

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF ALEXANDER IVANOVICH ERTEL (1855-1908):
WHITHER RUSSIA?

by

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ABSTRACT

Three principal aspects of A. I. Ertel's (1855-1908) art are considered in this reassessment of his life and works. The first is his religious ethnography, whereby he represents the felt quality of the religious revival of his time in all its diversity. The second aspect is the dialogue which his works form with the question of national destiny. The third is the spiritual autobiography which his oeuvre represents. Accordingly, the approach taken in this study is, from one perspective, historical and biographical, while from another it will make use of M. Bakhtin's notion of "polyphonic artistic thinking" in analyzing Ertel's works.

It is the third aspect of Ertel's art which gives this thesis its structure. In Part I, "Confrontation," representative early works are considered within the context of three philosophical confrontations: first, with the notion that the meaning of life is self-evident; second, with philosophical pessimism; and third, with Tolstoyism.

Part Two is devoted to two novels which reflect Ertel's philosophy of "Compromise." These works present a hopeful view of both individual and corporate moral development in spite of diversity and sweeping social change.

Part Three, "Counter Idea," examines two works which reflect the author's ultimate dissatisfaction with "all-embracing theories." In these works Ertel confronts the reader with reasons for hope and despair with regard to progress and the destiny of Russia.

The Conclusion attempts to re-establish Ertel's place in Russian literature, giving consideration to the relevance of his works for today and to his particular narrative style.

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Note on Transliteration and Abbreviations

In this thesis I employ the "modified" Library of Congress system of transliteration, i.e. without the diacritics and ligatures required by the rigid style. Exceptions to this rule are the following:

1. I use the common spelling for well-known names such as Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Gogol, as well as geographical names with Anglicized spelling, eg. Moscow.
2. I omit the double "i" in names such as Mariia.
3. I retain the original spelling of sources quoted.
4. In the case of A. I. Ertel, I have chosen to render Aleksandr as Alexander, and to omit the soft sign in Ertel' in order to avoid the double apostrophe in "Ertel''s."

List of Abbreviations:

ANSSSR	Akademiia nauk SSSR
<u>Gardeniny</u>	A. I. Ertel, <u>Gardeniny, ikh dvornia, priverzhentsy, i vragi</u>
GIKhL	Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury
<u>PSS</u>	L. N. Tolstoy, <u>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii</u>
<u>PSSP</u>	A. P. Chekhov, <u>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem</u>
<u>RL</u>	<u>Russkaia literatura</u>
<u>RM</u>	<u>Russkaia mysl'</u>
<u>SEER</u>	<u>Slavonic and East European Review</u>
<u>SS</u>	A. I. Ertel, <u>Sobranie sochinenii</u>
<u>Zapiski</u>	A. I. Ertel, <u>Zapiski stepniaka</u>

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Introduction

In today's post-Soviet Russia two questions which were asked a century ago have once again become prominent: What is to be done about Russia, and what can be reasonably expected?

Alexander Ertel's contribution to Russian literature is to be found in the way in which his works, with their attention to social and ideological diversity, constitute a dialogue with these crucial questions, and in many ways anticipate today's social landscape.¹ If in recent years the hope of a workers' utopia has been ruined and Russia finds herself increasingly polarized on various levels, so too in his day Ertel believed that positivism as a philosophy was dead, that the populist hope (to bypass the capitalist stage and gradually construct a socialist society with the village mir as a basis) had been illusory,² and he struggled against the kind of religious polarization represented by Pobedonostsev on the one hand and Tolstoy on the other.

In 1929 Ivan Bunin wrote of Ertel: "He is now almost forgotten, and most have never even heard of him. . . . Who has forgotten his friends and contemporaries: Garshin, Uspenskii, Korolenko and Chekhov? In fact, on the whole, he was no lesser

¹O. Lasunskii, a specialist in regional studies at Voronezh State University, has noted that Ertel's fiction is valuable today precisely because of its special attention to a plurality of world views (Personal interview, 30 June 1995).

²A. I. Ertel, Pis'ma, ed. M. O. Gershenzon (Moscow: I. D. Sytin, 1909) 311.

a writer than they (with the exception of Chekhov, of course), and in some respects he was even greater."³ Ertel's fiction enjoyed some success in Soviet Russia, where several editions of his novels and povesti, two monographs, and several theses on his works appeared (into the 1980's).

There is still much to be done, however, to assess Ertel's contribution to Russian letters. The primary reason for this is that scholars have failed to take into account the complexity of his world view, and thus have overlooked ways in which his works transcend the various trends which shaped his art and thought. Most critics have regarded him as a populist with little or no qualification, although Parsons has argued (as will the present dissertation) that populism had no lasting influence on him.⁴ Others maintain that Ertel was a Tolstoyan, although Ertel's correspondence (particularly with Tolstoy's follower Chertkov) shows otherwise.⁵ The three principal Marxist-Leninist studies on Ertel generally perceive him as a writer who truthfully depicted social injustice, the rise of capitalism, and the

³I. Bunin, introduction, Smena, by A. I. Ertel (New York: Chekhov Pub. House, 1954) 3. "Он теперь почти забыт, а для большинства и совсем неизвестен. . . . Кто забыл его друзей и современников, -- Гаршина, Успенского, Короленко, Чехова? А ведь в общем он был не меньше их, -- за исключением, конечно, Чехова, -- в некоторых отношениях даже больше" (Note: translations are my own unless indicated otherwise).

⁴N.S. Parsons, "Alexander Ertel' as a Christian Humanist," SEER 46 (1968): 176. V. Terras' A History of Russian Literature places Ertel firmly within the populist trend (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991) 458.

⁵M. Slonim, From Chekhov to the Revolution: Russian Literature 1900-1917 (New York: Oxford UP, 1962) 25.

despair of the populist in post-populist Russia, but overlook or downplay Ertel's religious and philosophical outlook.⁶

Ertel's literary career (1880-95) spans a period which is normally regarded as one of stagnation, where the only notable exceptions are assumed to be Chekhov, the later Tolstoy, Garshin and Korolenko.⁷ From another perspective altogether, the period can be seen to mark the beginning of a religious revival which, as Caryl Emerson explains, expressed itself in four main ways: first, in a form of Christian anarchism developed by Tolstoy as he sought to respond to the ethical problems of his day; second, in a rekindling of the vision of Moscow as the third Rome and of Russia's redemptive mission; third, in "religious ethnography" given expression by such writers as Leskov, who depicted religious types and movements in his fiction; and fourth, in the symbolist trend with its celebration of "the mystic and apocalyptic side of Church teachings."⁸

The second perspective provides a basis for a re-examination of Ertel's works. On one level Ertel succeeds Leskov as a "religious ethnographer," for in his fiction he depicts the felt quality of the religious revival among the

⁶Three book-length works on Ertel have been consulted in this present thesis: two monographs by Soviet scholars G. A. Kostin (1955) and A. P. Spasibenko (1966), and V. V. Nikiforov's dissertation (1983).

⁷Recently Julian Connolly has referred to the period as "a time of lesser cultural energies" in C. A. Moser, ed., The Cambridge History of Russian Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 333.

⁸C. Emerson, "Russian Orthodoxy and the Early Bakhtin," Religion and Literature 22.2-3 (1990): 111.

creative intelligentsia in all its diversity. On another level his work is clearly concerned with ideas, particularly as he deals with the notion of progress, both individual and corporate.

Since the primary task of this present study is to re-contextualize Ertel's works with a view to a better understanding of his art and thought, the approach adopted is primarily historical and biographical. In analyzing Ertel's works I shall draw from sources which previous studies have dealt with inadequately: his correspondence, biographical data, and materials which shed light on the historical context (particularly the dimension of religious thought and trends) of his fiction. While in no way presuming to recover fully the meaning of Ertel's works, I shall nevertheless take his intentions (which he tended to make explicit) seriously, and assume that his philosophy and the social and literary context of his works are helpful in the task of interpreting his fiction.⁹ As Jackson has noted, historical criticism is all the more important now that rival theories have been dominant for decades, with the result that contexts, especially for neglected writers, are more and more difficult to (re)construct.

⁹One notes that in her recent study of Tolstoy Donna Orwin admits: "I am under no illusion . . . that I can completely reconstruct either the circumstances of Tolstoy's life or his responses to those circumstances," but nevertheless sets out "to clarify the original meaning of Tolstoy's works." Tolstoy's Art and Thought, 1847-1880 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993) 10.

