebirth through hard labor

While in his story “‘Pinzhak’ i chort” Uspensky concentrated on the shared susceptibility to outside influences of a newly wed couple, in “Perestala!”¹ he addresses the relationship between the sexes in a peasant family. This peasant woman’s story, narrated by her husband, contains strong elements of authenticity in its description of the dynamics of the relationship of a husband and wife within a peasant family. The story has a strong moral undertone, insisting that for the marital relationship to function well within a peasant family it is necessary for both partners to engage in hard peasant-type labor. The underlying motif is no different from that in “‘Pinzhak’ i chort” and other stories where the slogan ‘to live by the labor of one’s own hands’ (*trudami ruk svoikh*) is taken by Uspensky as a credo for an honest lifestyle and a guarantee for a harmonious relationship within the family.

The costs of straying from peasant labor

While in “‘Pinzhak’ i chort” a young man goes astray because he is not involved in physical peasant labor, in “Perestala!” a young woman goes through a lengthy period of moral deprivation because she is not involved in hard peasant work. But if in the former text Uspensky employs strategies which allow ambiguity in deciding whether it is a young groom or a young bride that is acting as an agent of bad omen, in “Perestala!” it is unequivocally the woman who is the guilty party in the relationship gone wrong. Uspensky chooses to narrate the story of a peasant woman who “stopped” misbehaving through the first-person account of her peasant husband, so creating a narrative through the perspective of the person who holds the power within the relationship. This patriarchal perspective on the history of the life of a married peasant woman manifests itself in the fact that the woman’s voice is totally absent in the story as it is told through an

intimate conversation between two men who have known each other for twelve years. While Uspensky is an interlocutor, the peasant storyteller Mikhailo is described as the chronicler of events (hence the story's subtitle "*derevenskie zametki*"). Uspensky does not cast any doubt on the husband's account of the history of the woman's behavior. The story's veracity is taken by Uspensky as final and undeniable and the theme of the story—that of a wife who puts an end to her silly behavior and now leads a life that pleases her husband—affirms sexist and patriarchal values.

In "Perestala!" Uspensky recounts a story from the life of a peasant couple known to him in the 1870s at the peak of the populist movement. In those days the peasants Mikhailo and Avdotia (unmarried at this time) were particularly liked by the group of *narodniks* who lived in the village and frequently encountered local peasants through talks, educational sessions and tea parties. The young couple attracted particular attention and sympathy from the group of populists because they were more developed, engaging and "delicate" (304) than the rest of the peasants. Mikhailo is characterized by Uspensky as a man who could make "*sudit' voobshche*" (general judgements, 304) rather than talk only about himself, although in his appearance he was no different from other *muzhiks*, e.g. he "was dressed in the same kind of caftan and wore the same kind of shoes, and had the same kind of beard as the rest of the peasants, but there was in him something different: he was already literate, and literacy had already affected his thought" (304). Avdotia was similarly both peasant-like in her appearance and literate—a combination that held a particular appeal to the populists: "In front of our eyes she changed from a poor skinny girl with torn clothes and bare feet into a slender and clean girl, learning to read and write with the 'master's' children, without forgetting to sweep the floor, tell fairytales, play various games and do the most dirty work while also studying during the breaks, gaining the ability to read Nekrasov and Grigorovich" (305). Uspensky and his fellow *narodniks* were happy at the match between Mikhailo and Avdotia, and Uspensky comments that in those days "Avdotia was quite sure that her life would not be like that of a tyrannized village *baba*: Mikhailo was not that kind of a person" (306). Their house had all the attributes of what the populists saw as an ideal peasant home: it had books (Nekrasov's poems and Turgenev's "Sportsman's Sketches"), there was an engraving from the journal *Niva* on the wall, and guests were treated to tea in the same way in which the newly-weds were treated when they visited

Uspensky's populist commune. Mikhailo and Avdotia felt like equals among equals in the company of the populists. But all this changed. In the twelve years that separated Uspensky's life in the village from his present meeting with Mikhailo, Uspensky had heard rumors about Mikhailo's drinking and his wife's straying behavior that "is too embarrassing to mention" (307). This "embarrassing" behavior is described by Mikhailo whose account of the events Uspensky wrote down. Uspensky's preamble ends with an expression of hesitation in the validity of the populist cause—an expression shared by fellow *narodniks* when they heard about Mikhailo's and Avdotia's moral disintegration: they started blaming "books" (307) and education as a possible source of the peasants' downfall.

The dangers of excessive physical energy

Mikhailo starts his story of the change in his wife's behavior to her final spiritual recovery with a statement which corresponds to Uspensky-the-populist's fears of the destructive impact on peasants of the loss of ties with traditional labors:

Well, had it been that in those days Avdotia and I immediately became immersed in peasant labor, and were not involved in idle talk, nothing bad would have happened. Take my true word for it! We must not waste our peasant strength, we need to be put into a bridle, so that we will not go astray [...] There is a lot of strength in us, especially in a peasant woman [...] She also has to spend her energy on something, and what can she spend it on in our circumstances without being put into a bridle of peasant labor? [...] So this is the source" (309).

Mikhailo describes the first period of their marriage as a time when Avdotia devoted all her strength and energy to household duties. She obsessively cleaned the house, painted all the walls and shelves and, in her pursuit of high hygienic standards, chased all the insects from the house. Once, while cleaning the ceiling, she fell on the floor and damaged her back. Mikhailo describes this incident with irony and half jokingly makes a statement which has an unexpected bitterness: "Here, possibly, even the Lord became annoyed: she missed the chair and fell with her head against the stove and her back against the floor" (313). Why should God punish a wife for cleaning a house? One explanation is present in Mikhailo's description of the event: "she cleaned and cleaned and reached the ceiling, got up on to the stool [...], just looking at her made my soul freeze with horror"

(312). This statement suggests the challenge which the woman presents to God: by climbing up to the ceiling, representing the celestial spheres, she challenges the hierarchical order of things. Her act is a metaphor for the story of the tower of Babel, and God's punishment of the people for breaking the divine order. In her husband's understanding, God the father, a male figure, punishes Avdotia for encroaching into the territory of divine male domination. As well as the religious connotations manifested in the fear of God implicit in Mikhailo's statement, there is also the thought that God punishes a wife for obsessive behavior—Mikhailo's criticism here is directed at work performed around the house rather than on the farm. Domestic work is thus seen as unproductive labor, as the kind of work that is directed towards the creation of comfort which does not befit the peasant woman. Avdotia is, therefore, being punished for "disrespectful" behavior in abandoning the peasant woman's ways. Both of these meanings are expressed by the "climbing up" metaphor; the upward movement performed by the woman is considered to be a challenge to the patriarchal order and indicative of unseemly personal aspirations.

The *Domostroi* and the physical punishment of a wife

After the doctor orders Avdotia to rest in bed, the second episode ("*vtoroe deistvie*", 313) in their relationship begins. Once confined Avdotia is deprived of physical activities. All her "abundant energy" (312) is left without an outlet and, as Mikhailo's folk wisdom dictates, the excess of energy in a woman, if not directed to proper purposes, leads to mischief. Forced to stay at home, the bored Avdotia becomes involved in spreading malicious rumors about various members of the community. The situation becomes quite serious and Mikhailo is confronted by the village elders with the warning of expulsion from the village. Avdotia's involvement in spreading rumors ("*spletni pletsi*", 313) is specifically condemned in the *Domostroi*, which mentions that, when a wife is visited by guests, she is to abstain from discussing the personalities of neighbors and the affairs of other people, conducting instead a general polite conversation. Avdotia's passionate involvement in intrigue and spreading rumors is again explained by her excessive energy which cannot find a proper outlet. Mikhailo imposes his own punishment on Avdotia by hitting her. His behavior is performed in accordance with the prescriptions contained in the *Domostroi* which says that the husband has an obligation to "teach" his wife by beating her for

misconduct. According to the *Domostroi*, this beating should be followed by a husband's display of mercy and reconciliation: he should comfort his wife after the punishment. Mikhailo behaves in accordance with the *Domostroi* prescription and says that, after the beating, he felt sorry for his wife.

At this point in Mikhailo's story he mentions that Avdotia expressed regret at not having had children. This serves as her explanation for her dissatisfaction with Mikhailo. The relationship between Avdotia and Mikhailo deteriorates further. The next time Mikhailo beats Avdotia is a result of Avdotia's suspicion of Mikhailo's infidelity. Mikhailo used to stop on his trips into town at the house of a merchant's widow. During one such visit Avdotia unexpectedly shows up at the widow's house and accuses Mikhailo of having an affair. This episode creates an embarrassment for Mikhailo—to have a public scene is not acceptable behavior in a peasant community in which the wife is expected to display obedient behavior. As historians of Russian peasants have stated, "Russian peasant society replicated the structure of the hierarchical patriarchal state. Women [...] found themselves subordinated to husbands [...] just as peasants as a whole were subordinated to the tsar, the supreme father."²

This episode ends with Mikhailo beating his wife again and the further estrangement of Avdotia from her husband. While Mikhailo's conduct is structured by the rule of the *Domostroi*, Avdotia, who was brought up on the books of Nekrasov and Grigorovich, operates on the fringes of the structures and norms of behavior of the patriarchal family. She is not involved in peasant work and yet is not educated enough to be meaningfully engaged in a different kind of activity. On the one hand her husband provides her with financial support, but on the other she is constrained by the confines of the peasant surroundings with which her links are severed through her lack of involvement in the peasant working routine. She finds an escape from the boredom of her lifestyle by becoming a *bogomolka* (pilgrim) who wanders through holy places and wildernesses: "Pilgrimage and holiness took possession over her soul, and she was lead out of the house, to the deserts, to wild forests" (316). This new obsession lasts for three years, and comes to an end only when Avdotia becomes ill from her wanderings. On her recovery she embarks on to a new adventure: she decides to join Mikhailo in the military camp where he was conscripted during the Balkan War.

While in the camp Avdotia falls in love with a handsome young man. Finding this situation intolerable, Mikhailo tries to reason with the young seducer who agrees to leave Avdotia for a modest fee. From this moment on, it is not only Mikhailo who beats Avdotia, but also her former lover. This tyranny of the two males over Avdotia lasts for four months. The situation becomes highly charged and Mikhailo confesses that it could have ended in a criminal outcome had it not been for a divine intervention. At the height of the assault on Avdotia a woman neighbor has a vision during her prayers in the church. She allegedly hears a voice telling her that she must help Mikhailo and Avdotia. The woman blames Mikhailo for their misfortunes and tells him that he was wrong to provide his wife with an idle lifestyle. The old woman explains that a woman such as Avdotia, described as “*na chetyrekh bab sily-to khvatit*” (having the energy of four women, 319), has to be given the responsibilities of peasant labor. Her advice suggests the same negative potential of excessive energy as that of Mikhailo’s own folk wisdom: “On to such a woman as Avdotia, one has to throw real responsibilities to keep her away from nonsense” (319). The word that the old woman uses to characterize Avdotia’s behavior is “*mudrit*” (319), which means being too clever. This choice of lexis is highly significant because it implies that excessive energy not directed towards physical labor will be misused for fantasies and the implementation of fanciful nonsense in real life, as well as the notion that mental exercise is an occupation not suitable for a woman. Behavior which is juxtaposed to the notion of “*mudrit*” consists of the hard physical labor that is traditional for a peasant woman: she has to have a herd of cows and a flock of sheep, a chicken farm and a dozen children to look after. The old woman implements her therapy over Avdotia and both Avdotia and Mikhailo return to the peasant commune. The physical labor therapy has a healing impact on both of them and leads to a full recovery of Avdotia. In addition, the couple adopt a boy, Avdotia’s recovery thus becoming complete as she becomes a mother and is fully involved in traditional peasant occupations.

The hystericization of peasant women’s bodies

This story is underpinned by the notion of the destructive role which the excessive energy of women can play if it is not used correctly, with physical labor described as an undeniable source of therapy. This notion of a woman possessed by excessive energy is a biological concept which has formed a part of both folk belief and

scientific knowledge. The excess energy which was believed to lead to a (self-) destructive end laid a foundation for the phenomenon which Foucault calls the “hystericization of women’s bodies” in medical discourses at the end of the nineteenth century (Foucault 1978: 104). Women were believed not to be able to control their own behavior due to the excessive energies which their bodies produced. Implicit in the notion of excessive energy was the belief that women’s sexual energies were finding expression in various kinds of subversive, irrational and destructive behavior. Uspensky was familiar not only with the work of Cesare Lombroso, who believed in the treatment of various deviant behaviors by physical work, but also with the work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing.³ In one of his polemical pieces (1887) Uspensky quotes Krafft-Ebing’s work translated from German into Russian as “Nash nervnyi vek” (“Our nervous century”, 1873).⁴ He specifically refers to Krafft-Ebing’s opinion on the healing nature of peasant-type labor for people who suffer from nervous exhaustion. Thus psychiatrists contemporary to Uspensky believed that agricultural labor had a medicinal effect on mental disorders. Although Uspensky criticized the notion of the pleasantness of farm labor as a fanciful idea which did not acknowledge the extremely exhausting nature of real peasant labor, he nevertheless, as a *narodnik*, believed in the nobility of peasant labor. In application to Avdotia’s deviant behavior, Uspensky sympathizes with the idea of the therapeutic effect of agricultural labor as an effective cure. He thus supports the idea prevalent in the medical discourse of his time of the correcting effect of forced physical labor on mentally unstable patients.

In the case of Avdotia, her idle lifestyle, which does not consume her abundant energy, is also linked to the fact that she remains childless in her marriage. Her subversive behavior manifests itself in various forms of obsessions such as her cleaning mania, her gossiping behavior (represented by the metaphor of her uncontrolled evil tongue), fits of jealousy, amorous longings based on the transference of her love from a wanted child to a young and handsome lad, and the sublimation of love in the form of religious exaltation. This behavior comes to an end as a result of two factors: her return to hard physical labor on the land, and parenthood. Apart from the populist moral value of the return to peasant labor and the soil which was extremely influential in the 1880s (as evidenced by the lifestyle exercised and preached by Leo Tolstoy), the concept of hard work in this story is introduced as a form of punishment and cure. Imposition

of hard work serves as an equivalent to the imposition of penalties in correcting institution, and to nineteenth-century psychiatric science that had also adopted the concept of the therapeutic power of physical labor. The notion of the necessity of the experience of motherhood as therapeutic also relates to the discourse on woman's mental health. "Episodes" in Avdotia's behavior, such as her fits of jealousy and falling in love with a seductively handsome village lad, clearly relate to her sexuality, and in this story the topos of her excessive physical strength and energy stands as euphemisms for her sexual energy. What is more, Mikhailo's references to Avdotia's excessive energy are formulated as statements on the general strength of the body, and are given as essentialist characteristics of women's nature: "Especially in a woman there is a lot of strength" (309). The word used by Mikhailo to characterize women's nature is "*sila*" which denotes physical strength, might and energy, all of which need to be controlled. In patriarchal culture one of the ways to control woman's energy is through pregnancy and childbirth. The fact that Avdotia does not have children serves as a reason for her aversion to a patriarchal structure of behavior. Both Avdotia and the old woman, who has "the revelation", view Avdotia's childlessness as the reason for her subversive behavior. But although Avdotia refers to her lack of children as the reason for her restlessness, she is nevertheless incapable of rationalizing her actions. She both understands and yet cannot withstand the inner impulse which leads her to self-destruction: she thinks and does not think, and is thus governed by the world of her inner drives. That factor which Mikhailo calls "*sila*" could well be equated with *nechistaia sila* (unclean forces) —a folk expression denoting devilish powers of possession. Although Avdotia is not depicted as possessed in terms of the manifestation of symptoms of *klikushestvo* (possession), she nevertheless is possessed in as much as she is not the full agent of her own drives. Her longing for motherhood can be viewed as part of the nineteenth-century medical discourse on women's sexuality where two conflicting ideologies had to find resolution: the view that women needed to be sexually gratified on the one hand, and more recent ideas on women's defining purity on the other. We know that in Uspensky's view a woman was a pure creature ("*chistoe suchshestvo*") yet, at the same time, Uspensky was informed by views on the power of women's sexuality as disseminated by such an epochal work as Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What's To Be Done?* (1862-63). In this novel, which served as a text book for generations of populists and revolutionaries,

Chernyshevsky espoused the essentialist theory based on the view that women has stronger sexual drives and needs than men, which lead him to justify extramarital sex for women who, for health reasons, needed to have more than one partner (Paperno 1988).

Rachel Maines notes that “in the nineteenth century the received wisdom, that women required sexual gratification for health, came into conflict with newer ideas regarding the intrinsic purity of womanhood. A not uncommon resolution to the conflict of medical philosophies over women’s sexuality was the compromise position that women ardently desired maternity, not orgasm” (9). A similar resolution is found in Avdotia’s case: not only does hard labor channel her energy for productive aims, but her newly found motherhood keeps her both hypothetically celibate and yet also maternal. The adoption of the child creates the desired ambivalence vis-à-vis Avdotia’s sexuality: like the mother of God she is both the mother and yet she is also celibate. In Mikhailo’s story Uspensky finds a resolution to the dilemma of a woman’s sexed body: it can be construed both as child bearing and chaste at the same time. Avdotia’s newly acquired physical strength, which is an attribute of the secondary sexual characteristics of masculinity, only reinforces her fantasized celibacy: we remember from the work of Roberta Davidson that “the masculine woman is a sexually inactive woman, even if she has a prior history of ‘womanly’ behavior”. It should come as no surprise that such a woman “stopped” being subversive, “*perestala mudrit*” (321), both to the satisfaction of her husband Mikhailo and to Uspensky who supposedly did no more than write down the peasant’s story.

Uspensky ends his story with a short epilogue in which he returns to his own authorial voice. Here he articulates the meaning of the “happy ending” of his story by telling his reader that now, some twelve years later, all the participants of the events have stopped being unnecessary clever—“*perestali mudrit*”: both Avdotia and Mikhailo are peacefully involved in hard work alongside the other peasants. Uspensky also notes that the results of the educational activities of the populist commune are finally being felt: while in the past peasants were suspicious of the *narodniks*’ advice to buy land from the landlords and to form peasant syndicates, by the time the story was written the peasants’ economic condition had improved thanks to their participation in various economically beneficial schemes. Peasants had more trust in the educated advisers and brokers who helped them to invest their income and manage their finances. But although the

“happy ending” supposedly relates to the end of nonsense for the whole community, the story and its title embody the successful recovery of the woman heroine who finally “Stopped!” her undesirable behavior thanks to the “treatment” of hard labor.

A response to “Perestala!”: “Baby” by Anton Chekhov

We mentioned earlier that Uspensky’s sketches, as well as his stories and notes, were received as almost scientifically accurate ethnographic accounts of rural Russia. His work served as a basis for other Russian writers and journalists focusing on rural Russia—a Russia which was distilled through Uspensky’s prism. This situation did not escape the attention of Chekhov, who wrote that the majority of the writers knew Russia only from Uspensky’s work. Chekhov drew a line between his own first hand knowledge of rural Russia, acquired as a *zemstvo* physician, and the second hand knowledge of the majority of his contemporaries. In his quest to learn about authentic Russian life, Chekhov followed in Uspensky’s steps: it was noted by commentators that his trip to Sakhalin in 1890 was made soon after Uspensky made travelled to Siberia in 1888.⁵ Indeed, as Chekhov noted in his *Sakhalin*, many journalists whom he met in Tomsk spoke of Uspensky’s visit and his descriptions of Siberia.⁶

Chekhov took a special pride in not needing to rely on Uspensky’s writing in order to understand rural Russia. In one of his letters, written on his return from Sakhalin in 1890, he states: “If I am a *literator*, then I have to live among the people” (131).⁷ This statement was followed by such comments as, “Chase the writers out into the countryside”(25)⁸ and the labeling of most writers as “urbanites who know village only through Gleb Uspensky” (538).⁹

Chekhov’s story “Baby” (“Peasant Women”, 1891) represents Chekhov’s trust in science, and the results of his conscious effort to counter populist sentiments about peasant sexual morality. If populists like Uspensky were building the myth of a subdued and regulated sexual life of the Russian peasant, then Chekhov the medic offered a view contrary to this purist myth. His peasant women are as driven by sexual urges and desires as their city counterparts. And if the populist Uspensky created a moralizing script based on the old traditional family values regulated by Orthodox faith and the laws of the *Domostroi*, then Chekhov demonstrated the denouement of this script within the Russian village.

Both Uspensky’s “Perestala!” and Chekhov’s “Baby” contain a disturbing episode in which a married peasant woman is violently

abused as punishment for adultery. In both these stories, the husband and the lover turn violently against the woman and beat her into a near-death state. Both episodes are told by the abusers—in Uspensky's story by the lawful husband, in Chekhov's story by the former lover. While Uspensky complies with the sentiments of the peasant narrator and does not interfere with his belief in the reforming role of physical punishment, Chekhov creates a distance between himself and his storyteller, exhibiting compassion for the victim and loathing for the abuser. "Baby" appeared in the same year that Uspensky's "Perestala!" was republished as a separate booklet in a cheap thin paperback series "for the people" ("*dlia naroda*", 409).¹⁰ The fact that Uspensky's story was deemed suitable for mass distribution among the literate peasants is itself highly indicative of the widespread acceptance by the patriarchal state of the moral contained in his story. When Chekhov's "Baby" appeared, it was forbidden for distribution in public reading libraries (*chital'ni*) and school libraries.¹¹ The reason for this ban was articulated by a member of the Ministry of People's Education, who described the story as having "shaky moral foundations" (501).¹² These opposing receptions of the two stories attest the presence of two opposing views on peasant women and their sexuality: one acceptable to society because it supported its social foundations and the dominant belief on peasant sexuality; the other which challenged the accepted views. It was mentioned earlier that, in the 1880s and 1890s, there was a strong tendency to idealize peasant sexual behaviour in spite of the facts pointing to the contrary.¹³ Even among the medical profession, there was the continued denial of illicit sexual activity and, when faced with irrefutable evidence of sexual transgressions among peasants, medics redefined the situation as an urban problem. It was the encroachment of the city into the countryside which was blamed for the loss of the sexual innocence of peasants. It will be demonstrated in this paper that Chekhov clearly did not share these views of the medical profession.

Uspensky was the main contributor to opinions regarding subdued peasant sexuality, and his story "Perestala!" is a typical manifestation of his views on the truncated sexuality of peasants. In Chekhov's story "Baby" peasant women's sexuality is not linked to physical labor. In this story, Chekhov reworks the plot of both a husband and a lover physically abusing a peasant woman who has gone astray. In addition, he introduces the second plot of a peasant woman having an extramarital affair as a form of liberation from hard physical labor and the tyranny of her husband's family. While

Uspensky's story features the beating of a woman as a form of punishment by her husband and her lover, leading to a cathartic restoration of her senses and thus reforming her from sinful behaviour, in Chekhov's story the abused woman attempts to liberate herself from the ties of a loveless marriage. It is her need for passionate love that characterizes the peasant woman, and it is her ability to love and experience desire which becomes her distinguishing feature. If the tendency of Uspensky's heroine to "*mudrit*", or rhapsodize, is the syndrome which has to be cured, then, in Chekhov's story, the very ability to desire makes this woman equal to the romantic and dramatic heroines from upper class society. By poisoning her husband she becomes the very epitome of that syndrome, which Uspensky glosses over as the ability to "*mudrit*", and it is this act that links Chekhov's heroine with both the Shakespearean Lady Macbeth and the Leskovian "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District" (1865)—stories where love and passion know no class boundaries, and women of royal blood and from the merchant class succumb to their desires in an equally passionate way. In Uspensky, it is the essence of peasant women that was under scrutiny; in Chekhov, it is both the essence of women and their sexuality that is being explored.¹⁴

In "The Duel", written in the same year as "Baby", zoologist fon Koren makes a speech which illustrates Chekhov's views on biology and sexuality. While the plot of "The Duel" is built on the description of an illicit love affair between a bourgeois woman and a married man, fon Koren speaks of sexuality as a concept of nature. Not only does sexuality in the zoologist's view have to be subdued by the civilizing norms of culture and religious prohibitions but, in his view, the laws of nature function in such a way that excessive sexuality becomes a form of pathology or degeneration:

The fact that peasant girls strangle their infants and get sent to penal servitude, and that Anna Karenina threw herself under the train, and that in villages they paint gates with tar, that you and I love in Katia her purity without knowing why, and that every one has a need for a pure love, although he knows that there is no such a thing – are all these to be counted as prejudice? This, my dear friend, is the only thing that survived from natural selection, and without this dark force which regulates relationships between sexes, people like Laevskys would take over and humankind would become degenerate in two years" (433-4).¹⁵

Subdued sexuality, sexuality for procreation, sexuality sanctified by marriage, some paradoxically chaste sexuality – as much as these ideas were intended as polemics with Tolstoy's "The Kreutzer Sonata", for the purpose of my discussion they represent Chekhov's views on sexuality as a biological phenomenon regulated by extra-biological factors and completely divorced from class boundaries. Chekhov's peasant women are capable of criminal acts for the sake of love because love subsumes their whole being. Both Masha, who poisons her husband and dies on her way to the Siberian prison, and Varvara, who, under the influence of the story of Masha's fate, anticipates poisoning her own husband, see love as the only escape from the hard and debilitating existence of peasant life. In both cases, marriage was forced on to Chekhov's heroines. It is their quest for personal happiness which drives them into an extramarital relationship. Is their need for love a form of degeneration? Or an exhilarating and humanizing experience? Does their love equate them with nature, or elevate them above nature?

The story of Masha's tragic life is narrated by the very man who caused her demise – her former lover. He shows no sympathy for Masha's sad end, and his unrepentant cruelty is further valorized by his brutal treatment of Masha's orphan—a boy whom he keeps out of pity. While his own story of their relationship shows that he seduced Masha while her husband was away for a few years on military service, he maintains that it is the woman's seductive powers which made him succumb to this illicit relationship. He sees his moral superiority over Masha in the fact that he confessed his transgression to Masha's husband, and that he had the strength to put a stop to this relationship on her husband's return. Masha, however, shows signs of weakness by being unable to control her emotions. For this, she is viewed by the lover as inferior – and for this reason he joins her husband in beating her. The former lover assumes the role of an inquisitor: he warns her of torments in hell for her unrepentant adulterous behaviour. When it is discovered that Masha poisoned her husband, her ex-lover acts as a witness and gives damaging evidence against Masha's hatred of her husband. He is thus actively involved in Masha's demise and takes a special pride in being instrumental to her punishment. He considers himself superior to Masha because he repented his sins while she did not and because, according to his beliefs, "evil and all sorts of dirt stem from women" (362). This belief is based on the view that women serve as pollutants and that, following physical contact with them, salvation is to be found only

through prayer and repentance. The woman as a pollutant code is further reinforced by the comment made by the lover's interlocutor, who states: "Dog deserves dog's death" ("*Sobake sobach'ia i smert*", 357) —dogs in Russian folk belief system are perceived as unclean animals.¹⁶ In Chekhov's story, in the male peasant belief system a woman is thus an animal. Yet, if women were animals to peasant men, what were they to Chekhov? As a man of science and an ardent Darwinist, Chekhov believed that humans were part of the animal world, and therefore part of nature. As in Darwin's theory of evolution, however, there were gradations and hierarchies—in Chekhov's system of hierarchies, men and women were not on the same level.

It was mentioned in the Introduction that, as a medical student, Chekhov planned a scientific project devoted to women.¹⁷ In his plans for a research thesis entitled "*Istoria polovogo avtoriteta*" ("History of Sexual Authority", 1883) Chekhov followed Darwin's *Origins of Species*. In this unfinished work he states that, in the evolutionary development, women have not reached the intellectual abilities of men. Although Chekhov rejects the methods of anthropology which use "skull-measuring" (117) and the assumptions that women's innate inferiority was based on the size of their brains, he nevertheless emphasizes the fact that there are few women scientists in medical science, so drawing the conclusion that women have problems with intellectual creativity.¹⁸ He intended this project as an MA thesis in zoology, with plans to publish it as a separate brochure before submitting it for a degree.¹⁹ He also planned to devote his life to the study of this topic. It is thus reasonable to assume that there was a great deal of Chekhov's own thoughts on the nature of sexuality in the views expressed by the zoologist von Koren, in "The Duel".²⁰

While Chekhov doubted the accuracy of craniological methods of anthropology, he at the same time expressed skepticism about the intellectual abilities of the female species. When writing about skull-measuring he was most likely referring to Cesare Lombroso's method of anthropology, which was based on the quasi-statistical analysis of the measurement of criminal types. We remember that, under Lombroso's conclusions, women prostitutes fell into the category of inborn criminals. When thinking of the nature of illicit sexuality, Chekhov hesitated between the role of the hereditary and the role of the environment — this hesitation was exposed by the reception of "The Duel". The reviewers commented on the unclear

nature of the story's message, which prompted Chekhov to make changes to fon Koren's views on extramarital relationships.²¹ In one version, the zoologist condemns Laevsky; in another, he expresses his admiration for him. The final version does not contain words of admiration, so suggesting that Chekhov decided to adhere to the view that excessive sexuality is not only immoral in its extramarital form but is in itself the force which needs to be controlled. In his story "Baby", peasant women are driven by instincts and emotions and, in the author's male-centred beliefs, emotions are equated with an irrationality that is opposed to the world of reason. This conflation of women with emotions and men with rationality and intellect is paralleled by the equation of women with the body and men with the brain. Real, strong-minded men control their instincts, and it is not by chance that the only debauched man in "Baby" is the hunchback, Alexis. A drunkard and a despot, he does not make a suitable husband to the beautiful and physically strong Varvara, and it is this lack of physical fulfillment in marriage which drives Varvara to have illicit sexual relations outside of marriage. This need is also present in the heroine in "The Duel", where it is characterized in the style of a medical diagnosis: "She loves to the extent that a woman of her age has a need for a man" (377).²² It is this need for men which makes Varvara in "Baby" consider poisoning her husband. Both the bourgeois woman in "The Duel" and the peasant woman Varvara cannot live without love. In "Baby", Masha's tragic fate does not serve as a warning to the young Varvara, but rather works as an encouragement to shake off the burden of a loveless marriage. While in Uspensky's work a peasant woman's sexuality can be fulfilled by childbirth and truncated by hard agricultural labor, in Chekhov's medicalized script a peasant woman's sexuality is a powerful force representing her essentiality. Masha falls in love with her neighbor after she has already had a child to her husband, and Varvara confesses that it is better to be on her own than to suffer in a loveless marriage. Chekhov's peasant women thus construct their sexuality outside the patriarchal structures into which they have been born.

Chekhov's "Baby" reworks and subverts Uspensky's populist script. In doing this it exposes the similitude of this script with the controlling and regulatory patriarchal structures of the peasant family. Chekhov challenges Uspensky's reputation as a ethnographer and an authority of the peasant *byt*, and asserts himself as an expert on peasants. Uspensky created the script of the special, truncated nature of peasant women's sexuality, which contributed to the trend in

medical beliefs of the weakening of sexual desire in peasant women. Some medics even believed in the hereditary weakening of sexual desire among peasant women due to their hard physical labor and long periods of abstention from sex due to the lack of opportunity caused by their husbands' absences. In Uspensky's view, women from educated classes should hold desexed peasant women as their ideal. Although Uspensky and his wife had five children, he insisted on long periods of abstention from sex, explaining that sexual intercourse was totally unnecessary for maintaining a good relationship. He evidently believed only in a pro-natal channeling of sexual energy – the belief which he shared with both theological and androcentric medical discourses on sexuality. As is discussed further in Chapter 7, Uspensky explained one case of infanticide as resulting from a peasant couple's transgressions of the laws prohibiting sexual relations as prescribed by the Church – in his story "Vlast' zemli", children born at a time of year that coincided with peak agricultural labour become unwanted children. Their mother murders them by giving them an overdose of vodka; this act is explained exclusively by the peasant couple's decision to indulge in sex at the wrong time of year. Their practice of sex during Lent is explained as the result of changed circumstances in post-emancipation Russia, when husbands became city labourers due to the economic disintegration of the peasant communities. Visits home to their villages were the only time when they could have sex with their wives, and the sporadic timing of these visits did not coincide with the traditional calendar regulating peasant procreation cycles.

Chekhov believed in the sublimation of a sexual drive; even as a young man he noted that "sexual instinct interferes with writing" (Letter to N. A. Leikin, 14 September 1885 (Senderovich 331-2)).²³ In 1886 he also expressed the view that a woman has to be more than a "hole" ("*dyrka*"); she also had to be "a mother" (Letter to V.V. Bilibin, 11 March 1886 (Senderovich 323)) which serves as evidence that he was not immune to the pro-natal view on sexuality. However, Chekhov did not manipulate the reality of peasant sexuality in his work in the way that Uspensky did. In Chekhov's story, peasant women are driven by the desire to fulfill themselves through their sexuality, and their emotional and physical well-being is inseparable from this desire.²⁴ He destroys the myth of the truncated sexuality of peasant women. Fully familiar with the spread of venereal diseases in the countryside, he was not inclined to blame the city as the populists did. Not easily shocked by syphilis, he called for a correct

understanding of this disease, asserting that it was both curable and not contagious in the second generation.²⁵ His character Varvara's readiness to become a prostitute, rather than remain abused and exploited in her husband's family, is clearly a result of injustices caused by patriarchal tyranny rather than urban influences. To Chekhov, the village was not the moral utopia constructed by populists. Rather, it was ridden with its own problems; crimes of passion were more endemic due to the lack of civilizing factors such as education and social infrastructures. In order to solve the problems of the village, he indefatigably contributed to the improvement of peasants' lives by building clinics and libraries.²⁶ If, in the populist Uspensky's views, reading books had a confusing effect on the peasant couple, in Chekhov's views progress, through books and education, offered an escape from degeneration. In his much quoted letter to Suvorin, in which Chekhov proclaims his faith in progress, he states that he lost interest in Tolstoy and Tolstoyism because, being of peasant stock himself, he was not easily persuaded by the beliefs in the virtues and goodness of peasants (*"krest'ianskie dobrodeteli"*, 141).²⁷ Through the experience of and with his own tubercular body, Chekhov knew only too well that progress had limitations in the field of biology. His story "Baby" is thus a response to the biological utopia and the peasant woman myth that was cultivated by Gleb Uspensky.

Notes

1. G. I. Uspenskii. 1956. *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 302-324.
2. Worobec. 2001: 76-93. On the importance of peasant women's contribution to the financial survival of the family see Glickman. 1992: 54-72.
3. Richard von Krafft-Ebing's work appeared in Russian translations in the 1870s. His most well known work, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), was translated into Russian in 1887. Krafft-Ebing was the main authority on sexual criminal behavior in the 1870s when he visited Russia as a consultant. See G. S. Vasil'chenko 1996: 3-7.
4. See G. I. Uspenskii. "Trudovaia' zhizn' i zhizn' truzhenicheskaiia" in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 7: 458-479, 361.
5. See Semanova 1959.
6. Uspensky wrote a cycle "*Pis'ma s dorogi*" (1888). See Semanova 1959.
7. See Suvorinu 1891: 131.
8. See Suvorinu 1893: 25.
9. See Egorovu 1891: 538.
10. G. I. Uspenskii. 1956. Primechaniia in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 409.
11. See Chekhov 1955: 359-371.
12. See Chekhov 1955: 501.
13. See Engelstein 1992.
14. Chekhov's interest in women's issues well into the 1890s is evidenced by his having a copy of P. B. Bezobrazov's 1893 book on the state and condition of women in his library: *O sovremennom polozenii zhenshchiny*. Publichnaia leksiia. Moscow: A. I. Snegireva.
15. A. P. Chekhov. "The Duel" in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 372-478
16. See Uspenskii 1988: 197-303.
17. See Bel'chikov 1930: 107-133.
18. Gromova-Opul'sskaia, L. M. et al (eds). 2000. *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchetsva A.P.Chekhova 1860-1888*. Moscow: Nasledie: 1: 117.
19. See Geizer 1954.
20. The common understanding is that fon Koren's views represented the views of Chekhov's friend, the biologist Dr V. A. Vagner. Chekhov allegedly opposed these views. This understanding is based on the reminiscences of Chekhov's brother, Mikhail, and seems somewhat too hagiographic. Chekhov 1933.
21. See K. D. Muratova. Primechaniia in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 501-502.
22. See A. P. Chekhov. 1955. "The Duel" in *Sobranie sochinenii dvenadtsati tomakh*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 372-478.
23. For the full, uncensored wording of this letter see Senderovich 1996: 306-340.

24. Barbara Heldt notes, "Chekhov presents Agafia's decision to gratify her own needs as a heroic end" (52). See Heldt 1987.
25. See Mirskii 2003.
26. See Rayfield 1997.
27. See Suvorinu. 1897.

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Children: necessary evil or product of divine will?

One of the themes intrinsically linked to the problematics of sexuality is the topic of childbirth. Towards the end of the nineteenth century this topic was approached in Russian public discourse from a number of angles. One such viewpoint claimed that, within the bourgeois family, children were responsible for various domestic tensions and the subsequent deterioration of the relationship between a husband and wife.

Fears of fatherhood: the influence of children on social responsibilities

Uspensky believed that, in upper and middle class families, the appearance of a child necessitated husbands to acquire more capital in order to sustain their bigger families. As a result, they neglected their duties as citizens. Mothers in bourgeois families were viewed as incapable of feeding and nursing their own children without the help of wet nurses and nannies, and were considered to regard the birth of children as an obstacle to entertaining and the carefree existence to which they were accustomed. The birth of a child and the subsequent increased demand for cheap labor thus lead to the increasing exploitation of the lower classes in the workforce and the deterioration of morals in the new father, as well as an unavoidable conflict of consciousness when the man had to compromise his high ideals and hopes for an honest life. In Uspensky's work this theme acquires polemical dimensions and is problematized as a class issue, as seen in his juxtaposition of a bourgeois family with a peasant family in which children have definite roles as contributors to the economic wealth of the family unit.

The apogee of the debate on human sexuality within the bourgeois family took place with the circulation of illegal copies of Leo Tolstoy's "The Kreutzer Sonata" in 1889 (a text already

mentioned on numerous occasions in this book). Tolstoy's hero, Pozdnyshev, shocked the Russian public by his proclamation of abstention from sex between the husband and wife as the only way to have a tension-free relationship in the family unit, and by exposing the destructive role that children have on the relationship between husband and wife. In his philosophizing on the nature of sexual relationships between a husband and wife Pozdnyshev refers to the work of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) who treated human sexuality as a manifestation of the blind will to procreate.¹ In Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1864), the will to live is regarded as an egotistic and destructive force which takes humanity away from the sublime. Referring to the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer, Pozdnyshev declared that the end of the human race resulting from abstention from sex was a desired condition. While the declarations of Tolstoy's hero are well-known in Russian cultural history, similar views expressed by Uspensky's heroes are forgotten and have been not been registered as part of the discourse on sexuality.²

It was, however, Uspensky's democratic hero, the *narodnik* Tiapushkin, who confessed his own temptation to get rid of his newly born child whom he viewed as an evil being that would hinder his participation in a meaningful and useful life. In the 1884 pieces "Vozmutitel'nyi sluchai v moei zhizni" ("An Outrageous Event in my Life") and "Podrobnosti 'vozmutitel'nogo sluchaia', 'Nam samim' nichego ne nado" ("Details of an Outrageous Event: 'We Personally' Do Not Need Anything"),³ a populist hero experiences a moral crisis when sitting next to the bed of his newly born child: he is tormented by the realization of the fact that with his entry into fatherhood he will now have to join a community of people which he has despised all his life. He will have to become a member of the group of people that he calls "wolves" who have to destroy innocent "sheep", or members of the working class, in order to support their children. Uspensky's understanding of the sacrifice required is contained in this allegory of "wolf-sheep" and is based on two factors which operate in the relationship between a father and child: a social or class factor manifested in the increased desire for materialist wealth; and a biological instinct through which a man becomes like an animal with the need to destroy innocent prey in order to feed his own litter. As in Pozdnyshev's case, Uspensky's hero tells his story as a confession, but while Tiapushkin succeeds in overpowering his "outrageous" impulse to kill his own child, Pozdnyshev tells the story of his murder

of his wife. In his confession Tiapushkin describes the episode of the temptation of infanticide as “the most shameless and mean fact that overburdens my consciousness” (57). But the reasons which inspired his “dark thoughts” (103) are presented as powerful yet unchallenged facts. It is only Tiapushkin’s optimism, and his hope that he will be able to return to the service of his people after the child is born, that give his confession a vaguely optimistic outcome.

Yet the actual story of the torments experienced by the class- and social justice-conscious man of deeds, who is torn between the egotistical demands set by nature on the one hand, and the high ideals of self sacrifice for the sake of the exploited working classes on the other, does have a logical resolution. Including a number of descriptions of the suffering of workers and peasants who are underpaid, cheated and brutally exploited by the “wolves”—the family men with newly born children—the story proves that there is a set of conflicts inherent in the birth of children: within the text Uspensky presents a disturbing account of the temptation of infanticide as a resolution to the conflict between “*lichnoe i obshchestvennoe*” (the private and the social, 103). This resolution has an uncanny resemblance to the plot of A. Alekseeva’s story “Magistr i Frosia”, which Uspensky incorporated into his story “Mechtaniia” (1885). In “Mechtaniia” Magistr’s infanticidal impulses are viewed as the act of a selfish career man. In Tiapushkin’s story, infanticidal thoughts are motivated by the common cause to serve people.

Uspensky returns to the theme of the destructive role of the newly born child within the bourgeois family in his polemical piece “Zametka” (“A Note”, 1887). This article was written alongside his story “Ne byl’, da i ne skazka” (“Neither a True Tale, nor a Fairytale”, 1887) in which Uspensky addresses the issue of marital relationships. In both these works Uspensky juxtaposes the relationship between a husband and wife in a bourgeois family with that of a peasant family. In “Zametka” Uspensky responds to contemporary European discourse on the relationship between the sexes, drawing on information from the article by P.B. Boborykin “Diuma-syn v novom osveshchenii” (“Dumas-the-Son in a New Light”, 1886).⁴

As was usually the case, Uspensky composed his own response to the material he read in the journals, limiting himself to the issues raised only in the journal articles and using quotations from Dumas’ work without consulting the original source (Uspensky’s lack of academic education and systematic knowledge was commented on

by his contemporaries especially in the context of his participation in the journal polemics).⁵ Among the views on sexuality and marriage found by Uspensky in Boborykin's article were those of Arthur Schopenhauer. Thus, most likely without even reading Schopenhauer's work, Uspensky was able to absorb his ideas on the relationships between the sexes and the biological blind force to procreate (or the will to live) which also informed the work of Leo Tolstoy, especially "The Kreutzer Sonata".

Boborykin's article contains a passage from Dumas' work "*Tue-la!*" which describes the grief and depression that a young husband experienced at the birth of his child. Boborykin contextualizes Dumas' description of the feelings of the new father within Schopenhauer's views on men as slaves of women through biological forces: "When in love, men are lead not by immoral want, nor by divine charm. They work for the sake of the genius of nature; without knowing this, they are at the same time both its instrument, its agents and its victim" (*Vestnik Evropy*, X, 1888: 484). Uspensky refers to Schopenhauer's words as "*strashnoe-prestrashnoe*" (terribly terrible, 200), and goes on to compare the attitudes towards children of the middle upper class family with those of the peasant family. In "Zametka" Uspensky maintains that both the man and the woman in the bourgeois family are antagonistic towards the appearance of a child because they are not used to responsibilities of any kind, let alone the responsibility of bringing up a human being. In Uspensky's views, the ideology of bourgeois men and women is directed towards pleasure, with any hardship that they encounter causing a traumatic reaction. This simplistic view of child rejection in the bourgeois family is further reinforced by his description of the lack of negative or traumatic reaction to newly born children amongst peasants. Uspensky maintains that the economic structure of the peasant family is built on the dependence of old people on the younger family members. A child is, therefore, welcomed into the peasant family not as a burden or financial liability but as a member who will contribute to the economic well being of the household. In addition, Uspensky claims that the diversity of duties performed by peasants contributes to their ability to cope with yet with another demand—that of bringing up children. Here Uspensky idealizes the situation, ignoring the astonishingly high level of infant mortality in Russian peasant villages.⁶



Illustration from Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh, 1957. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 8, from a painting by K. P. Savkeevich

Sex for procreation only: a peasant philosopher vs Schopenhauer

Uspensky's discussion on the difference in attitude between various classes towards the birth of a child is extremely schematic. He avoids raising the issue of children's education and refuses to acknowledge the difference in responsibilities towards the raising of children that exists between the classes. As a socially motivated *narodnik* who ought to be concerned with the need for education among the peasant class, Uspensky shows remarkable indifference to the future of the newly born peasant child. What are the underlying

reasons for this irresponsible ease with which Uspensky treats childbirth amongst peasants? Does Uspensky's description of Schopenhauer's biological views on sexuality as horrific suggest that he is adhering to religious views on procreation? If Uspensky believed in the divine nature of conception then he saw in the peasant family an example of the patriarchal unit that fulfilled God's wish to procreate. We can remember that Uspensky sympathised with the views expressed by the peasant Timofei Bondarev, the author of the treatise "Torzhestvo zemledel'tsa ili trudoliubie i tuneiadstvo". Bondarev taught not only that one should live by the labor of one's own hands, but also that one should fulfill God's commandments in giving birth to children. Well-versed in the Old Testament, this "judaising" sectarian who was exiled for renouncing Russian Orthodox faith accentuated the patriarchal structure of a family where children were the product of divine will. Inherent in Uspensky's attitudes to sexuality and childbirth was a paradox: on the one hand he rejected sexuality as sinful and strived towards monasticism, while on the other hand he was influenced by an New Testamental pathos of the divine nature of conception. Uspensky's wife Aleksandra Vasilievna Uspenskaia confided to Uspensky's psychiatrist, Dr Boris Sinani, that even in the early years of their marriage Uspensky had periods of abstention from sexual relations.⁷ Aleksandra dubbed such periods as the "*monasheskii lad*" (monastic mode, 540).

According to Dr Sinani's reports, however, Uspensky did attempt to have intimate relationships with his wife when he was allowed to leave the mental institution in Kolmovo for a home visit in June, 1893. Uspensky was disturbed by his inability to perform sex with his wife, describing his incapacity as a failure to perform his familial duty. This episode confirms that Uspensky, who had five children with his wife, viewed sexual relations within marriage as the fulfillment of his patriarchal duty. His attitude towards sexuality and childbirth was undoubtedly informed by contradictory discourses on the desirability of monastic celibacy and fulfillment of the divine wish for procreation. His idealization of the way in which childbirth and procreation was handled within the peasant family was linked with the belief that among peasants sex functioned as a part of nature and as a form of religious morality, rather than as a means for pleasure as it was regarded amongst the bourgeois classes.⁸

It was this same set of paradoxical beliefs which lead Leo Tolstoy to proclaim sex in marriage and childbirth as evil in the "The Kreutzer Sonata", while continuing to father his own children. It was

also this set of contradictions which lead him to finally leave his family, and which made Uspensky take regular escapades away from his family into the “exotic” locations of rural Russia and the world of the peasant Other.

After Uspensky’s illness and his placement in the mental institution in 1892, the Literary Fund (*Literaturnyi Fond*), with the help of Uspensky’s circle of friends, organized a special fund for donations for Uspensky’s wife and children which supported the family for some eight years. While Uspensky was preoccupied with the economic structure of the peasant family, which he saw as an ideal of the mutual support that existed between parents and children, he struggled all his life to support his own growing family. The reason for this was not so much his modest income, which improved significantly towards the end of 1880s when a full collection of his work was published, but his notorious impracticality. Both Uspensky and his wife had little respect for money and had an open house where people could come and go freely to find refuge and food. The bohemian atmosphere of their lifestyle was described by contemporaries as typical for a household of the radical generation of the 1860s. Uspensky’s fear of not being able to provide for the economic well-being of his own children was very real, materializing at the time when he was no longer able to write to support his family. His letters of 1889 show that he was only too aware of the inevitability of the full collapse of his exhausted, ailing body and mind, with their expressions of worry for the financial future of his family. His fears came to realisation and his wife and five children had to depend on the support of donations. As is evidenced by N. K. Mikhailovsky, the list of donors was particularly touching: alongside people donating thousands of roubles there were poor people whose humble donations formed a substantial sacrifice and who most likely deprived their own children of basic necessities in order to help the family of the *narodnik* writer.⁹

While writing about supportive, nurturing fathers in the role of hungry wolves hunting poor sheep in order to support their offspring, Uspensky himself must have felt like a such a wolf, fulfilling the obligations of instinct but at the same time loathing his own nature. This conflict between biology and class-consciousness was at the center of Uspensky’s torments as much as it was at the center of the inner conflict of the Russian intelligentsia of his generation. While nature’s goodness was accepted as part of the

peasant lifestyle and belief systems, instinctive nature as it demanded its toll on educated people was loathed. As part of the blind force of nature instincts had to be conquered and changed in the same way in which social conditions had to be changed to attain a better future for better individuals. And it was the self-hating sexed bodies that were caught in the process of this transformation.

Abandoned children: blaming the city

In his *ocherk* “Kvitanstiia” (“A Receipt”, 1888) Uspensky addresses the problem of unwanted children born to unmarried working class women who cannot afford to support them. It is known that Uspensky encouraged women writers to take up the topic of children abandoned by their working class mothers and the appalling conditions of state orphanages. In his letter to L. H. Simonova-Khokhriakova of 28 February 1885 Uspensky offers the woman-writer the plot for the story on orphans: “Why don’t you take up the deed of which I have been thinking for a long time: to write in a creative form a story about an asylum for orphans in St. Petersburg? I think that there is such a lot of material from which the readers will develop goosebumps, and it is necessary for the skin of the readers to get the strong feeling.”¹⁰

Uspensky’s *ocherk* “Kvitantsiia” achieved just that effect, evoking such strong feelings in Korolenko that he could not finish reading the story aloud (Korolenko 1961: 36). Uspensky starts this *ocherk* by quoting the statistical data on births in St. Petersburg: “It turns out that in Petersburg every month there are 700 children born who have neither fathers nor mothers. In the column “fathers” there is a 0, in the column “mother”—also a 0, and in the end line it is written: total—700 people” (498).

Disturbed by these statistics Uspensky decides to visit the orphanage in St. Petersburg. On his arrival he enters into conversation with a guard with whom he shares his discovery on the numbers of born children who are left unclaimed by their parents. The guard explains that from the gates where he is on duty children are being sent away each day from the orphanage to either villages or the “hygiene station” (499). The guard directs Uspensky to such a station in Goncharnaia Street. On the way to the station Uspensky is overtaken by a carriage carrying a young woman dressed as a seamstress who, in a state of extreme anxiety, asks the coachman to drive as fast as possible. Uspensky arrives at the station in time to witness a scene which clearly upsets him: the seamstress holds out a

receipt and asks the policeman at the station to direct her to her son. The numbered receipt is a paper of identification of a child whom she had given away to the foundling home. When the woman hands in the receipt to the policeman he explains that the number reflected on the receipt is of a “live child” (502) but, in order to identify him now, he needs a different identifying number which will help him locate the “dead” boy (502). The train carrying the corpses of dead children from the orphanage leaves the station, and the young woman, unable to say farewell to her dead child, breaks into “hysterical” (504) sobbing. Uspensky describes how one person from the crowd accuses the woman of abandoning her child. The crowd on the whole, however, is sympathetic to the bereaved mother. Uspensky consoles the woman, who tells him that she had hoped to earn enough money to be able to take her child back from the asylum. It is thus the circumstances of the working class woman that are being held as responsible for her situation.

In a postscript to “Kvitantsiia”, a piece entitled “Dopolnenie k rasskazu ‘Kvitantsiia’” (“An Appendix to the Story ‘Receipt’”), Uspensky argues against the destructive impact of capitalist labor on the working women with a story about the refusal of peasant women to become factory workers. He refers to a situation in the 1840s in the Urals, where industrial development superseded the encroachment of capitalism in the rest of Russia. Uspensky maintains that the refusal of the peasant women to participate in factory work served as a safeguard against the demoralization of the local female population. According to Uspensky, once they became factory workers women were vulnerable to degradation: they were involved in heavy drinking and free relationships with men which lead to such consequences as the spread of venereal disease, abortion, infanticide and the placement of unwanted children into orphanages where incidents of death were common. In Uspensky’s *narodnik* reasoning capitalism had a destructive effect on women who were deprived of time, means and energy to look after their children. Capital was an all-powerful force which devoured and consumed the bodies of women and their children. Only harmonious labor with the earth provided women with the environment where healthy children could be born and nurtured. In these two polemical pieces written in response to the statistical data on the birth of unwanted children, Uspensky offers an evaluation of the situation which, however, takes only social issues into account. For Uspensky, it is only as a result of the corrupting influence of the new economic pressures on peasants that cases of infanticide occurred

in peasant families. It was mentioned earlier that, in “The Power of Soil” (1882), the story of the peasant couple Avdotia and Gavril, Uspensky shows how the rhythm and birth cycle of the peasant family were interrupted by Gavril’s prolonged visits to the city. In peasant families children were born in autumn after the agricultural year came to an end and both the husband and wife had time to look after the newly born. The husband’s extended leaves from the village brought an end to the normal cycle of peasant life that was regulated by church holidays and prescribed periods of abstinence from sex, thus disturbing the regulated pattern of sexual contact and the resulting timing of childbirth. In the case of Avdotia and Gavril, a broken cycle of copulation and childbirth led to the birth of twins in the middle of summer, the most demanding time for work in the fields. To keep the newly born children quiet Avdotia gives them vodka, eventually giving them an overdose which leads to their death. Thus, even in cases of infanticide among peasants, Uspensky looks for causes outside the family structure. He found these causes in the corrupting influence of the new economic reality of Russia in the 1880s, as seen in this disturbing piece describing the twins’ death:

Two girls were lying naked with their heads turned each to the separate side; their faces were unusually red, like blood, and their mouths were open, the way hungry birds keep them open. There were smacking their dry lips, the girls opening their mouths wide, breathing heavily with interruptions as if they were consumed by inner fire.

I leaned towards them, the girls smelled of vodka [...] Vodka was in their feeding implements. The girls died the same night, they were superfluous, their birth interrupted all plans and the whole cycle of labor. And now they are no longer alive (183).¹¹

A simple conclusion: peasant families as the only healthy breeding sites

In the last years of his working life Uspensky developed an extremely schematic and simplistic view of the rift between the city and the village, offering a completely uncritical view of Russian peasant life. The reality of infanticide and abortion in Russia in the 1870s and ‘80s differed markedly from the conclusions drawn by Uspensky. In her discussion of the criminal charges laid against women who committed infanticide, Laura Engelstein shows that child murder was more common amongst peasant women, while factory women resorted more often to abortion.¹²

Infanticide among peasant women was treated by liberal legal and medical commentators with a degree of compassion, based on their assessment of young peasant women as ignorant and passive victims of intolerable circumstances in which childbirth took place in barns, fields and forests, during which the young woman allegedly lost control of her senses through pain, thus committing the act in a moment of temporary insanity. Abortion as was practised by the factory women was also seen by some as falling outside of crime and infanticide. Uspensky, however, ignores these aspects of infanticide and draws a simplistic schema in which the reality of life for peasant and factory women is distorted. The author of Uspensky's biography, professor of psychiatry P. M. Zinov'ev (1939), considers 1888 to be the last year of Uspensky's relative sanity. Zinov'ev came to this conclusion on the basis of his study of Uspensky's correspondences with friends and family as well as on the basis of his work, noting the tendency to simplify issues in Uspensky's later work. In their treatment of the theme of unwanted children "Kvitantsiia" and "Dopolnenie k rasskazu 'Kvitantsia'" certainly lack the complexity that was characteristic of Uspensky's earlier work as analyzed in this study. The nervous exhaustion to which Zinov'ev refers as a sign of illness in the late 1880s manifests itself in Uspensky's simplistic and schematic treatment of the issues.

In his discourse on unwanted children born to working mothers Uspensky neglects the issue of women's emancipation. This particular issue constituted an important part of his earlier work in which he declared that women needed to be able to take care of themselves without relying on their husbands. In the case of the seamstress Uspensky simply argues that her profession did not provide her with sufficient means to support a child, so limiting his discussion on working women's sufferings to issues of poverty. He does not offer education or the acquisition of an independent profession as a social or economic solution to the problem of single mothers. We remember that Uspensky saw the physical strength of peasant women as a means to economic independence and the ability to live alone. For these peasant women, their ability to function independently implied a sexually inactive lifestyle. In addressing the seamstress's tragedy, Uspensky deflects the issue of sexuality and replaces it with issues of social injustice. This tactic only reinforces the findings of this study concerning Uspensky's uneasiness with matters of human sexuality.

In his piece “‘Trudovaia’ zhizn’ i zhizn’ ‘truzhenicheskaiia’” (“Working Life and the Life of the ‘Toiler’”, 1887) Uspensky addresses the difference between the capacity to have children among peasants on the one hand, and city women on the other. He refers to the opinion of Krafft-Ebing on the intensity of urban life as a cause for the increase in nervous illnesses in contemporary European societies. Krafft-Ebing maintains that if the children of the “cultured class” (1886: 463) could be relocated to the countryside and raised there, the general mental health of people would improve. For Krafft-Ebing, agricultural labor clearly leads to physical and psychological well-being. Uspensky develops the point made by Krafft-Ebing—on the juxtaposition of city life with all its nervous ailments and the country life which is not conducive to mental pathologies—into an argument concerning the ability of women of various classes to mother children. He maintains that a peasant woman can raise children more easily than a working class woman, because her working duties are healthier than the exhausting work of her working class counterpart. He uses a seamstress’s work as an example of the kind of labor that drains a person because of its monotony and invariability. The mechanical work of the seamstress transforms the human body into a machine, so destroying the body and the psyche of the working woman. For the seamstress, there is no energy left for motherhood, while in the case of the peasant woman, bringing up children is one task among many duties which she performs daily. The very multifariousness of the peasant’s duties helps to avoid the exhaustion produced by mechanical city work.

Uspensky further develops his argument about the difference of perception of motherhood amongst bourgeois and peasant women, entering into polemics with Leo Tolstoy’s views on the maternal duties of women of the upper middle class:

In his article on women Count L. N. Tolstoy says that the duties of women of our circle will be completely fulfilled if a woman will give birth to children and will take care of their upbringing. I do not have at hand L. N.’s work, but I remember very well that in this article there is the expression ‘a woman of our circle’. This particular expression separates two modes of life—the cultured life and the toiling and working life of the people. In both of these societies the same sexes exist—men and women, but among the people’s class every woman can give birth and she can without fear fulfil all her womanly duties (but only if this lifestyle is not corrupted by outside influences). Every chap who has

hands and working implements can ‘procreate, multiply and populate the earth together with his wife’. The totally opposite happens in the cultured classes of contemporary society: here every woman cannot give birth, and here every man cannot be a husband and a father. Before such time as he will be able to purchase everything to satisfy his needs, which is achieved through the work of the toilers, he cannot in all honesty venture into such a difficult task as that of becoming a father of a family. Being a worker for the sake of income, he first has to pay the wages of other workers so that, with the labor of their hands, something which he cannot produce is made. In the same way that many women of our society are doomed not to have the opportunity to become mothers [...] She needs nannies and governesses whom she does not allow to become mothers while employed in her house under the threat that they, these toilers, would lose their jobs. An exemplary woman of our circle will not wait until her children’s married teacher recovers from her own childbirth – she will hire a different teacher [...] she will not allow the wet-nurse to keep her own child with her, but will talk her into giving her child away to the orphanage and from there nobody knows where else (472-473).¹³

As we can see, Uspensky conducts his discussion on motherhood from the position of class antagonism, and the mode of his polemics is informed by a reasoning borrowed from Marxist discourse on the exploitation of working classes by the bourgeoisie.¹⁴ Yet, while entering into polemics with Tolstoy’s views on the duty of motherhood among the women of educated classes, Uspensky does not address the issue of emancipation of women and their right for freedom over their own bodies—the polemics which he could have taken up as a *narodnik* who admired women revolutionaries. Rather, he moves the discussion to the level of class antagonism. In Uspensky’s argument motherhood in the upper classes is based on exploitation and is thus immoral, while motherhood for peasant women is a direct fulfilment of the commandment to “procreate, multiply and fill up the earth” (473). Uspensky’s views on the issue of motherhood in his contemporary society is a combination of patriarchal and religious values represented by the peasant society, and Marxist views on the exploitation of the working classes in the private sphere. Uspensky’s discussion addresses the issue of the body politics when he expresses the views that both upper and lower classes are in a relationship of interdependence when it comes to issues of

procreation and childbirth. He views the economic underpinnings of childbirth as a determining factor of the body politics in capitalist society.

Uspensky and his own children: the frustrations of a populist father

There is also a biographical element in Uspensky's description of the dependence of women of the cultured classes on the women of the lower classes in child nursing. In Uspensky's memoirs "Moi deti" ("My Children"),¹⁵ which he started sketching out while in the mental institution in Kolmovo in August 1893, he confided that his wife did not feed their children and had hired a wet nurse to perform this duty: "We fussed a lot about the wet nurse for hired milk was something which I considered impossible. Every woman feeds her own child and only a nervous one hires a wet nurse or feeds the child with cow's milk. The hiring of the wet nurse outraged me, and my wife Aleks[andra] Vas[ilievna] was upset that she could not feed our boy" (199). The wet nurse followed the Uspenskys on their trip to Paris in 1875. Uspensky wrote his reminiscences in a state identified by his psychiatrist as delirious, and he mentions that his wife was upset about not feeding their child. However, according to the reminiscences of a friend of the family, Uspensky's wife did not want to breastfeed the child because for her it was both an ideological and a class issue.¹⁴ This friend allegedly said that the wife of a famous populist writer should not breastfeed her children: 'I brought with me a wet nurse to Paris. I did not breastfeed my children. How can a wife of a writer like this [*takogo pisatel'ia*] involve herself in such things!' (164). According to the author of the memoirs, this behavior of Aleksandra Uspenskaia was typical for a woman-radical of the sixties who considered household duties, including the duties of motherhood, as bourgeois and unimportant in comparison to involvement in political affairs. But Uspenskaia's remarks concerning breastfeeding also express the attitude of a woman of the privileged classes. The daughter of a wealthy industrialist, Aleksandra Baraeva was as much a representative of the generation of the 'sixties who dreamed of devoting their lives to the education of simple people as she was a member of the privileged classes brought up with expectations of comfort and luxury. She belonged to the class which Tolstoy called "*zhenshchina nashego kruga*" (a woman from our circle) and which Uspensky criticised for egotism and indulgence in luxury through exploitation of the poor. The pain and shame expressed by the

mentally ill Uspensky over his wife's hired labor in breastfeeding his children serve as evidence of Uspensky's sense of guilt over his participation in the exploitation of lower classes—an expression of social consciousness that, in his understanding, converged with the body politics.

One of the persistent hallucinations which haunted Uspensky was his conviction that he had committed the terrible crime of killing his own children and family, or that he had poisoned them with strychnine. Dr Boris Sinani, who recorded these hallucinations, observed that while confessing these crimes Uspensky maintained that they were committed by one of the two halves of his personality, the one called "Ivanovich", the other—Saint Gleb. One of Uspensky's biographers, N. Rubakin (1908), noticed the connection between the hallucination on the theme of the child murder and Uspensky's story "Vozmutitel'nyi sluchai v moei zhizni". Rubakin limits his observation to pointing out that the mentally ill Uspensky was preoccupied with the same humanitarian issues which were at the core of his writing.¹⁵

For Rubakin it was important to stress the fact that Uspensky remained an exceptional individual even when touched by the debilitating disease, and that he remained concerned with the issues of human suffering and injustice even when psychologically unfit. For the purpose of our investigation, this information concerning Uspensky's fear of having become a murderer of his own children and family serves as evidence of the deep inner conflict which lay at the core of Uspensky's thoughts on the power of biological inevitability in sexuality, procreation, childbirth and lactation. An apparent conflict between the desire to lead the life of a Christ-like ascetic with the mission to serve the needy and deprived, structured around the necessity to abandon the family as an embodiment of egotism and to forget the body as an all-consuming vessel of passion, found its resolution in a schizophrenic divide of Gleb Ivanovich into two persons: Ivanovich, who killed his children in order to free himself and devote his life to the service of the people, and the incorporeal Saint Gleb who did not have the body in the first place. These hallucinations and the continuity of the subject of child murder and family conflict in Uspensky's semi-documentary writing show to what extent his clinical schizophrenia mirrored the cultural schizophrenia of the epoch.

Notes

1. Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1864) was hugely influential in Russia from the 1860s. See Maurer 1967.
2. Peter Ulf Moller in his discussion on the debate on sexual morality around "The Kreutzer Sonata" does not mention Gleb Uspensky's work.
3. G. I. Uspenskii. "Vozmutitel'nyi sluchai v moei zhizni" in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow, Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 57-80 and "Podrobnosti 'vozmutitel'nogo sluchaia'". 'Nam samim' nichego ne nado", *ibid.*: 6: 81- 108.
4. Boborykin works with information on Alexandre Dumas (1824-1895) as taken by him from an essay by Bourge, "Aleksandre Dumas-the-son" which appeared in the 1888 Russian translation by E. Vatson in the two volume edition under the title *Ocherki sovremennoi psikhologii*, St. Petersburg, sn. Uspensky could have been familiar with Dumas' views on prostitution and the relationship between the sexes from A. Dumas-fils' *Muzhchina-zhenshchina*. Odessa. 1873 and from *Prostitutsiia i ee zhertvy: Sbornik Perevodnykh Statei gg Rabiuto, Diuna-syna i Lekura po voprosu o priiutakh sv. Marii Magdaliny*. Moscow, 1873.
5. M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin was especially skeptical of Uspensky in the role of a "publicist". See Glinka-Volzhskii 1935.
6. See Ransel 1988.
7. See B. N. Sinani. 1939. "Dnevnik" in Glinka-Volzhskii, A. S. and G. A. Leman (eds). *Gleb Uspenskii. Letopisi*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi literaturnyi muzei, 4: 515-598.
8. See a discussion of this belief among the Russian intelligentsia at the turn of the century in Engelstein 1992.
9. See Glinka-Volzhskii 1935: 508.
10. Quoted from G. I. Uspenskii in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 7: 650.
11. G. I. Uspenskii 1988. "Vlast' zemli" in *Sochineniia*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 2: 91-189.
12. Engelstein uses data available from the research and investigation on cases of infanticide published in the 1860s and 1870s as well as in the pre-war period. See Engelstein 1992.
13. Uspensky refers to Tolstoy's work "Zhenshchinam" which he read in *Sochineniia gr.L.N. Tolstogo. Part XII, Proizvedeniia poslednikh godov*. Moscow: 1886.
14. Uspensky was familiar with the work of Karl Marx. He particularly valued Marx's opinion that Russia would be able to escape capitalist development if the reforms of 1861 could be put on hold and the agricultural communities with their communal structures would not be destroyed. Marx expressed these views in his letter written in French in 1877 directed to the editor of *Otechestvennye zapiski*. It was published in a Russian translation first in *Vestnik narodnoi voli* (1886: 5), and then in *Iuridicheskii vestnik* (1888: 10). Interestingly, in his letter devoted to Marx's article, Uspensky declares his admiration for Marx and his skepticism about Leo Tolstoy's views. See Uspensky's letter to V. M. Sobolevsky, 3 November 1888, in Glinka-Volzhskii 1935: 480-481.

15. G. I. Uspenskii. "Moi deti" in Glinka-Volzhskii, A. S. and G. A. Leman (eds). *Gleb Uspenskii. Letopisi*. Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi literaturnyi muzei, 1939: 199-202.
16. See Rubakin 1908: I-CIV.

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The sacred egg: a symbol of human procreation

Uspensky's fascination with the subject of reproduction serves to emphasize the controversies and contradictions implicit in his work and in the paradox of the Judeo-Christian tradition which, on the one hand, sanctified birth, reproduction and motherhood while, on the other hand, introduced the concept of sin in relation to sexuality and the body. When "Parovoi tsypfenok" ("An Incubator Chicken") first appeared in 1888, it received high praise from Leo Tolstoy, who liked it so much that he read it aloud to family and guests.¹ It was the masterful structure of the story, subtitled "A Story to be Published Only During Christmas", that Tolstoy purportedly enjoyed most, as well as its seductive quaintness and lighthearted humor.² Yet the seriousness of its subject matter cannot be understated.³

The body-soul dichotomy and the body of an animal

The problematics of the incubator chicken have been described as Uspensky's attempt, albeit ironic, to contribute to the "accursed questions" of Russian literature stated by Dostoevsky's metaphysical hero Ivan as: "Is there God, is there immortality?" (1974: 14:213). The pastiche-like subtitle of Uspensky's quasi-Christmas tale⁴ not only marks the mischievousness of the story in which uneducated peasants grapple with philosophical paradoxes; it is also an attempt by the populist writer to conceal his modest attempt at theorizing on the existence of the soul and the afterlife, notions challenged by the biological sciences and technologies of his day. The story that emerged was clearly worthy of Tolstoy's attention not just for its mastery of form, but also for the elegant subtlety with which it expressed a problematic concerning one of the major philosophical dualisms—the body and the soul—and its relevance to questions of human/animal sexuality and procreation. The chicken enigma forms a thematic link with an array of quasi-scientific questions on the origins of life, generation, and the bond between a mother and an embryo.

In this story Uspensky attempts to solve the cluster of riddles surrounding creation and generation by building a parallel between a mother and her child and a chicken and her egg. This reading is underpinned by work in the emerging field of animal studies in which scholars from various disciplines looked at the representation of animals in diverse cultures (Ham and Senior 1997; Rothfels 2002). Within western Christian tradition animals have been treated as inferior others (Deleuze 1997). These ideas were shaped by Church Fathers such as Augustine, Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom who considered, among other topics, the relationship between humans and animals, and decided that the two had nothing in common (Salisbury 1997). Animals had no souls; they could not have an afterlife; they existed to serve humans. With the advent of the Scientific Revolution the boundaries between animals and humans narrowed. At the same time, however, the triumph of Darwinism deprived both animals and humans of souls, and further established a taxonomy in which animals were inferior to humans. On the hierarchical scale of men-women-children-animals, animals occupied the most subaltern place. As the boundaries between humans and animals became blurred, marginalized groups slipped below the human boundary. Uspensky's story challenges all these assumptions and is structured on the parallelism between humans and animals.

The plot of "Parovoi tsypfenok" is based on an episode at a railway station. This story is identified by Uspensky as somewhat exceptional; he states at the outset that, while it ought to be published during *sviatki* (Christmas holidays), it is nevertheless more a *stateika* (short article) than a *rasskaz* (story, 597). This serves as a strategy for smuggling in scientific problematics under the disguise of the unreal and the fantastic, and the presentation of serious matters in the guise of the humorous and uncanny. This concealment betrays Uspensky's shyness in writing about the scientific and philosophical matters of generation and procreation.

The story relates how Uspensky-the-narrator overhears a conversation between peasants about a tragic occurrence which had taken place earlier that day. The owner of the road house, whom each member of the group knew personally, had thrown himself under a train and been killed on the spot. Significantly for the awkwardness of the subject matter, the conversation takes place in the total darkness of night, and neither the faces nor the figures of the storytellers can be made out; they are merely "dark shadows" and silhouettes (598). In discussing the dead man's act of despair, the peasants try to reach an

understanding, not so much of his motives, but rather of the consequences and implications of the sacrilegious and sinful act of suicide itself. While they all know that the unfortunate *kabatchik* was driven to drink by his unhappy marriage, they express equal concern about the lost soul of the poor sinner. With the staunch logic of simple reasoning they come to the sensible conclusion that there are many women in the world but only one soul for each of us, and it is for this soul that one will be held responsible before God at the Last Judgement. As they are grieving over the lost soul of the unfortunate suicide victim, the young and cheerful station master scoffs at the very idea of an afterlife. At this moment another peasant enters the conversation, and in a lengthy monologue tells the tale of his conversion from a careless *dubovaia koloda* (wooden block, 600) to an enlightened human being. His state of divine revelation was achieved, paradoxically, through his involvement in the new technologies of fish and chicken farming. In a reversal of atheist logic, science is not the means by which God is shown not to exist, rather God reveals himself to the peasant via science. What initially seems to be a nonsensical collection of unrelated terms and concepts, “God, soul, fish job, chicken job” (600), acquires meaning as the peasant-philosopher reflects further on the topic of the soul.

The peasant-philosopher astounds his interlocutors by sharing his discovery of the *kurinaia dusha* (chicken soul, 601). His clever listeners object to this conclusion, saying that there can only be a Christian soul, and in the scholastic tradition of argumentation they refer to the Scriptures which contains no mention of a chicken soul. To convince his skeptical opponents, the chicken-defender employs the methods of parallelism and analogy. As a master orator he asks his audience a set of rhetorical questions: “Answer me, why did the *kabatchik* throw himself under the train?” After receiving the expected answer— “because of the woman” —he asks the tricky question: “And now, would you care to explain this: which part of his body was cut by the wheel?” (602). On being told that the victim was cut through his stomach to his back, the philosopher develops his point about the locus of the *ogorchenie* (sorrow, 602), the condition which had led the victim to suicide. Impatiently, he rejects the explanation that it was the stomach which was cut by the train because it was the seat of the “sorrow.” The folk are obviously influenced by the linguistic association of *zhivot* (the locus of the emotions) with *zhizn* (the seat of life).⁵ Instead, the philosopher proposes an interpretation in which the place of sorrow is situated between the stomach and the

back, this place he identifies as the seat of the soul: "It is the soul that ached and the soul that perished under the train" (603).

Having identified the seat of the soul, the peasant proves its existence with reference to its ability to ache. Soul and conscience ("sovest", 605) in this interpretation are, at the same time, both transcendental and physical entities, which are not situated in the "stomach," the "bones," or the "ribs" (603), but are somewhere in the area of the chest. The paradox of this metaphysical physiology consists in the fact that the soul is physical and yet capable of emanation, capable of being physically destroyed and yet also able to survive destruction. This paradox does not perturb the peasant-philosopher, who clearly does not even see it as a paradox. Having proven the existence of the soul *per se*, he turns to demonstrating the existence of an animal soul—the "chicken soul" (604).

If the seat of the human soul is the part of the body in which ancient Greek philosophers located the *pneuma*, then, in the peasant-philosopher's microcosm, the seat of the chicken soul is linked to the chicken's capacity to procreate. The peasant first came to believe in the existence of the chicken soul when he observed that peasant women did not buy incubator chickens. These highly practical women had noticed that incubator chickens did not reproduce. The clever *kuriatnik* then noticed that farm fish also did not reproduce, and he concluded that "artificially" bred animals do not have souls. They function by activation of hot vapor (*parom deistvuiut*, 604) but do not have descendants: "*A potomstva netu!*" (604). These 'machine chickens' (604) are depicted as not unlike Cartesian creatures with an embedded dualism between the body and the soul: the body is animated by the spirit and, without this activating force, the body remains simply a machine, an automaton. As recent commentators on body politics have observed, René Descartes not only deprived the body of the soul (as had been done by Greek philosophers going back to Plato), but he also accomplished the separation of the soul from nature. Descartes distinguished two kinds of substances: a thinking substance, the soul, and an extended substance, the body.⁶ While the body functions by the laws of nature, the mind and soul have no place in the natural world. In the peasant's philosophical/physiological investigation, real and artificial creatures differ from each other in that, while both are born of a female bird, they receive warmth from two different sources: one from the warm feathers of its mother, the other from electricity. While the first type of chicken is real and has a soul because it can procreate, the second group is soulless, brought to

life by electricity and artificially maintained temperatures. Being without a soul, these birds cannot give further life.

The riddle of the egg: a history

Our Russian peasant philosopher has many predecessors in this matter of chicken procreation.⁷ In the seminal work on the history of generation, *The Ovary of Eve* (1997), Clara Pinto-Correia shows that Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) had systematically cracked open chicken eggs and registered their development during a three-week period. In his *Generation of Animals* he speculated as to what extent the hen's egg is alive if it is infertile. As to the practice of artificially incubating eggs, the ancient Egyptians knew how to do this by burying them in manure. The Egyptians could perform artificial incubation with precision around 1400 B.C.—a practice not matched in the West until the nineteenth century. The Egyptians also believed that *ruh*, or “life,” entered the egg on the eleventh day of incubation.

During the Scientific Revolution, experiments with hen eggs were widely performed to study the development of the chicken. On the basis of these studies conclusions were drawn on the nature of generation. The idea of the encasement of life in an egg, known as preformation, did not contradict the Christian notion of the divine will. Preformationists did not challenge the biblical Creation, and believed that all human history had been originally encased inside the ovary of Eve and/or Adam's seed.