"Criticism innocent of historical criticism," he adds, "is not an available option."¹⁰

I shall argue that Ertel's creativity is enhanced, to varying degrees, with what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "polyphonic artistic thinking."¹¹ For this reason, in the evaluation of Ertel's fiction I make recourse to Bakhtin's notion of the "polyphonic novel," as well as related insights articulated by some of his interpreters. I shall define Bakhtin's concept below, and explain why such a framework complements the historical method.

Bakhtin referred to Dostoyevsky's creative genius as "polyphonic" because he found in the novelist's works a "plurality of consciousness-centers not reduced to a single ideological common denominator."¹² What Dostoyevsky had done, essentially, was to create works in which his own consciousness was not to be merged with that of any of his characters. He was interested in the "interaction and interdependence"¹³ of the various voices, not in what any one voice in particular had to convey.

Given this, the author as understood traditionally can be seen to be "dead," and questions naturally arise as to the

¹⁰J. R. de J. Jackson, Historical Criticism and the Meaning of Texts (New York: Routledge, 1989) 150.

¹¹M. Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984) 279.

¹²Bakhtin, Problems 17.

¹³Bakhtin, Problems 36.

necessity of combining the historico-biographical method outlined above with a Bakhtinian analysis. Bakhtin insists, however, that he has in mind "not an absence of, but a radical change in, the author's position . . . which permits the characters' points of view to unfold to their maximal fullness and independence."¹⁴ To that extent the author is of interest, if only as the organizer or orchestrator of the plurality of voices.

Further, while the polyphonic novel is an artistic creation, "heteroglossia" is the framework, or set of social, linguistic or historical circumstances, which the novel assumes. As defined by Holquist, the term refers to the "base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text."¹⁵ If any voice within the novel is to be understood at all, it must be relationally; likewise the novel itself cannot be properly understood apart from its historical context.

At their best, Ertel's works, as we shall observe, display options instead of solutions in engaging the discourse of Russia's destiny. I characterize the polyphony in one of his novels as "providential," however, because there are in the novel two conflicting narrative structures: one adheres to the requirements of a Bildungsroman, while another contains the combination of heterogeneous material and "plurality of

¹⁴Bakhtin, Problems 67.

¹⁵M. Holquist, ed. The Dialogic Imagination (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 428.

consciousness-centers" which characterizes the polyphonic novel. As such, a "monologic" narrative which conveys through the hero "the stages in the evolution of a unified spirit"¹⁶ is not entirely absorbed into polyphony. The result, I show, has its merit, for through this collision Ertel provides a context in which the reader is invited to consider a way in which determinism might coexist with free-will, Providence with polyphony.

Ertel's entire oeuvre represents a kind of spiritual autobiography. Accordingly, this study is divided into three parts, each of which corresponds to a stage in the author's spiritual and intellectual development. In the first, entitled "Confrontation," I examine Ertel's works written between 1880 and 1889 within the context of his three early philosophical confrontations: first, with the notion that the meaning of life is self-evident; second, with philosophical pessimism; and third, with Tolstoyism. In Chapter One I study three works which establish a degree of certainty regarding the question "what is to be done?" These are Zapiski stepniaka ("Notes of a Steppe-dweller," 1880-83), in which Ertel found the message "there is nothing to be done," and two didactic stories which reflect Ertel's new confidence that the purpose of humanity was to live in brotherhood. In Chapter Two I examine two works with which Ertel begins to question his previous certainties: in Dve pary ("Two Couples," 1887) he challenges Tolstoy's universal

¹⁶Bakhtin, Problems 31.

call to the simple life, and in "Chervonets" ("The Gold Coin," 1889) he considers the value of the individual in the collective.

Part Two (Chapters Three and Four) is devoted to two novels which reflect the author's philosophy of "Compromise." Gardeniny ("The Gardenins," 1889) presents a hopeful view of moral development and social progress in spite of diversity and sweeping social change. Ertel's second novel, Smena ("The Change," 1891), in some ways a sequel to Gardeniny for its themes of progress and change, contains an optimistic view of social reform through "small deeds" and spiritual struggle. While in these works there is hope for Russia and progress is "providential" and taken for granted, their dialogic nature puts in question any future utopia.

In Part Three (Chapters Five and Six) I examine two works which reflect the "counter idea": Ertel's ultimate dissatisfaction with "all-embracing theories."¹⁷ As he comes to question the possibility of lasting reform in his country, and becomes more convinced that the future had to hold "multiple possibilities," Ertel becomes preoccupied with the question "What can be reasonably expected in Russia?" In "Dukhovidtsy" ("Clairvoyants," 1893) the hero despairs over injustice,

¹⁷Morson writes: "Countertraditional thinkers expressed deep suspicion of the intelligentsia's claims to have discovered the One True Theory that explains all of history and guarantees utopia. Countertraditionalists tended to deny that history has laws or that such all-embracing theories could be anything but spurious." "Time and the Intelligentsia," The Emperor Redressed, ed. D. Eddins (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1995) 84.

tragedy, and dissatisfaction with the vanity of life, while the narrator represents, albeit feebly, hope in humanity and the will to believe (I consider in Appendix A parallels between this story and Chekhov's The Head Gardener's Tale). The final chapter is devoted to Kar'era Strukova ("Strukov's Career," 1895), in which Russia's destiny is seen to be organically linked with that of the West.

Biographical Sketch¹

Not long before his death in 1908 Ertel invited Bunin to his flat on Vozdvizhenka Street in Moscow. Twenty years later Bunin would recall his visit with the forgotten writer:

How wise he is, how much talent there is in his every word, in every little smile! What a mixture of virility and softness, of firmness and tact--a thoroughbred Englishman or Swede and a Russian cattle-dealer rolled into one. How likeable he is, how nice is everything about him: the tall, dry figure in the immaculate English suit, the snow-white linen, the large hands covered with reddish hairs, the drooping brown moustache, the melancholy blue eyes--and the amber cigarette holder with the expensive cigarette, and the whole room sparkling with sunshine, cleanliness and comfort! Who would believe that in his youth this man was too shy to open his mouth in the humblest provincial drawing room, and did not quite know what to do with his napkin, and made the most ridiculous spelling mistakes?²

The roots of this "Englishman or Swede," on his father's side, were German. In the year 1811 a sixteen-year-old soldier in Napoleon's army by the name of Ludwig Ertel was captured at the Battle of Smolensk and taken to Russia by a certain Marinovskii, who intended to make the young man a serf. Dissuaded from this by his father, Marinovskii simply left

¹Based on Ertel's autobiographical letter to Chertkov of June 1888 (Pis'ma 3-35), memoirs of contemporaries acquainted with Ertel, Ertel's correspondence, and Sebastian Garrett's (Ertel's great-grandson's) thesis, which contains an introduction to, and collection of, Ertel's letters to his daughter, Natalie Duddington.

²I. Bunin, Memories and Portraits, ed. and trans. V. Traill and R. Chancellor (London: John Lehmann, 1951) 119.

Ludwig in his village (Voronezh region) and returned to the army, while Ludwig came under the care of Marinovskii's sisters. There Ludwig in due course served as tutor in a gentry home, married a serf of the Marinovskii family, and became a member of the Russian Orthodox Church. Until his death in 1865 Aleksandr Mikhailovich, as he came to be called, worked on the estate where he was eventually survived by his four children.

The oldest son, Ivan Aleksandrovich assumed his father's duties as estate manager, and when he was thirty years old married Avdotia Petrovna Panova, the illegitimate daughter of a nanny and a Zadonsk landowner by the name of Beer. On July 7, 1855, in the village of Ksizovo, uyezd of Zadonsk, Voronezh guberniia, their son Alexander was born. Alexander remembered his father as strict but kind at heart, with a keen sense of justice. He kept up with current issues, and was admired as a remarkable, well-organized administrator. He was quick-tempered, however, and had a passion for wine and women. Indifferent to poetry, art and the beauty of nature, Ivan Aleksandrovich was the opposite of his wife, who was "no stranger to either sentimentality or romantic dreams."³ Although she received no formal education, Avdotia Petrovna nevertheless imbibed certain gentry customs and views. Alexander recalled how his mother was consistently kind in spite of her husband's ill-temper, but sad, and far more religious

³Pis'ma 5. "не прочь и от чувствительности и от мечтательного романтизма."

than her husband. Alexander came to see in his own character currents of both his father and his mother.

When Alexander was about twelve his father took him to be apprenticed on an estate forty versts or so from home, where Alexander worked until he was eighteen. Avdotia Petrovna had wanted to have her son enrolled in the Voronezh gimnaziia, but an acquaintance of Ivan Aleksandrovich's convinced him, it seems, that Alexander's schooling would be his parents' ruin. For this reason Alexander never received a formal education, but was taught to read by his mother, and to write by himself. By the age of thirteen he had read such works as A History of Napoleon, Pythagoras' Travels, a volume of One hundred Russian Writers, Songs of Kol'tsov, Tales of Pushkin, as well as Bible stories (he knew the story of Joseph particularly well because he used to read it to his grandmother), Gogol, Pisemskii, and others. He soon began to teach himself Old Church Slavic by reading hagiographic writings such as the Kievan Paterik and books from the Chet'i-minei. A faithful, if somewhat reluctant, church-attender, Alexander could recite the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, but by the age of seventeen he was already questioning, with the spirit of his times, the divinity of Christ, the Church and its doctrines, and the existence of God. In his late teens his reading interests were eclectic: he read Turgenev's early works, Tolstoy's War and Peace, historical novels by Lazhechnikov, Zagoskin, Zotov,⁴ as well as Alexandre Dumas, Paul

⁴Lazhechnikov, I. I. (1792-1869); Zagoskin, M. N. (1789-1852); Zotov (probably R. M., 1795-1871), historical novelists.

Feval, Eugène Sue, and others. In 1871-72 Alexander was steered in the "progressive" direction by a certain Bogomolov, a merchant-landowner who supplied him with works by Darwin and articles by Pisarev.

Alexander's friendly relations with the peasants on the estate angered his father, who believed that such relations compromised his son's authority. For this reason Alexander found himself in the position of a go-between even from his youth, obligated as he was to maintain order on behalf of his father while acting as an advocate on his peasant friends' behalf. In 1873 Ivan Aleksandrovich found a new position for his son twenty versts from Usman' on the estate of Okhotnikov, which Alexander welcomed because it allowed him considerable independence now that he was an assistant manager. He considered himself a man of progressive ideals, although on one occasion he did beat a bailiff whom he caught sleeping on the job. With his new liberty Alexander began to frequent the town, Usman', where he encountered Maria Ivanovna Fedotova, the first woman he had ever met from an "educated circle." Following their acquaintance, which was sustained chiefly through correspondence, the two were married just before Alexander's twentieth birthday in 1875. Ertel was at the time, as Zasodimskii recalls, a tall, thin young man of pleasant appearance and thoughtful eyes, who impressed one as an exceptionally talented, energetic, resourceful person who did good without drawing attention to himself. Zasodimskii, a

populist, admired Ertel for his oneness with the peasants.⁵ In this year Ertel was indeed close to the people as he tried his hand at two poems devoted to peasant themes: "A Night of Hay making" and "The Weather's Noisy Hum."⁶

In 1876 Ertel rented a farm, which, because of a bad harvest, proved to be a disastrous move. In 1877 their daughter Olga was born, and two years later the Ertels moved to St. Petersburg, leaving their daughter behind with her grandmother. By this time Ertel's relationship with his wife had cooled, which he attributed to her gradual loss of interest in reading and ideas. Ertel sought intellectual stimulation instead from her father, a moderate socialist and admirer of Schopenhauer, with whom he was able to discuss art, politics, philosophy and ethics.

The move to St. Petersburg was prompted by Zasodimskii, who invited Ertel to manage a library he had recently opened. At that time Ertel admired Zasodimskii as a great literary figure, although he came to regard his knowledge of the people as idealized and lacking in common sense. Zasodimskii helped Ertel with his literary debut, seeing to the publication of his essays "Pereselentsy" ("Emigrants," Russkoe obozrenie, 1878) and "Pis'mo iz Usmanskogo uyezda" ("A Letter from the uyezd of Usman'," Slovo, 1879), devoted to peasant questions. Life in

⁵P. V. Zasodimskii, Iz vospominanii (Moscow, 1908) 439.

⁶These two poems appeared as "Noch na beregu Volgi" and "Gudit, shumit, pogodushka" in Voronezhskaia literaturnaya beseda (Voronezh, 1925) 72-9.

St. Petersburg, at first, was depressing, but before long Ertel became acquainted with such writers as G. Uspenskii and N. N. Zlatovratskii, as well as certain "highly placed" revolutionaries.⁷

While in Petersburg Ertel's health began to deteriorate, but his literary career had begun, and with it came the money which he desperately needed. Here he began to publish the sketches which would later become a part of Zapiski stepniaka (1880-83). His attitude at the time towards the revolutionaries with whom he came into contact was one of sympathy with critical distance: they used the library as a safe meeting place, and occasionally borrowed money, passed messages on through him, or simply left books with him for safe keeping.

In 1880 Ertel suffered a severe pulmonary haemorrhage and was treated, at Turgenev's request, by the famous physician S. P. Botkin. Subsequently Ertel moved back home to his mother's farm on the Griaznusha river, where his health improved, he resumed work on Zapiski, and met his future common-law wife, Maria V. Ogarkova, a merchant's daughter from Usman'. The period of 1880-85 was a low point in Ertel's life. It began, as Ertel saw it, with his death as library manager and friend of Fedotov and Zasodimskii, and ended with his death as a "pessimist." During those years he was treated for tuberculosis and suffered bouts of depression "with despair in [his] soul

⁷Uspenskii, G. I. (1843-1902), Zlatovratskii, N. N. (1845-1911), both populist writers. In his autobiographical letter to Chertkov, Ertel does not mention by name the revolutionaries whom he had met (Pis'ma 22).

because there was nothing to be done."⁸ He read Tolstoy's Confession in 1882-83, but admitted that he saw little connection between Tolstoy's world and his own. In 1883 he published "Volkhonskaia baryshnia" ("The Lady of Volkhonsk," Vestnik Evropy), "Piatikhiny deti" ("Piatikha's Children," Vestnik Evropy), and a play entitled Babii bunt ("Women's Revolt," Delo). In the two stories Ertel dealt with disillusioned populists, as in Zapiski, and in his play he addressed the issue of women's emancipation.

In 1884 Ertel was arrested for his association with St. Petersburg revolutionaries. While imprisoned in the SS Peter and Paul Fortress, Ertel was tormented by the fact that his seven year old daughter Olga had just contracted scarlet fever on the eve of his arrest (she later died of diphtheria while Ertel was still in prison, a fact which Fedotova withheld from Ertel), by the return of symptoms of tuberculosis, and the fact that he did not know how to respond during his interrogations.

On a positive note, Ertel experienced a decisive religious conversion while in prison. There he began seriously to consider the fact that life was brief and felt a surge of compassion "for all people." His sense of rebirth was enhanced by his release from prison on medical grounds, his life in Moscow and subsequent exile in Tver', and the beginning of his common-law marriage with Ogarkova. At this point he re-read Tolstoy's Confession, read What I Believe, and met with Tolstoy

⁸pis'ma 28. "с отчаянием в душе, что нечего делать."

and Chertkov. In Tver' he became acquainted with V.V. Lesevich, P.F. Nikolaev, N.N. Ge, and P. A. Bakunin,⁹ through whom he began to develop a broader philosophy, coming to appreciate much of Tolstoy's teaching particularly for the way in which it showed him the error of his previous opinions. In 1885 he was elected as member of the Society of Lovers of the Russian Word, and in 1886 a daughter Natalia (later Natalie Duddington¹⁰) was born to Ertel and Ogarkova.

By the time Ertel moved to his family farm on the Griaznusha river in the summer of 1889 he had written "Spetsialist" ("The Specialist," RM, 1885), Mineral'nye vody ("Mineral Waters," 1886, published in 1909 in Ertel's SS), "Zhadnyi muzhik" ("The Greedy Peasant," Posrednik, 1886), Dve pary ("Two Couples," RM, 1887), "Chervonets" ("The Gold Coin," Krasnyi tsvetok, 1889), and his epic novel Gardeniny. That same summer Ertel and Ogarkova's second daughter, Elena, was born.

In 1890 Ertel once again experienced symptoms of tuberculosis, which prompted him to visit the Crimea with Ogarkova and their children. In the same year he began working on his second novel Smena (completed in 1891), and rented a small farm at Empelevo. In 1893 Ertel became acquainted with Chekhov, with whom he came to be on friendly terms, as their

⁹V. V. Lesevich (1837-1905, positivist philosopher), P. F. Nikolaev (1844-1910, social critic), N. N. Ge (1831-1894, artist and Tolstoyan), P. A. Bakunin (b. 1820, published Osnovy very i znaniia, St. Petersburg, 1888; brother of anarchist M. A. Bakunin).