In *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) Jonathan Swift uses eggs to parody the absurdity of dogmatism. Swift's novel contains a fierce disagreement between two factions over which end of an egg is the correct one to break before it can be eaten—an episode which functions within the broader context of a parody on the extremes of dogmatism and scientific experimentation. In his polemical treatment of the scientific excesses of his time, Swift held that God's intervention was necessary for any act of the animal world. Likewise, Uspensky's peasant-philosopher argues that in order to procreate, chickens have to have a soul, since procreation is a sacred and blessed activity. While Swift's hero, in an encounter with Descartes (brought to life through an act of necromancy, the very possibility of which the philosopher of reason would deny), is given the opportunity to expose the limitations of Cartesian natural philosophy, our peasant-philosopher operates in the evolutionist post-Darwinian realia.⁸ He also engages in polemics with the prevailing beliefs of his time, which saw the notion of evolution triumph over divine creation. He draws

his knowledge not from scientific sources, but from a literal reading of the Scriptures, the authoritative source to which his fellow peasant conversationalists also refer. In addition, this worldly-wise philosopher calls on an array of folk beliefs which, in Dostoevsky's characterization of the period, formed a peculiar combination with learned and complex ideas that had found their way "onto the streets."⁹

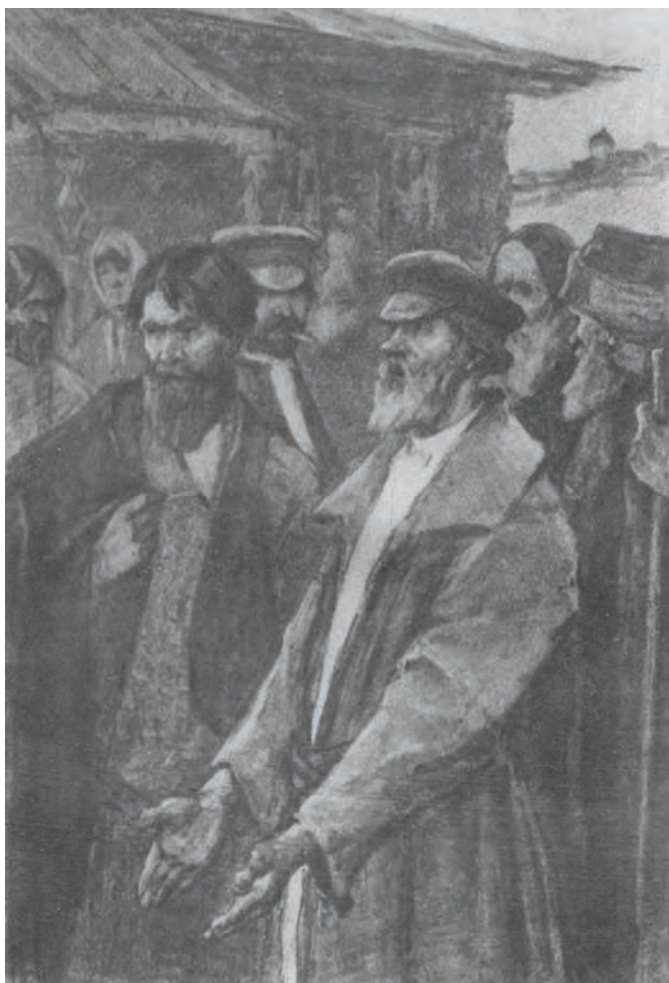


Illustration from Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh, 1957. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6, from a painting by A. O. Posledovich

The peasant believes that the hen influences her offspring not only at the time of conception but also during the incubation period as her “thoughts” and concerns travel from her soul into that of the young chicken. He draws a parallel between this and the mystical physiological link that exists between a human mother and her child. The genetically inherited features are supplemented by characteristics acquired during gestation which in turn become biologically transferable. The peasant repeats a common superstition about the origin of birthmarks, which are said to occur when a pregnant woman is shocked at the sight of a fire and then touches her skin: birthmarks appear in the same place on the child’s body where the woman touched herself. The link between the mother and her child is thus both biological and mystical. To parallel this link between a human foetus and a mother, the peasant describes how hens’ fantasies are imprinted on the chicken embryo. That there are more cocks born than hens is explained by the fact that hen mothers dream a lot about their male counterparts. Uspensky’s peasant is here espousing a preformationist view.

As has been shown by Pinto-Correia, the egg, and also the ovary, have been considered since antiquity to be the seat of encasement wherein the organism fully develops into the shape planned by the Creator.¹⁰ Parallel to this view, and somewhat paradoxically, there existed among scientists a view which survived well into the nineteenth century (and to the present day in popular culture) that the mother’s sensations during pregnancy make a physical imprint on the foetus. Uspensky’s example of birthmarks is especially telling, as this belief was used by scientists and philosophers alike to illustrate the power of maternal impressions over the formation of the embryo. As was discussed in Chapter 5, what was known in the history of science as *telegony*, the theory of “maternal impression”, was used to explain aberrations and deformities, including the formation of monsters. It placed a taxing burden on women, whose impressionable nature was held responsible for the process of generation going wrong. In the nineteenth century, scientific experiments on the modification of embryo development were conducted on chicken eggs, including highly unethical teratogenic work on the production of monsters. Some respected scientists of the Académie Française had hoped to work on human embryos that develop inside the placenta, but were forced to limit their experiments to chicken embryos. Such work earned the high praise of Charles Darwin.¹¹

Uspensky's pantheism and peasant philosophy on procreation and the Scriptures

Uspensky's peasant considers the influence that the mother has over her embryo to be good. Such a positive treatment of mothers is linked to the peasant's religious beliefs, which regard the ovary/egg as the seat of a God-created organism with a soul. Hence the anti-Darwinian elements of the peasant's thinking manifest themselves not only in his polemics against experimentation with new life, but also in his insistence that supernatural forces exist. It is these forces that are responsible for providing animals and humans with souls, with the mother functioning as the agent of soul transfer. Uspensky's peasant thus establishes an analogy between human and animal organisms, with both standing as physical bodies with undeniable links with the Creator. In the same way that the Creator of Genesis and Leviticus is concerned with the procreantary functions of human and animal bodies which are in a protective covenant with Him, so Uspensky's philosopher treats sexuality and procreation with the utmost seriousness. After all, it was the Creator's domain to make sure that all creatures, both human and animal who came off Noah's Ark, were guaranteed fecundity: "Be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it" (Gen 9:7).¹²

As we have already seen, Uspensky expressed his interest in human sexuality—specifically women's sexuality—through his concern for the fate of unwanted children in a number of his stories. Uspensky's reputation as a *narodnik* who exposed society's social ills has hampered the interpretation of the themes of abortion and infanticide in his texts. These topics were viewed as themes of pressing legal, social and political value; the religious and mystical basis of Uspensky's humanitarian concern with the ills of the society was overlooked. Yet it is clear that abortion and infanticide were of interest to Uspensky not only as unfortunate practices among the lower classes—the peasants, prostitutes and destitute young women seduced in the big cities. Of equal importance were the mystical aspects of these crimes against the human soul. Thus, what a generic philosopher from the chicken farm says in his *referat* (treatise, 597, 607) on the nature of fish, chicken and children, describing them as "*tvar' Bozhii*" (God's creatures, 605), is of utmost importance to Uspensky himself. His own innermost thoughts are concealed in the speech of a simple but reflective peasant, thoughts which he should have been quite critical of as an enlightened *narodnik*. The so-called superstitions of simple folk are the target of mild ridicule but at the

same time constitute the very essence of the author's unspoken beliefs. Uspensky himself came from a seminarian background; on both sides of his family men were priests, and his father received an education in a seminary. While it was accepted among the populists that Uspensky showed no interest in religious matters during his writing career (Mikhailovsky 1908), he was gripped by a religious mania during the period of his mental illness—from 1891 until his death. Significant here is his psychiatrist Dr. Boris Sinani's statement that Uspensky "understands God pantheistically and links him with love and infinity, which he understands either as attributes or synonyms [of God]" (Mikhailovsky, 1908). While in the clinic Uspensky became a vegetarian, maintaining that all living matter had soul, and a special diet had to be devised for him. He even refused to eat apples that had been picked, believing that only those that had fallen to the ground, and were thus no longer connected to the soul of the tree, should be eaten.

The extent to which the peasant-philosopher is Uspensky's alterego becomes more apparent when the *kuriatnik* elaborates on the God-given nature of the chicken's maternal instincts. He relates a somewhat anthropomorphic story about hen mothers: that once they are seated upon their egg(s), they stay there in an act of self-sacrifice and suffering until they have a physical pain in their bellies. They lose their feathers, lose their beauty, they dream of their roosters and of the entertainment of which they are deprived, but they nevertheless do not break the mystical link that is established between themselves and their chick(s). Exactly the same story occurs in Uspensky's "'Pinzhak' i chort", where the behavior of hens toward their egg(s) illustrates the special character of motherhood. Uspensky's choice of words here is the same as that of his *kuriatnik* in "Parovoi tsyplenok": due to extended sitting on the eggs, the hens lose their beautiful feathers on their sore stomachs; they dream of their roosters and missed entertainment, but their determination is unshakable. Uspensky dismisses the usual ironic and derogative treatment of instinct, wherein the power of the human mind is privileged over the instinctual impulses of animals—for Uspensky there is no differentiation in the animal world and, for him, a human and an animal both fall into the sphere which he courageously and affirmatively nominates as "zoological" (295). In the zoological connections between hens and chicks, and between husbands and wives in a peasant family, he sees the very center of a great mystery: while our peasant-philosopher in "Parovoi tsyplenok" does not know

the fancy words to denote the notion of instinct, he nevertheless expresses the same ideas which Uspensky-the-narrator expresses in the learned language of high culture in the chicken and egg(s) topos:

What is called 'the peasant way', that is, the whole structure of peasant working life, is in fact entirely dependent on something unknown, on this mysterious factor that even keeps a chicken pinned to its egg. No matter how clever the chicken may be, it will continue to sit on the egg even until it dies of hunger, and the motive and reason for this is unknown. And this *unknown* factor penetrates the whole structure of peasant life, starting with the land, the seed and the rain, and the wind, expressing itself in success, in failure, in animal and human sickness. At the heart of all this there lies not an idea worked out deliberately, but a mystery unknown to anyone, by which one can live only if one's instinctive feeling for it is pure and untainted. (295).

Uspensky describes the special link between a peasant man and his wife as "*zoologicheskaiia bezukoriznennost*", a zoological perfection that is God-given in humans (at least in peasants), animals, plants and all the elements of nature. This pantheistic universe appears to be monistic, the creation of one God who is present in all the manifestations of nature. This anti-Cartesian, Spinozan view of the world does not build hierarchies; it does not privilege the human substance over that of an animal, nor a grain over a stone.¹³ Neither does it problematize whether the chicken or the egg comes first. Uspensky's insistence on the commonality in both humans who are not separated from the soil and animals of the substance called by our peasant-philosopher "*kurinaia dusha*" (chicken soul) echoes the views of the Spinozan psychologist and physiologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920). A contemporary of Uspensky's, his work on animal and human souls, translated into Russian as *Dushi cheloveka i zhivotnykh*, was well known in Russia particularly in the 1880s in connection with his experiments in psychology.¹⁴ Uspensky wrote his story of the chicken soul at the time of the polemics surrounding Nikolai Danilevsky's (1822–1885) anti-evolutionist book, *Darwinism* (1885, 1887), which challenged the understanding that organic matter is created by mechanical forces alone.¹⁵ As for the parallels between animals and humans, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) by Darwin himself, which was a bestseller in Europe and Russia when it appeared, scrupulously enumerates examples of the similarities between humans and other animals.¹⁶ On the subject of the role of

hen-mothers in the life of their young chicks, Darwin notes that incubator chickens have to be taught by people to pick up small particles of food by means of the sound of a hen pecking, which they imitate. A proponent of the view that instincts are purely biological and congenital in nature, he nevertheless reveals in this example that chicks nurtured artificially are at least initially somewhat impaired in the development of their instincts compared to their more fortunate “mothered” counterparts.¹⁷

Uspensky’s monism

Uspensky’s image of a mysterious current which flows between a hen and her egg is remarkably compatible with the language of monist Spinozan philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), who uses literature both as his reference and his source.¹⁸ For Deleuze, the connections of desire transcend borders and barriers and can be established not only between persons, but also between a person and organic or even inorganic objects. In these connections the “dispersion of the subject” (Scherer 175) takes place in an unselfish act that Uspensky and his peasant philosopher regard as soul-transmitting currents. Such states of contact Deleuze calls states of becoming: becoming-animal and becoming-plant among them. The relationship between a chicken and her egg, which is achieved through a contact in surfaces, transforms life from a subject into an object, and can be viewed as a life-affirming act of becoming-mother and becoming-child.

In both of his stories discussed here, Uspensky refers to a practice used by villagers to deal with a hen that has wandered away from her egg. In such instances, peasant women give the strayed hen a piece of bread soaked in vodka in order to sedate her, and then put her back on her egg. Once the hen’s body touches the egg a mysterious force or current was said to create an inseparable bond between them: “*I v iaitso idet teplo i iz iaitsa idet v nee*” (and into the egg flows warmth and from the egg it goes into her, 606). It is this force which is identified by the peasant-philosopher in “Parovoi tsyplenok” as a *soul*, and by Uspensky-the-narrator in ““Pinzhak’ i chort” as a more opaque “*nevedomaia taina*” (unknown mystery, 295). In Deleuzian terms this current can be identified as a molecular flow between surfaces which creates “assemblages”. For both Uspensky and the *kuriatnik*, zoological links between organisms are not simply a matter of the blind impulse of perishable flesh towards flesh; the flesh is one with the spirit, and the relationship between mother and offspring among

humans and animals (fish and birds), and between husband and wife among people (at least among peasant “humans”), is driven by a soul not separated from the zoological, but part of its very essence.¹⁹ The peasant-philosopher and Uspensky clearly understand what is expressed by the eloquent author of Genesis: “So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth’” (Gen 1:20–23). Both Uspensky and the peasant-philosopher use the logic of analogy and parallel to argue for a monolithic continuum between the Creator and his creation—God’s love for his creatures expressed in the gift of proliferation and propagation.

Uspensky’s peasants argue by parallel and analogy, a method identified recently by Mary Douglas (1999) in her discussion of the model of Leviticus as a successful way of juxtaposing reasoning to the discursive argumentation of European culture. The analogical method is capable of building explanatory models which are equally effective for both scientific and literary analysis. Such models based on analogy are useful in mythopoetic and scientific discourses and should not be discriminated against as “unscientific” (Douglas 1999:17).

A warning against genetic engineering

The anxiety around the threat of scientific interference in matters of procreation is apparent in the peasant’s story and reflects Uspensky’s own uneasiness about the effects of technological advances related to the beginnings of new life.²⁰ On the one hand, his texts are concerned with the problems of abortion and infanticide, the fate of unwanted and illegitimate children and the statistics regarding orphanages. On the other hand, they fail to address the issues of contraception and pregnancy prevention. His moral concerns for the fate of unwanted children are expressed through first person narration in many of his *ocherki*, but his mystical views on sexuality and procreation are often disguised by being attributed to simple, uneducated speakers. Thus in his piece “Trudami ruk svoikh” (‘By the Labor of One’s Own Hands’, 1884), Uspensky uses the work of the sectarian peasant Timofei Bondarev (discussed earlier). Uspensky came across Bondarev’s manuscript “Trudoliubie ili torzhestvo zemledel’tsa” (‘Love of Work or the Triumph of a Farmer’) in the archives of the Minusinsk Museum, where it had been sent by the

peasant himself. Uspensky explains that Bondarev considered this manuscript to be a rarity because it exposed one of the most carefully hidden secrets of all: how to live an honest and religious life. Speaking apparently as a disseminator of Bondarev's views, Uspensky relates that ethical and godly conduct is to be found in two ways of living: giving birth to children and working the land to maintain the family through hard work. In this *ocherk* Uspensky quotes extensively from parts of Bondarev's manuscript where the peasant quotes the book of Genesis in describing procreation as a God-given command. Bondarev claims that these secrets to a godly life have been hidden not only from the Russian people but also from the rest of the world as part of a "conspiracy" by the clerics to divert people from original Hebrew sources. Uspensky's *ocherk* made a deep impression on Leo Tolstoy, who corresponded with Bondarev on this subject.²¹

Uspensky's sense of humor and a gender balance

Uspensky's anti-scientific stance in matters of sexuality and procreation is manifested in the jocular ending of his story "Parovoi tsypfenok". Once the *kuriatnik*-philosopher has finished his "*referat*" (597) on the chicken soul, another peasant relates an incident as a dialogic continuation of the theme under discussion—the interference of science in animal bodies. The tale is presented as hard to believe yet true. He claims to have seen a coachman in St. Petersburg with a clock installed into his rear, the reason given for this remarkable innovation being the busy lifestyle of the coachman's employer who measured time in seconds. The use of such a mechanism epitomizes the modern city lifestyle and the encroachment of technologies into the most intimate parts of the body. Such a truly ingenious installation—a mechanical device activating the body—can be interpreted as symbolizing not only a new form of life but also a Cartesian creature whose body is spiritless matter requiring activation by means of a separate entity. The male driver sits on the round object embedded with the ticking heart-like mechanism in the same way a hen sits on her egg. The peasant's parable parallels the dynamics of the body-spirit remarkably well: the coachman's body, after all, also produces and releases energy which, in turn, activates the mechanism of the clock. The relationship between the chicken and the egg and between the coachman and the clock is reciprocal, as is the phenomenological relationship between the body and the soul/mind (Damasio 2000). The parable also establishes a certain, albeit ironic, gender balance: if a female can activate an egg, a male can activate an

inorganic object. The irony of course is that the object that the man activates contains a self-functioning mechanism and does not need activation by heat, or *par*.

In considering Tolstoy's admiration for Uspensky's story, we should acknowledge, quite apart from the apparent courageous attempt by a Russian *muzhik* to tackle the problem related to the "great chicken and egg debate", the fine balance of humor and seriousness with which the story treats problems at the heart of the Russian classical canon²²: a peasant, tormented by love, who commits suicide in the mode of Anna Karenina; talk of theological sin, perished souls, and the afterlife of the suicide victim; the monism which unites animals and humans; Tolstoy's personal vegetarianism as a result of his identification with animals and his own monist quest; an anti-positivist mistrust in mechanistic scientific investigation; and the peasant conversationalists who pose and solve the "accursed questions" of life in a way typical of gatherings of Dostoevsky's eschatologically-thinking elite Russian boys. Core issues of Russian high culture are placed here in the peasant microcosm. Matters are ironically treated and yet seriously considered by the *narodnik* narrator whose peasant-philosophers engage in theorizing and employ oratorical devices and rhetorical analogies as successfully as is done in the logocentric modes of professional philosophical discourse (Douglas 1999). While Swift parodied Descartes and the Western dualist philosophical tradition, and made horses philosophize in a more reasoned way than people, Uspensky's short Christmas tale shows that the very object of Russian serious thought—the peasant—can also think, feel and philosophize. Perhaps Tolstoy liked the story's moral: that one does not have to be a learned *barin* to be preoccupied with the riddle of body and soul, creation and generation. Uspensky's mastery of depicting peasant speech was much admired by his readers and fellow populists alike, who treasured his ability to capture the essence of the humor as well as the lexical and syntactic features of peasant language. The authenticity of the language in this story no doubt also had a special appeal to Tolstoy, who had a firsthand knowledge of peasant speech.

Ultimately it took a Christmas story with its ambivalence between the real and the imagined to express the concealed tension between somatophobia and the desire for monistic unity between the body and the soul. While in most instances, Uspensky was haunted by the split inherent in Cartesian dualism, there endured, nevertheless, a deeply rooted quest for this unity.

Notes

1. Uspenskii 1956: 7: 597–607.
2. See P. I. Biriukov's letter 1888 (Uspenskii 7: 659).
3. Among the stories that take the chicken theme as a serious subject is a famous nineteenth-century political allegory about the Decembrists and Masons in the Russia of Nicholas I, Anton Pogorelsky's *Chernaia kuritsa* (1829); see Hellman 2000.
4. On the Christmas story in the Russian literary tradition, see Fridlender 1963, also Dushechkina and Baran 1993.
5. Additionally, the litany phrase "*i ves' zhivot nash Khristu Bogu predadim*," from the Russian Orthodox liturgy, puts the old Russian word for "life" before church-goers on a regular basis.
6. For a discussion of Descartes's dualism and Western somatophobia, see Grosz 1994.
7. In his post-modernist work "Nosy," Anatoly Korolev maintains that the famous debate about which came first, the chicken or the egg, was resolved only with the advent of x-ray technology, when zoologist John Bradfield and roentgenologist John Fairfax produced an x-ray of a chicken embryo inside an egg in 1946. See Korolev 2000: 291. In Russian folk tradition the tales "Kurochka riaba" and "Chudesnaia kuritsa" illustrate folk aspirations for possession of a chicken that would lay golden eggs or eggs made of precious stones. See Afanas'ev 1983 1: 83–85, 2: 55–59.
8. Uspensky wrote this story in 1888 when controversy over Darwin's evolutionist views was at its height in the Russian journals, with Professor K. Timiriazev, N. Strakhov, and V. Rozanov responding to N. Danilevsky's anti-Darwinist book *Darwinism* (1885, and posthumously 1887). Timiriazev attacked Danilevsky's allegation that Darwin had failed to explain the creation of organic matter and also his views on embryology. See "Pis'ma N. N. Strakhova k V. V. Rozanovu" in V.V. Rozanov. *Literaturnye izgnanniki*. 7-144, esp. 29.
9. Dostoevsky's famous views about ideas which have fallen on to the streets is found in his *Diary of a Writer*, and refers to the inevitable process whereby an intellectual thought is appropriated by the masses in a simplified, distorted, and dangerous form (1980: 21: 125–36).
10. On the history of discourse on the egg, see Pinto-Correia 1997.
11. On Camille Dareste's ambitions in the 1860s to found laboratories which would create monsters by tampering with embryos, see Huet 1993.
12. On God's covenant with Israel and animals, see Douglas 1999: 134–75.
13. On the relevance of Spinozan monism to issues of body politics, see Grosz 1994.
14. Uspensky uses the terms "kurinaia dusha" and "kurinaia psikhologiya" (7: 597). Russian psychiatrist V. F. Chizh popularized Wundt's teachings in Russian journals in the 1880s. On Wundt in turn-of-the century Russia, see Sirotkina 2002.
15. The debate was conducted by Nikolai Strakhov and Professor Kliment Timiriazev, among others, in the *Russkii vestnik* and *Russkaia mysl'*. See endnote 8.

16. Darwin's book has not been popular among anthropologists in the twentieth century due to its universalist claim that biology, rather than culture, determines the expression of emotions. See Ekman 1998.
17. Darwin describes the hen-mother's protective instinct and its manifestation as "she spreads out her wings, raises her tail, and ruffles all her feathers" (1998: 101).
18. See Deleuze 1997: 225–30. On the main concepts in Deleuze's philosophy see Scherer 1996: 173–78.
19. In his letters to his future wife (1869) Uspensky affectionately addresses her as "*tsyra moia*" (204), "*tsyplenok*", "*tsypin'ka*" (211) and "*tsyplenochek khoroshii moi*" (212) (my chick, chickie, chickadee, my beautiful little chicken). See Uspenskii. "G.I. Uspenskii, A. V. Baraevoi," in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 9: 204–12.
20. Here Mikhail Bulgakov's "Rokovye iaitsa" ("The Fateful Eggs" 1925) must be mentioned. It addresses the issue of science interfering with the God-given world order and violating ethical and moral imperatives. In it, the chicken and eggs become an emblem of old ordered Russia, while the imported eggs which involve the use of scientific methods of development hatch into reptiles which threaten to destroy Russia itself.
21. See Muratova, K. D. Primechaniia to 'Trudami ruk svoikh' in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 6: 166–67, 399–403.
22. It is interesting to note that Korolev, in "Nosy" (2000) connects the hidden metaphysical undertones of Gogol's trope of the missing nose with the phenomenon of the egg turning in a hen's body before it emerges. An egg comes out of a bird's body broad end first, and Korolev reads this as a marker of the creature's resentment at being delivered into the world and its preference for remaining in a state of closeness to the almighty Creator.

The final testimony: “Peasant Women”

One of the last major pieces written by Uspensky before his departure into the world of total psychological instability and mental institutions was devoted to the subject of peasant women. His piece “Krest’ianskie zhenshchiny” (“Peasant Women”) and its sequel “Otvetchiki: Prodolzhenie predydushchego” (“Respondents: Further Thoughts on Previous Themes”, 1890)¹ consolidate Uspensky’s views on peasant women as they developed in his work during the 1880s—in particular, the status of village women in contemporary rural communities and their plight resulting from the disintegration of the peasant class and their absorption into the working force in the big cities. At the same time, he continues his focus on the (de)sexed body of the peasant woman.

Factory workers’ bodies as victims of capitalism

In the last years of his working life before his confinement in the mental clinic, Uspensky experienced an acute need to travel to the villages in order to obtain new material which would enable him to write. His need to obtain factual information also found satisfaction in the reading of periodicals in which he picked up reports on the events and happenings in the lives of peasants, which he incorporated into his work. The fact that he referred to his pieces “Peasant Women” and “Respondents: Further Thoughts on Previous Themes” as *zametki* (notes) may have been an attempt to differentiate these works from the genre of sketches and stories which contained more creative writing and which relied heavily on Uspensky’s first hand experience. While his sketches and stories contained elements of peasant speech as recorded by Uspensky, his notes relied heavily on journalistic reports on court hearings, criminal statistics and newspaper articles on the topics of divorce, infanticide, and the general plight of peasant women. “Peasant Women” consolidates a number of topics which Uspensky had already elaborated on in his previous work, but this time Uspensky retrieves information mainly from published sources.

His topics are stable and remain the same: peasant women are the only women in contemporary Russian society who are capable of social independence and moral freedom due to their ability to sustain themselves economically; and the tragic plight of peasant women begins when they become working women in the cities.

In his last two pieces Uspensky tries to identify the forces and social institutions responsible for the misfortunes of the poor peasant-working women. These forces are identified as the city, the factory, and capitalist infrastructures, and Uspensky stresses the lack of government support as the main factor contributing to the continuing misfortunes of peasant and working women and the associated social ills such as infanticide, abandoned children, the child mortality rate in orphanages, lack of educational programs for poor children, prostitution and venereal diseases. In "Peasant Women" Uspensky identifies not only who is to blame, but also offers solutions for breaking the pattern of social and moral degradation linked to the problems of social and economic injustice in the lives of the peasant-working class women.

On the superiority of a peasant woman's brain

Uspensky starts "Peasant Women" by advising young populists not to bring the gender differentiations to which they are accustomed into the peasant villages. He observes that the young men and women from educated classes who move to the village in order to start a new sustainable lifestyle through the "labor of their hands" divide their behavior and duties along the lines of gender stereotypes. Men get involved in hard physical work while young women start bearing children and breastfeeding. Uspensky insists that such an understanding of the division of labor between peasant men and women by the young intelligentsia has nothing to do with the way labor divisions occur in the peasant family. He stresses that to believe that the primary duty of peasant woman is to give birth and breastfeed her children is to assign these women to an aimless and absurd existence:

To assign not just to a peasant woman nor to a woman from the intelligentsia, but for women in general such [...] a meaningless and aimless life means not to accept her as a human being, and it is true, we often see, that 'teachers of life' refer to a woman as 'fertile soil' [*chernozem*] and even sometimes deem it necessary when speaking of 'a woman' to mention at the same time a cow. If we recount everything that a peasant woman

does in her house with her brain and her hands, all of which has nothing to do with her fertility [...] then we will see that her life comprises of highly diverse and complicated kinds of work: she not only gives birth and feeds, but also spins, weaves, and sews clothes for the whole family, she looks after cattle, does washing, sows, mows, collects harvest, carries water. And she tells a fairytale, and sings a lullaby, and while singing continues to spin. In order to tell a fairytale, to sing a song, to spin and to weave one has to have not a cow's brain, but a human brain, and, if we take as an example of working life not the hardship, but broadness and, so to speak, 'poetry' of agricultural labor and of all folk life, then we will not be able to conceal the high working and moral qualities of a peasant woman, qualities which give her a full opportunity to be independent in all respects (providing she is not forced to leave her village to make a living elsewhere). (v.8, 511-512).

Here the comparison of a peasant woman to a "cow" is regarded as offensive, reflecting the move away from the pantheistic sympathies expressed in "Parovoi tsyplenok" where Uspensky asserted his belief in the positive side of peasants' closeness to nature. In the context of the new economic reality of rural life, Uspensky had to prove that the peasant woman could elevate herself above nature. By doing this, he achieves two aims: he shows the intellectual abilities of peasant women and he continues the desexing body politics of his writings.

Uspensky stresses that the current Russian press is partly responsible for this lack of knowledge and the misconceptions about peasant women that is rife among those populists who are under the influence of "theories" (512) of salvation while lacking any practical knowledge. The press only covers news relating to cases of destitute village communities in the throws of starvation—cases normally viewed as the result of the decreasing male population in villages. Contrary to such information, Uspensky finds a report in *Smolenskii vestnik* (n.133, 1889) describing a peasant community in which the leadership is taken over by highly capable women. The case refers to a rural community which had lost its male members due to the death of the *bol'shaks* and the departure of their male workforce to St. Petersburg where they became absorbed into the working classes. Only the women were left alone in the village community, they performed not only all the everyday duties, but conducted all the necessary financial and legal transactions. Uspensky is interested in this case as an illustration of the legal situation in the peasant family

community, by which a woman can become a *domokhoziaika* (landlady) after the death of her husband or even a *bol'shachka* (female head of an extended peasant family) if the family commune is of a significant size. Uspensky quotes the case in which the two *zhenshchiny-bol'shachki* developed such a large community that after their deaths a community the size of a village was left, which was then subdivided into various subgroups. Uspensky describes the case of the young woman-*bol'shak* Vasilisa Andreevna who, when a young girl, had to take over leadership as a result of the death of her brothers. When she died she left a family community consisting of twenty-one members.

Uspensky turns his attention to another case reported in the *Smolenskii vestnik* (n. 32, 1889) surrounding the successful leadership of Akulina from the village Sergeikovo who took over all the male duties in order to repair the damage done by her lazy and drunk husband. Uspensky pays special attention to the case of a peasant woman performing the work of sowing, a task traditionally performed in the peasant communities only by men. Akulina's success as a sower brought the neighboring male peasants to a state of anxiety. Their insecurity at a woman breaking gender boundaries and showing success in labor traditionally performed by males lead to her intimidation by the male peasants. The brave woman refused to be frightened by her persecutors and threatened them with a lawsuit. Uspensky rejoices at the fact that a peasant woman could stand above such intimidation and the fear of breaking customs. Her knowledge of her civil rights allowed her to maintain her economic independence. Uspensky concludes that the economic independence of a peasant woman allows her to escape violent abuse by her husband, and stresses that only through ties to agricultural labor can a peasant woman retain her independence. The moment this tie is broken and a woman has to embark on to a different way of earning money she is vulnerable to losing her economic and social freedom:

Not about bread alone is a peasant woman concerned; independence, the chance to live in the world without being under the yoke which is always part of 'hired labor', the yoke imposed by the husband who often considers his wife to be a working animal and who does not see anything human in her—all these are good reasons for a peasant woman not to separate from 'the soil', from peasantry and agricultural labor (516).

Uspensky's optimism in his evaluation of the peasant woman's chances for a successful and independent life is further reinforced by data which he finds in the journal *Iuridicheskii vestnik* (May 1889) where cases of legal land settlements among the peasants were reported. Shortage of peasant lands reached crisis point in the late 1880s due to a situation in which only rich peasants could acquire land which was desperately needed to accommodate growing families. Some twenty-eight years after the great reforms of the liberation of the peasants the portions of land allocated to them since emancipation had not grown. Land feuds among neighbors often lead to bloody fights, the number of legal proceedings in dispute resolutions over land increased dramatically. The legal profession was complaining about the total confusion of land ownership among peasants and was warning of bigger crises yet to come in future years. Uspensky noticed that out of twenty-five cases of peasant claims to land rights in the disputes among neighbors, twenty were filed by peasant women. The fact that peasant women's awareness of their civil rights had reached such a level that they turned to the court for the resolution of disputes is evidence of the tremendous progress which peasant women had achieved since emancipation. In his last work dedicated to peasant women, Uspensky, who had seen the abuse of women and used it in his stories and sketches, describes real progress in women's consciousness. The link between a woman and the land is viewed by Uspensky as a symbol of women's liberation: "In one word, on all the pages of Mr. Rev's report, the words 'peasant woman', 'peasant woman', 'peasant woman' come out, and they are followed by 'land', 'inherited land', 'piece of land'. This gives us a significant reason to appreciate the importance of land in the life of a peasant woman" (521).

They earned it: peasant women as free agents

Divorce among peasants is another topic which Uspensky encountered in his readings of the press. He refers to a report in *Nedelia* (N.1, 1890) which is devoted to the topic of the free premarital relationships which existed among the *raskol'niks* (old believer) peasant population of the Altai region. The author of the article stresses that in spite of the freedom in relationships between young peasant men and women, the wealth of peasant properties is extremely high. Uspensky resolves the "moral" dilemma postulated by the author of the article by creating a continuity between the *svoevol'stvo* (free will) of young peasant women before marriage and

their courage to leave their unwanted husbands after the wedding, to file for divorce and in many cases leave their husbands before the divorce was granted.

For Uspensky, the liberation which peasant women experienced in the face of abusive, lazy and drinking husbands is explained by their ability to sustain economic independence. Uspensky refers to another article found in *Volzhskii vestnik* (N.89, 1889) in which the author reports cases of peasant women who refuse to return to their husbands in acts of non-compliance with the regional court. In spite of the court's decision that not enough ground existed for the divorce, the peasant woman nevertheless chose to live away from her husband. Uspensky maintains that young peasant girls reach their professional maturity at the age of fifteen when they start taking part in various village recreational activities. The time for a peasant girl's sexual maturation coincides with her becoming a capable housewife who can perform a multiplicity of duties, ranging from working on the land, looking after farm animals, spinning and weaving material, dying yarn, and making clothing for the whole family. Uspensky arrives at the conclusion that a peasant girl and, later, a peasant woman have the right to liberation and expression of freewill due to their ability to sustain themselves. Their physical maturation is expressed economically and emotionally, and whether they express their free will at the age of fifteen through showing attraction to young men, or through the divorce of unwanted husbands at a more mature age, their freedom is based on their economic self-sufficiency:

All these duties are done by a fifteen-year-old girl and subsequently, during this age, she is totally protected in the freedom and independence of her existence; she is not constrained by anything in showing the most unmercantile and sincere feelings to a fellow of her own age, her future husband. So this ability to live in the world without any protection and fostering explains the right of the peasant woman to leave her tyrant-husband, taking both of her children with her; it explains all these divorces and requests for separations, and generally explains the quest not to submit to tyranny, not to suppress the voice of inner justice; and all this is possible thanks to the golden hands which can perform all the possible tasks and which can defend themselves from everything in the world (529).

"Peasant Women" is a testimony to a certain shift in Uspensky's portrayal of the issues of peasant women's sexuality. In the last creative year of his life Uspensky praises the peasant woman's right to the expression of all forms of emotion, including her sexual desires. Admittedly, when Uspensky addresses the phenomenon of premarital relationships he supposes that a relationship between a young peasant girl and her sweetheart will end in marriage. Similarly, his examples of peasant women leaving their husbands all deal with the situation in which a woman chooses to live on her own to avoid the tyranny of a marital relationship. This situation is explained by the fact that most of the peasant male population treat women as farm animals, and years of ordeal in marriage make women realise that only through life on their own can they enjoy total freedom from tyranny. Apart from being a harsh critic of the moral state of Russian peasant men, Uspensky repeats his conviction that for most of the peasant women in contemporary society the road to liberation lies in leading separate lives from their tyrannical husbands. Uspensky avoids discussing the sexual needs of those mature women who choose to live on their own but implies that years of abuse and child-bearing make them frigid on the one hand, and wanting to free their lives from such "side effects" of married life as continuing childbirth on the other.

Uspensky once again finds himself in a contradiction characteristic for his writing on women: he is caught between his religious beliefs about the necessity of procreation, when he expresses sympathies towards patriarchal values, and his belief in the asexual nature of peasant women. When the facts prove the opposite of his beliefs, and when cases relating to the sexually active behavior of peasant women are brought into discussion, Uspensky comes up with a morally acceptable schema: all the premarital relationships neatly end up in marriage. Uspensky's position here is to safeguard the moral reputation of peasant women. Peasant women remain morally pure as long as they remain being peasants. The moment separation from the soil occurs, and they are put into contact with the urban environment or become hired labor, they become vulnerable economically, physically, morally and sexually. In his last work devoted to peasant women, Uspensky takes up a position which Laura Engelstein identified as typical for the members of Russian intelligentsia: at the end of the nineteenth century, when the city was presented as the epitome of everything immoral and physically corrupt, while rural Russia was still regarded not only as a place that remained

uncorrupted by the encroaching moral disorder and infectious devastating illnesses, but as a place where answers to the moral crisis could be found, peasant women were viewed as morally superior to urban women and the women of the educated classes. Speaking of the views of the medical profession on sexual promiscuity and sexually transmitted diseases among peasant women at the turn of the century, Engelstein concludes: "The last to abandon their populist dreams, they clung to the image of the sexually innocent peasant despite evidence to the contrary uncovered in the course of extensive practical experience. In this they resembled the political populists, who [...] clung to their ideal of peasant life long after they had noticed its divorce from social reality" (163). A year before Uspensky wrote "Peasant Women" an article appeared in *Meditysynskaia beseda* (1889) by medical doctor A. Shingarev entitled "Polozhenie zhenshchiny v krest'ianskoi srede". The author maintained that it was not syphilis that was responsible for the high rate of child mortality, miscarriages and gynaecological diseases amongst peasant women, but rather the hardships of physical work and malnutrition that were to blame. Uspensky defended his peasant woman ideal till the very end; for him, peasant women could become morally corrupt only when they ceased being peasants.

As the latest research by Barbara Alpern Engel demonstrates, the cities offered peasant women refuge from the patriarchal tyranny of their rural families: "Tens of thousands of peasant women deluged state and local authorities with similar requests [for divorce] towards the end of the nineteenth century, encouraged by new economic opportunities to sever their ties with their former way of life" (87).

Alpern Engel shows that "Urbanisation and the burgeoning market economy expanded women's menu of choices by providing opportunities to earn an independent income and to refashion and perhaps even indulge the self" (105). The opportunities available to migrant peasant women who abandoned their villages have been illustrated by the case of the legendary singer Anastasiia Vial'tseva, a former peasant who became a famous entertainer and earned fabulous sums of money which she spent lavishly on herself, so exemplifying the extent to which the new individualism penetrated peasant women's milieu (McReynolds 273-291).

Unwanted children: the culpable city

Uspensky starts his sequel to "Peasant Women", a piece called "Respondents", with a programmatic statement which

encapsulates his last thoughts on the situation of peasant women: “The very same free-willed and independent peasant women are doomed to an unavoidable demise when, for various reasons (of which I will mention later), they will be forced to leave the native house, village and to look for income as hired labor” (529). In this piece Uspensky takes his chance to address the topic which he left uncovered in “Peasant Women”, that of abandoned children. In the latter work Uspensky avoids any discussion of the birth of illegitimate children and his resolution of the phenomena of sexual expression was sanitized. The newspaper articles reporting on the court case concerning the death of children in the Warsaw orphanage gave Uspensky an opportunity to address the topic of childbirth and the fate of unwanted children which he had missed or avoided in the previous piece. One case of abuse and malnutrition lead to the deaths of many children in a Warsaw foundling home. This case resonated in the Russian press, which depicted the owner of the children’s home, Mrs Skublinska, as an inhuman villain, a “woman Herod”. Uspensky points out that the woman owner who was vilified by the press was not such an evildoer, and transfers the focus of the discussion from the inhuman behavior of the orphanage owner to the problem of orphans per se. Uspensky expresses a hope that the court will not only address the misconduct of the guilty parties— orphanage owners who misused funds and deprived children of nutrition—but will also make a verdict on the ills of the society which create such criminal situations. The court, Uspensky says, should point out the “great injustices of the contemporary order of things, where a great many mothers can not perform duties of motherhood and a great many children are doomed to be abandoned by their mothers” (580).