¹⁰Translator of numerous Russian classics of literature and philosophy.

subsequent correspondence shows. V. P. Kranikhsfel'd, who met Ertel in Voronezh during the years 1892-96, recalled Ertel's "massive figure," the "cunning play of his eyes," and broad interests, which included philosophy, agriculture, literature, zemstvo administration, art and politics, in all of which he demonstrated more than a mere passing knowledge.¹¹ The years 1891-94, during which Ertel helped organize famine relief, built a school nearby, and incurred great debt while continuing to manage his farm, represent a period of low literary output. His essay "Makar'evskoe popechitel'stvo" ("The Trusteeship of Makarevo," 1893) tells of his efforts with famine relief and the building of a school, but his only work of fiction during this period was "Dukhovidtsy" ("Clairvoyants," 1893).

Ertel's first trip abroad in 1894 to London and Paris gave him part of his setting for his last completed work, Kar'era Strukova ("Strukov's Career," 1895). After this, his efforts were devoted almost exclusively to the running of estates owned by E.I. Chertkova and A.I. Pashkova, with occasional trips abroad. David Garnett, recalling his visit to Ertel's home in 1904 with Constance Garnett, writes that Ertel "was a big man, rather aloof and Olympian in manner . . . with humorous eyes and a sparse beard, wearing a blue flannel suit with a chalk stripe, polished top boots and a broad-rimmed hat. He used to walk up and down in the flower garden in the evening with his arm linked

11v.p. Kranikhsfel'd, "Provozvestnik russkoi burzhuaznoi kul'tury," V mire idei i obrazov, vol.3 (Petrograd, 1917) 129.

in that of Natasha, whom he rightly adored."¹² But his literary work was done: in 1898 Ertel left unfinished his last work, Y sumerkakh ("At Twilight").

The reason for Ertel's withdrawal from literature is somewhat unclear. On the one hand he appears to have accepted gladly his increased managerial duties, for, as Duddington insisted, her father did not accept his new responsibilities simply to get out of debt, but rather found a great deal of fulfilment in helping to improve the quality of life of the many peasants on the estates which he oversaw.¹³ From this standpoint his transition from writer to full-time estate manager represents a relatively smooth change from one form of service to another. On the other hand, based on an interview with Ertel, K. Levin asserts that the writer had considerable material "stored up," but could not return to writing because of his burdensome obligations.¹⁴ If there is truth in both of these views, it appears that Ertel was committed equally to the aesthetic and social dimensions of his vocation.

By 1904 Ertel realized that his health was seriously worsening, and in 1906 he moved to Moscow, from where he continued his administrative work. He died of a heart attack two years later, on February 7, 1908, confident that "our life

¹²D. Garnett, The Golden Echo (London: Chatto and Windus, 1953) 77-8.

¹³O. Lasunskii, Literaturnye raskopki (Voronezh: Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1972) 173-4.

¹⁴K. Levin, "Pamiati A.I. Ertelia," Sovremennyi mir 5 (1908), second pagination: 29-35.

does not end here," and that the answer to "all those tormenting riddles and mysteries of human existence"¹⁵ would be found in the life to come. He was buried at the Novodevichy cemetery, across from Chekhov.

¹⁵pis'ma 398. "жизнь наша не кончается здесь"; "разрешение всех тех мучительных загадок и тайн человеческого существования."

Part One

Confrontation

In 1883 Ertel was confronted with the notion that the meaning of life was far from self-evident. While Tolstoy's Confession (Ispoved', 1882) taught him that such meaning was to be found intuitively, "with the heart," he could find no way to refute (as he wrote to M.V. Ogarkova on August 27, 1883) the Spencerian notion that

we and our "souls" are the result of countless modifications and adaptations, no more, and if our conduct is honest, good, just and "holy" it is not because of any inherent dictates of the "soul" given us from above, but simply because we are the way we are as a result of countless adaptations.¹

Ertel could only admit that for him "'the meaning of life' is once again lost."² Spencer's determinism had reinforced for him Schopenhauer's notion that human freedom was illusory (an idea which he would have encountered earlier through his father-in-law).

Ertel's short story "Vostorgi" ("Raptures") reflects his intellectual predicament.³ In this miniature, Koroleva, a student, tries to make sense of the delight she felt at an evening concert. Reading Spencer's Principles of Ethics,⁴ and

¹Pis'ma 50-1.

²Pis'ma 51. "«смысл жизни» снова теряется."

³Ertel's SS gives no date for this work.

trying to recapture the pleasure of the previous evening, Koroleva begins to convince herself that she must have experienced some sort of contagion in the crowd which caused her to express her emotions rather excessively, and decides to write about the laws governing this force.

As he explained to Chertkov on July 13, 1888, Ertel perceived that until 1885 he had been a novice writer ". . . with vague and bitter pessimistic thoughts, tearful pity towards people, and despair in his soul from the conviction that there is nothing to be done. . . ." ⁵ However, the belief that there was "nothing to be done" was soon confronted with another certainty. During his incarceration in 1884 Ertel was struck with the desire for a way beyond his dilemma and a new foundation for life:

Why had it not occurred to me before that life was so short and so much time was wasted on trifles and evil? I remember that along with these thoughts came an unusual surge of feeling of love towards people, a strong desire to be reconciled with all people, forgive all people, and to live in peace and harmony with all people. . . . ⁶

In his letter to Tolstoy of 1 March 1885 he claimed that the latter's works "had illuminated the confusion which had reigned in [his] soul," and he now wished to meet to discuss how the

⁴In the same letter to Ogarkova mentioned above, Ertel wrote that he was reading H. Spencer's Principles of Ethics (Osnovaniia etiki, 1879-93).

⁵Pis'ma 28. "с мыслями неопределенного и скорбного пессимизма, с жалостью к людям, доходящей до слез, и с отчаянием в душе, что нечего делать. . . ."

⁶Pis'ma 34.

ideas expressed in What I Believe (1884) were to be worked out in the present.⁷ Ertel's new conviction was that the meaning of life was to be sought in "being reconciled with all people," to which his collaboration with Tolstoy in writing stories "for the people" attests.

Such collaboration was, however, brief. Well acquainted with rural life, Ertel came to question any doctrine, whether populist or Tolstoyan, which established an agenda with regards to the peasant without an intimate knowledge of peasant concerns. Ultimately, he was more concerned to understand the intelligentsia's relationship with the peasant than the peasant himself.

In the two chapters that follow we shall examine Ertel's early works as reflective of his early philosophical development from the conviction that "there is nothing to be done" to Tolstoyism, and from there, through a rejection of Tolstoy's universal call to the simple life, to his turn to questions relating to individual identity in the collective.

⁷Pis'ma 52: "озарили путаницу, господствовавшую в моей душе."

Chapter One

"What is to be Done?"

"There is Nothing to be Done:" Zapiski stepniaka

Referring to Zapiski stepniaka ("Notes of a Steppe-dweller," Vestnik Evropy, 1880-83), Tolstoy wrote: "At first [Ertel] slavishly imitated Turgenev, but still wrote very well."¹ While the direct influence of Turgenev is not limited to the choice of title, which echoes Zapiski okhotnika (Notes of a Hunter, 1852), Ertel's collection of sketches is remarkable for the way in which it confronts reasons for hope and despair with regards to progress.

In "My acquaintance with Baturin," the introduction to Zapiski, the fictional editor (hereafter "editor"), a close friend of Baturin's, explains that the sketches (twenty in all) were passed on to him for publication with the request that he introduce their author and explain how Baturin came to the pessimistic conclusions expressed in "Idilliia" ("Idyll") and "Addio."² We learn from the editor that Baturin was a member of the gentry (although his grandmother was a peasant), single, had no qualifications, and was a kind person of whom his peasants took advantage. We are also told that Baturin's

¹К. Shokhor-Trotskii, "Dnevnik V. F. Lazurskogo," Literaturnoe nasledstvo 37-38, ed. G. N. Shevchenko (Moscow: ANSSSR, 1939) 465. "Сначала он писал, рабски подражая Тургеневу, все-таки очень хорошо."

²Precedents for such editors are found in Pushkin's Belkin Tales, or Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time.

favourite writer was Gleb Uspenskii and his favourite poet Nekrasov. The reason for his pessimism is stated clearly: although he felt attached to the "soil", he was tormented by the way in which the social landscape had changed. In the forties and sixties people were happy because they had hope and integrity, but now, he lamented, one found only confusion and chaos. Despite this despondency, the editor tells us, Baturin did find courage from time to time to visit his neighbours, make new acquaintances, talk about his ideas, and even get involved in charitable activities. Towards the end of his life, however, he ceased to read, and tormented himself with depressing thoughts. While abroad he finally died of tuberculosis, ever eager to return to his native Russia.

Right from the introduction, as we see, the question of populism is raised. While disillusioned, Baturin has attached himself to the "soil" and the people through the influence of populist writers. Since considerable disagreement exists concerning Ertel's populist sympathies, it would be useful first, before examining the Zapiski, to discuss the ways in which Ertel has been understood on this question.

In his 1897 study of the Russian novel, Golovin describes Ertel as a populist "to the core" for praising poverty and ignorance while demonstrating an aversion to the cultured class.³ According to this "liberal" view, Ertel through Baturin fails to give a portrait of authentic, truly cultured

³K. F. Golovin, Russkii roman i russkoe obshchestvo (St. Petersburg: A. A. Porovshchikov, 1897) 427. "чистейшей воды"

individuals. Bush, in his 1931 study of literary populism, considers Ertel a populist on somewhat different grounds: although Ertel attempted to dissociate himself from populism by claiming that in his stories the peasant is gradually replaced by members of other social classes, such as the intelligentsia,⁴ Bush points out that other populists such as Uspenskii and Zlatovratskii did likewise. He adds that Ertel's Zapiski are populist not only because they are often devoted to peasant questions (such as re-settlement and land), but because Ertel-Baturin himself is "infected" by the peasant's bravery under harsh circumstances and begins to feel guilt for his "whining" as a member of the intelligentsia.⁵

Bush and Golovin are to a certain extent correct. Ertel did, in fact, begin his literary career with the help of the populist Zasodimskii, through whom he published his essays on peasant indebtedness and forced relocation. Further, the populist "mood" which Ertel believed was a positive force⁶ can be found in the work of the "intelligentsia's chronicler of despair," Gleb Uspenskii, whose works depicted "the unregenerate

⁴In his 10 August 1881 letter to Chistiakov, Ertel wrote that "the intelligentsia [was] beginning to predominate in [his] stories." (Pis'ma 41).

⁵V.V. Bush, "A. I. Ertel'," Ocherki literaturnogo narodnichestva 70-80 gg (Moscow-Leningrad: GIKhL, 1931) 97-8.

⁶In a 22 February 1891 letter to Prugavin Ertel explained that populism as a mood was right and proper as a force, but not a teaching. "[O]ur relationship with the people is founded not on judiciary dogma, but on the moral law laid down . . . by Christ. . . ." ("[Н]аши отношения к народу вытекают не из юридической догмы, а из той нравственной, которая...установлена Христом. . . ." Pis'ma 243).

reality of Russian life that defied the intelligentsia's urge for change,"⁷ while observing the misery of the peasants with sympathy.

However, Ertel came to question any dogmatic "agenda," populist or otherwise, as suggested in his letter to A. S. Prugavin in 1891:

I think we must once and for all throw aside those three pillars (tri kita) of populism: duty, obligations and repayment... As a doctrine, a party, a teaching, populism definitely does not stand up to criticism. . . .⁸

If authentic development was to come about, the young intelligentsia would require more than populist dogma: "Our youth . . . needs . . . to be permeated with the teachings of Christ, a clear familiarity with history, and an enduring interest in philosophy and art."⁹

The narrator of the Zapiski, in any case, does not necessarily speak for Ertel, and in this regard later Soviet critics make the same mistake as do Golovin and Bush in drawing a necessary connection between Baturin and Ertel. Kostin, for example, praises Ertel-Baturin's accurate depiction of the development of capitalism in pre-revolutionary Russia, which set him against the erroneous notion (according to Marxist thought)

⁷R. Wortman, The Crisis of Russian Populism (London: Cambridge UP, 1967) 61.

⁸Pis'ma 242-3.

⁹Pis'ma 298. "Нашей молодежи . . . нужны . . . основательное проникновение учением Христа, отчетливое знакомство с историей и неослабевающий интерес к философским наукам и искусству."

that Russia might bypass that stage.¹⁰ As such, the sketches are a "study of the most important problems of [the period], the life of deceived peasants, the make-up of the gentry, the growth of bourgeois society, [and] the relations between the democratic intelligentsia and the people."¹¹ They are evaluated primarily on the basis of their authenticity according to a Marxist standard, and are assumed to be of considerable artistic merit: the influence of Turgenev is evident, to be sure, but Ertel adapts an old form to a new context and demonstrates skill in depicting landscapes and authentic pictures of individuals living in post-reform Russia such as greedy kulaks, conservative types, downtrodden peasants, and disillusioned populists.

While there is some connection between Baturin and Ertel, who attributed the collection to his "pessimistic" period, the collection of sketches is introduced and published by a "close friend" who questions Baturin's gloom with an optimistic tone:

"In what way were [the people of the 40's and 60's] happy, Nikolai Vasilievich", I would ask. "They were happy", he would say, "because they had faith and integrity, saw their enemy clearly, and grasped their ideals with their hands. . . ." And in vain I would remind him of those crystal clear ideals, and he would smile with a suppressed sadness. "Yes, they're clear," he would say, "but only in theory and arithmetically. They're clear until life obscures and fouls them."¹²

¹⁰G.A. Kostin, A.I. Ertel': Zhizn' i tvorchestvo (Voronezh: Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1955) 26-7.

¹¹A. P. Spasibenko, A.I. Ertel: Pisatel'-vos'midesiatnik (Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1966) 33-4.

¹²SS vol. 1, 6.

The identification of the author with either of his characters is problematic given the fact that the latter are clearly caricatured: Baturin, as introduced by his friend, is a restless fellow whose populist leanings have rendered him emotionally unstable, while the editor (in Baturin's eyes) is a confused, sentimental type whose dreams are illusory. When agitated, Baturin would even call his friend "Manilov," suggesting that he had lost touch with the world around him like the non-committal and obliging character by the same name in Gogol's Dead Souls.

A critical distance between Ertel and his characters must be maintained for two other important reasons. First, it might be said that the pessimistic tone that permeates the sketches, and with which Ertel identified at the time, does not rest strictly with Baturin's outlook, but with the notion that there is "nothing to be done": in both cases history has been determined, whether to perpetual cycles of building and destroying or to inevitable progress. The second reason has to do with the likely influence of Turgenev, who in 1877 had published Virgin Soil (Nov'), in which he sympathetically, but critically, portrayed some young populists, while at the same time caricaturing conservative types. As references below will indicate, Turgenev's influence is not limited to the critical distance he kept between himself and his characters.

One of the chief merits of the Zapiski, then, lies in the way in which the reader is invited to participate not only in the narrator's dilemma and observations, but also the quarrel

between the narrator himself and the editor, or between despair and hope. By presenting Baturin and his friend as opposites, Ertel presents just one of many such juxtapositions which can be found throughout the series, as Baturin examines, and is compelled to confront the perplexities presented by pairs of landowners or peasants who represent opposite views or characteristics.

Beside discussing its ideological significance, critics have indicated areas where the series seems to fall short formally and stylistically. In general, most of the episodes contain descriptions of nature that are repetitious and appear to exist only for their own sake. Ertel himself was quite dissatisfied with the collection, as he wrote to Gol'tsev in October 1889: "Would you believe the other day I had a look at Zapiski stepniaka. So much of it is unnecessary, unappealing, artificial, fake and lofty!"¹³ While Soviet studies generally consider Ertel's descriptive talent praiseworthy, the earliest reception of the Zapiski affirmed the opposite. Nekrasova, for example, found the episodes pleasant when reading them separately, but nearly unbearable when published as a volume (in 1883). Any message that was to be found, she felt, was sacrificed to useless descriptions of nature that became tedious and attracted attention to themselves rather than enhance the moral dimension of the story as they ought.¹⁴ Before being

¹³pis'ma 175. "Поверишь ли, раскрыл я как-то на днях «Записки степняка»: сколько лишнего! Сколько противного, искусственного, фальшивого, приподнятого!"

introduced to the characters in a particular episode, we find that the reader is often required to endure Baturin's lengthy survey of the landscape. In "Krivorozh'e" ("Crooked Rye"), for example, one joins Baturin on a dusty road on a dry summer day and listens to his description of the oppressive heat, of an emaciated herd of cattle, and of a similarly skeletal herdsman. This clearly gloomy setting, where the heat is unbearable, the herdsman glances around indifferently, the taverns are empty and the towns remind one of a cemetery, could be endured if it played a role in the rest of the episode. Instead the descriptive passage seems superfluous.