Uspensky insists that the current phenomenon of *podkidysh* (foundlings) is increasingly an item for the “city news” (530) pages of the daily newspapers published in such diverse cities as Odessa, Rostov, Kiev and Kazan, and is no longer a specific phenomenon of the larger cities such as Warsaw, St. Petersburg or Moscow. Uspensky creates a nexus between new stories devoted to abandoned children and the pages dedicated to the advertisements of numerous women who are looking for jobs:

A daily foundling, mostly in the singular, and a daily mass, hundreds and thousands of women looking for a piece of bread—this parallel between the size of the woman’s destitution and one to two abandoned children clearly bespeak of the fact that an abandoned child is not

the result of the debauchery and libertarianism of the dark city 'masses', as it is viewed, by the way, by a number of analysts of the Warsaw events (530-531).

Uspensky endeavors to point to who is really to blame for the proliferation of abandoned children and arrives at the conclusion that it is the *obyvatel'* (city philistine) who is to be held responsible for the economic and social disintegration of the former peasant women who arrive in the cities in order to provide the *obyvatel'* with comfort and to satisfy the needs and demands of the city family:

First of all, of course, an enormous amount of peasant women, broken away from their households and in most cases at the age of their greatest strength, are being consumed by all kinds of city, big or small. Every city household cannot get by without house-helpers, male or female. And if we look at only women in the class of servants, and only those who do the dirtiest work around the house (not to mention governesses, companions, etc.) then we will see that in this kind of work a family household needs a significant amount of helpers: wet nurses, nannies, servants, cooks, seamstresses, laundry women - all these are necessary helpers without whom no city family can get by (530).

Who to blame? Identifying the responsibilities of the state

In blaming the city and its *obyvatel'* as the reason for the growth in the numbers of serving people, Uspensky identifies the cause of the misfortunes of disenfranchised peasant women. To answer the eternal question of Russia's politically and socially aware literature: "Who is to blame?", the populist Uspensky held culpable the capitalist city and its population who, by being incapable of living by the labor of their own hands, were causing former peasant women to abandon their children. Uspensky is adamant that in the rural communities the phenomenon of abandoned children is not known. By focussing on abandoned children he avoids the topic of infanticide which *was* rife in peasant communities and which he himself addressed in his earlier work. In his last written adulation of peasant women Uspensky blames all their misfortunes on a society which no longer allows for the survival of peasant women as peasant women. In his discussion on abandoned children Uspensky says that, although "illegitimate" (531) children are also born in the village, these children do not get abandoned by their mothers. To illustrate his point

he quotes a newspaper report of the legal case surrounding the rights of an illegitimate child born to a peasant woman in a village in the Laishev region. The report states that members of the community declined the illegitimately born child rights for a land share because they did not know whether the father of the child was a member of the commune, and also because they did not want to open the gates to the flood of illegitimate children born to widows and wives of recruited soldiers who might also claim communal land rights. Uspensky interprets the situation in the village as a case in which the decisions of the community were dictated by the situation of *malozemel'e*, the critical shortage of land experienced in rural Russia at the end of the 1880s which resulted from peasants not being in the position to acquire sufficient land after the emancipation reforms. The illegitimate children, nevertheless, are not abandoned by their mothers. They are not assigned equal land rights, but their peasant mothers can sustain their children without the help of husbands. It is only when a peasant woman loses her last chance to earn bread in the village that she embarks on the fatal and destructive journey to the city. The situation in the village, therefore, is critical—it is no longer economically sustainable due to land shortages and the obligatory military service, both of which take the male population away from the village, so making the women population leave the village in search of employment.

Uspensky looks for practical solutions to the problem of abandoned children, and states that this enormous social issue has not been addressed at state level but is left instead in the hands of private charity. Uspensky refers to the city of Samara where *zemstvo* funded the building of a children's home attached to the hospital. However, a budgetary crisis occurred when the number of abandoned children grew rapidly and infants reached the age when they had to be provided with an education. The Samara example is especially telling for Uspensky, since Samara, one of the wealthiest Russian cities, had allocated a large budget for the construction of an elaborate cathedral. The money spent on the cathedral provides Uspensky with an example of the lack of humanitarian charity and altruism in a city which owed its wealth to the rapid development of capitalist enterprises. Together with the city *obyvatel'*, plants and factories constituted the main force which used and exploited women's labor; Uspensky refers to two tobacco factories in Rostov-on-Don alone which employed four thousand young women.

Having identified the guilty parties in the social ills affecting peasant women, Uspensky hesitates to provide a solution to the issues raised. He does, however, express a firm belief that the state has to take control over the situation regarding the destiny of abandoned children, their health, education and general place in society: “Plants and factories are consumers, and those responsible are those who follow all those enterprises, trade and industrial, which, in one way or another, use the labor of unmarried and disenfranchised women.”

At the same time, when Uspensky’s genius began to fade due to his mental illness, problems he had identified came to be addressed in the work of one of the main thinkers of the Russian Silver Age, Vasily Rozanov. As was mentioned earlier, Rozanov created his own philosophy on sexuality. The aim of this philosophy, which he called his own “mission of sex”, was to repair the damage to the intimate spheres of human life caused by Christianity. Rozanov saw all the social ills linked to human sexuality, such as infanticide, abortion and domestic violence, as the results of the repressive and oppressive influence of the Christian church on the laws and customs governing human relations. Rozanov viewed Christian marriage as a loveless institution sanctified by the Russian Orthodox Church, which he accused of neglecting the emotional and sexual needs of humankind. Rozanov juxtaposed Judaism to Christianity as a religion which treated human sexuality and the relationship between the sexes as a phenomenon sanctified by God. For Rozanov, Christianity, with its ascetic model, was a teaching promulgated by an asexual minority who took over the management of people’s private lives and imposed their monastic ideals through the institution of the church. So powerful were Rozanov’s writings on human sexuality, that they stimulated not only intellectual debate and creative writing among the major figures of the Silver Age, but they also lead to the reform of Russian laws on divorce (Nikoliukin 2004). The major personality of the Russian Silver Age, Andrei Belyi, described the effect of Rozanov’s work *V mire neiasnogo i nereshennogo* (*In the World of the Undecided and Unclear*, 1901) as “the flame which flared at us from his book” (Belyi 1906: 1: 69). In this book Rozanov rehabilitated human sexuality by devising the notion of the cosmic nature of sexuality. He broke the boundary between the celestial and the sexed body by declaring that the very material from which human sexual organs were made came from cosmic matter, and related to all human organs in the same way that “the iron coming from a comet relates to the iron in the earth” (1995: 118).

While Russian writers and poets explored his notions of mystical sexuality manifested in androgyny and bisexuality, the general Russian public was made aware, through Rozanov's journalistic writings, of the oppressive role of the church's laws on their emotional lives. What the Russian public had previously seen as the result of social ills, came to be seen, thanks to Rozanov's writings, as the result of customs and belief systems imposed by state and church institutions. As a result of Rozanov's work, issues of abortion, infanticide, venereal disease and domestic crime were re-evaluated as a set of issues linked to the distorting forces of Russian orthodox religion and cultural beliefs. Rozanov introduced the Russian reader to a number of alternative cultures, in which cases of infanticide were very rare and extra- and pre-marital childbirth was not stigmatized by the community. One such example was found in the practices of some Estonian rural communities, where it was acceptable for a young woman to have a child prior to wedlock and to be taken as a wife by a man who had not necessarily fathered the child (Rozanov, 1994). Rozanov juxtaposes this state of affairs to the attitude of Russian peasant communities towards premarital pregnancies, an attitude which lead to the cruelties of infanticide. While Uspensky was caught in the paradoxes created by the dominant culture, contradictions which he mistook for the results of capitalism's destruction of the Russian rural community and its belief systems, Rozanov was demonstrating that it was the cultural beliefs themselves which were the cause of problems related to human sexuality.² While Uspensky devised his paradoxical desexed body politics, Rozanov created a body politics based on the rehabilitation and recognition of human sexuality (Mondry 1999). Both writers wanted the state to instigate a sensible response. For Uspensky, this mean the involvement of the state on the level of government institutions such as hospitals, foundling homes and schools—institutions which would help cope with the results of transgressive sexuality. For Rozanov, however, the very notion of transgressive sexuality was a cultural construct. His "mission of sex" was an attempt to provide the Russian public with sexual education long before it became the subject of the school curriculum in western countries. As is revealed through the reading of Uspensky's texts in the present investigation, as well as through the evidence provided by Dr Sinani's *Diary*, Uspensky's case itself stands as a telling example of western and Russian culture's need for such a field of knowledge.

Notes

1. G. I. Uspenskii. ‘Krest’ianskie zhenshchiny” in *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: 8: 509-529; “Otvetchiki”, op.cit., 529-540.
2. It is thus not surprising that, in the seemingly unorthodox world of Rozanov who praised mystical aspects of sexuality and condemned Russian cultural asceticism, Uspensky’s work was deemed superfluous, and that both of his favorite women revolutionaries, Vera Figner and Vera Zasulich, were removed from their pedestals in the celestial spheres, and irreverently placed on the scatological strata inhabited by human/animal bodies: “And here come Verka Figner, Verukha Zasulich and all other sorts of crap [*der’mo*]” (Rozanov 2000: 130).

Conclusion

Topics related to sexuality, childbirth and child mortality concerned Uspensky all his life, as he swung from a desire to see peasant women as masculinized and de-sexed to a fear of any interference in matters of procreation, which he regarded as a manifestation of divine will. His behavior at the time that his mental illness took hold is highly symptomatic of this pendulum-type swing. In his first years of residence in the Kolmovo Mental Institution he expressed disgust at the flesh and the body and yet, at the same time, he was highly distraught at his failure to have sexual relationships with his wife. We mentioned earlier that, in addition to the report in the *Diary* of Boris Sinani concerning Uspensky's lamentations at his failure to perform family duties and have intercourse with his wife on his visits home, there exists evidence provided by Uspensky's wife and recorded by Sinani showing that, during his years of marriage, Uspensky had long periods of abstention from sexual intercourse, explaining that physical relationships in marriage were superfluous. And yet he regarded his failure to have an intimate relationship with his wife as a failure to perform his duties as a husband, thus indicating his belief that sexual intercourse was a responsibility imposed by the religious basis of the institution of marriage and the church's sanctification of intercourse in marriage as a duty to fulfill God's command to procreate. At the same time, during his first year of stay at the mental institution, Uspensky started referring to himself as 'St. Gleb'. He called his favorite son Aleksandr 'St. Aleksandr', and referred to those around him as saints. His long time friend and fellow populist Nikolai Mikhailovsky described how Uspensky insisted that his own body had lost physical gravity and was weightless, and that he was capable of lifting himself up and completing a flight around the earth and up to the stars—this act he saw as a heroic act through which evil could be conquered and humanity liberated from dark forces.¹

Uspensky also insisted that his son Aleksandr was weightless. This desire to get away from the corporeality of his own physical body, and to see himself and his own descendent as celestial ethereal creatures floating above the earth, and his fantasy of being

able to give birth not to a human being but to an angel (in his son), was a culmination of the ascetic ideals which Uspensky harbored all his life and which revealed themselves in the form of visual hallucinations at the time of his mental illness. From 1888 Uspensky began to suffer from olfactory hallucinations, claiming that the smell of stagnation and decaying flesh followed him everywhere. This is yet another telling example of Uspensky's feelings of disgust towards flesh and the physical body. Uspensky's doctor at the Kolmovo, Osip Aptekman (1849-1926) left a striking description of Uspensky's reference to his wife as "Bogoroditsa" (Mother of God).²

For Uspensky, who also referred to Dr Aptekman as St. Joseph (Osip is a Russian form of Hebrew Ioseph), both his own wife and the wife of the doctor could be "logically" conceived as "Bogoroditsa". Uspensky clearly believed not only in immaculate conception, but also in the power of divine intervention in pregnancy. He desired to believe in the physically pure procreative body of women, uncorrupted by sexual intercourse and requiring no man to plant the seed thanks to a process activated by the holy spirit (hence his "woman, a pure creature" in the story "Vypriamila"). At the same time, however, he wanted to fulfill his duty to procreate. These conflicting desires resulted in a paradox in his thinking which he struggled to resolve in his writing and which broke out in the form of psychotic dreams, fantasies and hallucinations.

His tragic contraction of syphilis in the 1860s no doubt exacerbated his anxieties around matters of human sexuality and, at the same time, contributed to the organic causes of his mental illness. Censored by his friends, family and literary establishment, this fact nevertheless played a crucial role in Uspensky's concern for human sexuality. Dr Sinani reports that, when mentally ill, Uspensky was constantly haunted by the fear of contaminating others with syphilis. He lived with this fear all his life: being a married man with five children at the time of proliferating discourse on the congenital transmissibility of syphilis, Uspensky must have been wracked by worries and fears about his progenies.

As a man who was brought up in the religious milieu and who believed in the necessity of fulfilling God's will to procreate, Uspensky was distraught by the fault of his own seed. Dr Sinani reports that one of Uspensky's manias was the sensation of an inflamed stomach—he could not get rid of the feeling of being bloated and he explained this by the fact that in him two creatures coexisted, one of them being a pig. This self-image is highly symptomatic of

Uspensky's anxieties: it contains both the fantasy of pregnancy and of being divided into two halves, one of which is animalistic and is represented by an animal considered to be an emblem of physical impurity in folk beliefs. Getting rid of this dirty animal within must have been one of the overriding desires in Uspensky's life.

Feelings of self-disgust contributed to Uspensky's search for the pure Other, uncontaminated by syphilis which could be acquired through associations with the urban, debauched, corrupted pleasure-seeking bourgeois classes. For an educated *raznochinets* of the 1860s, brought up on the peasant-adulating poetry of Nekrasov, the quasi-orientalist prose of I. P. Melnikov-Pechersky and the prose of A. Grigorovich with its excessive use of "Natural" *naia shkola* devices and people who spoke a language different from that of educated Russians, who wore colorful clothes and performed exotic rituals, peasants became a group which fell into the category of the Other.³ In the ideological framework provided by the populist movement, this group was viewed as an ideal, unspoilt Other from whom one could learn how to live honestly without exploiting the weakest. For the syphilitic Uspensky a woman ideal had to be found—one which would be far from the image of the sophisticated, vain and oversexed bourgeois woman (the kind of woman which could seduce a young man like Uspensky himself). Such a woman would be hard working, physically mighty and totally unattractive. In other words, she had to be man-like. Her masculine physique would also make her into a quasi-androgyne, a sexless creature who posed no danger of contamination or of spreading venereal disease and who stopped the perpetuation of the cycle of temptation, seduction and enslavement of men through the imposition of paternal duties and family responsibilities—the very cycle which was viewed by Uspensky and some of his contemporaries, such as Leo Tolstoy, as the core of the *modus operandi* of the bourgeois society. Uspensky's peasant woman was created by him to provide comfort and to serve as a cure for his troubled conscience and, in later years, his troubled psyche. Her imagined asexuality had little to do with the sexuality and gender of the real peasant women—the ones who bore illegitimate children to the Russian gentry and the ones whom Leo Tolstoy and his literary heroes found to be so seductive that, after falling victim to the seductive powers of big, strong, barefoot and sweat-smelling peasant women, they saw in them the devil playing out the eternal temptation of the flesh (Tolstoy's "The Devil" 1889).

Uspensky's relationships with his wife were overshadowed by his desire to see all educated women as being capable of independent existence. Although his wife was well-educated and strongly influenced by the emancipatory rhetoric of populists, although she taught at schools in Russian provinces and earned an income translating from French into Russian, she nevertheless was considered by Uspensky as being too much in need of his company and presence. Uspensky clearly felt divided between his familial duties and the higher call to "go to the people": his need to travel and spend long periods of time at small peasant communities with fellow populists was one of the main drives in his creative life. The 'burden' of family life which he depicted in his stories was felt by him in his personal relationship with his wife. One of the closest friends of the Uspensky family, the woman writer Varvara Timofeeva (1850-1831), left in her memoirs a vivid description of the nature of the rift which existed between Uspensky and his wife—a rift based on Uspensky's desire to see his wife as no less independent than peasant women.⁴ This conversation between Aleksandra Vasilievna Uspenskaia and Timofeeva took place in 1889 during a period of financial stability in Uspensky's family (they had just purchased a house in Siabrintsy) but when Uspensky's health was fragile:

"But you are still happy and are friends with Gleb Ivanovich?" I asked her once.

She did not reply immediately.

"We quarrel now somehow more," she admitted at last. "Gleb Ivanovich does not want to understand... I tell him: I cannot be on my own all the time... But Gleb Ivanovich reprimands me: 'Do you, Aleksandra Ivanovna, want to walk with me holding you by your hand?' This is not what I want. But it was not me alone who started the family... We together started the family. And we now have five children. It is necessary to think about the children. And it is also necessary to think about me too..."

I have not heard anything like this from her before. It was a blast of some sort of despair which then was still not clear to me. It was not an accusation or reproach—it was a bitter and joyless reminder from her to others that she too is alive and that she needs life and attention and understanding... For years and years she stayed on her own in the sticks, in the villages, in town. While Gleb Ivanovich was away she wore his old jackets, paid debts, helped children with their homework and, when with sick children during the cold autumn, she sent to Gleb Ivanovich comforting telegrams: 'Not to

worry. Everything is fine', 'Everyone is in good health', 'Please do not worry, Gleb Ivanovich, everything is fine'... And here, I think, one can find the origins of those 'quarrels' and 'disagreements' which Gleb Ivanovich often mentions in his letters to her. Here also one finds the reason for the painful search for the 'truth' in the resolution of the question of women and family in his articles and letters to his closed friends. The family started to burden him, as an egotistical entity which came to serve narrow self-interests... He was drawn to the free spaces of broad human thought and activities, to the heights and depths of a limitless ideal, where one did not have to make compromises with conscience and where there was no place for antagonism with the inner self. His warm heart could not break away from his wife and children who were dear to him... He would have liked to convince his wife that she could get by without him, that she did not need him at all, in the same way as husbands are superfluous in his article "Peasant Women", but, witnessing her sufferings, he tormented himself and found himself guilty of everything" (484).

This conversation with Uspensky's wife described by Timofeeva discloses the acute understanding on behalf of the emancipated contemporary woman writer of what constitutes the core of Uspensky's ideal woman. This ideal is based on the desire to see women liberated to such a degree that their need for partnership with men became redundant. And, although in this conversation the economic independence of strong and versatile peasant women is viewed as the dominant feature of Uspensky's woman ideal, in the context of his writing and the evidence from biographical sources we can distinguish a desire for a shift in women's gender and sexuality towards a de-sexed body whose sexual characteristics would become blurred in the same way as the gender and sex of a peasant woman were blurred vis-à-vis that of peasant men.

It is quite significant that in the recordings of Timofeeva's 1889 visit to the Uspenskys' home there is mention of Uspensky's olfactory hallucinations: when Uspensky entered the room his wife quickly reached for a bottle of perfume and covered her hands with scent, explaining her action by the fact that Uspensky imagines bad smells everywhere. His disgust at human odors was perceived by Uspensky's wife as a manifestation of his disgust of the physical body, hence her defensive reaction of covering her own body with the strong aroma of fragrance. In this instance, fragrance serves to cover the smells emanating from a natural, organic body which, in

Uspensky's wife's perception, might be offensive to Uspensky. Although she speaks of his hallucinatory perception of non-existing smells ("Gleb Ivanovich has olfactory hallucinations! He imagines bad smells everywhere", 485), her attempt to substitute the imagined smell with an artificial smell invented to conceal the unpleasant odors of the body serves as curious evidence of her awareness of the reason underlying Uspensky's olfactory hallucinations—his disgust at bodily functions and fluids. Perfume, which was invented partly to conceal and hide smells of the natural body, is a marker of a civilization that has departed from nature.⁵

When Uspensky's wife covers herself with the aroma of perfume she is adopting a gesture which symbolizes the nineteenth century's cultural obsession with physical purity and the danger of contamination, one of the major causes of which was the spread of venereal diseases. Her gesture is also motivated by this culture's association of sexuality with animality, in which smell is viewed as an attribute of a woman's body. Contemporary sexologists, like Krafft-Ebing in his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), viewed smell as a strong motivator of sexual excitation and considered a strong sense of smell to be a marker of psychopathology. The reversal of this logic is a desire both to suppress the bodily smell and to recognize the sense of smell as a sign of liberation from nature and its atavistic calls. Paradoxically, in this culture perfume both suppresses natural odors and excites and provokes libidinal reactions. Tolstoy's hero Pozdnyshev, from "The Kreutzer Sonata", condemns perfume as a seductive substance which enslaves men in their irrational drive to procreate. Perfume thus is a substance which encoded the paradox of the attitudes towards the body, the desire to suppress its call and the admission of the necessity to perpetuate desire as a means to sustain the economics of gender and sexual relations. Ironically, in the case of Uspensky's wife, her use of perfume is a gesture which further reinforces her distance from her husband's ideal—the peasant woman's body which knows no artificial concealment of bodily smells. The double irony of Uspensky's wife's gesture of concealment is underscored by the fact that Uspensky imagined the peasant woman's body as monumental, made of stone or brass—elements which do not emit odor. His ideal woman did not smell of bourgeois perfume nor of the sweat with which real life peasant women, perspiring in labor, were covered; her body with all her strength and might is paradoxically incorporeal. Such a woman did not emit that which the contemporary sexologists dubbed the "*perfum de la*

femme”—a special smell emitted by women’s genitalia and which acted as an attraction to the male. As Jay Geller has noted in his discussion of the role of smell in the cultural construction of the stigmatised Other (a Jew and a woman in turn-of-the-century medical literature), sexologists’ “reference to the *odor di feminina* indicates that the primary focus of discussions of odor and sexuality was feminine odor and sexuality” and that “the vast preponderance of attention was directed toward women’s odors” (1992: 251).⁶

One can be quite sure that Uspensky’s ideal woman depicted by him in “Vypriamila”, the woman of white marble who had the power to “straighten” him out, was undoubtedly free from both kinds of perfumes: those used by the little French Venuses on the streets of Paris which were a product of civilization, and the others created by ‘Mother Nature’. But angel St. Gleb, unlike Gleb Ivanovich, did not have a mother: he had a Madonna, a *Bogoroditsa*.

Notes

1. N. K. Mikhailovskii in *Gleb Uspenskii v zhizni*, Glinka-Volzhsii, A, S. (ed.) 1935. Moscow: Academia: 530-531 .
2. O. V. Aptekman in *Gleb Uspenskii v zhizni*, Glinka-Volzhsii, A, S. (ed.) 1935. Moscow: Academia: 531-541.
3. See A. Nekrasov “Korobeiniki” (1861) and “Komu na Rusi zhit khorosho” (1877); I. P. Melnikov (A. Pechersky’s) *V lesakh* (1871–1874) and *Na gorakh* (1875-1881), and D. Grigorovich’s *Derevnia*. On Russian writers on peasants see Fanger 1968.
4. V. V. Timofeeva in *Gleb Uspenskii v zhizni*, Glinka-Volzhsii, A, S. (ed.) 1935. Moscow: Academia: 483-487.
5. See Douglas, 1966.
6. See Geller 1992: 243-282.

APPENDIX.

The Diary of Doctor B.N. Sinani: a record of Gleb Uspensky's illness

Translator's introduction

In the commentary on Sinani's *Diary*, which is included in Section IV of the 1939 State Library Museum edition of documents relating to Uspensky, psychiatrist V. A. Grombakh describes the doctor as "a star of the second magnitude" in a constellation of late nineteenth-century Russian psychiatrists that included such names as Kashchenko, Litvinov and Bazhenov. Sinani came originally from the Crimea, where he died in October 1920. He spent his working life as a doctor/psychiatrist in northern Russia where, at the time of Uspensky's final illness, he was in charge of the Kolmovo Psychiatric Hospital in Novgorod, which was maintained by the Novgorod Zemstvo. The *Diary* is clearly of importance for the history of Russian psychiatry but its inclusion here is rather from the perspective that its value lies in the light that it sheds on Uspensky's character and mental decline 1892 - 1900 and hence on his special qualities as a creative artist. Furthermore, Uspensky's religious mania contains in a valorized form certain features which appeared in his writings, especially his somatophobia and his anxiety surrounding issues of the sexed body such as pregnancy, procreation, venereal diseases and abstention from sex. The irreconcilable paradoxes implicit in the needs of the sexed body on the one hand, and the ascetic demands and expectations of Christian teachings on the other, while hidden from the surface layers of his texts become explicit in various manifestations of Uspensky's psychosis. In the *Diary*, readers will be able to familiarize themselves with the details and plots of Uspensky's hallucinations, e.g.: his visions of saintly figures and monastic revolutionary women, his despair at the idea of infecting his family with syphilis, the delusions of animal infestation (a metaphor for quasi-pregnancy as well as possession), his extreme veganism (linked to his disgust for flesh and, paradoxically, to his pantheistic

belief that every living form had a soul), as well as his imagined mission to save the world from dark demonic forces—all syndromes pertaining to his longing for physical and spiritual purity and his disgust for the needs of his own animal body. At the same time, his erotic fantasies reveal the nature of his repressed desires. The *Diary* can thus be used both as an extra-textual manuscript and as an inter-textual aid to more comprehensive understanding of Uspensky's beliefs as they appear in this study.

Students of Russian literature are familiar with Sinani's name from Mandelstam's "Noise of Time" in which the doctor is presented as a psychiatrist who treated patients with hypnosis, as well as a convinced populist and personal friend of Gleb Uspensky. He had known Uspensky before he began to treat him, and the *Diary* makes it clear that he admired him as a writer. He shows a marked reluctance to "write him off" prematurely, clinging for a comparatively long time to the vain hope that some kind of recovery might be possible.

Uspensky began to show signs of mental instability from the mid-1880s. By 1889 there were definite signs of psychiatric disturbance and from that time his condition deteriorated, albeit with fluctuations, until his final transfer to the St. Petersburg Novo-Znamenskii Hospital 18 March 1900, where he died 24 March 1902. Sinani's *Diary* naturally covers only the time when Uspensky was directly under his care, being treated with special concern and attention. The writer spent two periods in the Kolmovo Hospital: 21 September 1892—13 November 1893 and 23 April 1894—18 March 1900. In the first period Sinani made almost daily diary entries, very detailed and inevitably somewhat repetitious. In the translation these are presented in condensed form, with some insignificant omissions (it should be noted here that the editors of the 1939 edition made some quite long cuts in their version of the diary in the interests of decency, most of them seemingly concerned with the patient's excretory habits and sexual fantasies). For the 1894—1900 period Sinani made his entries not daily, but several times a month, and towards the end, when hope of recovery had clearly vanished, not even once a month. The translation of this part of the *Diary* is almost in full, although there has been some condensation of its author's somewhat verbose language. It should be emphasized that the *Diary* was not of course intended for publication, and that Sinani does not seem to have revised it in any way. Thus it often reads as if he is thinking aloud. This immediacy gives it much of its special quality.

To judge by the *Diary*, Sinani's treatment of Uspensky involved principally *vnushenie*, by which he meant the use of powers of suggestion (which, from all accounts, were unusually effective). This included the use of hypnosis, particularly at bedtime. He also refers to "Faradisation", a form of electric shock therapy, although this does not appear to have been used on a regular basis. Opium and other drugs are also mentioned, primarily intended to ensure that the patient had a good night's sleep.

In his *Diary*, Sinani does not attempt to reach any clear and final conclusion about the precise nature of his patient's affliction and its possible causes. In the article, "Bol'noi Uspensky" ("The Ill Uspensky"), included in the 1939 State Library Museum Edition as a commentary on Sinani's observations, Professor P. M. Zinov'ev presents his own views on the subject. Among the possible causes of Uspensky's mental collapse he refers to over-exhaustion and nervous tension, probably exacerbated by illness, and the writer's congenital hypersensitivity, particularly to the plight of the Russian peasantry at the end of the nineteenth century to which he devoted so much of his creative talent. Uspensky's nervous system, Zinov'ev avers, was naturally weak and unstable from childhood and therefore more than usually prone to some kind of mental breakdown. But he allows that it would be mistaken to blame exhaustion and nervous tension alone for the deterioration in the patient's condition in the 1880s. Two other factors need to be considered: abuse of alcohol, particularly in Uspensky's youth, and venereal disease, probably syphilis, as the result of imprudent sexual behavior. However, Zinov'ev believes that, although these causes were perhaps more than likely, it is ultimately impossible to determine with certainty whether they were crucial. He concludes his analysis by proposing that, had Uspensky been living in a properly organized "socialist collective" and not in the corrupt, chaotic and unjust society of late nineteenth-century tsarist Russia, his mental health would probably not have deteriorated as seriously and rapidly as it did. A similar view was expressed by Vladimir Korolenko. This view dominated perceptions of Uspensky's illness well into the twenty-first century, as was illustrated in the Introduction.

Henrietta Mondry

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The Diary of Doctor B. N. Sinani

Preface to the Diary by publisher Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich

Gradually and imperceptibly there developed the tragic and terrible condition that was destined finally to utterly destroy all those human, delicate and tender qualities with which a great artist was so abundantly and remarkably endowed, an artist sensitive to the misfortune, grief and oppression not only of individual human beings, but also of the broad masses of the people. Slowly, but surely and irreversibly, the highly gifted consciousness of one of the leading educationalists of the 1860s and '70s was reduced to ashes by a serious organic brain disease. For ten years, Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky, populist, literary giant, social activist and writer of great literary significance, fought to resist the condition that was bringing him ever nearer to death.

It was Uspensky who gave to Russia wonderfully exciting works of literature, in which he presented vivid and clear pictures of workers and peasants, laying bare their souls, telling us of their social hardships, their political oppression, employing his artistic powers, his unselfish love of the people, to call upon thousands and thousands of them, now made aware of their identity, citizens of the Russian Empire without any rights, subjects of the tsar, to join the eternal and irresistible struggle against the hydra of autocracy, always on the side of the people, the masses.

For the last ten years of his life this incomparable writer, so sensitive to the sufferings of the masses, was stricken with a serious illness, which took him further and further away from real life, into the world of the unconscious, the anguish and despair of a disturbed mind, the dark and chaotic abyss of an existence that was no longer human, but almost subconscious.

How all this happened, how he lived, what he felt, what he experienced during these long years, how he suffered and fought against this slowly developing sickness—all this is surely important for all of us to know. We, who were so familiar with the artistic gifts of Gleb Ivanovich, who grew up with his works, who still read and study him, who love, know and remember the always excited,

thoughtful, often suffering, sometimes cheerful and always sympathetic character of one of the best and most gifted writers of the second half of the nineteenth century. Until now our knowledge of the tormented last decade of this great populist writer has been limited, vague and patchy—this writer from the dark ages of reaction under Alexander III, Nicholas II, Pobedonostsev and his ilk, times of police corruption, of the anti-revolutionary activities of the “Black Hundreds”, of provocateurs and spies.

Only now, when the remarkable handwritten diary of Doctor B. N. Sinani, the psychiatrist, who for so long observed, treated and did his best to cure Uspensky’s serious mental illness, has become available for study and publication, has the curtain hanging over the writer’s life been lifted so that we can now learn for the first time about the terrible tragic struggle of his last ten years. Uspensky’s blessed memory lives on and will continue to live among the Russian people for long years to come.

It has not been possible to publish this remarkable human document in full. We have omitted everything that is purely of medical interest, but have retained everything that provides information about the life and experiences of Uspensky during those terrible ten years, everything that takes us, as it were, into the flesh and blood of his life at that time. The information in the diary enables us to complete our account of the writer’s career, which was previously regarded as effectively concluding in 1892, when he was first stricken with his serious illness. Everything patchy, vague and arbitrary that was previously printed about this side of Uspensky’s life is now, thanks to Doctor Sinani’s carefully written diary, put in proper perspective, confirmed or denied or explained by the scientific analysis made by this remarkable medical man who was deeply sympathetic to his patient, both as a human being and a writer. Uspensky is the true hero of Sinani’s story. For Uspensky’s life, his creative powers, his well-being, Sinani selflessly, courageously and steadfastly worked hard and long, applying all his experience and knowledge of contemporary medical science. Day by day he observed the life of his famous sick friend, in spite of severe personal problems, taking him into the bosom of his own family, where for many years the deeply depressed Uspensky found peace, solicitude, kindness and deep sympathy, and the loving care of all the family. A grateful posterity was to honour the actions of this unselfish and loving doctor as a human being and citizen who found in his heart a powerful impulse of true humanity which marked the agonizing course of his

titanic struggle for the life and creative powers of the writer, for the life of a man dedicated to the cause of the people, for his own and his family's happiness.

We thought long and hard before deciding to publish this uniquely important document, but we believe that what we have written above fully justifies its appearance in print, since the profound inner tragedy it depicts is of unique significance. We have supplemented the diary with an article by Professor P.M. Zinov'ev and a commentary by Dr V. A. Grombakh, psychiatrist. They have analyzed the document from their own specialist points of view and present a diagnosis of Uspensky's illness, for which tragically fifty years ago there was no radical cure. It seems unnecessary to add that this diary is of enormous interest, not only as a specialized medical document, but also as a document of profound social significance. Similarly, it will undoubtedly be sensitively read by all those who love, honor and still respect Uspensky as one of the most gifted writers from a bygone age who is closest to us.

The diary is published with the permission of Uspensky's son, B. G. Uspensky.

THE DIARY OF DOCTOR B. N. SINANI

Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky came into my care on 21 September 1892. Briefly my knowledge of his present condition is as follows:

Two to three years ago he was being treated by Chechotte and at one stage had olfactory hallucinations (the smell of a corpse). In recent years he did little work; his creative activity ceased almost completely. His predominant state of mind was one of depression. The taciturnity, lack of energy and gloom, which were his particular characteristics but which earlier had not excluded their opposites, became more and more permanent. His habitual grief over civic matters began to turn into despair.

In general terms Gleb Ivanovich could be said to have been in a state of complete exhaustion, to the point that he was afflicted by serious cerebro-spinal neurasthenia.

There were long periods when he was deeply depressed and in a state of complete prostration. It was apparent that any kind of mental activity exacerbated his condition. By contrast, complete rest and calm seemed to help restore his capabilities. I am aware of the following incident. Last year he left St. Petersburg, listless and depressed. He

spent a day or two in Moscow, but made almost no contact with anyone. Then somehow he got to Voronezh, staying in a room in a hotel. He stayed there for about ten days, hardly ever going out anywhere, not knowing anyone or making any new acquaintances. This instinctive self-isolation apparently had a beneficial effect. He gained new strength, became significantly more lively and cheerful. He even showed himself capable of work, but not creative work. Last summer he did some travelling with his son and spent some time in the country. His condition improved considerably. He worked energetically on the third volume of his collected works. In winter he again became thinner and weaker, suffering a serious mental decline. Around New Year he was treated for hemorrhoids in Subbotin's clinic, where he had a bloodless operation. After that there was no show of blood for a long time, but he did not feel well. He ate heartily, but the food did him little good. He himself explained this in a quite ridiculous way by the fact that his food no longer remained in his intestine, but passed straight through. He expressed some curious theories about the compensatory effect of the hemorrhoidal bleeding on the action of his heart before the operation. He was in a state of mental depression. His thought processes were extremely sluggish. He found it very difficult to express his thoughts. His exposition of them was incoherent and confused. He was unable to give an intelligent account of anything. The fact that he could neither write nor work deeply depressed him. But he still went through a great many newspapers, although of course he could not do this at all systematically. Sometimes he would seize upon some facts from a newspaper, often of no particular importance, and become obsessed with them for a long period, explaining his ideas and opinions about them to his friends in a way that made it difficult to understand what he was babbling about. At this time he used to bombard Mikhailovsky with telegrams which made little sense. In them he apparently wanted to share the impressions he had just formed from a newspaper article or an event of some sort.

On 1 June 1892 he fell ill with some form of fever. He was treated by Shtange who believed that his patient's psyche was disturbed and suggested consulting a psychiatrist. Chechotte made four visits and on the last (17 June) he declared that there was nothing wrong with Gleb Ivanovich that he could treat. The patient's temperature had been normal for some time. Chechotte advised him to go to Chudovo with his family for two to three weeks and then to go and take the waters in the Caucasus. He was taken to Chudovo on 19

June. On the way there he asked his wife what the papers were writing about him. He had the idea that they were reporting that he had robbed Pavlenkov. After she had reassured him, he said that he must have had a hallucination about it. The next day his wife returned to St. Petersburg for financial reasons, leaving her husband and having no anxiety about the state of his health. She was there for about four days. All this time he was continually concerned about her absence, worried, sleeping very badly, eating poorly. He became thoughtful, deep in concentration, and finally began to express delirious ideas which rapidly became confused and complicated. His wife summoned me by telegram on 26 June. I found him in a pitiful state, emaciated and weakened. When I went in to see him he was lying in bed. Before taking my hand he told me in a terrified whisper not to come near him, because he had syphilis. He was scarcely able to speak, pointing to his mouth and nose, where he thought there were syphilitic sores. His nose was running, he was slobbering. His appearance was unkempt. He went on to express other delirious ideas. He said that he was a spy, and insisted that I leave him immediately or my reputation would be compromised and I would no longer be welcome at Krivenko's, a man of great importance then. There had been some kind of upheaval, many deaths, and only Krivenko was left alive and unharmed, even acquiring great power and influence over social affairs. He said that many of his friends had perished, some had committed suicide, others had died in some other way. Incidentally, the suicides included [populists] Mikhailovsky and Yaroshenko. Pavlenkov, Sibiriyakov and Korolenko were also among those who had perished. On a piece of paper he had written down their names and the month, date and hour of their deaths. For some of them the time of death was several months in the future. He did not believe it was June, being convinced that since June some four months had gone by. There was one moment when the patient, his face somehow lit up, said that it *was* June and that all this was in his imagination, but he immediately added: "Oh, how much I have lived through during that time." And he added with a sickly smile: "That means I've lived four months longer than you." He expressed a whole lot of other delirious ideas: that he was a thief, that he had robbed Sibiriyakov (by taking from the bank all the eighteen thousand roubles Sibiriyakov had received for the first two volumes of his works), that he had ruined his family, that he had now nothing left, that he was on trial, that he would be condemned as a thief, and so on.

His speech was incoherent, his actions confused. He had the idea that there had been a political revolution, many people killed, including Alexander III. He asked who the tsar was now and sent his son to ask this question of the first peasant he—"they are bound to know." Before my arrival he rushed outside several times (once in his underclothes) and fell on his knees.