In their basic structure the Zapiski are quite simple. Most episodes involve a trip of some sort, either from sheer boredom or for the specific purpose of, for example, buying a horse or selling oats. This simple device, like that of the hunt in Turgenev's Notes of a Hunter (1852), allows Baturin to meet people, some of whom he portrays as types worthy of a certain degree of ridicule, while the rest tend to be more vivid and on the whole positive characters whose lives for one reason or another are tragic. At times Baturin is guilty of using whatever means is necessary to enter into the lives of his subjects. In "Lipiagi," for example, he eavesdrops in a way that seems highly unlikely: during the night he listens in on the conversation of a young couple, managing to catch the details of their conversation, gestures and actions both when

¹⁴E. Nekrasova, "Zapiski stepniaka," RM 9 (1883), second pagination: 82 ff.

they are outside his room as well as when they proceed outdoors and past his window.

Between those, such as Nekrasova, who consider the Zapiski to be of little value, and those who overrate them, such as the later Soviet scholars, there seems to be a middle ground. While it is clear that Ertel has not yet found a way to integrate his descriptive passages into the rest of the narrative, there is indeed a "message" in the series (Soviet studies deserve credit for recognizing this), and the description of nature does not dominate, as Nekrasova maintains. However, in identifying Ertel too closely with Baturin, Soviet critics have overlooked the dialectic which results from the consideration of the editor's role and have interpreted Baturin's observations with a strictly political agenda, severely limiting the scope of what are clearly more universal concerns in the series.

The Peasant

With this perspective in mind we now turn to those sketches which seem to represent best the various concerns of the early years of Ertel's literary career. "Pod shum v'iugi" ("In the Blizzard") is devoted exclusively to the sad lot of the peasant. In this first episode Baturin, on his way to the home of a certain Pankratov, is forced to take shelter twice due to foul weather. His first stop takes him into the hut of a poor peasant family where both a mother and her baby evoke great pity: the child's cry seems to Baturin a profoundly sad lament,

and not "the capricious whining of a spoiled baby,"¹⁵ while the mother's lullaby seems a pathetic echo. The family is in such need of food that her husband Grigorii is prepared, for a fee, to guide Baturin through the storm to his destination. Baturin's second stop, again because of the blizzard, is in the home of a certain Andreian Semenykh, a kind old man who complains that after "freedom" (i.e. the Reforms of 1861) forced relocation had only made his situation worse because it drove him away from his native rivers and forest. Once on the road again Baturin recalls his first love Dunia, a peasant girl, and imagines that a hard life of work has undoubtedly stolen her beauty. He never makes it, incidentally, to Pankratov's, but loses his way, which underscores the fact that the trip is only there to give structure to his peasant concerns.¹⁶ It seems worth noting that the journey, at the same time, is not so much a progression from one place to the next as it is a movement from one subjective impression to another: Baturin's melancholy sets in during his first stop by the baby's lament and the mother's lullaby, then increases when back on the road with his daydream of Dunia.

In a later sketch, "Popleshka," Baturin is once again on the road during stormy, windy weather. On the way he meets a certain Popleshka, through whom he learns that this peasant and

¹⁵SS vol. 1, 22. "капризное хныканье избалованного ребенка."

¹⁶This recalls A.N. Radishchev's famous Journey from Petersburg to Moscow (1790) as a precedent for the journey for the purposes of observation.

others like him are ruled by the greedy parish priest and other "bloodsuckers" to whom they are indebted. They manage on very little for their sustenance, and even if they could hope for some land it would soon be controlled by their creditors. Baturin, in desperation, asks Popleshka what hope he has in life, to which the latter responds only with a prayer to God for strength. Baturin then continues on his way depressed.

From these two episodes we learn, on the surface, that the emancipation in Russia had increased the peasants' burden and that those members of the intelligentsia, like Baturin, with populist concerns felt a need to draw attention to the harsh conditions of their "brother." As we come to know Baturin, however, we realize that his attitude towards the peasant is somewhat ambiguous. As an intelligent he has been taught to hope and work for the enlightenment of the masses, but as a landowning barin he demonstrates a certain disdain for the peasant, no doubt because peasant life as he sees it presents too many obstacles to progress. In this way the reader's attention is drawn beyond the peasant question to the narrator's own attitudes and impressions.

Change

This brings us to a second theme which stands out in the Zapiski: that of "change." "Krokodil" ("Crocodile") draws attention once again to the sad lot of the peasants, but eventually comes to focus on a reason for their suffering: a particular "bloodsucker" by the name of Sazon Psikheich, who

goes by the appropriate nickname of "Crocodile." In this character we have a portrait of the new kulak who, taking advantage of the Russian peasant virtue of perseverance (terpenie), lords it over an artel of carpenters who humbly work for him. Sazon's influence is both dehumanizing and culturally impoverishing: he sees to it that the carpenters are provided with good meat, but he does this only because "the peasant, like a horse, carries what he eats;"¹⁷ in his home Baturin arrives to hear the sound of classical music, only to find that Sazon is sitting in the corner, diligently cranking out a waltz on a mechanical piano.

Sazon stands as a symbol of a changing Russia. Later, when writing his novel Smena, Ertel would envision the change as one where members of the intelligentsia surrendered their places to "far less refined and even crude people."¹⁸ One recalls, for example, Goncharov's earlier Oblomov and Chekhov's later Cherry Orchard, where more pragmatic, but less refined individuals replace the genteel old order. The transformation which Ertel depicted was drastic: the impoverished gentry was giving way to the likes of "Crocodile," who might now easily devour anything wholesome that remained.

In a sketch entitled "Two Landowners" ("Dva pomeschchika") in Notes of a Hunter, Turgenev juxtaposes a proud, solitary and inefficient farm owner named Khvalynskii with a gregarious lover

¹⁷SS vol. 2, 265. "мужик ведь, что лошадь: что поест, то и повезет."

¹⁸pis'ma 209. "... уступая свое место иным, далеко не столь утонченным и даже грубоватым людям."

of discipline named Stegunov. If in this sketch he draws attention to class change (Khvalynskii, whose name comes from the word "glory," holds on with pride to his rank but has horses who have seen better days), in an episode in the Zapiski with the same title Ertel does the same. Baturin, while on a business trip, meets the landowner Mikhriutkin (whose name suggests the grunt of a pig) and his guest Karpetkin ("carp"). When we first encounter Mikhriutkin he is in his dressing gown and slippers, holding up his large stomach with his "fat little arms," screaming at his cook for not preparing his salmon properly. Later he is all dressed up as he hosts the not-so-refined Karpetkin, who is less concerned about his appearance and has no use for Mikhriutkin's conservative gentility. What is now important is the ruble, Karpetkin believes, and one cannot move forward with sentimental readings of Dumas. Rather, one must read Uspenskii, for example, because he takes the reader into the life of the peasant, with whom one must now deal.

Soviet critics perceive Baturin-Ertel's clarity of vision here: the narrator is pessimistic about the utilitarian order which is replacing the old one only because he is not sufficiently aware of what must happen before socialism will come. This, of course, does not take into account the more apparent and universal dilemma at work--that of the seemingly unbridgeable gap between personal and societal progress. This dilemma is evident in the pessimistic, apocalyptic theme which links two other episodes in which one is given the sense that

societal change can only be leading towards the "end of all things." In "Ot odnogo kornia" ("From the Same Root") the practical, business-minded but insensitive Vasilii Mironych is set against his opposite, the conservative peasant Trofim, who sees how degenerate his world has become and concludes that the end must be near. Similarly in "Poslednie dni" ("The Last Days") Baturin meets a group of alcoholic monks who lament the filth and freedom of the new age in which they live, thinking nostalgically of the past when there used to be order and fear.

The apocalyptic theme in these episodes is predictable, just as the end of the world is often predicted whenever society is perceived to be on the brink of something new. Those characters in the Zapiski who represent such visions are not entirely admirable, however, since they at best demonstrate the virtue of longsuffering which renders them conservative and incapable of personal initiative.

Types

The hope in some form of progress is implicit in Baturin's "correction through ridicule," which he directs towards both "liberal" and "conservative" types whom he satirizes in many of his sketches. In "Barin Listarka" ("Listarka the Barin") we meet Aristarkh Teterkin, a retired clerk of the second guild whom the peasants humour with the title "Barin" Listarka for his pomposity. This would-be aristocrat longs for the good-old-days when there was plenty, masters could punish their servants properly, and when there was a "real" gentry whose members

attended church services and were respected. Baturin pokes fun at this neighbour, whom he visits out of sheer boredom, by pointing out that Listarka is fooling only himself when, for example, he calls his balcony a porch or insists that the peasants remove their hats in his presence.

In "Idilliia" ("Idyll") we meet another conservative type who is similarly given special treatment by the peasants. Gergomen Pozharskii is a state councillor who believes in the traditional master-servant relationship which is held together by a bond of goodwill. As a staunch conservative he is opposed to all doctors for their supposed nihilism and lack of fear of God, and believes that sickness is part of God's will in any case. Whereas Baturin sees the people as unenlightened, Pozharskii sees them as happy and full of goodness. To verify this optimistic view, Baturin takes a trip to the town where Pozharskii is welcomed with honour and a spread table only to find drunkenness and a mob frenzied with excitement over some thief.

In "Zholtikov" we are introduced to Protas Zakharych, a merchant who believes that the present plague is not from God, but the fault of the peasants. For such a view, along with his conviction that the gentry has lost its sense of duty, he is regarded as a "liberal" and a freemason by the conservatives. While many things fill him with a sense of helplessness, such as fires, the famine, the diphtheria epidemic, the inefficiency of the schools, and the lack of intellectual life, one thing gives him hope: the belief in freedom of conscience and religion. He

is inconsistent in character, however, for he hoards money and gives little to those in need; to his death Protas Zakharych remains a gloomy pessimist.

In "Inostranets Lipatka i pomeshchik Gudelkin" ("Lipatka the Foreigner and Gudelkin the Landowner") Baturin demonstrates through two "westernizers" that wealth will not make Russia a better country. Irinei Gudelkin is a tidy, modest man who becomes convinced one day that Russia's hope is in the enlightenment of its peasants. He admires Lipatka, an anglicized Russian, for his home with all its signs of enlightenment: paintings from Europe, sculpture, and business telegrams lying about. Under Lipatka's influence Gudelkin comes to believe that culture will flourish when wealth is produced, for a better life will promote goodwill, which will in turn bring about art. Unfortunately, he learns that he is being used by Lipatka, who is more eager to become wealthy than anything else.

For all his naiveté, at the heart of Gudelkin's desire to see Russia become cultured is a genuine humanitarian concern, for after he learns the ways of the likes of Lipatka he opens a charitable dining room for needy peasants. Such genuine, if youthful, enthusiasm Baturin portrays also in Liuba, a young populist in "Lipiagi," whom he meets on the estate of her parents, Mark Nikolaevich Obozinskii and his wife Inna Iur'evna. Liuba is engaged to a certain Karamyshev, whom she scolds for elevating Goethe above Nekrasov (who stands up for the people),

but is in love with the populist Lebednik, with whom she wants to seek the "real" salvation of the people.

These "types," whether deserving of ridicule or sympathy, are in the end unsatisfactory characters for Baturin because they do not know the peasant well enough. Those who idealize the peasant, like Pozharskii, belong to a different time and are thus anachronisms; and those who presume to know the peasant and his concerns are equally inauthentic for viewing him as an uncivilized savage. Here Baturin, perhaps, even indulges in a certain amount of self-criticism.

Despair

For all the "correction through ridicule" which Baturin employs, he offers no positive individuals. In fact, as one approaches the end of the collection of sketches one is convinced that Baturin has given in decisively to despair. In "Moi domochadtsy" ("My Servants") Baturin depicts his vision of the eternal struggle between passivity and aggression in the persons of Semen and Naum: Semen is a gentle, reserved man who has learned from life that one must suffer, endure and hope as long as God tolerates human sinfulness. Human suffering he sees as the suffering of God himself, who, in the words of Tiutchev, "under the weight of the cross walked up and down blessing the land of longsuffering." His weakness stems from his strengths: his fear of God causes him to fear authority even when he has

the right to approach that authority, and his sensitivity makes him a poor overseer.

In his passive acceptance of authority Semen resembles Kalinych in Turgenev's "Khor i Kalinych" ("Khor and Kalinych," Notes of a Hunter), who humbly submits to his efficient master Khor. Naum, on the other hand, is an orderly, unhurried man who loves to talk at great length, tolerates no objections, beats women, and sees the sunset (with complete lack of contemplation) as something created by God to tell of the next day's weather.

We have noted that passages describing nature tend to have little or no role in the sketches. In "Serafim Ezhikov," however, we have an exception. In this episode Baturin describes a storm which the peasants call "the devil's wedding" because in its indifferent, almost capricious way, it is beyond control. He introduces Serafim Leskovskii, a populist teacher whose circumstances are not unlike the weather and who is bound up very closely with the theme of fatalism. A "romantic" at this point, Leskovskii appreciates everything that contains the "people's spirit" (Nekrasov's and Kol'tsov's work) and has faith in the intelligentsia's ability to enlighten the masses, if only gradually. In calling Leskovskii a romantic, Baturin, who otherwise regards him as a positive character, questions the populist hope in humanity.

Similarly in "Ofitsersha" ("The Officer's Wife"), which Ertel considered his favourite sketch in the Zapiski,¹⁹ Baturin

¹⁹See Letter to Chertkov, 25 July 1888 (Pis'ma 71).

describes with considerable admiration a woman who believed that Russia's salvation would come about when the masses had learned to read. With a great sense of good will she took it upon herself to teach the peasants to read. One day, however, Baturin learns that she had committed suicide, leaving a note in which she states that she found no reason to carry on with life and her efforts, since learning was being used for evil purposes. She complained that when children read the story of Nikolai the miracle worker they missed the humanitarian message and instead took from it a message about finances.

In "Addio," a collection of fictional diary entries with which Zapiski concludes, Baturin reveals the extent to which he has been "infected" with the despair he has observed. Not only does he learn that Serafim Leskovskii has committed suicide, but that he himself is ill, and that nature seems to be reminding him of his own mortality as he observes her "death" in late winter. Thoughts of going abroad excite him temporarily, but the sound of Schubert's "Addio," played by Baturin's visiting aunt, depresses him once again. "Like many," he consoles himself, "I pray for eternal oblivion, reconciliation and peace, and eagerly await death and the mysterious prospect of turning into nothing,"²⁰ and recalls the sense of belonging when, as a boy, he stood in church among the worshippers as they solemnly passed candles along. His upcoming trip to France will provide

²⁰SS vol. 2, 281. "Я, подобно многим, молю о вечном забвении, вечном примирении, вечном покое, и жадно жду царицы-смерти и таинственной перспективы превращения в ничто."

only temporary relief, for his depression drives him to drink and to insult his servants before his departure; moreover he hopes to return home someday to meet up with his reader again and together "curse the days gone by."²¹

To conclude, the Zapiski are not primarily, as Spasibenko suggests, a sociological study. The structural feature of polarization contained in them speaks of a concern which goes beyond mere "landscape" writing (where Ertel demonstrates his craft by being "true to life" in his depiction of the rise of capitalism). We have observed throughout, underlying the Baturin vs. Editor dilemma, a juxtaposition of opposites: passive, patient peasants who are challenged by the new "bloodsucking," efficient types, while well-bred and conservative members of the gentry are being replaced by populist-leaning, and far more practical but less refined individuals. The change in society which causes Baturin to reflect on these pairs of opposites is not to be understood as a mere class struggle, but as a force which obliges one to assess the justification for hope or despair in relation to humanity and progress. As Hegelian optimism was challenged by Schopenhauer's pessimism in Ertel's philosophical development, so too in his Zapiski a pair of opposed certainties come into conflict. On the one hand one is faced with the editor's optimism (and to a lesser extent Baturin's naive hope that one day he might return to Russia to "curse the days gone by" with

²¹SS vol. 2, 299. "проклянем минувшие времена."

his reader), while on the other one must contend with the powerful and universal images of death, decay and degeneration, relief from which one might find finally in nothingness.

The Quest for Brotherhood:

Two Stories on Greed

If Zapiski reveal Ertel's indebtedness to Turgenev, the second stage of Ertel's literary apprenticeship was brought about under Tolstoy's influence. If Tolstoy's writings had "illuminated the confusion in his soul,"²² then for Ertel too the Kingdom of God was to be regarded as a present reality. In this sense his stories on greed, examined below, engage the Russia question only indirectly, for "what was to be done" about greed seemed clear: promote brotherhood so that the Kingdom of God could be revealed. As Ertel would later see it, Tolstoy had no patience for a Kingdom of God which was to be realized in the future; rather, he expected "cataclysmic" change in human hearts in order to reveal the Kingdom which was "within."

In a letter of September, 1885, Tolstoy encouraged Ertel to write a story "keeping in mind only a member of the narod as [his] reader."²³ In the same year that Tolstoy published "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" and other stories for the narod, Ertel published "Spetsialist" ("The Specialist," RM, 1885), the first of his stories on greed.

Greeted by Golt'sev in June 1885 as a story written "with great artistic tact,"²⁴ "Spetsialist" is the structurally very

²²Pis'ma 52. "озарили путаницу, господствовавшую в моей душе."