At about nine o'clock in the evening he was horrified to see that he had passed a large quantity of blood. He called me, showed it to me and immediately remembered Subbotin, asking what he would say about it, saying that he should be told.

He had no sleep that night, often getting out of bed ... he started crumpling the sheet up into a ball, saying it was blood ...

... On 29 June I returned to Chudovo at midnight. I found Uspensky completely naked. As soon as clothes were put on him, he threw them off. He mostly sat upright on the bed, his head to one side, picking at his beard as was his habit, a look of concentration on his face. Sometimes he would get up and stand for a long time in one place, his pose unchanged. Auditory hallucinations: listening attentively, sometimes asking questions. Meaningless babble. He is ruined, he has nothing of his own, the house belongs to Subbotin, not to him. During an operation Subbotin had broken one of the instruments, leaving part of it in his intestine, blocking it. It was Subbotin who had told him to leave this house, to leave it completely naked (because even his clothes no longer belonged to him)... His family robbed, syphilis, his friends ruined, just as before. Somehow we managed to dress him, get him to the railway station and to St. Petersburg (his son, his brother, Ivan and I went with him). The swelling on his palate had gone down slightly. An abscess had burst.

On the morning of 30 June he became a patient at Frei's clinic.

On the way from the station he expressed various ideas. He was being put on trial. Today was the day of a manifesto on the occasion of Emperor Mikhail becoming tsar. He was being taken to Subbotin. It was somebody's name-day.

At the end of July I found him somewhat calmer. He had put on weight. He was more aware of his surroundings. He talked about the baths not being kept clean; other people were using the baths, fouling them, so he did not like having a bath.

During his first days at the clinic he often refused food and was reluctant to eat. He asserted that the food stank, that it had

syphilitic sections in it. He explained this by the fact that they were treating him on the Sinani principle of “like cures like”. Afterwards, although he still regarded the food in the same way, he continued to eat it, saying that he had to submit to this regime.

He told me that he felt totally incapable, that he was finished, that I had no chance of curing him and that he had turned into a complete idiot.

Towards the end of August his condition seemed to have significantly improved. His weight was 153 pounds. He was talking sensibly, aware of the fact that he had previously been raving in madness. He still suffered auditory hallucinations, but was aware that these were merely his own thoughts. He was conscious of the fact that he seemed to consist of two different personalities. His speech and writing had improved in their coherence and logic. But he felt that he was a long way from being able to organize his thoughts properly. He said that an idea would come into his head, an idea that was well founded and expressed, but as soon as he tried to put it on paper he lost its thread. There were also very few grammatical mistakes and omissions of letters.

On the day of my first visit the patient told me of his guilty feelings about Pavlenkov. A few months earlier he had sold Sytin several of the stories from the third volume of his works, which Pavlenkov had published. In fact, it appeared that he had done nothing wrong, formally or otherwise. To put matters right he had asked Pomerantsev to give him 300 roubles to be returned to Sytin. The next day he told me that Pomerantsev had arranged for this to be done.

He asked to be discharged from the clinic.

I was told that his condition did not deteriorate before 5 September. On that day he had a meeting with his son, apparently without any adverse consequences. He wept, but gave a rational explanation for his tears—his joy at meeting his son.

After a second meeting with his son on 7 September he became deranged, agitated, slept badly, and on 8 September was transferred to an inter-communicating room, having tried to injure himself by hitting himself over the head several times with a candlestick. At this time, I cannot give the precise date, the following development took place. Through some misunderstanding the patient was let out of the clinic by himself and he spent some time wandering about alone on Vasil'evsky Island. He came back of his own accord.

From this time (5—8 September) his condition deteriorated: he slept badly, tried to injure himself, threatened suicide, kept repeating his request to be discharged, all this time suffering a strange delusion which he told me about at the very beginning of our meeting on 15 September. He told me that until 5 September he had been quite all right; while he was out of the clinic he had walked around all the places on Vasil'evsky Island where he had once lived, his head full of memories of his past. These memories later began to focus on the conviction that he was a pig. This idea gradually spread from his head through his whole body, so that he began to feel that his whole organism was changing from that of a human being to that of a pig. First his spine began to stiffen and take the form of a pig's spine, then his ribs changed too. In other words, he had completely turned into a pig, not figuratively, but quite literally, and the change was irreversible, permanent. There was no possibility of turning back into a human being. He shook his head at the suggestion that this was the fantasy of an artist used to thinking in images. But simultaneously he insisted that he be discharged. He said this to me, and to Krivenko the next day, and each time he concluded his request with the agitated threat that, if he were not discharged, he would kill himself. He said that in the clinic he was completely alone, that he needed company and freedom.

On the evening of 20 September I suggested that he move to my house. He agreed, seemingly content.

On the morning of 21 September the patient, Ivan Ivanovich [Uspensky] and Al. Gennadievich left St. Petersburg. They said that during the journey he was quite cheerful, talkative and only became taciturn and gloomy towards the end of it. But not once did he utter a word about delirious ideas.

They arrived in Novgorod at 5 p.m. I met them at the station and took him home with me. As soon as we left the station he started talking in the same way about the delusion he had told me about on 15 September.

[Uspensky complained of a swollen stomach]

From what he said it appeared that his explanation for the hard and swollen condition of his stomach was that inside him there were two beings, two embryonic organisms, and that the swollen stomach indicated the presence of, in figurative terms, something pig-like, which was blocking it, so preventing normal evacuation and the restoration of what was human. And here is another variation on the

same theme: he said that one night, as he lay awake, something like an evil spirit appeared to him. His elder brother seemed also to be involved. They wanted him to sign something. Then an angel appeared. He was not entirely clear about this, but the outcome was that he signed a document of some sort, by which he put an irreversible end to his human existence, losing all hope of ever returning to his human self or liberation from his pig self, or the pig-like construction of his organism.

22 September

He got up in a noticeably more cheerful mood ... When I went to see him, he said nothing about the delirium of the day before. He asked me to give him some physical work to do, and I told him he could help me saw some firewood. Afterwards he told me about his decision taken while still in bed that he could restore his personality only by going on foot, as the common people did, to Chudovo, Tikhvin or somewhere like that. He felt the need to put himself in the position of someone from the common people, to become one with them. He wanted to be among the people, not as a mere observer, but as one of them, living their life. I pointed out that wandering from place to place like a holy pilgrim was remote from the life of the people, since their lives were essentially not ones of pilgrimage, but of toil. I told him that in my opinion he would better achieve his aim by staying here in Kolmovo among the common people, sharing in their toil until he was completely cured. He replied: "Then let me live in a peasant hut, not a room". He found a room too comfortable.

... That same morning, on his own initiative and in straightforward and sensible terms, he told me about his family background. His father was an ecclesiastic, his mother a Sokolov. There were many cases of insanity in his father's family. One of his father's brothers had been an archimandrite and had died insane. Another brother had committed suicide. In general there were many cases of abnormality on that side of his family. On his mother's side his relatives were all talented people, one was a painter, another a musician, many of them were writers published in *Sovremennik*. His sympathies seemed to lie wholly with this side of his family.

In reporting what he said that same evening I am unable to set down his words in the incoherent way he uttered them, so allowing myself to systematize them. It should also be noted that Uspensky's personality must be considered totally different from the rest of us

who are used to thinking in ideas. He gives one the impression of being a person who can think (if one can put it that way) only in images. In his case this faculty is so highly developed that we may regard it as almost incomprehensible, even when he is in a normal state. In his present condition it appears even harder to understand. So I have to convey his language of images in the language of abstract concepts.

From the very beginning of his affliction to the present time a struggle has been going on in his consciousness between two primal forces, one of truth and righteousness, the other, which he could only describe vaguely, its opposite. He believed that he had a dual personality, consisting of two halves fighting against each other. The first was Gleb (Uspensky), the second Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky, simply and more clearly called "Ivanovich" (N.B. his mother's father's name was Gleb. Ivanovich derives from his father's name—Ivan). However hard Gleb fought, he found it difficult not only to destroy Ivanovich, but even to resist his power. From the beginning of his illness the struggle between them had been desperate. On occasions Gleb seemed to succeed in holding his own, but this was only temporary. Ivanovich would once again invade Gleb's territory, disregarding all efforts at dissuasion or compromise, ruthlessly overcoming them and taking Gleb over. When this happened the patient not only saw himself as utterly unsympathetic and repellent, but actually took on those characteristics, to the point of literally turning into a pig with all its physical attributes, its skull, its snout, its spine, its ribs, all its external features transferred inside him. Since this transformation into a pig is the most extreme form in which Ivanovich's victory was expressed I shall concentrate on that. Apparently, each time his mood worsened and his thoughts became correspondingly gloomier, the personality of Ivanovich became more and more dominant in his self-consciousness. One night (see above) he finally surrendered his Gleb-self completely and Ivanovich took over. And, as soon as he acknowledged this denial of himself, negative changes began. The next morning he had the feeling that his spine and ribs were stiffening and hardening. However much he struggled, his arms tried to grow into his chest and to move forward. He made frantic efforts to return them to their normal position, and it was when this failed that he used physical violence against himself: trying to smash his own head, to cut his whole body in half, to set fire to himself, and feeling as if he were burning. There were times when he thought he had more or less achieved his purpose and that his

negative self was being expelled externally, although it was still inside him. Sometimes, through the darkness of the negative personality that had taken him over, a ray of light would appear in the form of real people like Korolenko, Wolfson and others, or creatures of imagination like an angel or the nun Margarita. Sometimes they managed to defend Gleb's existence, but then Gleb would collapse completely and Ivanovich would take command again.

Uspensky believed that Ivanovich committed monstrous crimes. For instance, he killed his family and his children three times, poisoning them all with strychnine. The patient could not understand how they had all survived, referring to his son's visit on 1 July which seemed to prove that his family were not all dead. He recalled his displeasure at seeing his son alive. It is notable that he remembers every detail of the outside world that impinged on his consciousness at that time. Moreover, he remembers quite well how he behaved and what he said at the most critical periods of his illness. But he does not remember the details of his bouts of delirium, marked as they were by extreme complexity and rapidly changing notions, although at the time these notions were so vivid that when he talked about them they seem like complicated hallucinations, i.e they were objectified outside of him. It appears that every notion he has tends to be accompanied by hallucinations (or pseudo-hallucinations) of the sensory organs which contribute to the forming of these notions. This, I believe, must explain why, during bouts of delirium, there are hallucinations of seeing, hearing and feeling. He clearly sees people, hears them speak, and simultaneously experiences tactile and muscular sensations. For example, he sees before him Margarita the nun. She tells him to hold up his hands and have them spat on. The patient sees and feels that his hands are completely covered in a thick film of spit. He is told to put his hands over his face and to wipe it with the spit. This he does. It is in ways such as this that he succeeds in resurrecting Gleb or his conscience, but only briefly before Ivanovich returns.

All this should be understood not as an inward struggle between good and bad, nor as an alternation between good and bad behaviour, but rather as his adoption of a more or less tolerant view of himself, while at other times he is harshly critical of himself. The mechanism of this appears to be as follows. Depending on his physiological functions (mainly his intestines) and the pain he feels in the organs concerned, his mood deteriorates and he becomes conscious of more and more unpleasant notions and images. As soon as he feels any improvement, brighter ideas begin to show through the

general gloomy background, varying in their duration which is determined by the outcome of the conflict between them. He sees this conflict as one between forces of good and evil. And the following point should be emphasized: although the images presented to his consciousness seem to him to be the result of impressions gained from objects external to him, or although (at the least) he projects them outwards and regards them as hallucinations, he still sees them exclusively as particular states of his own psyche, as phenomena inside his head. I believe the most appropriate way of describing this is to call it a “subjective reaction” or even a “pathological subjective reaction”. He regards himself as responsible for the images (thoughts) in his consciousness. This means that all the personalities and all their thoughts appearing in his delirium he regards as his own. Thus he appears to himself in different forms, some positive, some negative. Korolenko and the others, even the nun Margarita, are one of his “I’s”, Gleb Ivanovich is the other. He thinks that he is always in a state of duality, that he always consists of two “I’s”.

23 September

N.B. His character is marked by extreme modesty, delicacy, morbid sensitivity. If his pride is hurt, even slightly, he seems totally disinclined to consider whether he deserves any reproach or not. It is as if he is quite incapable of protesting, even inwardly, against anything unpleasant done to him. He shrinks into himself and his reaction to anything he sees as negative amounts merely to a worsening of his mood, the assertion of his low opinion of himself, and ultimately to the total disappearance of his better side. Today he tried to read and complained that it was no use, nothing stayed in his head.

24 September

... Today he talked to me for quite a long time about his earlier life. He began to recall things apparently without any definite idea, but his recollections proved quite significant as an indication of what makes up his delirium through the process of unconscious synthesis. Of some importance were his memories of certain women of a high moral standard: ideal women, saints. His general opinion was that such superior moral types are to be found among women, rather than men. This might explain the fact that in one of his bouts of delirium, lasting more than twenty-four hours, the nun Margarita played the most prominent part. She was the embodiment of heavenly virtue, of

ideal moral perfection. She revealed all his sins to him, but finally set him free, forgave him and called him brother. She told him that he would remain in a state of redemption only if he forgot his family and became a monk: only then would he be joined to her by an ideal brotherly connection. But he remembered his family, disobeyed her, and at once lost the state of grace she had promised him. It was Gleb Ivanovich who was to blame (it appeared that he had been expected to give up everything that was personal and private). Gleb Ivanovich always prevented him. There were many women who pursued him (as Gleb Uspensky)—a maid, a schoolteacher, etc.—but he reacted to them as Gleb Ivanovich. He talked in some detail about his revolutionary friends and I asked him why in his delirium an ideal woman should appear as a nun, when in fact he had known ideal women who were not from any kind of religious order. His explanation was that populism must have played a part in the way his imagination worked ...

... As far as praying is concerned, sometimes he says that he does the praying, at others times that someone else does, while he watches and bows his head as he is told. He says that he has never been particularly religious. It appears that the prayers, like the plan to visit monasteries on a pilgrimage, like monasticism itself, are connected with populism, the idea of becoming one with the people.

25 September

... He says that when there is a human being inside him his stomach, his muscles, his joints are flabby and weak, since the animal part of him is reduced; when there is an animal inside him, everything is stiff, thick. At present he is in the latter state and his stomach needs cleansing ...

... He explains the hardening of his tissues as follows: a surplus of blood rushes to his head and this removes the newly forming part of the material that goes to change the “I” into an animal. He avoids using the word “pig”. Today he used the word in the phrase “when I am a pig”, but seemed to sense that this was absurd and almost whispered it.

[On waking on the morning of 26 September Uspensky felt a burning sensation in the lower part of his body which he interpreted as a sign that his animal nature was taking over permanently. He heard a voice telling him to make his confession, preparatory to becoming a

monk. He went to church, where the priest told him he would have to receive communion in the evening, fast the next day, and then make his confession].

... He returned from church and laughingly told me that the priest had given him a book which he was to read before writing his sins down on paper.

... He told me that he could hear his elder brother saying that he never confessed his sins, and later complained that he hadn't seen his family for four months; "I don't understand why they haven't let my wife see me". He was pleased when I offered to send for her. When I told him that, given the fact that he persisted in talking about abandoning his family and becoming a monk, I was surprised that he should want to see his family, he made no reply ...

27 September

... After lunch I showed him a letter his wife had sent me. His response was to express the mistaken idea that his relationship with his family had been broken off. In the letter his wife called him Gleb Ivanovich, whereas she used to call him just Gleb. Then he began to insist on being back home. All this became confused with concern for his wife: she must be seriously hurt, ill, and so on, and that that was why they would not let her see him. I spoke to him quite heatedly, telling him that it was my duty to do everything in my power to cure him and that I could not, therefore, give in to his transient and often contradictory whims. This seemed to upset him, but his determination wavered. He suddenly suggested sending a telegram to find out whether his wife was alive or not. I helped him compose the message: "Are you alive and well? If possible, come and see me". This seemed to satisfy him, although the rest of the time he was sad and thoughtful. However, this was different from the usual depression caused by hearing voices in his head.

29 September

... At 4 p.m. I gave him the telegram and letter from his family. He read them standing up. He stood for a long time with the letter, seemingly frozen in one position, with a blank look on his face ... After a few minutes he said: "What a change from this morning. Then I felt quite healthy, but now I'm beginning to have those sensations again." In the evening he read for quite a long time, as he had done during the rest of the day. He asked me to give him the first volume of his collected works so that he could read Mikhailovsky's

preface. After reading it for a short time, he told me that he had never read it before, explaining that he had been afraid he would not be able to understand it. He said he lacked learning and had had little education. From what he said later, it turned out that he was afraid that, if he forced himself to accept other people's views of his work even though they might be positive, as Mikhailovsky's were, he might lose losing his independence and originality as a creative writer (that is my understanding, or rather my surmise).

After his bath his concentration was focussed on listening to his thoughts, which took the form of distinct words. From what he said it appears that the words were accompanied by external auditory impressions: the lashing of rain, the ticking of a clock, the rustling of his beard. In his bath the ticking of the clock was accompanied by the impression of a funeral bell tolling and words that spoke of his having stolen Christianity (taking communion, etc.). As a human being he was doomed, his conscience had stopped working.

30 September

... He refused to have breakfast with me because his hands were dirty (although he had carefully washed them). He had breakfast in his own room in my presence. He is clearly depressed by the fact that he acts like this. Although he says that conversations go on continually in his head, his mood, for the most part, seems not to depend on this. It seems to me that if one ignores the effect of the hemorrhoids, his mental state, especially in respect of his intellect, will improve.

He is apparently disturbed now not so much by words as by sounds alone. He says that he will now try to train himself to eliminate the sounds by continually reminding himself of one idea alone—to live by the truth.

1 October

He slept from 11 p.m. until 2 a.m. The rest of the night he was on his knees in prayer. He told me that he could see his own eyes, but that they had taken the form of pig's eyes (he did not use the word "pig" directly, but implied it) and during his prayers they had changed into human eyes. He had seen them do this. Then his eyes disappeared and his heart came on the scene. Gradually it changed into a pig's heart. Then came the chalice from which he had taken communion. All the patient's thoughts were expressed in what may be called poetic images. His problem is not that he has the ability to fantasize like this,

but that he cannot distinguish between his fantasies and actuality, or remains unaware of how nonsensical they are as actual facts.

4 October

... His psychic abnormality at present, to judge from his answers to my questions, consists of hypersensitivity of the skin (perhaps also muscular), of overall feeling and of hearing. As regards the latter, his own evidence is reasonably objective. The sounds in his immediate vicinity are received by his mind as a terrifying chaotic mixture of sensations, and he reacts to them not merely with his head, but with his whole body. The sounds flow through the whole of his body. Monotonous sounds cause him a different type of agony, for example, the ticking of a clock's pendulum, the sound of a sweeping brush, the rattle of wheels, the clatter of horses' hooves, the lashing of rain, and so on, all these are heard as the repeating of monotonous words such as "Damned, damned ... vanish, vanish," and so on.

6 October

His appearance is quite healthy, but he is still preoccupied with his bowel movements. His ideas about physiology are quite ridiculous, and this should be taken into account when evaluating them as delirious. He himself admits that he is ignorant of the natural sciences and that he has made up his own theories about anatomy and physiology. His ideas on matters concerning his bodily sensations may be called more ignorant than delirious. He acknowledges that it is terrible to fantasize as he does.

Today he did a lot of reading. In the evening he listened to me read and then himself read quite a lot aloud from the *Vestnik Evropy*. He made fun of himself, calling himself an illiterate animal, just learning to read for the first time.

8 October

... In the evening he read to us aloud for some time... The first time he started to read was the day before yesterday... Yesterday he called himself a stone (because of his silence and the slowness of his thoughts). On one occasion today he said he was incurable. He read better today, with hardly any swallowing of the sounds. The day before yesterday it was noticeable that he sometimes pronounced letters incorrectly, especially when there were several consonants together. It should be noted that having to read things that have little interest immediately upsets his mental equilibrium. He begins to sink

into thought, makes long pauses, and finally suggests that it would be better to read something else.

His cough is no better and this to a marked degree depends on his smoking. At midnight I was called to see him. It turned out that after reading for some time he had used two paper tubes to draw up water from a glass into his nostrils. They had had difficulty settling him down for the night. When I arrived he was still feeling his nose and he let me feel it. He told me that the bones in his nose were moving (were broken) and that he had not got a head cold, because a great deal of water had poured out of his nose. I applied a pad and sternly told him to go to sleep and to get all that nonsense out of his head.

11 October

... Generally very satisfactory. But not very communicative, i.e. doesn't talk much. Sluggish. Today he quoted his articles which he had read previously. He recalled his trip to Baku, reproaching himself for having written a very short article on that occasion, when the impressions and information he had gained from it should have enabled him to write something more substantial. He is aware that he was rushing about senselessly.

He recalls that when he was at Frei's all his works went through his mind. He seemed to hear Korolenko reading them aloud to some of his other friends (although he was aware that it was his own thoughts). He felt as if he was on the other side of a wall, listening. Suddenly the reading stopped, when someone remarked that there was a "spy". When asked who the spy was he laughingly replies that at that time he regarded himself as a spy. He remembered this episode to tell me that at that time the whole of his life passed before him with remarkable detail and clarity. At the same time he evaluated his works (through what others had said about them) and compared himself to Zlatovratsky. Some quite insignificant short items had earned him a few satisfactory comments, whereas whole piles of material had been devoted to Zlatovratsky (he mimed turning pages over).

20 October

Yesterday he expressed some sensible critical ideas about his earlier works. He read quite a lot and was extremely taciturn. He went to sleep at night without hypnosis. An hour later, at about midnight, he got up and started to read Mikhailovsky's preface to his works. (N.B.

On an earlier occasion he had said that he couldn't bring himself to read it, being afraid that he would not understand it, having a very limited education.) After 2 a.m. he called me and I found him in bed. He was shivering, complaining of pain at the back and sides of his neck. I tried to hypnotize him—it took much longer than usual and then was incomplete. He kept trying to open his eyes. As I left he could no longer open his eyes, but kept raising his eyebrows. About twenty minutes later he got up again and had no more sleep, still reading Mikhailovsky. This morning I found him in silent concentration, eating and drinking nothing. At first he made no reply to my questions, but then he became talkative, even garrulous. Yesterday in the bath the drops of water prompted him to say “it will blind me”. Later he became obsessed with the word “blind”. It was as if he had been ordered not to close his eyes, but to keep reading. He now says that he has understood Mikhailovsky very well, finding that Mikhailovsky has an excellent grasp of what he had described from his own life. Reading Mikhailovsky, it was as if he were reading his own biography and the result was that he kept going over his past life in his mind, as he had done at Frei's. So he began to recall everything he had experienced with Frei, and this brought back the same spiritual state in which he had been at that time. He even thought that his wound had reopened. He describes this in a way that makes it impossible to say positively whether he believes everything he describes or whether he sees it in a critical light. Apparently halfway inbetween. He talks with pleasure about how, when he was with Frei, he had seen Margarita, hearts, and things of that sort. He is now apparently mainly preoccupied with the idea that it was a whole poem, which unfortunately he cannot reproduce in detail. He seems to regard everything from the time of his illness, his ideas and images, as expressive of the profound work which was shaping itself in his mind at the turning point of his life. He is apparently convinced that all this is nothing else but a process of criticism of his past and of the development of new beginnings for his future. At the same time he acknowledges that this process caused him terrible suffering and was accompanied by crazy incoherent thoughts, images, behavior, and so on. (At Frei's not only did he hit himself over the head with a candlestick, he also banged his head against the windowsill to destroy the animal inside him).

21 October

... Before his bath he came and told me that, as his head was empty, he found it necessary to educate himself by copying from Schiller (a book I had got for him several days previously). He wants to keep writing and so asks me not to have him take a bath. During his bath he sent to ask me to have it shortened by ten minutes. After supper he wanted to keep copying. But this soon passed.

22 October

This morning he came and asked me to give him a subject to write about. The conversation about this was cut short by the arrival of Mikhailovsky. Apart from the first hours of the meeting he was passive, self-absorbed, but this did not stop him from listening to other people's words.

26 October

Yesterday he visited the Boitsovs with Dmitrii Vasil'evich Ivanov, who noticed only one piece of strange behavior: on the way to and from Kolmovo, when they drove past a church he crossed himself. He tells me that in the past not only has he never shown any religious feeling, but he has actually felt repelled by the clergy and ritual. But in one of the rooms of his apartment there has always been an icon, and there still is. (N.B. Although his wife previously seemed to be a non-believer, it turns out that she once visited Father Ioann in Kronstadt ...)

28 October

Although I insisted that he should have a normal good night's sleep, he woke up at 3 a.m. and he kept getting up until 9 a.m., getting back into bed and lying quietly for some time. It is not clear whether he was asleep or merely dozing. At any rate, we can say that from 3 until 9 a.m. he had no sleep at all. At the same time he did nothing abnormal... And at 9 a.m. he fell asleep. Could this be another sign that he is returning to his old habits and his normal past life, when he used to work late at night, have supper at about 2 a.m. and go to bed in the early morning?

31 October

... he is thinking a lot, trying to remember in all its detail what he experienced at Frei's: everything about his life down to the last detail. But he cannot, and the harder he tries, the more difficult it

becomes and this disturbs him. He regrets that it has all vanished. What happened there was so artistic, what unfolded was so characteristic of him, indicating what and in what way he should be writing; his actual writings are merely a faint shadow of it. The scenes with Margarita were particularly striking, like a poem, but unfortunately he cannot recall her. Inevitably this is accompanied by crazy notions, such as that he has lived through all his reminiscences, all his life, that they have disappeared without trace, burnt to ashes, and there is nothing left. At the same time he recalls that other writers have diaries, biographical material, while he has nothing, and he cannot restore his memories and acquire material for his own biography. Here we have a combination of the awareness of a weakening of memory in the sense of ability to recall things with the awareness of a weakening of his capability as a writer (he recently said that, when he arrived in Chudovo last August, he felt that the short article he had just written was his last work, that as a writer he was dead and gone... that he suddenly felt emptiness all around him), and a feeling derived from the articles he had read about himself (including Ivanovich's paraphrase from *Russkaya Zhizn'*). There is also a desire to spread his wings, fly aloft, to re-establish his worth as a writer and show that he did not deserve all those expressions of sympathy. Whatever it is, it is obvious that he is tormented by his inability to write.

1 November

... It is remarkable that almost every Sunday the religiously colored delirium recurs more vividly. Today ideas peculiar to Sunday were combined with numerous other unpleasant ideas: his anticipation of a journey, reading about himself in the *Smolenskii Vestnik*, sleeping badly, an agonizing awareness of his inability to write, desperate efforts to resurrect his talent and to write something of real artistic worth.

9 November

This evening there was an outburst of uncontrolled delirium, to counteract which he had to be given cold baths.

I take this opportunity to note certain facts known to me about Gleb Uspensky's past. These may help to give a picture of his personality when he was completely healthy. His wife tells me that she could never persuade him to clean his teeth or to stop walking

about at night barefoot. She could never make him tidier (cigarette-ends, etc.), neater in appearance and so on. As a result she never slept in the same room with him, unwilling to have to see what might interfere with the feelings of love and respect she had for him. There were often periods when he was in what might be called a monastic frame of mind and was hostile towards emotional relationships, even those between man and wife.

Sasha, his son, tells of an occasion when he senselessly and stubbornly insisted that Sasha had an abscess somewhere in the intestines. This was when Sasha was seriously ill with typhus, everyone was taking the matter very seriously and had no time for stupid ideas. Uspensky had even consulted an atlas of anatomy and somehow come up with the idea of an abscess and tried to convince everyone else of its accuracy. In spite of the seriousness of the situation, the people in his immediate circle found it hard not to burst out laughing.

Mikhailovsky also tells me that they all knew what outrageously ridiculous ideas he was capable of in branches of knowledge of which he was totally ignorant. With no rational basis he still insisted on his own viewpoint. Krivenko tells how Shchedrin reacted when Uspensky started to get involved in social and political journalism by remarking: "What a journalist God has sent us!"

According to his wife, Reshetnikov and Levitov, with whom Uspensky kept company, were terrible drinkers. They used to spend time together in Chudovo on wild drunken sprees.¹ She made representations to them about it and simply did her best to ensure that the children's lives were not upset. This she tried to achieve by trying to lead a life for herself and her children that was quite separate from theirs.

Judging by what Ivan, Kamensky and Mikhailovsky have told me, I am aware that Uspensky went so far as to complain about his wife and to express his displeasure towards her (and even more than that) in their presence. Apparently he was irritable with her to the point of coarseness.

His wife says that after his illness he began to drink very little or rarely.

According to Sasha, he was always extremely nervous when travelling in a cab; constantly shouting at the cabman and even swearing at him for his bad driving, for running the risk of colliding with another vehicle.

Sasha also tells me that his father has always been extremely short-tempered, but that his irritability would quickly vanish as though it had never been. At home he was used to the idea that the life of the whole family should be arranged to suit his own life, which was full of disorder and caused other people great inconvenience. For example, in order to clean and tidy his room (study and bedroom) they had to wait until he left them and then do what had to be done in great haste, so as to be gone by the time he came back. Or he slept on the sofa. In order to make his bed they had to wait until he came out into the dining room to have his supper. This might happen at two o'clock in the morning, or maybe even four o'clock. And they had to make sure that the samovar did not go cold. A servant could not wait about all that time, which meant that his wife had to see to things. And he was completely oblivious to the fact that his wife got no sleep until such a late hour. Generally speaking, until 1887 he made absolutely no effort to put himself in the position of the members of his family. Somehow the complete unacceptability of such behavior never seemed to occur to him; the lack of feeling it showed towards his family, the way he adopted the unsympathetic status of a little god, accepting this servile treatment as his due. The following incident is a striking example. When Sasha was ill with typhus eight or nine years ago and apparently likely to die, according to Telicheev Uspensky was in his study writing a comic story which, so they say, had him "clutching his stomach with laughter". Sasha says that only after 1887 did he begin to show more consideration and concern for the family.

30 November

Today, like yesterday, he drank much less. He spends little time sitting with us. Reads a lot in his own room.

He has the most incongruous ideas about his bodily functions... Could it be that he will prove to be suffering from some form of paralysis? Or will we have to acknowledge senile dementia praecox, the possibility of which I recognized in spring. In that case has it been worth the expenditure of so much effort? My family has had to make so many self-denials, so many sacrifices! Would even one's own loving family be capable of such sacrifices? What a pity! I cannot console myself with mere philanthropy, because I could use my energies with greater effect for people in general, not to mention the fact that it would relieve my wife Varya of the obligation to deal with him, when she is so much in need of rest and quiet.

1 December

This evening, seeing that he seemed to be wrapped up in himself, I began to question him. On the one hand he admits he is ill. He says that his whole family relies on him, but that he despairs of recovering. But, on the other hand, he becomes thoughtful and starts to recall earlier experiences and is unable to look at things in a simple and straightforward way, trying incoherently to explain it all and talking about reorganization etc., at the same time bringing up various facts derived from the sensations of that time, delirious ideas, and so on. He says that even now he experiences the same sensations he did before, hearing the thoughts in his head in those objects from which monotonous sounds come to him. When I asked him to give me an example, with some difficulty he managed to refer to the sound of a steam engine, and kept giving examples from the past: the sound of rain, a carriage moving, and so on. During a break in our conversation he was standing by the window, gazing into the street. He gazed for a long time and found it hard to tell me what he could see there. "Nothing very much" and "I'm looking at the stars". Then it turned out that he could see the same angel that he had seen at Frei's, which had flown away from him on 5 September, when his condition worsened. Now it was coming back, but much smaller in size.

2 December

... About the time when the angel left him he says essentially what he said before, that he feels the whole of his organism undergoing change and transformation, reorganizing itself. He doesn't talk about changing into a pig, but in essence it is the same thing: he feels changes which are leading to the loss of his human personality in general, and his talent as a writer in particular. The vision of the small angel may be seen as the graphic expression of the idea that he can detect signs that his former talent is returning, only that it is now much less than it was before. It may be that all his delirious ideas will prove to be graphic images (in incoherent form) of a synthetic deduction derived from those abnormal sensations which impinge on his hypersensitive consciousness with such remarkable precision.

14 December

... When I remarked that he hears conversations going on in his head, he replied that this would never change; he had always had something like that. By this he means that he has always felt that he

consisted of two antithetical halves, responding in completely opposite ways to what he felt he ought to do, how he ought to behave. For example, one side says “Go”, the other says the opposite. One side he calls fair and just, the other he did not name. If he happened to act on the instructions of the negative (I shall call it such) side, contrary to the demands of the positive, he always felt that the latter was disturbed and upset. He says that has always been the case and always will be.

16 December

[Uspensky had asked the doctor to discharge him from treatment, apparently anxious to be at home with his family again.]

... He spoke agitatedly and fairly incoherently, but from what he said one could deduce the following main ideas and feelings which concern him: he feels that there is no firm ground under his feet; he finds himself in a kind of quandary between my family and his own; he despairs of himself; he thinks he could write something, or has no hope of doing so; he sees himself as dead as far as literature is concerned; he tells me (revealing a secret) that he will come to a bad end, and that he would like to be at home to put his affairs in order, to do what he can for his family [including a discussion with Pavlenkov regarding the publication of a series of his works “for the people”], and then he would see—perhaps he would get better and be able to write.

17 December

Last evening he told me with delight that he was thinking a lot and doing it “in silence”. He had thought a great deal about his trip to the Caucasus and his memories of it went through his mind clearly and in remarkable detail. He told me some of them. It is surprising how little and how inadequately he has written about his impressions of that trip. He was clearly pleased that memories of the past had not vanished from his memory in the way he had previously thought. In view of his improved condition I refrained from using the hypnosis I had prescribed the day before, since I was interested to see what the outcome of the natural course of his illness would be. Unfortunately that night he hardly slept at all and eventually had a rush of blood to the head (was this the result of a reduced dose of opium?)...

18 December

He slept well from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

This morning he insisted on seeing me at a time when I was busy in my surgery. He could see this for himself, not to mention the fact that he ought to have known it anyway. It turned out that he was anxious to tell me that he had to go to St. Petersburg for at least a few days and wanted to catch the morning train. I gave him a formal reprimand, referring to what had happened in the past when he was in good health. Remarkably, as happened previously, he took this very well. He spent the morning recalling his recent past in some detail and even started making a short biographical outline on paper. He keeps returning to the idea that he has made only very limited and fragmentary use in his printed works of the rich material he has from his experience of life, and keeps insisting that he has experienced a great deal.

20 December

For the past two days he has been putting on paper quite a lot of his reminiscences in summary form, as far as possible in chronological order. In general he has looked very well. Today he is more withdrawn, distracted and apparently not himself (he keeps shutting his eyes, touching his forehead, etc.) When I asked him what the matter was, he replied that he was remembering various women who had pestered him with their attentions. One of them, for example, went so far as to offer to be his cook, another was always trying to see him, even dressing up as an apple-seller, etc. This same individual got a position in Tosna as a teacher so that she could keep watch on him and be able to communicate with him either by writing to him or meeting him. On one occasion she came to the back entrance of his apartment in the guise of a trader so that she could have a look at his wife. He admitted that these women tried to have relationships with him. He did not respond as they wanted him to, but he did not reject them or draw a firm line. When I asked him if he had told his wife about this, he said no. And when I asked him whether she had guessed what was happening, at first he said no, but then admitted that she could have done. I observed that this could well have made her jealous and caused domestic strife and he told me that there had been heated arguments and scenes.

23 December

Ivan tells me that from 7 until 8.30 this morning he lay in bed talking to himself, shouting quite loudly at someone, telling him not to laugh, to go away, etc. When I tackled him about this, at first he said

that he had had a fit of delirium, and then started to explain with some difficulty and incoherence what had happened to him. But in his reaction to these phenomena there was no sign of his adopting a critical attitude to their reality or meaning. It as if he has no criterion to enable him to distinguish between when he is ill and when he is well. He seems not to feel that the symptoms of his illness include something different from what was accessible to him when he was healthy. Since everything that happens to his organism seems to him to owe its existence to his psychic condition (this is how I would explain it), he imposes various prohibitions on the workings of his mind. It is not possible to get at all the details. He thinks that it is the influence of the way things were organized at Frei's clinic. In a word, today, quite unexpectedly, there appeared all that incoherence in his explanations, or simply in the way he described the sensations he felt from his own organs which he once experienced, but which have not been apparent for some time, at least not to us ... Yesterday he missed his family. He is worked up about his wife's expected arrival. Naturally he has erotic thoughts and feelings, and probably sees erotic images too. He cannot analyze or make sense of his feelings, or explain them physiologically, scientifically or psychologically. To put it simply, he displays total ignorance of any kind of scientific approach and a complete absence of correct methods of thinking. And I am convinced that this has always been part of his character.

24 December

... In many respects he may give the impression of being healthy. He can now freely talk at some length about what he has read either most recently or in the past. But you can talk to him freely only when you keep to the subject which concerns him at that moment. You can ask him for all sorts of detail and he will immediately give you a reply that is satisfactory, even interesting. But if you suddenly move into an area not related to what concerns him at present or an area which he finds totally uninteresting, then he proves to be deaf, fails to understand, incapable of explaining anything sensibly. I believe he has always been like this.

... He believes that his stomach (and apparently not merely his stomach, but the whole of his organism) must have undergone a radical change which makes it different from anyone else's. So it would be worthwhile investigating it after his death. He is convinced that inside him they would find something of great interest.

25 December

Last night he had a vivid dream about Vera. He is expecting her today with his wife. He saw her as a living person. He also told me that he often sees whole pictures when his eyes are closed (a sunset through the window of his room, for example). Or whole pictures or whole conversations take place in front of him (apparently recollections). What he tells me merely indicates that he has a vivid imagination. Furthermore, he has a remarkable memory, not only for what happened long ago, but also for his most recent impressions from life, books, newspapers, and so on. For instance, yesterday at the Tyutchevs there was talk of Leskov's latest story. I could not remember where it was printed or what it was about and asked Gleb Ivanovich. He immediately told me that it was in *Nedelya* and about various rumors to do with cholera.² It is remarkable that a memory like this should go with extreme absent-mindedness and an apparently complete lack of attention to what is going on around him... He is a man of highly original character, interested, judging by what he reads in the papers, only in matters of a particular category. This category may be described as everything to do with the common people and what, in his opinion, is to their advantage. It is also remarkable that, although he is highly sensitive, he completely disregards the interests of those around him, totally indifferent to the sacrifices they make to look after him and to the inconvenience this causes. He rarely mutters anything by way of thanks, usually accepting what they do in sullen silence. Here are some examples of his absent-mindedness: he forgets to put sugar in his tea; he strikes matches and applies them to his cigarette when it is still lit; he gets a light from someone else and moves away before his own cigarette is lit; he puts a cigarette in his mouth the wrong way round; he puts a match in his mouth instead of a cigarette and tries to light it with a cigarette.

... He told Ivan that he will soon be leaving. He is clearly counting on persuading his wife to take him with her. He was excited about her coming, but this did not stop him from suddenly telling me that there is a great deal of correspondence in the *Sibirskii Vestnik*, that is very interesting on the subject of folk medicine among the Yakuts (his complete lack of basic scientific knowledge seems to encourage his conviction that everything that the common people believe contains some kind of profound truth.) No one has hitherto observed this narrowly populist feature in his writings and it may well depend on the inhibiting influence of his close friends, probably Mikhailovsky most of all.

28 December

He accompanied his wife and daughter to the railway station. All the time they was here, he gave them the impression that he was almost the old normal Gleb Ivanovich. According to his wife, he has always been different from ordinary people. Those who knew him well always told her that he was abnormal. From the many eccentricities his wife and daughter told me about I will mention the following. In the 1870s he arrived in Tula to see his mother, whom he had not seen for a long time and whom he loved. A day later he suddenly left for Moscow, saying he would be back the next day. Instead he turned up in Paris, where his wife was, and then went to London, where he spent three days. His wife adds that some trivial matter must have made an unpleasant impression on him, so he got it into his head to go to Moscow, then something else made him dash off to Paris, etc.³ She says he always acted on the spur of the moment. Or he might get an idea into his head, make arrangements accordingly and then for no apparent reason continue to put it off, and in the end do nothing about it. On numerous occasions he would make up his mind to go somewhere and ask for coach horses. The horses would be standing there ready and people would keep reminding him. He just kept saying, "Soon, soon" and then send the horses back, although they still had to be paid for. She also talked about the untidiness of his room, his slovenliness, the absence of any kind of regime and order in the way he lived, how you could not go into his room when he was there and had to wait until he left it before hastily tidying it up. We may conclude from what she said that she believes he abused alcohol under the influence of his friends and relations, especially Nikolai Uspensky, to whom she refers with strong disapproval. "There were times," she said, "at the beginning of our life together when I would be on my way to a lesson and would meet Nikolai Uspensky on his way to our house with a bottle of vodka under his arm. And, all the time I was at the lesson, I had it on my mind that Gleb's evil genius was at home with him and they were drinking together." She was fearful that Sasha might also develop a taste for vodka. "My one concern was that the children's lives should run smoothly; their upbringing depended entirely on me." And she mentioned that Gleb Ivanovich had often given one of his children a violent shaking.

1 January 1893

Behaving well all the time. Saw the New Year in yesterday. On his own initiative he embraced me, saying "I am deeply grateful!"

Then he kissed Varvara Lukinichna's hand and at her suggestion embraced her too. Drank three glasses of champagne which fortunately did not prevent him from sleeping well. Since 30 December he has frequently mentioned that he is haunted by the sounds of the accordion, guitar, and snatches of the sounds he heard at Christmas. After Christmas he expressed his dislike of the accordion, which he was convinced was not of Russian origin, since it cannot convey precisely enough the subtle shades of Russian music. He regards its sounds as defective. This evening he announced almost in despair that it was clear he would never get those confused sounds out of his head. They come into his head every time he hears all those sounds which were previously accompanied by words, seeming to originate in the source of the sounds (the sound coloration of his own thoughts). The Christmas sounds are so firmly fixed in his head that by comparison the genuine intensity of the sound of a church bell seems weak, and they seem to muffle the bell sound which he usually hears at full strength. In an attempt to remove the traces of the unpleasant unharmonious sounds I suggested that Varvara should play the piano to him. He persisted that the piano sounded to him like the tunes played on the accordion and the guitar, and the other sounds he had heard at Christmas.

2 January

He talked to me about the various sensations he often seems to experience mainly in his face and skull. They are clearly the results of the effect of frost on his forehead, ear, eye, cheek (the left one), nose - he does not usually cover his face up properly when outside, rarely turns up his collar, and there are often 25 degrees of frost. Usually these sensations bring to his mind images which are similar in character: in this instance he associates them with the real-life experience of the large number of skulls he saw at Peredolsky's, with noses fallen off, hollow eye-sockets, sawn-off bone arches, and so on. And so he has the sensation that somehow he has no right eye or a glass one, or he cannot feel his right cheek, which seems to be missing, that somehow the band of bone inside his forehead is hollow, and so on. He describes all this uncritically and with no comment apart from the fact that it demonstrates "impressionability", "rushes of blood to the head", "full-bloodedness", that there are various changes and "organizations" going on inside his head. I put all this in the same category as the many phenomena described earlier: under the influence of any kind of external impression, whatever sensation he

experiences he associates with various closely related ideas or with real objects, or with a more or less distorted combination of these objects, or simply with various fantastic images. The way he himself reacts to these sensations depends on the degree of his self-consciousness and self-possession; he may merely establish them as facts, but there are times when he may create from them something like delirium. He says that he often has the feeling that his face is changing. (It should be noted that in speaking about what he feels at any given moment he always implies that he has always had these same feelings; he thus gives the impression that he has never had any completely clear periods when he experienced no abnormal sensations whatsoever.

6 January

After breakfast he was at the Boitsovs. What he tells me shows that he heard conversations, that is, he heard his own thoughts spoken aloud, coming from the ticking of a clock and the ringing of bells. And he added, laughing and pointing to his head: "Obviously there are a lot of people in there." After dinner he started whispering. It turned out he was thinking aloud about material for work on the peasant question. The remarkable thing is that these "conversations" and whisperings take place while he is simultaneously talking freely on almost any subject, like someone almost normal. And from what he says it is clear that he is now reading very productively, not more or less automatically as he did previously ...

10 January

... He told me that while he was taking his bath today he twice coughed up dark blood. When I asked him if he felt any pain in his sides, he said no, but then averred that he often feels pressure on the upper part of his body, as though he is in a vice or tied up with ropes... He went on to speak of his impressionability when, for example, he bends forward to light a cigarette from a lamp and remembers the skulls he saw at Lenkoran and immediately feels a sensation on his back as if a tortoise is crawling up it. When I asked him about the sounds he had been hearing he told me that they seemed to have stopped, like the conversations, while the sound of the bell had become very muffled. The conversations, in his own words, consist of what he is thinking at that particular moment, i.e. they are his thoughts taking on a sound coloration under the influence of the sound of a bell, and so on.

25 January

It should be noted that all this time he has been very punctilious in attending meetings of the provincial *zemstvo*. Even though he obviously does not always listen attentively or understand everything, he is still very keen to attend; nor did he miss two social functions in the evening...

... Yesterday he might have been more agitated than on previous days by the following. He has not written to his wife for a long time. Yesterday he received a letter from her, in which she expressed her concern that he might be angry with her for failing to see Varvara Lukinichna in St. Petersburg and thus being unable to do what he had asked. On hearing yesterday that Varvara Lukinichna might be going to St. Petersburg, even just for one day, he animatedly expressed his desire to go with her. Then he had to be persuaded that he ought not to go, as they were not at all prepared to receive him at home; he would make things difficult for his family, especially for his wife, whose health was not good. Later I talked to him alone in his room about this. My final question was to ask him if he thought that they would look after him at home as he required. After a moment's thought he said no. Then I told him my plans for arranging for various close friends to visit him here in turn to relieve his boredom, and how I was thinking of going with him to Chudovo when the weather became warmer (there are hard frosts at the moment). Finally I suggested that he should rely on me. He replied that he would leave me to take care of everything.

31 January

In recent days he has been especially pleasant; clearly he is bored, but, apart from that, his thoughts seem to be focussing on his memories of the Frei period, although he expresses himself in the normal way. Today one of the servants told me that last night and today he had seen Gleb Ivanovich hitting his head with his fists. When I asked him about this, he got confused, and tried to put me off with off-handed replies, but then I noticed that the wound on his head was somewhat exposed again. Not really a wound, but a groove with strips of hard skin over it which have not joined together properly. Now and again he examines it. He says that he must have opened it up when he was combing his hair. On the other hand, he used a phrase which showed that he connects it with his memories of the Frei period, explaining it as a special sensitivity. Certainly sensitivity has its part

to play, but the causal link between these things must be understood as the complete reverse of what he imagines. In other words, the memories of the Frei period are the result of the physical sensations he feels where he hurt himself. Similarly the blows to the head must be seen as a repetition, a re-experience of the violence he did to himself at the Frei clinic, only in weaker form.⁴

25 February

At 10 p.m he woke up in a very agitated state. He told me that he had killed Aleksandra Vasil'evna, the remarkable piece of art which had been gestating in his head for fifty years. She was alive, but in his head she was dead. She is the embodiment of perfection. She brings up all children. She questions him about what he will be—he should be Gleb Uspensky, the writer, but he has lost touch, has become useless... has destroyed her. He kept gesticulating, his face showed despair, he grasped his head, distractedly started pacing about the room, a wild look on his face, capable of something terrible. Quietening down, he started telling me in a calmer tone that he had killed his wife and children, that they were no more.

12 March

Similar delirium, with the additional idea that all his family is dead (from hunger) and so Chudovo no longer exists. But all this is ad hoc, without the expected emphasis. By contrast today he showed some concern for other people. He drew attention to what servants had to eat, their low pay, and this evening he told me how badly they were fed. This is not meant as a criticism of the local authorities; it seems rather to be connected with his own personality, which, he thinks, is to blame for so much that relates to other people. For instance, when I told him that my daughter was ill, he said sadly: "I am to blame".⁵

18 March

On his table I found the following note: "To Boris Naumovich. Confession by that wicked man, Gleb Uspensky. For a long time it has been fixed in my head that my wife and children died without proper burial; I was the one who decided their fate and the end of Chudovo. To this end I reduced my stature..." When I asked him if it never occurred to him to consider such delirious ideas critically, he replied that it did, but that the thoughts returned later. Asked why he had recently started drinking so little milk, he said that he did not deserve milk, having turned into some kind of animal.

26 March

Yesterday, after Leli's funeral, he had a meeting with Boitsov and then one with his brother. When Boitsov, in passing, mentioned my sad loss, he remembered that my daughter had been ill (I told him about her about a week ago and he never asked me how she was), but said nothing more. With his brother he gradually began to direct the conversation towards the subject of the changes in his organism. This morning he asked me about Leli and when I told him that she was dead, he fell to his knees, embraced me, kissed my knees and sobbed bitterly. A few hours later he expressed a wish to come and see us. I persuaded him to wait until the next day. His intention was "to pay his respects to Varvara Lukinichna."

27 March

Since yesterday almost completely lucid. Wrote a letter home. Awaits his son. No sign of delirium.

31 March

He has had his son to see him for the three days of the Easter holiday. As before he had two meals a day with us. To his friends he may give the impression of being quite normal, but I am still aware that he does not adopt a critical enough attitude towards his earlier delirious ideas. Twice he had to be told firmly about this in his son's presence, as he thought he was cured and was anxious to leave Kolmovo. While his son was there he began to express the conviction that he would soon be well and more than once, as he left us, said: "Believe me, I shall soon be quite cured." He does a lot of reading. He talks very sensibly. To Varvara Lukinichna he is attentive, gentle, courteous. Has started to write. Is convinced that he will soon be completely cured and will be able to write an article.

2 April

Continues to write and is apparently reading very intelligently. His reactions to various writers etc. are considered, confident, knowledgeable. Generally gives a positive impression. Could it be that Gleb Ivanovich will recover so much that he will be able to write as he did before? I am afraid even to think of that possibility. If only he could give us some comfort in the tragic loss of our beloved daughter, who promised so much...⁶

9 June

Today he had to be brought back to Kolmovo. Life with his family proved to be extremely difficult. From the very first his dearly cherished hope of resuming normal marital relations with his wife was dashed. On 11 May in a fit of despair he seriously injured himself by hitting himself on the temple with a rock. When I went to see him, he said that he was sorry for what he had done and put it down to a temporary bout of insanity and, as if he were trying to explain the reasons for it, added: "What of it? I'm a writer who is no writer, a father who is no father, other people support my family, not me, I'm a husband who is no husband. I'm just a burden." The longer he stayed with his family, the more reasons there were for disappointment. He became morose, taciturn, discontented, irritated at himself and other people. He started tugging nervously at his beard, muttering phrases like "3000 a year", "Sasha is coming," "Get away" and so on. Whispering, breathing out with a whistling sound, shaking his head, making violent movements, scratching his wound. Finally he started hitting himself on the head, on the temples, trying to injure himself with a stick. Several days ago he started muttering such phrases as "Sasha is here," "You have to live," "Get away". His irritation reached such a pitch that he started shouting at people, telling his wife and children to leave him alone. It got worse; he started hitting himself, threatening to kill himself, to kill the closest members of his family whenever they contradicted him. He began to sleep badly, and kept asking for sulfonyl which made little difference. Sometimes he slapped himself across the face and no longer did as I asked him. In my presence he made a dreadful scene with his family, dismissed his wife because she had sent for me, terrified the servants. When I told him that I was going to take him back to Kolmovo he shouted at me, finally dismissed me, threatening to kill me, his children, himself. All the time he kept slapping himself wildly. His condition at home may be summarized as follows: his consciousness is clear, no sign of delirious ideas, violent thoughts, violent actions, extreme irritability, a tendency to outbursts of anger immediately changing to tenderness, gentleness, self-accusation, but only briefly: trying to injure himself, self-flagellation, dissatisfied with himself, annoyed with other people, protesting when they failed to do what he wanted, threatening them and prepared to abuse them verbally and physically. Remarkable memory!

He had to be removed from his room by force. But he got in the carriage of his own accord and was perfectly calm on the journey,

showing no dissatisfaction, but not once saying a word about whether he accepted that he needed treatment or not. He insists that he ought to kill himself...

11 June

His thoughtlessness is remarkable; apparently this has always been characteristic of him, making his behaviour at times seem almost absurd. He shows no signs of being sorry for the trouble he has caused. True, in a letter he wrote to his wife today, he expressed his regret for what had happened, telling his family not to worry about him, but all in a rather dry tone; and the letter contains no hint of any pain he might be feeling for the suffering he has caused to other people. He tells me he is planning to walk with Andrei along the river as far as Chudovo and then set off for the Chernigov province with his son. When I remarked that he had upset his family, he calmly told me he had sent them a letter, telling them not to worry and promising not to behave like that again. He seems to think that all he has to do is acknowledge his guilt in writing... When he was at home, he often promised faithfully to behave himself, but as soon as anyone said something he did not like, he yelled at them to go away. In general, although he still sometimes hits himself, he shows no sign of having the thoughts and feelings of a person suffering a bout of melancholia. His behaviour rather suggests that of a paranoiac with his egotism, his subjectivism in his own favor, and his indifference to other peoples' interests if they do not coincide with his own whims. There is no self-accusation for imagined wrongdoing, nor is there any independent or actual remorse, any pangs of conscience for the genuinely bad behaviour directed precisely at those who treat him with the greatest concern and kindness, like Andrei, whom he rudely dismissed one night when he was trying to stop Uspensky hitting himself.

22 July

For a long time I have written nothing about his physical condition, which I will now describe in general terms. He does a lot of walking. Visits the Morozovs. Visits the town. His new habit of whispering and exhaling with a long hissing or whistling sound still persists. If you ask him about it, he says it is nothing, merely a habit, that he is talking to himself. Although he seems confused as he explains this, he is not averse to defending it as normal. Everyone does it, he says. Every day he asks to be discharged from my care, claiming to be healthy, to have stayed with me too long. His family

hold him guilty and this is why he is making them wait so long. He needs them. They have many concerns. He contrives to pick out phrases from his wife's letters which seem to confirm what he says. However much you try to persuade him that he is a long way from being cured, that at home his condition would undoubtedly deteriorate, as it is now worse than it was when he was previously discharged, he accepts this with great reluctance, but on the next occasion he repeats that he ought to be at home, that his family expects him, that he is well and happy. Recently he has become very stubborn in his desire to go to Chudovo and, however much he might seem to accept my views about his discharge from my care, his letters keep referring to it taking place in a few days time, perhaps even today, and he says that every day he feels healthier, stronger, happier. Let me explain the word "happy". He seems to experience a feeling of happiness more and more frequently. When he recalls that evening after Gruzino, that moment when at night, after several hours sleep, he felt supremely happy, he immediately has the same feeling. And that happens more and more. Now and again in recent days he returns to a moment at Chudovo and describes his state of mind then in great detail. Often he remembers and experiences, so he says, a feeling like that, particularly since the time when, a few days ago, he was promised a day or two in Chudovo to celebrate his name-day (24 July) with his family. He is excited by this prospect not merely because he will see his family (it is questionable whether this alone would be enough to excite him), but because in his heart he cherishes the hope, even the certainty, that he will stay there for good (in spite of the fact that he agrees with me about the need for further treatment). It is this hope, this belief, that gives him such excitement, and the excitement gives him a pleasant feeling. Deriving from this, his subjective sensations (mainly connected with the nerves in his head, and especially his cranial cavity) evoke images from the time of his illness which are of euphoric character. Thus he has recollections predominantly of those scenes which afforded him a feeling of bliss, ecstasy—thoughts of Margarita, for example, but especially that evening after Gruzino. He returned here from Gruzino full of gloomy thoughts but then, at night, he began to experience a remarkable transformation. Through his whole body, starting from his feet, something pleasant and warm began to spread, like an electric current. He was completely transformed, he felt happy, he had come back to life, he felt as he had never felt in the whole of his fifty years... He was completely pure, without a stain, quite holy. He had to preserve

this condition forever. He had to get up and go to his wife, but for some reason did not. He continued to lie there and then felt splitting pains in his cranium, his mood worsening and gloomy thoughts taking over. The pains continued and became so bad that the next morning he started thumping his head. He says that he should not have done that, should not have given way to despair when the earlier feeling of euphoria came to an end. He was wrong to think it had completely disappeared. It was still there inside him, as is proved by the fact that he remembers it and the memory still evokes the same condition. He believes that he will experience it more and more frequently, that it will finally become firmly established, so that he will be *resurrected* for good as both man and writer. And he will be *pure, holy*, and he will write. Could he be developing delusions of grandeur? If so, are they of paralytic or paranoiac character? Somehow his remarkable memory on the one hand, and the absence of the feeble-mindedness and weakness of will characteristic of progressive paranoia on the other, do not go with this idea. He is incoherent, lacks knowledge, shows weakness in critical thought, but is by no means feeble-minded; he lacks strength of character, behaves like a spoilt child or a hysterical woman, but one cannot treat him as a paralyzed puppet, one cannot influence his frame of mind, or make him adopt a particular role.

Consequently, and in light of the fact that, in the outward manifestations of his illness, he still retains the complete former personality of Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky, it may be suggested that the form his illness takes reminds one of paranoia, that he has always borne the mark of a degenerate, and that his illness is the ultimate development of innate psychopathic degenerative neurasthenic peculiarities brought on by exhaustion, alcohol abuse, dissatisfaction with his family, civic dissatisfaction, material insecurity and, finally, hemorrhoids.

25 July

The day before yesterday he went to Chudovo with Morozov. He returned this morning, although in Chudovo he tried to convince his wife that he was well, that without him his family would fade away, that he was to blame for their troubles, etc. I see the following occurrence as gratifying. Before he left, he took 25 roubles from me from the 150 I was keeping for him (recently received for his story "The Foundling" printed in *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, No. 6, 1893). Not trusting him to be able to deal with the expenses of the journey, I gave

the money to Morozov. In the event, Gleb Ivanovich dealt with the expenses himself, even buying the tickets for the two of them. It is very gratifying that, in spite of his present condition (indifference to anything not connected with his favourite topics of discharge, "remarkable" transformations, resurrection, happiness, etc.), he turns out to be capable of revealing a sensitive concern for other people that is natural to him. In general terms I see a great deal that is positive both ethically and intellectually, and this emboldens me to conclude that both progressive paranoia and actual paranoia are unlikely. He talks nonsense, that is the main thing. This evening, à propos of his whispering habit, he told me quite confidently that it was not just connected with the peculiarities of his sick condition, but that from it perhaps would come what I require of him as proof that he is cured.

29 July

He continues to speak naively about his discharge, even talking about the actual day of his departure. At the same time he is planning a trip to the Novgorod district. In general his psychic condition is the same as before. He still talks a lot about the famous moment after Gruzino. Today he gave me some explanation of his strange habit of whispering. It turns out that when he is whispering he is engaged in a struggle with the darkness still in his head. He believes that eventually his resurrection will be permanent, the darkness and gloom will vanish; he is striving towards this. When he appears strange to those around him, he is working to consolidate his resurrection, his happiness. When to others he seems to be whistling, blowing, and so on, he is working to eliminate what is stormy and sombre (he cannot define it precisely) through his whispering: "honestly, in all conscience". And when he tosses his head back he is, so to speak, shaking off what is dark and whispering: "happiness". So he keeps on trying to strengthen his recovery, his resurrection, his happiness—to rid himself of everything that is dark and evil. Incidentally, he talks about the processes that went on in his head during his illness. He gives a humorous account of the work going on in his head, with various people actively trying to change him for the better, how their work seemed to be going well and how, on the other hand, he begins to experience an opposite influence which takes over entirely. He has the feeling that the good weeps when it is overcome by the bad, etc. Now he is convinced that the good in him has not perished, that in the end it will triumph. He says that his good conscience has never entirely disappeared. The time will come when

there will be nothing left in him but honor, conscience, love, happiness, etc., and he will be writing. He appears occasionally to be conducting experiments in auto-suggestion.

31 July

As an example of his recent writing I will quote a letter he wrote today which, it has to be said, indicates that his exalted state is reaching a crescendo:

31 July, 1893. My dear! Exactly a week has passed since my own and Boris's name-day and every day (from the moment of my sad departure) I have been yearning with all my heart to be with you and our children, and I assure you, my dear, that my burning love for God dominates me more and more every moment. It is the greatest possible happiness to be alive in the world, a bright distant future will bring joy to those who love me, who pin high hopes on me. I love everyone and am being reborn in love for all those who suffer and are condemned. Joy and happiness will come home to me. I send you and all our children a loving kiss.

Yours, Gleb.

I think I shall be back with you soon, early August without fail. And then this *burning love for God* I shall describe in detail.

Even more remarkable was what he talked about immediately after I read the letter. It was about ten o'clock in the morning, that is, soon after he had written it. Other doctors were also present. His words did not become at all confused, he did not avoid answering questions, saying that he had been reborn in his love for God. He understands God in a pantheistic sense, and adds love and infinity to it, partly as attributes, partly as synonyms. The result is a poetic, fairly harmonious outlook on the world, or something like the solemn but simple-minded ravings of a paralytic. As he speaks of infinity, other worlds, etc., he adds that all this is in his head, and that his head contains a universe with stars, etc. His son recently spoke about Flammarion's books and he and I discussed certain features of Gleb Ivanovich's last composition. It appears that these conversations gave him considerable food for thought (although it seems there was no mention of love). To try to establish the true character of all these ideas about his condition, whether it was the affected joy of a person convinced of his own salvation, or arrogant raving, I put the following questions to him: does he consider himself to be different from the

rest of us; when he says that there is a whole universe inside him, does he think he is ascribing to himself something that he does not acknowledge in other people (other people might also have mental pictures of the heavens, the stars, etc.)? He replied that he saw the difference in the fact that the rest of us are healthy, while he is sick, acting in many respects like a madman, on the verge of lunacy, suffering a great deal, etc. As a precaution I prescribed XV gr. *Nat. brom.* to be taken with food. If for any reason he cannot bathe in the river, he is to have two baths per day.

2 August

He is concerned about why there are no letters from home (since the time he was in Chudovo). Yesterday he sent his wife a telegram. Today he is sending her the following letter, dated 1 August:

My dear! I am greatly and deeply to blame for what I have done to you, to the children, to everyone who loves me, wishes me well and looks for my resurrection as a writer. I know that it was my fault that those summer months in Chudovo were far from happy, profoundly depressing, and my name-day convinced me even more that my inability to improve in health for forty days was my own fault. But since the time of my own and Boris's name-day I have relived a great deal (I have relived the whole of my 25 years with you) and I have reached a turning point—towards a deep love: *the whole of me is deep love*. I cannot express in any other way the profound joy, the profound love, that grows in me with every moment, every day, and holds the promise of joy in happiness and love for many years to come. It is in this profound happiness of love that your husband and the writer are being resurrected. I shall return home very soon—unrecognizable—a deep love is leading me home and 'into the world'.

Believe me, my dear.

Your deeply loving Gleb.

6 August

Today he wrote the following letter to his wife in reply to the one he received from her several days ago, in which she spoke of his extreme behavior, the need for stability, etc.

My dear! It is high time I began to write to you about how I live, who I know, how I spend my time and what I do. I have been to Novgorod more than once and have

always enjoyed myself, not forgetting for one moment the need to improve my health and return home happy, *resurrected in a deep love for God* (I confess, my dear, that I injured my head after I was resurrected in love for God! I shall come to you and to all who love me, those resurrected *in a deep love for God*. It is absolutely impossible for anyone to imagine this great event in my life: believing in the Lord God, in His almighty heavenly power—yet God is everywhere!) So there we are, Aleksandra Vasil'evna, there is stability in my character, the extremes of depression and exaltation have resolved themselves into the one word “God” and love for God. I have been resurrected, every drop of my burning heart has borne witness to the greatness of God and there have been moments when I have been stunned as I experienced the profound joy of being enveloped by a burning love for God. And it is as one resurrected in God, renewed in the light of truth and righteousness that I also appear to you and all who love me. And spiritually renewed with a deep love for the whole world I shall begin a new life as a writer. Soon, very soon, I shall return home. I shall write to you at length and in detail about my trips into town, my journey to St. Yurii's Monastery, to Derevnitsy, to St. Anthony's Monastery and my forthcoming journey tomorrow by boat under the supervision of Andrei Vasil'evich Kamensky. Your deeply loving Gleb.

My dear Vera, I shall write to you as soon as I return from my journey. Your deeply loving Gleb.

9 August

The day before yesterday he made a journey by steamer to Msta with A.V. Kamensky. He was very happy about this trip and the next day he talked eloquently about his impressions. He talked about the way other travellers treated him (three schoolboys among others), saying with a laugh that they kept watching him. Why? Because they realized that there was something not quite right in his head, or maybe Andrei Vasil'evich had warned them. But in general he reacted to them well. Yesterday he described his trip in detail, also his trip to St. Yurii's Monastery in a letter to his wife. Of particular interest is the following passage in the letter, where the train of quite normal ideas breaks off into what seems almost like something from a fairy tale. I quote the whole passage in the middle of which there suddenly occurs an insertion about his state of exaltation: “...Had it not rained the trip might have lasted all day. (At that moment I experienced a remarkable event in my life: I was entirely filled with a deep love for the Lord

God; in this deep love for God I shall indeed be resurrected and the gifts given to me by God will be revealed by me in a remarkable way and I shall be able to describe and write about the remarkable phenomena in my life every day that God sends me). And then it might be possible to learn a great deal about the people who work in summer and wander all the year round...”

16 August

I give here an example of the notes Gleb Ivanovich is in the habit of making on scraps of paper, apparently in order to fix those “remarkable” moments which he now experiences frequently and which he sees as a pledge that he will be well etc.: “... deep love for the Lord God, for angels soaring in the heavens on wings great and small. The Lord God calls me into the universe to tell the world of the Lord’s mysteries.”

18 August

To describe Gleb Ivanovich’s character from time to time I shall give extracts from his letters. Today I quote from a letter he wrote to his wife the day after the departure of Vera and Boris:

I give you my word of honor that these strange things will soon be over. My thoughts are quite different now; whenever people observe me, they think that I have something on my mind similar to what I had in Chudovo and on my name-day. I assure you that only *a deep love for God*, so to speak, *educates me*, re-casts my mind. I tell you I am engaged in great work. Please don’t take this to be mental derangement—it is nothing like that; I tell you directly: I have been cleansed of all sin and feel deeply happy. You are aware that sometimes I am silent for a long period, thinking a great deal, the same thing is taking place at present, only my recovery is moving in the direction of the best possible frame of mind. The whispering, the eyes that are sometimes closed, very soon this will all be over, and I shall come to Chudovo only when there is not the slightest sign of instability in my character, my thoughts, my way of life. And that will be soon...

And a short note written on the same day:

My dear! In all honesty I simply do not understand what difficulties there can be about my coming to Chudovo.

Only the greatest possible joy of being with you and all the children constantly draws me there. It may be only a trip, but it would mean being in the same room with you, having a heart-to-heart talk with you, going for a walk, reading, gardening, hearing all about Sasha. We must take advantage of the August weather. Please write to me. I shall come to you deeply loving and shall not give you a moment's cause for alarm. *Write to me frankly.* Tell me if you expect the slightest upset from me, or if for any reason you think it is still too early for me to return. I shall be overjoyed if your letter tells me to come. To be with you, Boris, Olga, Masha, Vera—that would be heaven on earth. Believe me.

Your Gleb.

25 August

Recently he has put on weight. Perhaps this has something to do with the fact that since the middle of June (when his bowels were disturbed) he has been having an alcoholic drink at lunch and dinner. At first he had a glass of red wine, but about ten days ago he changed to vodka, which he seems to prefer.

2 September

Ivan Ivanovich was here today and told me many things about Gleb Ivanovich's life, characterizing him as extremely uncontrolled, muddle-headed, disorganized, slovenly. I consider it necessary to note the following fact, which might be interpreted as a sign that his aesthetic and ethical feelings suffered a drastic decline. It concerns what happened eight or nine years ago. He was once at Chudovo station and sat down at a table to eat something (he was constantly anxious to buy something, to trade with somebody, no matter who—everyone at the station took advantage of this). Finding he had no handkerchief, he blew his nose on a serviette. "Why are you dirtying a serviette?" the waiter asked, "If you had told me, I would have given you a handkerchief." According to Ivan Ivanovich, Gleb often borrowed other people's handkerchiefs and that is why he always had so many belonging to other people.⁷

13 November

He travelled to St. Petersburg with me and stayed there. Apart from the whispering he showed no signs of abnormality. There will be something.

He expressed an interesting and characteristic idea when I was with him to say goodbye. Somehow it was mentioned that Pavlenkov

had had his photograph taken at Bergamasko's and that it had not come out well. In this connection Gleb Ivanovich said that all the faces in Bergamasko's photographs had something in common. To explain this he said that Bergamasko made his subjects all look at the same object, some sort of doll. According to Gleb Ivanovich, this printed something similar on everyone's facial expression or even changed the features of the subjects in the same sort of way, as if it was making their faces like the doll's, or something of that sort. I am trying to express this idea in the same sort of way that he did, not taking much heed of grammar as he spoke. As an afterthought he mentioned another photographer, who made his subjects look in a mirror. When his wife remarked that that must make things worse, he contradicted her, saying: "on the contrary, a person sees himself in a mirror". So it turns out that—well, the meaning is clear.

The next entry in the diary is dated 23 April 1894.

Brought back to Kolmovo. Before beginning to keep a diary of the course of his illness here, I shall briefly mention what I know about his condition since he was discharged. As soon as he left Kolmovo he began to frequent student evenings and, incidentally, to drink. He showed periodic signs of hemorrhoids, but it was impossible to persuade him to do anything about them. He stubbornly rejected any kind of treatment and even something incidental, like a sore on his foot caused by his shoe, he refused even to show anyone and became extremely irritable when a doctor, even one he knew (Volkov), asked to see it. At the end of December 1893, on the way to Nizhnii Novgorod, he began to show clear delirious signs of megalomania. The extract from my notebook given below, dated 13 February this year, will give some idea of the character of his delirium until recently. For the last few weeks there have been signs of extreme sluggishness and alienation from the company of friends. In recent days ideas emerged that he was to blame for his wife's suffering, that he had ruined Sasha, destroyed his own mind, his heart. He refused to eat. Once he signed himself "your unhappy Gleb" in a note to his wife, complained that he was weak, could not stand up, that his mind would go, had gone, he could not be cured, he was dead, and so on. All this must be assumed to be unstable. That is how he put it when I saw him in my study today. Extract from my personal diary:

13 February, St. Petersburg.

He now spends the whole day living almost exclusively an inner life, only very rarely and very superficially

reacting to phenomena in the life around him, as if they have no connection to the delirious thoughts that occupy him and fill his consciousness. In the company not only of the members of his family, but also of mine, without any embarrassment he becomes absorbed in the contemplation of his fantastic ideas and performs a great variety of actions with his eyes, hands and head. He shows no interest in anything around him, pays no attention to it. Any attempt to divert his attention to what is extraneous is met with either complete lack of attention or a lazy response, as if he were only half awake, sometimes with a hint of annoyance. The first time he showed any animation was when, at his wife's suggestion, he got ready to take Vera to school. The explanation for this lay not in concern for his daughter, but, as it turned out, in the importance of his being in the open air. When he came back, he lapsed into the same state of indifference to his surroundings. He is totally preoccupied with what is going on in his head. And what is going on there is, in his view, something tremendous; the whole universe is contained there in all its infinity, with all its countless worlds, with all the light issuing from the heavenly bodies, with all the harmony of its movement, with the almighty power of the divinity... God has wrought such a transformation in him, endowed him with terrible power. Often he experiences such a cumulation of lights in his head that they stream out through his eyes, from which powerful light rays pour into the world. On these occasions he has such powers of vision that he can see the stars even when the weather is cloudy. He talks animatedly about this condition and quite coherently. However, he does not always feel a total transformation with the whole universe formed in his head, with all its harmony, its almighty divinity, and so on. Sometimes the harmony is partly disturbed. This happens when for some reason his spiritual equilibrium is upset because of illness or something else. Partly this happens when he deliberately forces an idea into his head and recalls and relives unpleasant moments in his life. This disturbs the order of his thoughts which has been formed under the influence of the forces of nature, acting on him by the will of God himself. In order to keep the universe inside him constantly whole, harmonious and all-powerful, he has to lead a particular way of life (keep himself pure, and so on). All the many actions he performs are intended to maintain this wholeness, etc. He either cannot or will not explain the meaning of every action, but his explanations for some of them are worth quoting. For example, screwing up and rubbing his eyes is apparently intended sometimes to make them more light-sensitive so that his thoughts will

be given more light, at others to ensure that his visual sense organ is hyperaesthetic. Generally, at the present stage of his illness, visual images, visual impressions, visual illusions hold pride of place. It is as if he is accomplishing something of the greatest importance by either observing the stars or conjuring up the brightest possible images of stars by various means. Among these should be noted fixing his gaze on lighted candles, lamps, etc.

The nearer he comes spiritually to the ideal (the embodiment of the universe), the greater the change in his organism, which acquires, among others, the following characteristics: his body becomes so light that he cannot feel it at all; his body enables him to breathe with the whole of it, with all its remotest parts. He is convinced that God is leading him to a point where he will undergo a complete and absolute transformation, by which he will have no difficulty in being able to fly in the literal sense. He is convinced that he has the power to fly, that he will be able to fly to the heavens (he says that astronomers can cover millions of miles as they move from one star to another). His task is to make his transformation absolute and durable. More than once he has had temporary transformations, when he feels fire flowing through his body like lightning, when he breathes with the whole of his body, when he feels an absolute lightness of his body. On one occasion, incidentally, he could clearly see his own image in the sky (apparently this was the sky in his head).

Previously he failed to understand the meaning of these sensations, not realizing that God was guiding him towards perfection. When he achieves this, he will be able to destroy all evil and inequality on earth. He will keep a diary of what he has experienced, he will give a series of lectures, but mostly, it appears, he is relying on the power which will emerge through his eyes and reach infinite distances. All other ways of exerting influence, those available to ordinary people, clearly do not achieve their purpose, since throughout the world and in Russia in particular, evil, inequality, despotism, etc. still exist at the present time; everywhere there is endless darkness. This must be brought to an end; it must not be left as it is! So he has been summoned by God to re-educate all people, to establish complete equality between them... The power has been given to him by God... he can do it.

From our most recent conversation I was able to conclude that by no means has he given up his former delirium even now. He merely feels that for some reason (his illness, among others) he has wasted much of his intellectual power... He has killed off both his intelligence (clearly exceptional) and his unbounded heart, which he somehow felt in this very room, when he had the clear sensation that the mighty pealing of the bell from Antoniev had directly entered his heart and marked it for ever... And now he has killed off this heart too. In passing, he is still able to express ideas which closely correspond to actuality (he caused Aleksandra Vasil'evna great suffering, stupidly lay about in bed, grew lazy, felt ill, experienced mental disturbance, confusion, muddle, spiritual disorder, etc.). It is interesting to note his attitude to being taken away from home, brought here and left here. Although he stayed in bed, regarding himself as weak, he agreed to his son's proposal that he should go to Chudovo, but added that all he could do was get out of bed. When his son offered to help him, he got up, dressed with his son's assistance and finally left the house. In Chudovo he readily agreed to his son's suggestion that they should board the Novgorod train and come back by steamer. Arriving in Novgorod he agreed to visit me. While he was waiting for me in the study, he told his son that he could not return with him because he was dead, weak, etc., and would stay here. He went through with me into the men's section without making any protest and unhesitatingly went through to his old room with an orderly. Had a bath, ate, slept. He drew attention to the fact that there was no sofa in the room and asked for one to be put back. Later that day he asked me if Sasha had left, if he would be coming to see him. When his son and brother came to see him at 8 p.m. he had already got out of bed. He asked when they were going and when he heard that they were leaving on the ten o'clock steamer expressed no intention of going with them. He said goodbye, embracing his son several times, reminding him to give his mother his greetings. When he was asked if he wanted anything to be sent, he replied that he seemed to have everything he needed.

His weight was 17 pounds lighter than it was when he was discharged from Kolmovo.

24 April

Now and then he keeps repeating that he is dead, dying, and that by evening he will be no more and should be taken to the mortuary. He has himself to blame for having wasted the great power given to him by God, has himself killed off his intelligence, of which

very little remains, he is chewing up its last remnants (that is the explanation for the chewing movements). His family has been left in penury: he has sent them out into the world, there is now probably nowhere for them even to spend the night. The whole sum of 25 thousand roubles kept for his family with Gurevich [treasurer of the Literary Fund, responsible for the money collected for Uspensky's children's education when he fell ill] he has wiped out at one stroke, swallowed it with a chocolate a month ago. He has killed, destroyed his whole family—six souls no longer alive. Why he did so, he does not know. When earlier he had been transformed by God physically and spiritually, when the whole world, the whole universe was inside his head, he possessed omnipotence, omniscience, and other attributes of the divinity. He even remembers God placing an enormous hand on his head and anointing him. His body was transformed to such an extent that none of the usual bodily functions remained. In his stomach was a container of the Holy Spirit which constantly produced angels and archangels, which rose from his stomach to his head and continued to enhance his reason. Now all this has gone, is going. He is dying, he cannot get up, cannot eat, etc. But he sleeps well.

25 April

The same. From what he says we may conclude that the idea that his family has perished, is poverty-stricken and so on, is based on the fact that when he was at home he expressed (to himself) various violent thoughts concerning his family's fate. For example, during the last month with them he kept whispering "death, death", or, on his last night in St. Petersburg, he went into Boris's room and whispered: "Your last night has come". Clearly against the dark background of being aware of his helplessness and uselessness and his fears for his family he had a vast number of gloomy thoughts about his family and himself. In addition, he imagines that everything he thought, or pictured to himself, has taken place or is destined to take place, even if he finds it repugnant and undesirable.

30 April

For the most part, no change. Apparently his failure to perform certain bodily functions is closely dependent on the idea that he is dead, dying, etc. Consequently he claims to be unable to move or, more precisely, to make any voluntary movements, perform any deliberate actions—in a word, to show any initiative or will-power. This morning Andrei simply could not persuade him to get up; he

refused to go for his bath, saying that he was dead and so would have to be carried if they wanted him to have a bath. When Andrei insisted, he lost his temper and told him to go away.

It should be noted that in the last few days he has rarely talked about the death of his family, but more about his own death....

Today for the first time he wrote something: two notes—one to me, the other to his son. They show that he no longer clings to his earlier ideas about the death of his family, their poverty, homelessness, etc. (previously he said that his family had been left without a roof over their head when he departed, and that perhaps they had been permitted to spend only one more night in the same house, and then only on the stairs):

“My dear Sasha! If your mother needs money, you can get some from Gurevich. Your mother has complete power of attorney. I shall soon get better. Your ever loving father.”

“Dear Boris Naumovich! Make sure my family are all right. They live in the same apartment as before. Your letter about entrusting the care of my children to Gurevich will save them... At your request they will receive money. Be so kind as to send my wife a telegram, so that she does not worry.”

1 May

Today he wrote the following telegram to be sent to his wife: “Tomorrow, Monday, draw 250 roubles from Gurevich. Your Gleb.” It is typical that precisely on the first of the month he began of his own accord to concern himself about his family’s welfare, seemingly attaching no serious significance to what he had said about having used up all the 25,000 roubles available from Gurevich.

12 May

He displays remarkable memory, recalling to the day and even to the hour what he was doing this time last year. He continues as before to babble about death, family, etc.

29 June

He has recently begun to say quite often that it is time for his release. Sometimes he simply expresses his desire to go home or even his determination to leave that same day. Refused on one day, the next he may express his regret that he did not leave the day before, as if the reason for his not going was not that he had been refused, but somehow just a matter of chance. Today he repeatedly told Andrei

that he had to see me and leave for home immediately. In the evening, when I went to see him, he was, as usual, lying undressed in bed. When it was mentioned that when he came here he was very ill, he agreed and, in addition, for the first time showed the right appreciation of his condition before his last admission to Kolmovo. He said that he had been an idiot at Skabichevsky's anniversary celebration. He recalled the moment when he had gone up to Mikhailovsky and noticed him looking at him with horror. He made haste to say goodbye, feeling like an idiot. This, he says, was the last time he saw Mikhailovsky. Later he went out several times: once to see Popova, on another occasion to the editorial office of *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, and to see Mikhailovsky again, but every time, almost at the door, for some reason he came back home again. In the end he says he refused to go out any more, until Sasha brought him to Kolmovo.

5 July

All physical functions normal. He is stronger physically and has put on weight.

16 August

Today for the first time during treatment Gleb Ivanovich showed sharp hostility towards me. Before describing what happened I shall give some details of what preceded it. His weight record shows that he has made a remarkable recovery physically; he now weighs 177 pounds! He does not now lie about in bed so much, goes for a walk almost every day, sometimes twice. He is anxious to leave Kolmovo, now and again asking to be allowed to go to Chudovo, if only for a day. When refused, he modifies his request to being allowed to mix with the common people. About ten days ago this was granted and it was suggested that he visit Roza L'vovna [wife of Nikolai Sergeevich Tiutchev, living in Novgorod at that time]. He went among the common people, but did no more than walk in the park and drink two glasses of beer, although he had been told not to drink (vodka or wine). Several days later (8 August) he again asked to be allowed among the people. His request was granted, on condition that he drank no alcohol at all. This instruction he obeyed, but played another trick. He went to the railway station and sent his wife the following telegram: "In case of my death I give to you forever the capital sum invested in the Literary Fund for the education of our children. This telegram must be certified with a lawyer. Gleb Uspensky".

The next day he expressed regret at having sent this telegram which might, he thought, have shattered his wife completely. At the same time he partly hoped that, as soon as she received it, she would come and see him. But, in contradiction to this, he had the idea that although his wife's first thought would be to come, she would not do so, being unwilling to leave the children at home alone. Furthermore, he admitted that he owed me an apology for having sent such a telegram without telling me, and that what it said did not make sense. In the last few days his requests to be allowed to return to Chudovo have become particularly insistent. He thinks he is in good health, he is sure they are expecting him, he will stay for only one day. About four days ago I told him that I was prepared to go to Chudovo with him, but only after my daughter, seriously ill at the time, had recovered. In spite of having heard that her illness was serious, he was so preoccupied with the idea of going that he showed complete indifference to my trouble and persisted in trying to persuade me to go in a few days' time. Next day he sent Andrei to me (I could not see him in the patients' department, being unable to leave home because of Lena's illness), asking to be allowed to go to Chudovo with Andrei. Yesterday he happened to meet me at the door of my apartment and once again repeated his request just after I had told him that Lena was so ill that we were having sleepless nights over her. When he said he was quite well, I told him that, if that were true, he would not talk about his own problem at a time like this. Today he came into my study, when I was there with V.V. Krumbiller, and started once again trying to persuade me to let him go to Chudovo just for one day. Among various reasons I gave for my refusal I mentioned that I could not rely on Andrei, who had failed to stop him drinking beer and sending the telegram. At that point he burst out: "So, am I in prison here?" And then, highly agitated, he got up, saying, "After this I do not want any more to do with you!", and went out into the garden and headed in the direction of the town through the farthest avenue of trees. Andrei went after him but, unable to rely on him, I sent Nikolai Stepanovich Stepanov after him, telling him that if Gleb Ivanovich attempted anything foolish, he had my authority to bring him back, by force, if necessary. Gleb Ivanovich was near the pond when he noticed Nikolai Stepanovich coming after him. He suddenly dashed off towards the gate (in the direction of Volkhov), saying that he would drown himself, would leave... When Nikolai Stepanovich tried to persuade him to come back, he refused, and Nikolai had to seize hold of him. Gleb Ivanovich gave in, came back, met me in the entrance-

hall and protested vehemently against the violence used on him. I told him that Nikolai Stepanovich had acted on my instructions, as I was expecting him to do something foolish when he was so agitated. With an angry gesture he suddenly said: “Damn you all! Keep me in prison!” and went to his room, where he lay down, trembling with rage. An hour later he was sitting at the table (reading *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, which he had asked for several days earlier, having heard that there was a biographical note about him in Issue No. 6. Until then he had done no reading. Incidentally he continues to write nothing, not even to his family). He was given lunch, which he did not refuse.

N.B. About his birthday (which, according to his cousin, the author of the note, is given wrongly in Skabichevsky) Gleb Ivanovich gave the following explanation. In fact he was born not on 14 November but on 13 October. Skabichevsky was led into error by the fact that Gleb Ivanovich celebrates his birthday on 14 November. He started doing this because Mikhailovsky’s birthday is 15 November. He chose the fourteenth so that he could celebrate it with Mikhailovsky as two celebrations in succession without a break (the year of his birth is 1840, not 1843).

22 August

He apologized most touchingly today when we met in the street (I have not been to see him all this time). On 18 August Sasha and Vera visited him and brought him a letter from their mother, replying to the letter in which he has asked to be brought home. A very sensible and frank letter. On 19 August he wrote the following will:

Last Will and Testament. On 19 August I, the undersigned, make this bequest to my wife Aleksandra Vasil’evna in case of my death:-

1) Ownership of all our common property: the villa and property in St. Petersburg;

2) Permanent rights to the income from the publication of the *third* volume of my works, publication of the third volume and articles not included in it (these will be indicated below);

3) The capital sum held by the Literary Fund, collected in my name *solely for the education of our children* and for the living expenses of our family, after my death is placed at your complete disposal in perpetuity, dating from 19 August, the date of this testament, after my death, and the *eight-year capital sum*

in the Literary Fund is placed at your complete disposal;

4) By the last will and testament of G.Z. Yeliseev you, my dear, (indecipherable word) the document winning the sum of 25 thousand roubles from the Dvoryanstvo Bank *for the whole of your life and the life of our children*;

5) By the same testament I am fortunate in the future to win on tickets for an internal loan, and this capital sum, according to G.Z. Yeliseev's testament handed over to me, I bequeath to you for your full disposal together with the testament.

6) These two testaments of Eliseev will become part of our children's inheritance.

Your Gleb Uspensky. This last will and testament must be witnessed under the supervision of a lawyer. At whatever time it is presented to a lawyer it carries the authority of a genuine will and testament.

He asked M. S. Morozov to send this document to his wife. Morozov persuaded him not to. Then he asked him to take it back for safekeeping, which he did two days later.

29 August

Yesterday he sent the will to me for it to be sent off. I returned it to him, asking him to rewrite it without the mistakes. He promised to do so, but today he sent it to me as it was, along with this telegram: "To Aleksandra Vasil'evna Uspenskaia. Rejected the eight-year means of life and learning. Do not attend my funeral. Not your Gleb Uspensky." When I visited him today he told me that he had been insane when he wrote the telegram the previous evening and asked me not to send it. But he asked me to send the will. During the night he vomited, simply because he had had too much to eat and drink (milk and tea). Yesterday after supper, apart from milk, he drank eleven glasses of tea! And the following addition has been made to the will: "26 August, 1894. This will and testament has legal force forever, in the event of my death. Your faithful Gleb Uspensky."

25 September

In general his condition is no worse; one may even say there is a gradual improvement both physically and mentally. He is at present reading *Russkie Vedomosti*, *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, Mikhailovsky's book about Ivan the Terrible. Even today, some three hours after a physical problem, he was talking sensibly about Protopopov. He had noticed in the announcement about the September

issue of *Russkoe Bogatstvo* that Protopopov had written an article about a translation by Boborykin.

5 October

Several days ago he told me in some detail about Mikhailovsky, Yuzhakov and Abramov once coming to see him in the Samara Province at New Year, trying to put the affairs of a savings bank in order with individual contributions of 1000 roubles on condition that Gleb Ivanovich finish with the bank and leave on 1 January. He had not done so and this had damaged his career. I had heard nothing like this before and what he told me seemed strange and unlikely. This was partly confirmed by the fact that he himself said that only now had these memories come to him with unusual clarity; only now could he properly understand the significance of what had happened. Yesterday he again started to remember about the stars, infinity and so on, and that he only had to close his eyes to have in his head the sense of a firmly constructed universe, etc.

This morning he started saying something he had never said before in this form. Before going into detail I think it appropriate to refer to the following facts:

1) His physical condition has improved so much that his weight has increased by 38 pounds since he was last admitted.

2) Nearly a month ago he expressed the wish to have his photograph taken. The first photographs did not satisfy him—from what he said one could conclude that he saw in them signs of sickness and abnormality. He was photographed again. A week ago the proof was delivered and he found it very good. This partly corresponded to his reaction to photographs of other people. Yesterday some of the photographs ordered arrived and he planned to send them to his wife, to Mikhailovsky and Rebinder. But no letter was ready today; he had tried to write one yesterday apparently without success.

3) Halfway through last month I had told him in passing that his wife was thinking of coming to see him in October. At the end of September he told me he was impatiently waiting for 1 October, when his wife was due to arrive. Considering such pointless impatience harmful to him, I told him that he had no reason to expect his wife so soon; there was a long time left in October and she had no intention of coming so early in the month. At the same time I wrote to his wife, asking her to tell him that she would come in such a way that he would expect her ten days later than the real time of her arrival. Yesterday he got a letter from his wife, telling him that she was

thinking of coming in the middle of October, come what may, but the fact remains that until now Gleb Ivanovich has been greatly preoccupied with the prospect of meeting his wife.

His delirium takes the form of his recounting events long past. Their exact time was not made clear, but judging by the fact that the main person involved was Ivanchin-Pisarev, who had long vanished from sight in the early eighties, we must suppose that Gleb Ivanovich was referring to the late seventies. This is supported by the fact that he often mentions 1878 and 1879 and refers to his son at the age of seven. But his account also included people he met much later, for example, Doctor Chechotte and Doctor Tilicheev. He could only have met the former for the first time in 1888, when his wife was ill, and the latter no earlier than 1889. Since all these people were supposed to be acting under Pisarev's influence, it is clear that his *perspective of time* is wrong. He has people meeting, when in reality they cannot have been in the place he remembers at the same time, and other people appear in places where they never were. And he ascribes to them actions and behavior which never existed. His account took the form of a recollection which only now has vividly come to life. Of all the people involved only one plays a consciously active role—Pisarev. The others act under his influence or are his blind victims. He acts on all of them in a corrupting way. His weapons are partly simply a way of looking at them, but mostly poison in the form of drops or powders. On some of them he acts by taking advantage of the weak sides of their nature, hitherto concealed, on others by using the poison, in spite of the fact that previously they were in themselves wholly pure. He behaved like a devil, taking pleasure in spoiling relationships between people, introducing debauchery and fornication into their relationships, turning them into animals, trying to kill them, drown them, inflicting cuts on their bodies, beating them about the head, and so on. His victims are numerous. Among them are Aleksandra Vasil'evna, Sasha, Nekrasova, Sumkina, Pavlenkov and his wife, Yuzhakov, Yaroshenko and his wife, Griboedov, Chechotte, Tilicheev, Vaimar, Rebinder, Ver[zh]bitskaia and many others.⁸ Under Pisarev's influence some of them commit forgery, theft, swindle money, take away Uspensky's summer villa, evict him and his family and deprive him of his entire means of subsistence, but the vast majority of them fornicate in the most crude and disgusting way, performing the coarsest of erotic actions. He describes all this in a lively and vivid way. While not sparing in his epithets (foul creature etc.), at the same time he expresses no anger or animosity, often even

laughing at the terrible things he describes. People combine in different ways... [passage omitted by original editor]. Surely I understand. This was in the time of my predecessor. Of course it all took place. Under Pisarev's influence there were all sorts of horror, bestiality, debauchery. He reduced people to the level of animals as, forgetting who they were, they adopted unexpected positions ...[passage omitted by original editor].

If he is reminded of people he does not mention, he happily puts them in the same category, blackening their character in the same way. In the case of others, he limits himself to saying that although their disposition changed, this was not translated into action: for example, Lopatin, Mikhailovsky. Others were driven insane: for example, Ol'ga Nikolaevna Figner. There are other people to whom he does not ascribe erotic behavior, such as Krivenko, who is supposed to be guilty of forging promissory notes. As far as Vera Nikolaevna Figner is concerned, he had second thoughts, said nothing about her, and only when asked firmly whether Pisarev might have had a bad influence on her, he replied: "He might have done; after all he influenced N. Aleksandrovich Yaroshenko and his wife, and they are quite pure". No matter how monstrous the actions of all these different people, he now has nothing against them: many of them are good people with whom he has a good relationship. Apart from Pisarev none of them could be held responsible. Pisarev had finally ceased his evil-doing, on the grounds that he had eaten and consumed his fill of human flesh and blood. Subsequently, in Siberia, he has changed completely, been reborn. When he had finished his evil work, his victims felt badly about what they had done. He remembers finding Aleksandra Vasil'evna and Nekrasov in tears. Then they confessed and forgot everything. Only he, Gleb Ivanovich, could vividly recall what had happened. He remembers, when the madness was over, going to see Pisarev in his villa and asking him to allow him and his family at least to go there for a visit. Pisarev allowed this and returned the villa to them, saying: "I give way to you with great regret". When asked about his attitude towards his wife, Gleb Ivanovich replied that he was thinking of her constantly.

7 October

Yesterday and today he continues to talk in the same way, adding more and more people, arranging them in various ways, not even sparing Lopatin, Ol'ga Nikolaevna Figner or Mikhailovsky, varying the details and adding more refinements to his descriptions of

filthy, disgusting, monstrous scenes. He thinks nothing of presenting people as dead, hacked to pieces, etc., yet afterwards resurrected by the confession and repentance of those who committed the murders...

8 October

More of the same, with the difference that the central character is now Ver[zh]bitskaia, with Pisarev hardly mentioned. And another difference is that now the delirium about sexual matters is less prominent than that about persecution—now he harps more on robbery and the theft of his property, mentioning particularly often Krivenko as a money-grabber (in the past, of course, not now).

17 October

His wife came on 14 October and stayed until yesterday. Until the evening of 15 October he said nothing in her presence about his wild memories. But then he started talking in the same vein, this time including people he has never even known—some of my colleagues, for example, whose photographs he had seen in my album, taking them to be people who had played various malevolent roles in the fate of different people mentioned by his wife. From the moment of his wife's arrival he began to assert his determination to leave with her. But then he agreed to continue his treatment. He saw his wife off at the station and told her he would be home in a few days. Today, of his own accord, he wrote on his photographs and put them in an envelope to be sent to his wife. What he wrote included the following: Krivenko: "With deep affection"; Griboedov: "Resurrected in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost"; Pisarev: "With heartfelt gratitude"; Mikhailovsky: "With deep gratitude".

15 November

The day before yesterday his son came because Gleb Ivanovich usually celebrates his birthday on 14 November. He stayed the night. Yesterday, having lunch with us, Gleb Ivanovich suddenly had a bad turn, turned pale. With difficulty I got him onto my bed, wet his head with eau de cologne, twice sprinkled him with water. He improved gradually and five to ten minutes later was cheerful enough. His son left in the evening. He was given a sleeping draught, fell asleep at 1 a.m and slept so soundly that at 5 a.m he fell out of bed. He at once picked himself up on his own and went back to sleep again. When I visited him this morning there was no sign of anything to suggest that he might have had some sort of fit.

6 December

After his wife's visit (14 October) Gleb Ivanovich continued to fantasize wildly, claiming that his fantasies were memories. Their content had what might be called a social character. He described how Alexander II treated with kindness the ten-year-old Aleksandra Vasil'evna, daughter of the merchant Baraev, of peasant origin... There was something about the unity of autocratic power and the people, talk of reforms of the most democratic and exalted type, various revolutionary acts of violence which disturbed the great march of the people on the road of progress. Then there was something about the genius of Aleksandra Vasil'evna (a daughter of the people), who made all sorts of scientific discoveries and produced all sorts of literary works. These had been stolen by Turgenev, Tolstoy, Saltykov, etc. Sometimes her name was linked with that of his brother, Ivan Ivanovich, to whom, like her, belonged masses of literary works. All the works of various authors were nothing more than extracts taken from these works, distortions, feeble imitations, travesties, of what they had created (populist in character?). Their writings are kept in the Public Library and it is these works that play a leading role in the broadest and most wide-reaching social measures, directed at the radical improvement of all peoples, their total material well-being, universal education, and so on. All this comes out in a confused, muddled and naive way. For instance, they go on foot from place to place and erect crosses... schools appear, etc. They invest small sums of money in this or that enterprise and become shareholders. Then it turns out that in reality every type of philistine is a shareholder; for example, every human being holds a share in all the houses he has ever lived in, that is, rented. The Literary Fund has an important part to play in all this. It has vast resources used to finance every type of higher educational institution, to organize various scientific expeditions, and so on. In a word, his imagination weaves an endless web over a background of universal welfare and education, his close relations playing the leading role. There is no consistency in what he imagines, the images changing and combining in the most illogical and naive way, like a kaleidoscope. Very recently the following feature has appeared: as he looks closely at what is real, he finds that it is totally incompatible with his fantasies and, dissatisfied with it, or rather, protesting against it, he deals with it by saying it is not real at all. For instance, the Literary Fund's report is false, whoever produced it is a liar; the latest volume of *Russkoe Bogatstvo* is not the real one, it is full of useless old rubbish. The same with *Russkie Vedomosti*. But

in the way he has been reacting recently to various contemporary works of literature one has to suspect something like envy. He says that the articles are unsatisfactory, just old rubbish, merely included to preserve the rights of the shareholders. One detects that in his heart he is conscious of the inadequacy of his own thinking, his own creative powers, depriving him of the possibility of writing anything in general, and of making money from his literary works in particular. Even Korolenko is not spared his negative comments; Gleb Ivanovich refers contemptuously to his articles about Gatsissky in *Russkie Vedomosti* as outdated rubbish which, he claims, was merely a distorted version of what he himself had written and discarded as worthless, which Korolenko had stolen and published simply to maintain his shareholding in the newspaper (obviously he is depressed by the thought that he himself is not a shareholder in *Russkie Vedomosti*). Of course all these ideas are expressed in an incoherent, confused, childishly naive, unsystematic, illogical and contradictory way. Asked whether he knew Gatsissky, he replies that there was no such person, that he was mythical, but that does not prevent him from making unflattering comments about this mythical person (calling him a scoundrel, etc.) and going into detail about the way his character was formed, unconsciously using material about Gatsissky's parents taken from his biography).

Today on the occasion of Mikhailovsky's name-day he wrote the following message: "To Nikolai Konstantinovich Mikhailovsky. I deeply regret that it is so long since I saw you and my beloved guardian angels. The Uspenskys.

Boris Naumovich, do not refuse to add the names of your family and all the medical attendants of the female section. Please send a telegram at my expense."

The telegram was sent with its wording unchanged, but in his name alone.

8 December

[Short passage omitted from the original] ...Today, for instance, he raised the subject of Staniukovich having an article published in *Russkie Vedomosti* also to safeguard his share. And it is all his, Gleb Ivanovich's, written long ago, and now appropriated by others, Korolenko, Belogolovyi, Staniukovich... And all to ensure that there was no break in their share-holding for the current year. He constantly talks about the matter of shares in connection with articles in *Russkie Vedomosti* and *Russkoe Bogatstvo*.

At the end of my visit today the poor man showed clearly that he is depressed by the idea that he does not write, saying, without any prompting from me, that he is deeply sorry not to have published in *Russkie Vedomosti* and *Russkoe Bogatstvo* and has failed to maintain his right to a share. If one analyzes what he says about the articles that attract his attention, one may make the following conclusion: 1) he is depressed by the idea that he is not a shareholder in *Russkie Vedomosti*; 2) this idea strikes him mainly when he comes across articles by people he knows or on subjects which interest him. When he sees the signature of someone he knows he experiences something like envy: here they are writing and publishing, while I do not. And as it was under the influence of the idea that he did once write and publish and was a writer no worse than them, better than them even, this feeling of envy prompts him to call their works unsatisfactory. But there is more to it than that. When he reads their works he cannot properly concentrate his attention on what they are about and how they are written. Passages from them evoke in his consciousness sometimes fragments of his own memories, sometimes simply a variety of fantasies on related subjects. Consequently there is some awareness of the difference between the works and his imagination. On the one hand, he finds the works inferior to his imagination, and on the other, he regards them as nothing but the distorted products of his imagination. Hence the conclusion that they were taken from him, that the original work is his. Proof of this lies in his fantasies on the same subjects, which he takes to be memories; that is, he thinks that they have not appeared just at this moment, under the immediate impression of what he is reading, but that they are being reproduced in his memory under the influence of the works in question. Hence it is clear that his reaction to them and their authors is not the result of the delusions of grandeur and persecution that are characteristic of a paranoiac. In the first place he shows no sign of arrogance. In the second, he expresses no complaint or protest against the authors of the works and never accuses them of hostility towards him. Frequently he even denies that the authors ever existed (for example, today he denied the existence of Staniukovich). In the third place, the following feature is important, which essentially explains why he regards the works as distorted versions of what he wrote in the past, that is: that he suffers from *Erinnerungstäuschung* (false memory).

Whatever he thinks about or, more precisely, whatever occupies his consciousness, he regards as a memory, thinking it to be the reproduction of what he experienced in the past (saw, heard, said,

did, etc.) This is clearly analogous to what sometimes happens in the case of people who are not mentally ill: when they meet someone completely new or hear something for the first time they afterwards feel that somehow it was not the first time they had seen the person or heard whatever it was. It had happened on a previous occasion. And this “previous occasion” seems vague and remote in the past. This is the so-called “false memory” which, in my opinion, becomes apparent when a person is in a state of nervous debility. At such a time a person generally feels that he is not himself, that he is “off course”. His mental equilibrium is upset, his personality lacks complete wholeness and harmony. And in such cases this sometimes even develops into *Erinnerungstäuschung*. Here it is highly probable that the harmony of the two hemispheres, each of which has different functions, is destroyed—in one of them processes take place more quickly than in the other. And as a consequence there is, in general, a double perception and, in particular, a double representation. Incidentally this phenomenon may be caused by the difference between the nourishment of the hemispheres which may depend on a difference in blood circulation or blood supply. This will be in cases where there is a difference in the activity of the vessel system, in which event there is bound to be a difference in the condition of the eye-pupils, the dilation of which depends on sympathetic nerves. Gleb Ivanovich’s pupils have this condition, which is additional evidence and confirmation that the blood supply and consequently the nourishment of both hemispheres is not the same. In explaining his condition (his tendency to *Erinnerungstäuschung*) the importance of this should be recognized.

9 December

Recently his sleep pattern has been very unsatisfactory. Although in general he has enough hours of sleep, the fact that he sleeps more in the daytime than at night has had an adverse effect. Last night he had no sleep at all and slept for some time during the day. And now this evening we find him talking excessively and on subjects far removed from present-day reality. He talks rapidly, comprehensibly, has no difficulty with his choice of words, uses a wide range of vocabulary, the style is totally literary, he uses strong expressions, vivid images, his language may be called totally poetic... but it is all nonsense. There are naive descriptions of events in the creation of the world, the formation of the earth, the appearance of life, partly evolution, partly metempsychosis, picturesque descriptions

of astronomical, cosmographical, biological, ethical so-called events which he himself has witnessed... Angels and geniuses come down from heaven to the foul earth... they summon forth all kinds of wonderful creations (birds, flowers, tsars, emperors, incorporeal men and women, love, science, good, etc.). Here and there he himself is involved, and his wife, Ivan Ivanovich and Sasha... in the form of angels, geniuses, even tsars, emperors... And with it there are all kinds of wild tales, uncontrolled fantasies, gross absurdities, comic details. To describe them is beyond my powers. When you listen to him for a long time, you feel your head spinning, you feel something like terror. At 9 p.m. I gave him a sleeping draught and put him to bed, although he was unwilling, wanting to read the paper. Today's fantasies about astronomy were stimulated by the announcements printed in *Russkie Vedomosti* about a number of cheap books on the subject, which he feels he must have.

19 December

The same uncontrolled fantasies, with a kaleidoscopic mixture of all kinds of pictures on a wide variety of subjects, originating from the many newspaper announcements about books, music, art exhibitions, shops, etc. Every announcement, every heading, evokes some kind of association in his mind. And all of them are blended in the most fanciful way, described against the background of the almighty power of God, the benevolent and ennobling influence of the Virgin Mary, the great significance of women and children endowed with God's gift of genius, talent, the life-giving importance of truth, love, science, art, personified in angels, gods, tsars, his own importance, that of his sons and his brother (Ivan Ivanovich). To these people he is ready to ascribe everything; everything belongs to them, everything originates with them, every scientific, literary or any other sort of work is the product of their creative powers. Incidentally, apart from them, the peasant, the Russian peasant, frequently makes an appearance. They made everything, were part of the origin of everything (the earth and all that is in it). What is ascribed to various people (such as Gogol, Lermontov, De Quincey) is nothing more than a fragment of something taken from them. Or they took possession of their talent without their knowledge, appropriated what they had created and published it in distorted form. Interestingly, this matter of distortion apparently relates to works in the newspapers and journals in Uspensky's possession. This may be explained as follows: when, influenced by a heading of some sort, certain images appear to him, he

observes them as memories and, in addition, has nothing to compare them with. When he reads any literary work, or, more precisely, when he glances through it, there is a constant clash between the images of his own fantasy and what is being expressed by the author. Naturally they do not coincide, but the images continue to stimulate his imagination in new ways. And these images keep running up against the content of the original. Thus he confines himself within certain limits to the framework of what he is reading and at the same time senses the difference between the products of his imagination and the author's work. Hence the conclusion that the authors have written in corrupted form what he created long ago. As for the announcements in the journals, he simply asserts that by the author's name is meant his own, his son's, his brother's, etc. And one must suppose that he is influenced by the question of which person is associated with a given subject. For example: if he sees the title of a book about astronomy, Sasha is the one to come to mind (a student, a scientist, a mathematician); if he sees the title, "The Song of the Little Fish", it is Boris (a small boy, a game, a song, childhood). I think this is the most probable explanation.

23 December

Today I think I can make more sense of Gleb Ivanovich's fantasies at this morning's visit. It is clear that words like "genius, angel", even "god", which he applies to himself and to people close to him, should not be taken to be uncontrolled delirium in general or megalomania in particular. Incidentally, today he used the word "god" for a peasant, at the same time unable to avoid his usual habit of calling a peasant by his surname (Uglanov). The general sense of his fantasies is as follows: human beings are so created that they all have within them a basis for all-round perfection and the higher development of their spiritual (intellectual, moral and ethical) abilities, to the extent that they are able to ascend to the level of angels, even of God. When they are free from the influence of violence, of earthly vice, they are capable of rapid spiritual development, of rising higher and higher to the heavens, coming more and more to resemble higher heavenly creatures, acquiring continually higher spiritual dimensions. At the same time their spiritual make-up becomes ever more unified, refined, delicate, sensitive. For them to remain at the height they have reached, it is essential that nothing disturb the perfect harmony in their make-up, that they remain completely untouched by the influence of what is earthly, vicious,

base, violent. Once they are touched, however slightly, by anything base, they immediately begin to suffer the rapid loss of their heavenly qualities and take on the crude shapes and dimensions of earthly creatures, ordinary human beings. When Gleb Ivanovich names people, applying various epithets to them, it is obvious that he does not refer to their concrete state at a particular moment, but to their potential. To make this clearer I shall give examples. When he speaks of little Boris as a genius or an angel, he is, as it were, embodying in him the idea of children who, in spite of their natural age and development, are capable of manifesting unusually lofty and pure qualities (intelligence, love, a sense of beauty, etc.). And little Boris with his great intelligence is suddenly reduced when he is given a toy which does violence to his nature, presents him not with something that answers his natural requirements, but with worthless trash which, on the one hand, deprives him of nourishment for his true needs and, on the other, fosters base needs.

Similarly, when he speaks of Sasha as a genius, he is embodying in him the idea of students, young people who are engaged in learning. And, having ascribed to them superior qualities and development, and ever increasing great deeds, in his next example he indicates what an adverse effect violence has on them, bringing them down from the heights, hindering their development, their natural way of behaving. He described a procession along the Nevskii Prospekt, with Sasha at its head, with stars on his head and shoulders. The procession moved on and then, near the Kazan' Cathedral (he must have been referring to what happened in 1876) was subjected to violence which destroyed its natural progress, its significance, its activity. By violence he meant not the fact that people were arrested, but what influenced them to take part in the procession to the cathedral, making them adopt a role which he believes did not correspond to their true purpose. Here is an example relating to the peasant Uglanov. There was a commune, with all sorts of perfect qualities in its members and in their relationship with each other. Vast oak trees grew up from the earth. Their lofty crowns formed a vault, a dome, under which flew mighty eagles and angels, and where wonderful songs were sung. Bread grew on the trees. From earth to heaven there rose a vast column, up which human beings gradually ascended to the heavens... And, lo and behold, Lev Karlovich (Chermak) appears (a member of the gentry? a landowner? culture? liberalism? radicalism?) and starts to attack the tree-roots with an axe... The trees topple... The column falls... On the peasant the effect

is thus: he bends over an iron plough, turning the earth over, and with a sigh of exhaustion says: "Once there was God, but now I have to work with an iron plough". When he speaks of Aleksandra Vasil'evna—of what she creates, of the roles she plays—he sees her as the personification of woman in general, whose calling he previously considered lofty. What personification he sees in Ivan Ivanovich I cannot precisely say. Apparently that of a working man, but not one working on the land.

29 December

On 25 December his wife arrived with Ol'ga. All that day and the next he continued to utter delirious ideas. Any objection seemed to infuriate him and he could scarcely contain his anger. They were all megalomaniacal ideas mainly about Sasha, Boris, Ivan Ivanovich, his wife and himself. Whatever was mentioned, he immediately asserted that it was done by one of them and what was ascribed to other people was either lies or something stolen from them. They are geniuses, angels, gods. They are the source of everything done by others in every possible field of science and art. Newspapers and journals are nothing but deception. Everything they print is merely old material published under a new cover. The latest issue of *Russkoe Bogatstvo* was published by Mikhailovsky's enemies. An article published over his signature is a forgery, disgusting, his signature used by his enemies to discredit him. In the New Year there will be no journals and newspapers apart from *Bog*. He is completely healthy and will definitely leave with his wife. When his wife tried to persuade him to stay here for treatment he displayed momentary irritation, scarcely concealing his hostility to me, and then started trying to soothe her by saying that he was cured and would come with her. Seemingly to prove that he was healthy, he launched into an endless string of crazy megalomaniacal ideas, and once again his heroes appeared: mainly Ivan Ivanovich, Boris and Sasha.

On 27 December after a sleepless night he fell asleep towards morning and so missed his wife's departure. When he woke up and wanted to see her, he was given a letter from her. He was very angry, tore the letter up, and made a dash for the front door. Under various pretexts we managed to keep him there until Morozov arrived. When Morozov opened the door, Gleb Ivanovich tried to rush past, but Morozov stopped him. Gleb Ivanovich turned on him, cursing and swearing. Returning to his room, he remained agitated and started uttering accusations against Boris (aimed at me), claiming he had torn

him to pieces, ruined his family, etc. I visited him a few hours later. He greeted me gloomily, telling me that he would be leaving that evening. I spoke strongly to dissuade him. This took him completely aback, and for the rest of the day he said nothing about leaving. In the evening he told Andrei and Nikolai Stepanovich that he could not understand what he had done to make me so angry. He refused to eat, suspicious of the food, but had a good supper. He refused to eat an orange left by his wife, explaining that the skin had been pierced and poison injected. That suggested that he thought I was the poisoner. On 28 December the same idea of persecution persisted. Today he sent me a note, asking to be moved to St. Petersburg. I wrote back refusing, referring to what his wife and friends wanted. When he got my note, he expressed the idea that I could get to him anywhere by means of the network of telephone lines I had laid. When he talks about me, he calls me Boris and sees me as his principal enemy, the destroyer of his family, etc.

30 December

Ate nothing at all yesterday. Just three glasses of milk and the soft part of a bread roll at 4 a.m. Today he spoke rudely to me, cursing me, accusing me of ruining his family, etc. He regards me as the only person to blame not only for his stay at Kolmovo, but also for the pains he feels as the result of poison. When told that he is here at his wife's request, he replies that his wife is acting under my influence, because she is afraid of me, terrified merely by the way I look at her. He was generally very rude to me and made me leave his room. He announced that, come what may, he will not stay here, by the New Year he will be gone. And if he is not released, he will hang himself.

He sent me a letter: "Boris Naumovich! You have done me the favor of introducing me to a gang of thieves with two bloodsuckers in charge: Roza L'vovna and you. There is poison in every medicine. Henceforth I part company with this gang and humbly request you on receipt of this letter to allow me to go home. From the new year for my living expenses at Kolmovo you will not receive one copeck [...illegible...] insolent and villainous attitude towards my family, manifest poisoning of food, of water in the bath." And today he is talking about poison at the Skabichevsky celebration.

31 December

Ate nothing all day yesterday. Just two glasses of milk at 1 a.m.

In the evening he made up his mind to leave the hospital at all costs. There was no dissuading him. He dressed, took a bundle of letters under his arm and went to the front door, saying that if he was not allowed to leave voluntarily, he would leave in the name of the father and the son. He spent a long time trying to convince all of us to let him go, but when he saw it was useless he moved away from the door, sat down on a bench in the corridor and remained sitting there for a long time until he dozed off. Then he accepted Andrei's suggestion, went back to his room, and allowed himself to be undressed and put to bed.

1895

1 January

No sleep at night. In the morning the same story—he was determined to leave on the morning train—and more long arguments... Had nothing to eat all day, like yesterday. He drinks only tea. Over the past two weeks he has lost ten pounds in weight and five pounds over the previous two weeks. Apart from delirious ideas, he is undoubtedly suffering from hallucinations (auditory).

2 January

Today he agreed to eat eggs, but only if Nikolai Stepanovich served them and only in his room. He also ate soup and meat (cooked in the main kitchen), but only on condition that Nikolai Stepanovich ate with him. In the evening he had something to eat in his room without Nikolai Stepanovich being there (eggs, milk, bread).

5 January

Although in his dealing with me he observes the outward signs of respect and good will, in my absence he calls me his enemy [passage omitted in the 1939 edition]. Delirium as before. Eats satisfactorily (food from Nikolai Stepanovich).

6 January

Today he expressed a desire to go to church. He wrote a prayer note in advance, which he gave to the priest, telling him that he was God, etc. The note may be regarded as the quintessence of his *folie de grandeur*: "Gleb, Angel of the Lord. Most Holy Virgin Mother Aleksandra, Great Martyr. Alexander, Lord Emperor. Vera, Keeper of the Church. Mariia, Ol'ga, Saint Boris—eternal life of plants, eternal life in the universe".

8 January

... Yesterday he sent me the following message: “To Boris, Angel of the Lord. Please write and tell me what power directs you over me. Is an All-Powerful Guardian Angel by the power of God or by your own will? Angel of the Lord Gleb.” [Omission from 1939 edition] As he continues to assert all sorts of ideas about influence over him and his family, he ascribes power to me naturally in a negative sense; from my position as a divinity I at once reduce them to the status of the humblest of subjects. [Omission from 1939 edition]... Before Christmas he began more or less to abstain from food and drink. From much of what he says now one may conclude that the reason for this is that food products are acquired by violence done to animals and plants. One might say that what he now argues about is more logical than what he said before (“logical” in a formal sense only, of course) but that his actions now scarcely correspond to his arguments. He now refuses to eat if he has to cut anything during a meal. He cannot cut because food products are obtained by similar acts of violence. But he is apparently quite prepared to eat without using a knife. When he was given just a spoon, there was no objection. This is a very interesting example of how a form, symbol, ritual, can take the place of what is behind it to the point of eliminating it entirely.

25 January

He has gradually reached the point of eating no meat at all. And to a degree he is consistent in his abstinence from fruit and vegetables, now eating only bread and milk. And it was his own idea that he be given semolina, which he eats in quite large quantities. At one time he almost gave up drinking tea, but has now resumed. Incidentally, he has entirely given up smoking, although he was previously a heavy smoker.

The ideas about *grandeur* and about persecution are as they were before. Today he wrote the following letter addressed to Aleksandr Glebovich the Blessed at the Academy of Arts, St. Petersburg: “Angel of the Lord, Aleksandr the Blessed! Do not refuse me, Gleb the Angel, in my request to move to St. Petersburg before 1 February. My humble obeisance to the Most Holy Virgin Mother, Aleksandra the Blessed. Do not refuse me the possibility of an immediate move to St. Petersburg. I shall obey you, Most Holy Virgin Mother, and shall constantly read the book about the ideal of the

divine powers of Gleb the Most Wise. I am well and as clear as God's daylight. Your faithful Gleb." (This message was to his son).

He is often irritable, abusing me for not letting him go to St. Petersburg, to church, for not acknowledging his divinity, and so on.

26 January

This morning he almost struck Andrei because, from the washroom window, he saw my cook getting into a sleigh to go shopping. He suddenly rounded on Andrei, cursing him for having deceived him there are angels living here, his own eyes prove this—he saw one leaving the house.

30 January

He wrote the following letter today, addressed to "St. Petersburg. To the Great Sovereign Empress. From the loyal slave of God, Gleb."

"Great Sovereign Empress! Liberate many most wretched creatures, made wretched by the ignorance of doctors who have, as it were, set themselves the task of torturing healthy people and me. Liberate us as soon as possible in the knowledge that 1 February is of great significance in the lives of non-Christians who have no right to any property. Your loyal subject Gleb."

1 February

[Another letter is quoted, to the Mother Superior of the Derevianitsky Nunnery in St Petersburg. It concludes: "Please reply immediately, advising me what to do, how to live, and above all inform me of the day and the hour when you can meet me and begin a new life."]

2 February

Today's letter addressed to Father Vladimir (the new priest at Kolmovo):

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost I make a humble request to you, true Christian that you are, to pass this letter to Jesus Christ, the Savior of The World, so that He may inform His twelve apostles that there must be an investigation of the gross injustices prevailing in the irregular and illegal way in which the Kolmovo clinic is operated. God's temple must be restored and a regime established that is based on the healing of the sick by instruction in the name of the

Father, Son and Holy Ghost, not by the transformation of the human organism with frequent doses of medicine, the violent destruction of social life, based on the cruel and heartless treatment of wretched people, depriving other people of wealth and their very lives. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost I await a visit from the twelve apostles for the investigation, with a list of questions for each patient. What do they live on? Why does the doctor live? Does he know the reason for taking medicines? This list, sworn before God, must be produced for the doctors, who are obliged to give the apostles an answer about those promptings of a clear conscience which direct the actions of persons not of a Christian way of thinking. Angel of the Lord Gleb.

7 February

Condition unchanged. Still remarkably stubborn in protesting against my authority. Every day he gets ready to go somewhere, St. Petersburg, church, etc. He asks those around him to let him go, to go with him, etc. As soon as he is told that my permission must be requested, he gives up his preparations and announces that he will die, without my permission. Equally remarkable is his consistency over food; he eats only bread, semolina and milk. No tobacco. Drinks tea.

8 February

He makes no rude remarks to my face. A few days ago he asked me if I get the newspapers, but did not ask to be given one to read. He asked what they were writing about the tsar. It turned out that he thinks that Sasha, his son, is the tsar. When he was told that the tsar is now Nicholas II, not Alexander III, at first he tried to insist that Sasha was the tsar and then he said: "All right then, Nicholas is the tsar". It only needs a person to have something in common, even if it is only some outward sign, with any kind of object, person, etc., for him to identify them as the same. To people he likes he gives all sorts of lofty appellations, to those he dislikes he gives bad names, and at all those to whom he is more or less indifferent he regards from the point of view of metempsychosis—they all have souls, and both animals and even plants have human souls. So he might have seen a horse somewhere—it is not a horse, but a human being turned into a horse. And he can understand its position, its sufferings; he can read its thoughts in its face, etc. Every type of violence leads to bad consequences. Everything bad in the world is the result of violence done by human beings. For example, he regards frost and winter not as independent natural phenomena, but as the result of violence done

by human beings to trees—they chop down trees for firewood, to warm themselves against the cold, and yet winter itself has come about because people started to chop down trees; had they not done so, there would be no winter, just eternal summer. He condemns the fact that near here they have sunk an artesian well and drawn water from the depths of the earth. This has deprived the trees of the water that fed their roots. The earth itself complained about this and, incidentally, called it “the devil” —this he could hear in the sound of water. The trees, deprived of water for their roots, began to wither. The moisture visible on their foliage in summer was the tears they were shedding over their misfortune. The ditch dug in the garden to take the surplus artesian water through a pool to Volkhov had also harmed the trees by undermining their roots. Previously, working people used to bring up their children under these trees, but now they had started to wither the children brought up under their foliage had also started to wither and degenerate. And the water itself was being senselessly and uselessly wasted by being channelled to Volkhov. The *zemstvo* does nothing but harm, and the same applies to the maintenance of Kolmovo and every other hospital. Taxes are taken from people for hospital maintenance and, besides, the so-called treatment destroys people’s health, not merely healthy people, but really also saints, angels, etc. Medicine does nothing but cripple people, perverts their organism. Doctor Tairov, over whom he enthused at one time and praised for the surgical operations he carried out, is now treated as an evildoer, killing healthy people. Similarly with Okunev, with whom he travelled last year to Ustiuzhina and whose work for the *zemstvo* he also once enthused over. Needless to say, he regards what I do as totally criminal. He thinks the evil that I do derives mainly from the fact that I am not a Christian. My employees, mainly my assistant Petr Ivanovich, he hates because they are in league with me. But today Petr Ivanovich earned his approval by singing a hymn as he walked along the corridor past his door. Hearing it, Gleb Ivanovich came out smiling and said: “So you are a good Christian then.” This prompted Petr Ivanovich to propose giving him an enema, which he refused, regarding it as an act of violence [omission in 1939 edition]. As soon as Petr Ivanovich reminded him about it he agreed to have it, but it had to be done with religious airs being sung, while Gleb Ivanovich reminded him of the religious services he regarded as necessary (mass, etc.). Afterwards he expressed to the supervisor his delight at the pleasure he had derived from the enema, calling it a pure act of communion.

12 February

Yesterday he started smoking. Talked more incoherently than on previous days and pronunciation was less clear [omission from 1939 edition]. His delirium regarding people, if one tries to make sense of it, may be expressed as follows. When the names Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky, Aleksandra Vasil'evna Uspenskaia, Aleksandr Glebovich Uspensky, etc., are mentioned these people are just ordinary, of no significance, not worth very much, with every possible imperfection. When their full names are used they are deprived of all higher spiritual qualities. But if they are called just by their first names they lose all the characteristics they have as separate individuals, the characteristics of ordinary human beings. Then they are the bearers of those lofty spiritual qualities which characterize the saints who have the same name. And not just one saint, but all great people with the same name. Apparently this works better if an epithet describing a great person or being (saint, emperor, angel, archangel, etc.) is added to the name. This may exalt the person, make him or her divine by the addition of some exalted title, irrespective of whether the name is identical or not, for example, Aleksandra Vasil'evna is called "Holy Mother of God".

13 February

Today he wrote the following letter, clearly addressed to his wife: "Most Holy Mother of God, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Send envoys to investigate the irregular affairs of the Kolmovo Clinic. I also need to have the following lives of saints: of the Most Holy Mother of God, of Alexander the Blessed, of Holy Vera, of Holy Mariia, of Saint Ol'ga, of Saint Boris, and of Saint Gleb. Thy eternally true and faithful angel, Gleb."

On the envelope: "To Novgorod. To the meeting of the twelve apostles to Jesus Christ, Savior, Most Holy, Most Blessed and to His Most Holy Mother. From Saint Gleb. In the New Kremlin."

Today his appearance is considerably healthier. He is talking almost completely clearly, quite fluently, more coherently and systematically.

14 February

Today he wrote two letters: one to his son, another to the father of someone who is ill.

First letter: Addressed to "St. Petersburg, To the Academy of Arts to Saint Aleksandr the Blessed":

“In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost to Saint Aleksandr the Blessed. I am extremely anxious to know about the life of Mariia Aleksandrovna (she is indeed the darling Aleksandra Vasil’evna), about the life of dear Aleksandr the Blessed, about Saint Vera, Saint Mariia and Saint Boris. The lives of the saints of God are essential, essential too is the life of Nikolai the Miracle-Worker. Saint Gleb. It is essential to know about the means of life of the holy saints of God.”

Second letter: Addressed to “the peasant Pavel, father of sick Dmitrii”:

“To Saint Pavel. Do not deny my most humble request to write about the causes of the illness of your son Saint Dmitrii, who did evil against him, what reasons there are for your son to be in hospital and what your opinion is, as father, of the situation of your son Dmitrii, desperate to be living under his father’s roof, what the opinion of the peasants, and of you, Saint Peter, of the Kolmovo curative establishment. Write to me in detail. To Saint Gleb.”

Today he received a letter from his son which displeased him. He thinks it has been written by the hand of a robber, since his son could not refer to himself as an ordinary mortal, sign himself Shurochka, etc., because he is really Alexander the Blessed, Emperor, author of all the remarkable pictures, etc.

Henceforth I shall not copy out his letters, but keep them separately.

23 February

He got up at 4 a.m. (he had not slept all night—recently he has got into the habit of falling asleep very late). He went [to relieve himself] and collapsed on the floor in almost a dead faint. On investigation it turned out that first his knees had buckled, and then, before ending up stretched out on his back on the floor, he had extended his arms backwards, so that when he fell they were underneath him. Two or three minutes later he got up and went back to his room and lay on his bed: from what he says one may gather that he suffered a giddy spell.

From 12 February

In general he gets enough hours sleep, but falls asleep only late. Sleeps in the daytime too. He is now eating more varied food, including broth, but he does not eat any meat. In his notes he has once or twice shown some inclination to drink alcohol.

17 March

He has recently become particularly insistent in his requests for alcohol. Several days ago I tried to take advantage of this to get him to agree to take valerian drops several times a day. When he was offered drops in water, at first he refused to take them, but then, sniffing them, agreed that they smelt of alcohol and took them. This happened several days running, but he became more and more reluctant and after each dose expressed displeasure that he was not getting any alcohol. Finally today he refused them point blank. Allowing for the possibility that vodka is essential for him at present as a stimulant to which he has long since grown accustomed, and without which he might suffer further loss of strength and energy, I decided to allow him a glass of vodka twice a day before a meal. He drinks it with great pleasure, saying "That's good."

9 April

Refuses to eat meat, as he did before. Apart from fruit and vegetables, he takes milk, and very recently has begun to eat eggs (as many as six or eight a day). In general he sleeps about five or six hours every twenty-four. As earlier, he expresses the delirious idea that plants and animals have souls like people. He often maintains that animals do not really exist, that God could not have created them for the kind of existence we observe—for example, He could not have created pigs, cows, etc. for slaughter, or horses for strenuous work, etc. What we see in the form of a horse, an ox, etc., is simply a human being who, by mutual agreement with God, has taken on that form for a definite number of years in order to study the life of a particular animal, to enrich him or herself with its special qualities. A human being experiences every condition of every species of animal and so acquires all the accomplishments symbolized by the animal (eagle—flight to the skies, astronomy; fish—swimming in the depths, geology and also wisdom, etc.) In exactly the same way God could not have created cold, winter. The idea of God is compatible only with light, heat, the full flowering of plant and animal life, the complete happiness and physical and spiritual perfection of human beings (everlasting life, everlasting labor, everlasting knowledge), to the point of total identification with the divinity. Human beings are to blame for the fact that reality does not correspond to this ideal, but not all of them, only a certain category. These are the people who acknowledge neither God nor the tsar. In fact, the tsar is identical with God, the two are a single unity viewed from different points of view.

The tsar is the one who has passed through every human condition, starting from that of a humble laborer. The tsar's task is to contribute to the perfecting of all people and the achievement of total happiness for them. In order to make use of these gifts a human being must believe in God, and be fully prepared to live in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Their name human beings will accomplish everything. Endless toil should not be understood in the usual sense. Toil not only does not presuppose, it absolutely excludes any kind of violence, even violence done to trees which have lives cut short. It excludes any action involving a blow being struck, a cut being made, etc.; in a word, it excludes any physical action in toil and leaves only its ideal element. For there to be ships on water or in the air, any kind imaginable, only one thing is needed: creative imagination, a mental picture of them in every detail, with all their attributes. He naturally tells me all this in a fragmentary way, incoherently, with wild leaps of thought, completely without system and without any ability to give proper answers to any comments or objections. His reaction to comments and questions about his delirious ideas varies according to how sympathetic or otherwise he finds a particular person. And this depends on his idea of how important the person is for carrying out his wishes. Since his main desire is to leave Kolmovo it follows that I am his worst enemy. The more he is convinced that people around him are acting in agreement with me, the greater antipathy he feels towards them. And the more he trusts that someone will cooperate with him, the more sympathetic he feels towards that person. I am responsible for his transfer to Kolmovo, where I am in charge, his transfer to the *zemstvo* which maintains Kolmovo, to the doctors, without whom there would be no sick people, to the medicine, without which there would be no illnesses, and so on. Once I had become the person for whom he had the greatest antipathy, to him I became the personification of all the evil being done in the world and even all the evil ever done in the world, which prevented the world from becoming in actuality, or, more precisely, from appearing to be what it should be, or, more precisely, what he imagines it to be. Not only am I to blame for snow, wind, bad weather, etc., but even for the fact that he apparently can no longer see the steamers there were before, the landing stages, the monasteries, the schools, etc. etc. I am even to blame for the evil deeds done in history, for example, by Ivan the Terrible, who in fact is none other than me.

For people to achieve perfection it is essential for them not to be mean with money. Let everyone go to the twelve apostles and take

from them the life of the saint they are named after, it does not matter which, and then let them go to the state bank and register for a million roubles (they will get that sum in any case) and then let them begin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost an eternal life, with eternal toil and a striving for the acquisition of eternal knowledge. From this point his ideas degenerate into complete nonsense, quite impossible to reduce to any kind of system. An interesting episode occurred the day before yesterday. He went for a walk with Andrei through the suburb. When they were near the town he tried to persuade Andrei to go there. Andrei replied that he could not agree without my permission. Naturally this brought my detested image to his mind. Just then the beating of a drum was heard from the barracks. He stopped, crossed himself and said: "They're taking Boris Naumovich to be shot". The following morning when he met Osip Vasil'evich (the pharmacist) he told him I was dead, had been shot, and that the senior doctor was now Osip Vasil'evich, from whom he now requested his release.

It is interesting that his plans to leave here are linked not with a desire to see his family, but a desire to travel, this being almost the principal way of acquiring knowledge and in general the principal method of fulfilling the task of coming close to perfection, to God. He once gave a child-like picture of travel in general. Trains would come together in Liuban', passengers meeting each other would embrace and travel on; the same thing would happen at the next station, and the next, and so on to infinity.

On some days he speaks with more animation, on others with less. Accordingly, sometimes his speech is unintelligible, some letters being missed out, syllables transposed, sounds swallowed, sometimes it is clearer, properly enunciated. On two consecutive days there may be the most extreme contrasts.

20 April

No changes. His behaviour is now so much in line with his nonsensical view of the world that this is beginning to show itself even in the smallest things. He recently made a trip to town with Andrei. He went into the restaurant in the summer garden, asked for a bottle of beer, never even thinking about paying for it. When they asked him for the money he seemed surprised, but then took a piece of paper out of his pocket (it had columns and figures on it, indicating supervision times; he regards it as a kind of official form which

anyone can use to apply for millions of roubles, so gaining the right to the triad referred to earlier) and thrust it at the waiter. When he refused to accept it, Gleb Ivanovich went to the man at the bar. Receiving the same response, he went off in displeasure, but without saying a word. An incident like this does not shake his beliefs at all, indeed he trusts them more strongly than he trusts real impressions. Like Don Quixote, he is satisfied that the lack of correspondence between reality and his imagined world is explained by the influence of powers and persons hostile to God and the tsar. It goes without saying that I am the one he regards as the personification of this prime evil force. He tells me this to my face, calling me a blackguard and a scoundrel. At my morning visit today he treated me to such unflattering epithets on the following pretext. I recently gave him to read an issue of the unofficial part of the *Novgorod Provincial News*. He looked through it quite carefully, all the time complaining that it was lies. His main cause of concern was that they wrote about Alexander III as if he were dead. That was an evil lie, written by people who did not acknowledge either God or the tsar. How could they refer to the tsar as dead, when his son (Alexander) was alive. The tsar could not die, he has eternal life. The fact that preparations are being made to erect a monument to Alexander III does not at all prove that he is dead, monuments are erected to the living too. The existence of a monument proves that the person is alive. Go up to the monument to Alexander II in Samara, or in Smolensk, and you will hear him telling the whole story. So it turns out that Alexander II is alive, and Peter the Great too. All the tsars are alive. And if I disagree, that is explained by my lack of faith, my evil character. Then excitedly he began to show me an article about a book by Bogdanovich on the last days of Alexander III and to express his hatred for Professor Leyden, who had caused Alexander III so much suffering. There was no mention of suffering, but there was a reference to the fact that, when the tsar was ill on the last night of his life, Doctor Vel'iaminov had summoned Leyden, who had put a pillow under the tsar's head. When I asked him what Leyden had done wrong and why he blamed him in particular, he began to abuse first me and then Leyden, and it turned out that Leyden and I are the same person. When I left him, he immediately went to bed. He was given his evening meal, ate well, went to bed again, and immediately fell asleep. He said nothing to Andrei, did not abuse him at all (in the morning he had kept abusing him, demanding to be allowed to go into town, to get ready to go to Chudovo, saying he was certain his wife and son had passed through

the town on the steamer— they had shouted to him from the steamer that they were coming to fetch him, and so on.).

22 August

Generally no changes. Yesterday, for the first time since the end of last year, he had meat soup both for his midday and evening meal. The same today. He must have known it was meat soup—fat was visible on it.

26 August

He had meat in his soup today. He ate it without comment.

30 August

Until today he had soup with meat every day, but today he refused meat, although he still has soup.

1897

9 November

This is the fifth Sunday that he has eaten a meat pie with relish. We refrain from trying to give him a meat pie on weekdays, in order not to lose the possibility of giving him food with meat at least once a week. For two months now he has been out for a walk quite frequently and has come back without objecting. Previously, and this was over a long period, he never went out in the fresh air. The usual source of his dissatisfaction is above all the meat he sees being delivered every day. He says it is human carcasses, backbones of Iuzhakov, Korolenko, etc. [Passage omitted from 1939 edition]

He is ruining his clothes and underwear with cigarettes. Everything (in particular his frock-coat and his blanket) is covered with large or small holes caused by burning cigarettes.

For a very long time now he has done no writing or reading. Every time he sees me he talks about going away with me immediately and even starts getting ready to leave, but every time it is easy to put him off by saying I have no time at the moment, I have to do my rounds, etc. Left to himself, he says nothing about leaving.

He often lashes out at those attending him, especially over an enema. Recently, in spite of his former objection to any kind of cutting, he insisted on having his hair and even his beard cut short. This was done with pleasure, his beard given just a light trim.

[This was the last entry in Sinani's diary relating to Uspensky.]

Translator's notes

1. An editorial note indicates that this cannot be true. Reshetnikov died in 1871, Levitov in 1877, whereas Uspensky did not take up residence in Chudovo until 1881.
2. This refers to Leskov's story *Improvizatory (The Improvisers)*
3. An editorial note suggests that what actually happened at that time (autumn 1874) was much less straightforward, and that Uspensky's behaviour was not as erratic as Sinani describes.
4. The diary entries for 6 - 10 January, totalling approximately 8,000 typographical units, were omitted from the 1939 published text as unsuitable for print. They referred to the patient's delirious condition.
5. Shortly after this entry the doctor's daughter, Leli, died.
6. Sinani laments the loss of his daughter and wonders whether Uspensky's possible recovery might be some compensation for it. But he rejects the idea since, had she lived, his daughter would no doubt have brought greater benefit to other people than the fifty-year-old Uspensky. On 24 April Uspensky went to Chudovo. On 29 April he returned to Sinani. On 5 May he was formally discharged from Sinani's care and moved to Chudovo. The diary entries break off, resuming on 9 June.
7. Uspensky spent the early days of October 1893 at the *zemstvo* assembly at Ustyuzhna. 11 - 15 October he was at the Yeremen Zemstvo Hospital under the care of Doctor A.A. Tairov. Then he spent a month in Novgorod living in an apartment belonging to N.I. Ushakov. Sinani's notes resume on 13 November.
8. These are disparate names of populists, relatives, nineteenth century Russian writers and their wives.

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INDEX

- abortion, 8, 23, 59, 69, 71, 101, 103, 141-143, 158, 162, 178-179
 Académie Française, 157
 adultery, 22, 50, 53, 54, 123, 125
 agriculture, 24, 100, 116, 118, 119, 172
 alcohol/alcoholism, 24, 99, 191, 220, 229, 242, 265-266
 Alekseeva, A., 22, 41, 44, 135
 Alexander II, 194, 198, 250, 262, 269
 Alexander III, 194, 198, 262, 269
 animal husbandry, 100, 118, 153
 Aphrodite, 72, 76
 Aptekman, Osip, 111, 182, 188
 Aristotle, 155
 art, 16, 44, 64-67, 71-77, 79, 193, 200, 224, 254, 257
 asceticism, 50, 59-61, 67, 69, 71, 76, 78, 81, 91, 93, 147, 178, 180, 182, 189
 Augustine, 80, 152
 baptism, 76, 78
 Barthes, Roland, 75, 273
 beauty, 22, 29, 39, 40, 41, 46, 66, 67, 69, 71-73, 127, 159, 256
 Belinsky, Vissarion, 10
 Belyi, Andrei, 178
 Berdiaev, Nikolai, 8
 Black Hundreds, 194
 bleeding, 53, 54, 61, 80, 198; menstrual, 61, 63; hemorrhoidal, 61, 196, 236
 Boborykin, P. B., 135, 136, 148, 246
 Bogdanovich, Angel, 13, 269
 Bondarev, T. M., 30-33, 44, 48, 98, 111, 138, 162
 Breuer, J., 108
 capitalism, 12, 15, 24, 33, 82, 95-98, 101, 104, 110, 141, 146, 148, 167-168, 177, 179
 castration, 78, 80, 93
 Chaadaev, P., 77
 Chadwick, W., 78
 Chechotte, Dr, 195, 196, 247
 Chekhov, Anton, 20, 23, 122-128, 130
Chernyi peredel, 13
 Chernyshevsky, Nikolai, 10, 11, 71, 93, 94, 120
 children, 9, 12, 17, 23, 31, 32, 36, 46, 52, 59, 69, 84, 85, 100-106, 114, 117, 118, 120, 128, 133-141, 143-147, 158, 162, 168, 172, 174-178, 182-184, 203, 213, 220, 224, 226, 231, 232, 235, 240-245, 254, 256, 263; child abuse, 49, 69, 104; childbirth, 20, 32, 42, 44, 120, 127, 133, 138, 142, 145-147, 173, 175, 179, 181; child mortality, 168, 181; illegitimate children, 162, 175-177, 183; infanticide, 8, 23, 24, 59, 101, 103, 128, 135, 141-143, 148, 158, 162, 167, 168, 176, 178, 179; unwanted/abandoned children, 23, 24, 59, 140, 141, 143, 158, 162, 174-175; orphans, 140, 175
 Chrysostom, John, 152
 Clement of Alexandria, 152
 Clements, Barbara, 26, 81, 82
 Danilevsky, Nikolai, 160, 165
 Darwin, Charles, 17, 126, 157, 160, 165, 166
 Darwinism, 126, 152
 Davidson Roberta, 50, 94, 121
 Deleuze, Gilles, 24, 64, 152, 161, 166
 demonic possession, 23, 26, 95-98, 100-110, 117, 120
 Descartes, René, 55, 154-155, 163-164
 devil, 92, 95, 96, 98, 105, 107, 109, 183, 247, 263
 divine will, 5, 133, 138, 155, 181
 divorce, 34, 38, 167, 172, 174, 178
 Dobroliubov, Nikolai, 10, 11
 domestic violence, 23, 34, 53, 116-118, 123-125
Domostroi, 22, 23, 55-57, 63, 116, 117, 122

- Dostoevsky, Fyodor, 10, 69, 80, 151, 156, 164, 165
- Douglas, Mary, 20, 162, 164, 165, 188
- dreams, 36, 68, 74, 79, 157, 219
- Dumas, A., 135, 136, 148
- economic independence, 8, 18, 19, 22, 40, 143, 170, 172, 185
- education, 207, 210, 240, 242, 244, 250
- Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard, 60
- emancipation, of women, 16-19, 21, 30, 37, 50, 87, 89, 102, 143, 145, 171, 177
- Engel, Barbara Alpern, 26, 50, 174
- Engelstein, Laura, 26, 32, 48, 63, 130, 142, 148, 173
- factory work, 30-33, 141-143, 167, 168
- family, 10-13, 19, 23, 24, 30-37, 41-44, 46, 52, 56, 69, 82, 85, 86, 94-98, 100, 103, 106, 109, 113, 117, 122, 123, 127, 129, 130, 133, 135-139, 142-147, 151, 159, 163, 168, 169, 172, 176, 181-185, 189, 194, 196, 198, 201, 203, 205, 206, 214-218, 223, 224, 226-229, 237, 240, 241, 244, 247, 248, 251, 258, 260, 268
- Faradisation, 191
- fatherhood, 43, 44, 52, 53, 54, 85, 133-136, 140, 145, 146, 226
- Fedorov, N. N., 77, 80
- femininity, 8, 15, 22, 29, 47-50, 55, 58, 61, 63, 67, 71-72, 76, 78-82, 90
- Fet A., 66, 72, 74
- Figner, Vera, 8, 9, 13, 25, 26, 60, 61, 69, 180, 248
- folklore, 53, 56, 57, 63, 102, 104, 105, 110, 111, 116, 118, 126, 156, 165, 183
- Foucault, Michel, 22, 119, 274
- Frei, 198, 209, 210, 211, 215, 218, 223
- Freud, Sigmund, 21, 22, 80, 108
- Geller, Jay, 187, 188
- gender, 5, 7, 8, 15, 16, 19, 23-29, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44-50, 52, 53, 55, 59, 60, 62-66, 75-77, 79, 81, 83, 85-87, 89, 95, 96, 106, 109, 163, 168, 170, 183, 185, 186
- Gilman, Sander, 64, 109
- Gogol, Nikolai, 10, 73, 166, 254
- Goncharov, Ivan, 68, 276
- Gorky, Maxim, 15
- Grigorovich, D., 114, 117, 183, 188
- Grosz, Elizabeth, 16, 63, 94, 165
- hagiography, 91, 92, 93, 265, 268
- hallucinations, 195, 198, 199, 203, 204, 259
- heredity, 32, 55, 57, 59, 110, 126, 128, 157
- Herzen, Aleksandr, 10, 12
- homicide, 31, 134, 142, 147, 249
- Huet, Marie-Helene, 105, 106, 165
- hypnosis, 21, 190, 191, 209, 216
- immaculate conception, 182
- incest, 22, 37, 49, 50, 53, 54, 63, 110; *Snokhachestvo*, 33-38
- infanticide, 8, 23, 24, 59, 101, 103, 128, 135, 141-143, 148, 158, 162, 167, 168, 176-179
- infidelity, 22, 50, 53-56, 117
- Ivanov, Dmitrii Vasil'evich, 211
- Judaism, 178, 276
- Kolmovo Mental Institution, 181
- Kon, I., 42, 48, 277
- Korolenko, Vladimir, 26, 58, 65, 140, 191, 197, 203, 204, 209, 251, 270, 277
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, 16, 27, 119, 130, 144, 186
- labor, 23, 29, 30-35, 38-40, 55, 85, 92, 97, 98, 101, 104, 113-120, 122, 124, 128, 138, 141-145, 168-170
- land ownership, 30, 87, 171, 177, 244
- Lavrov, Petr, 12
- Lenin, Vladimir, 26
- Lermontov, Mikhail, 88, 90, 254
- Leskov, N., 219, 271
- Lesnitskaia, V., 22, 41, 45
- Levi-Strauss, Claude, 56
- Leviticus, 22, 54, 158, 162
- Literary Fund, 139, 240, 242, 244, 250
- Lombroso, Cesare, 18, 22, 58, 59, 69-71, 73, 74, 119, 126
- Lotman, Jurii, 89, 90, 94
- Ludmer, Iakov, 33, 34, 36, 38, 48
- Maines, Rachel, 111, 121
- Mandelstam, 190, 278
- Margarita the nun, 25, 61, 203, 204, 210
- marriage, 12, 17, 35, 38, 45, 46, 49, 97, 101, 108, 115, 119, 124-127, 136, 138, 153, 171, 173, 178, 181
- masculinity, 15, 23, 49, 50, 57, 58, 63, 67, 71, 73, 76-79, 81-90, 93, 108, 121, 181

- maternal impression, 105, 106, 157
 Marx, Karl, 145, 148
 Melnikov-Pechersky, I. P., 183
 mental illness, 8, 9, 21, 24, 33, 61, 65, 110, 159, 178, 181, 182, 194, 195-270; depression, 84, 136, 195, 196; auditory delusions, 198, 199, 207, 259; Margarita the nun, 25, 61, 203, 204, 210; olfactory delusions, 182-186, 195; pig delusions, 207, 215, 266, 182, 200-202, 205; saint delusions, 264-266; schizophrenia, 33, 70, 147
 migrants, 85, 100, 174
 Mikhailova, E., 18, 20, 27
 Mikhailovsky, N. K., 27, 67, 68, 69, 111, 139, 159, 181, 196, 197, 206, 209, 211, 213, 219, 242, 244, 245, 246, 248, 249, 251, 257
 militarism, 88-90, 117, 125, 177
 monasticism, 60, 68-72, 74, 93, 138, 178, 189, 205
 monism, 161, 164, 165
 morality, 9, 11, 16, 23, 30-35, 44-46, 50, 57, 69, 81-87, 90-93, 96-101, 109, 113-115, 119, 122-125, 129, 133, 134, 138, 168, 171-174, 204-205
 Moser, Charles, 66
 motherhood, 37, 42, 52, 100, 104, 105, 118, 120, 121, 133, 143-146, 151, 157, 158, 161, 175
 Naiman, Eric, 9, 78, 93
Narodnaia volia, 13
Narodnichestvo (going to the people), 12-15
Narodniki (populist writers), 7, 12, 15, 27, 50, 59, 61, 92, 93, 95, 97, 110, 114-115, 119, 121, 134, 137, 139, 141, 145, 158, 164
 Nekrasov, Nikolai, 11, 26, 114, 117, 183, 188, 248
 Nicholas I, 165, 194, 262
 Nicholas II, 194, 262
 Obolensky, L., 16-18
ocherki, 8, 13, 15, 47, 81, 97, 162
 orientalism, 42
 orphanages, 23, 140, 141, 162, 168
 Ovid, 50
 patriarchy, 16, 32, 34, 37, 44, 56, 57, 76, 82, 85, 87, 98, 113-117, 120, 127, 129, 138, 145, 173, 174
 Pavlenkov, F., 197, 199, 216, 235, 247
 photography, 75, 236, 246, 249
 physical strength, 36, 50, 120, 121, 143
 Pinto-Correia, Clara, 105, 106, 155, 157, 165
 Pisarev, Dmitrii, 11, 247, 248, 249
 Plekhanov, Georgii, 8
 Pobedonostsev, Konstantin, 194
 Pomerantsev, Vladimir, 199
 possession, 23, 26, 95-98, 100-110, 117, 120
 procreation, 19, 21-24, 32, 41, 47, 60, 61, 71, 76, 77, 105, 125, 128, 134, 136-138, 145-147, 151-155, 158, 162, 163, 173, 181, 182, 186, 189
 promiscuity, 22, 49, 82, 85, 88, 96, 103, 174
 prostitution, 8, 9, 24, 31, 32, 37, 49, 56, 58, 59, 69-71, 78, 126, 129, 148, 158, 168
 Prutskov, Nikita, 16, 26, 65, 76, 80, 280
 Pushkin, Aleksandr, 10
 Pygmalion, 72
 religion, 21, 24, 35, 38, 145, 173, 178, 179, 181, 182, 205; afterlife, 102, 103, 151-153, 164; Aphrodite, 72, 76; Bible, 30, 53, 54; Christianity, 16, 57, 73-77, 82, 91, 151, 152, 155, 178, 207, 262; Christ figure, 16, 22, 50, 60, 74, 76-78, 80; church, 74, 82, 96, 118, 142, 178, 179, 181, 206, 211, 221, 259, 261, 262; God, 60, 86, 91, 92, 103, 115, 116, 121, 138, 153, 155, 159-162, 178, 181, 231-234, 237-240, 257-269; paganism, 37, 54, 56, 63, 68, 74, 76, 77, 82; pantheism, 24, 158-160, 169, 189, 231; Russian Orthodox, 23, 44, 77, 138, 165, 178; Virgin Mary, 73, 80, 121, 254
 Rozanov, Vasily, 8, 29, 48, 77, 86, 94, 165, 178, 179, 180
 Rubakin, N., 27, 147, 149
 Schiller, J. C. F. von, 211
 schizophrenia, 33, 70, 147
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 16, 27, 134, 136, 137, 138, 148
 science, 194, 254, 257; anthropology, 17, 22, 57, 59-61, 67, 74, 126; biological determinism, 17, 20, 22-39, 53, 59, 60, 109, 110; biology, 16-21, 27, 52, 58-60, 74, 83, 97, 108, 118, 124, 125,

- 129, 136-139, 151, 157, 161, 254;
 criminal anthropology, 58, 69, 70;
 medicine, 16, 17, 108, 219, 258, 262,
 263, 267; physiology, 208;
 psychiatry, 10, 96, 103, 108, 109,
 119, 120, 146, 189, 195-270;
 psychoanalysis, 21, 53
 Scientific Revolution, 106, 152, 155
 serfdom, 12, 17, 36, 87, 101, 102
 sexuality, 7-9, 16, 17, 21, 29, 32, 33, 35,
 36, 41, 42, 44-50, 54, 55, 58, 59, 65,
 71, 72, 78, 81-86, 90, 92-97, 100,
 101, 104, 107, 109, 110, 120, 123-
 128, 133-136, 138, 143, 147, 151,
 158, 162, 163, 173, 178, 179;
 androgyny, 9, 22, 50, 57, 59, 60, 76-
 78, 86, 179, 183; bisexuality, 77, 78,
 179; celibacy, 49, 81, 104, 121, 138;
 instinctive sexuality, 17, 128, 196;
 sexual drive, 36, 108, 121, 128;
 sexual terms, 42; truncated sexuality,
 49-63, 123, 127, 128
 Shabel'skaia, A., 22, 41-43
 Shashkov, S., 37, 38
 Shingarev, A., 174
 Silver Age, Russian, 8, 9, 178,
 Simonova-Khokhriakova, L. H., 128
 Sinani, Dr Boris, 33, 138, 147, 194, 195-
 270
 Sirotkina, I., 9, 22, 165, 282
 Skabichevsky, 242, 244, 258
 socialism, 12, 13, 15, 93, 191
 Soloviev, Vladimir, 77, 78
 Spencer, Herbert, 18, 20
 statues, 39, 65-78; Venus Barbatus, 78;
 Venus de Milo, 22, 57, 60, 65-69, 71-
 76
 St. Petersburg Novo-Znamenskii
 Hospital, 190
 St. Stephan, 81, 91-93
 Subbotin, A. E., 196, 198
 supernatural phenomena, 56, 102, 158
 Swift, Jonathan, 155, 164
 Timofeeva, Varvara, 184, 185, 188
 Tiutchev, Nikolai Sergeevich, 242
 Tkachev, Petr, 15
 Tolstoy, Leo, 11, 16, 30, 44, 45, 71, 77,
 119, 125, 129, 133, 134, 136, 138,
 144-148, 151, 163, 164, 183, 186,
 250
 Tolycheva, T., 91, 92, 94
 Turgenev, I., 39, 66, 73, 114, 250
 ugliness, 40-41, 44
 urbanization, 10, 14, 32, 49, 85, 99, 100,
 109, 123, 129, 144, 173-175, 183
 Uspenskaia, Aleksandra, 12, 138, 146,
 184, 224, 233, 239, 244, 245, 247,
 148, 250, 257, 260, 264, 265
 Uspenskaia, Nadezhda Glebovna (née
 Sokolova), 10
 Uspensky, Aleksandr, 181, 264
 Uspensky, Gleb – works by, “A Good
 Russian Type”, 23, 81-94; “A Note”,
 23, 135, 136; “A Receipt”, 140; “An
 Appendix to the Story ‘Receipt’”,
 141; “An Outrageous Event in my
 Life”, 134; “Details of an Outrageous
 Event: ‘We Personally’ Do Not Need
 Anything”, 134; “By the Labor of
 One’s Own Hands”, 30, 162;
 “Daydreams”, 22, 29-48; “In a
 Woman’s Position”, 22, 49-63;
 “Incubator Chicken”, 24, 151-165;
 “Mikhailych”, 11; “My Children”, 23,
 146; “Neither a True Tale nor a
 Fairytale”, 135; “Peasant and Peasant
 Labor”, 7, 13; “Peasant Women”, 18,
 23, 24, 122, 167-180; “Respondents:
 Further Thoughts on Previous
 Themes”, 167, 174; “Ruin, the
 Observations of Mikhail Ivanovich: a
 Novella”, 12; “She Stopped!”, 23,
 113, 130; “She Straightened Out”, 22,
 65-80; “The Manners of Rasteriaev
 Street”, 11; “The Power of the Soil”,
 7, 13, 15, 35, 36, 128; “Varvara”, 22,
 50, 55-58, 125, 127; “Working Life
 and the Life of a ‘Toiler’”, 23, 144
 Uspensky, Ivan Ivanovich, 200, 235,
 250, 254, 257
 Uspensky, Ivan Iakovlevich, 10, 11
 Uspensky, Nikolai Vasil’evich, 10
 Uspensky, Sasha, 213, 214, 220, 226,
 235, 236, 239, 241, 242, 244, 247,
 254-257, 262
 Vainshtein, Olga, 89
 vegetarianism, 21, 159, 164, 248
 venereal disease, 8, 9, 24, 32, 33, 128,
 141, 168, 179, 183, 186, 189, 191;
 syphilis, 9, 11, 21, 24, 32, 33, 110,
 128, 174, 182, 183, 189, 191, 197,
 198

- Ver[zh]bitskaia, A., 247, 249
 Veresaev, V., 60, 64, 66, 69
 virginity, 22, 23, 55, 56, 58, 70, 72, 74, 78, 97, 111
 Virgin Mary, 73, 80, 121, 254
Vlast' zemli (the power of the soil), 7, 13, 15, 35, 36, 127
 Wallace, Alfred Russel, 17
 wedding night, 23, 96, 104, 106, 107, 108
 witches/witchcraft, 26, 95, 96, 100, 103, 106, 107
 Worobec, Christine, 26, 63, 94, 95, 96, 103, 107, 108, 111, 130
 Wundt, Wilhelm, 20, 160, 165
 Yaroshenko, Nikolai, 197, 247, 248
 Zasulich, Vera, 8, 26, 61, 180
 Zinove'ev, P. M., 143, 191, 195
 Zlatovratsky, N. N., 209