²³L.N. Tolstoy, Perepiska s russkimi pisateliami, vol. 2 (Moscow: GIKhL, 1978) 185. "имея в виду только читателя из народа."

²⁴A. A. Kizevetter, ed., Pamiati Gol'tseva (Moscow, 1910) 140. "с большим художественным тактом."

simple story of Kapliuzhnyi's capture of an important criminal Fetiuk²⁵ and subsequent promotion. Ertel begins the story with the attention-getting "On November 12th Yegor Petrovich Kapliuzhnyi came home late from work,"²⁶ and makes his descriptive passages unusually brief and simple: "The night was dark and damp. . . . Pious townspeople's icon lamps glimmered in the windows."²⁷ The story's intent is didactic: Kapliuzhnyi's wife is interested only in material wealth, Kapliuzhnyi himself in prestige, and will use whatever brutal means he needs to achieve that end.

The story's simplicity can be deceptive, however. To begin with, Kapliuzhnyi has a gentle side. By playing on the floor with his daughter and making all sorts of animal sounds, Kapliuzhnyi not only delights his little girl, but eases some of the tension between himself and his mother-in-law. Yet his public life enters his home only in a distorted way, either through playful threats with his daughter ("Zakharov, take Gal'ka to the police-station"²⁸), or bits of police news like suicides and tragic accidents which his wife can only acknowledge with a mumble as she "chewed on a sugared

²⁵In his footnote to chapter four of Dead Souls, Gogol says this is an insulting term.

²⁶SS vol. 7, 515. "12 ноября Егоръ Петрович Каплюжный поздно пришел со службы."

²⁷SS vol. 7, 525. "Ночь была темная и сырая. . . . В окнах мерцали лампадки благочестивых обывателей."

²⁸SS vol. 7, p. 516. "Захаров, сведи Гальку в участок."

biscuit."²⁹ Like "Colonel B" in Tolstoy's "After the Ball" ("Posle bala," 1903), Kapliuzhnyi has to lead two separate lives: one whose official responsibilities require insensitivity, and a private life which requires tenderness.

Further, while greed and violence are deplored, the message against the Church's close connection with the state is drawn in somewhat more subtly. At home, where the Kapliuzhnyi couple is enveloped in the purely material and temporal concerns that a promotion would bring, icon lamps burn and father gently makes the sign of the cross on his daughter's forehead as she sleeps. Similarly, Kapliuzhnyi's violence enjoys the "blessing" of heaven: he manages to subdue (after shooting and beating) a wanted murderer because "[h]eaven, it seemed, decided to take the side of justice: the clouds dispersed and the dense darkness lifted slightly"³⁰ so that he could make out the murderer's figure in the distance.

The inability of the Church to be a voice of conscience to the state, reflected in Kapliuzhnyi's inability to integrate his private and public lives, is made clearer still by the problem of anti-semitism. Set against the backdrop of pogroms, "Spetsialist" raises the Jewish question as a serious problem. As Kapliuzhnyi relates his police news to his wife he mentions that it was "only a Jew" who committed suicide, and in his capture of the murderer, who had grown wealthy during the recent

²⁹SS vol. 7, 518. "пережевывая сахарный кренделек."

³⁰SS vol. 7, 526. "Небо будто решилось содействовать правосудию: тучи разорвались и густой мрак несколько рассеялся."

pogrom, Kapliuzhnyi employed "a dirty Jew" Myseika as a spy and guide. In dealing with this theme, Ertel was joining with those who advocated toleration for the Jews. In the following year (1886) Leskov would publish a story devoted to the issue, "The Tale of Theodore the Christian and his friend Abraham the Jew" ("Povest' o Fedore-khristianine i druge ego Abrame-zhidovine").

Ertel ends the story with two challenges to Kapliuzhnyi's conscience. Returning home after his successful night on the job he goes to his daughter, who is asleep, and makes the sign of the cross over her forehead. As he does so he realizes his fingers ache, then examining his hands in the light he sees how grazed his knuckles are from the blows he inflicted on the murderer. Then, as he sleeps that night Fetiuk appears before him, helpless and with his face disfigured by beating. By "forcing" Kapliuzhnyi's two worlds to meet, Ertel underlines the suggestion that Kapliuzhnyi's faith, ossified into mere ritual, has nothing to say to his greed for money and power, nor does it stand in the way of the violence which he must inflict to achieve those ends.

"Zhadnyi muzhik" ("The Greedy Peasant," Posrednik, 1886), likewise simple in structure, is the story of a prodigal son in which a younger brother forsakes his village in search of the good life, comes to lose everything he has acquired, and is then welcomed home and forgiven.

The tale begins in the 1850's in the province of Orel, where an older brother Ivan finds employment for his younger

brother Ermil with a wealthy merchant. At first Ermil finds disturbing the fact that the sole purpose of the trade is to make as great a profit as possible, but soon he realizes that he wishes to become rich. A summer visit to the village lets him know that he is no longer one with his people, as he experiences no joy in the prospects of a good harvest nor in the peasants' festivities. Ermil then learns to read and write so as to make a profit for himself with his master's goods. One day as his master sleeps Ermil steals some money from his coat, only to wake him up and cause him to have a choking fit which ends his life. Ermil is not found guilty of any crime, however, as the dealer had died of a stroke and his financial records were inaccurate. With his money invested safely Ermil could enjoy the kind of life his master had. He attends church faithfully, watches his money increase, and fathers two children. Eventually this life becomes dull, and misfortune strikes. His wife and one of his sons die, his bank fails, his other son steals from him, and he can find no help. Eventually Ermil is brought home by his brother, who helps him to find the simplicity he had lost and the gradual acceptance and forgiveness of the community. Ermil comes to die in peace, having made a public confession of his sins.

As in "Spetsialist," Ertel draws attention to the protagonist's failure to integrate his private and public lives. In this case Ermil's devotional life once he is wealthy does not moderate his pursuit of wealth. Only when tragedy strikes his home does the icon of the Saviour in his home seem to speak to

him, so that Ermil is moved to tears as he imagines that "Christ looks upon him severely and sorrowfully."³¹ Just as with Kapliuzhnyi, whose conscience was stirred as he performed a ritual with an aching hand, Ermil's icon comes to life for him in his moment of grief.

The intent of "Zhadnyi muzhik" is clearly didactic. Unlike those unresolved polar opposites in "From the Same Root," (in Zapiski), the conservative Ivan in "Zhadnyi muzhik" is the victor for having the moral strength to welcome his prodigal brother home. Kostin, from a different standpoint, perceives the teaching against the exploitation of the working class to be the authentic one, and argues that the story is no longer "from life" when Ermil repents and is forgiven because the narod, forced to struggle rather than forgive, simply did not "take comfort in sermons."³² Considering the fact that the story was intended for publication by Posrednik (whose mission it was to publish largely didactic works for the popular reader), one might argue that, whether Ermil's welcome home was "from life" or not, Ertel's primary concern was to suggest how the community ought to deal with repentant prodigals, and to teach about the dangers of a life lived purely for oneself by having Ermil received back into a simple, God-fearing, and forgiving community.

³¹SS vol. 4, 429. "глядит на него Христос строго, насмурно."

³²G.A. Kostin, A. I. Ertel': zhizn' i tvorchestvo 39.

Ertel's two stories on greed, in conclusion, are inspired by Tolstoy's later philosophy. Ertel would have been familiar with, and perhaps discussed with Tolstoy, the ideas contained in "What Then Must We Do?" ("Tak chto zhe nam delat'"), not published until 1886, but on which Tolstoy had been working since 1882.³³ Central to Tolstoy's work were the notions that property and money were the source of all evil, that the authentic life was to be found in a healthy simple and rural life, away from the excesses and corruption of the city, and that the institutions of Church and State protected the interests of the oppressor. Not only do Ertel's stories uphold these ideas, but in their simplicity of structure and allusions to biblical stories (as in the case of "Zhadnyi muzhik") they stand as models of what Tolstoy was to uphold explicitly as "universal" art in What is Art? (Chto takoe iskusstvo?, 1898).

³³See N. K. Gudzii's notes on the essay in Tolstoy's PSS vol. 25 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia Literatura) 740ff.

Chapter Two

The Individual in the Collective

Contra Tolstoy: Dve pary

While Ertel's two stories on greed were straightforward, didactic, and in line with the objectives of Posrednik, he never became a Tolstoyan. Even when Tolstoy advised him to write for the peasant reader, Ertel had explained his misgivings, in a letter of 24 September 1885, on the grounds that he would have to do away with descriptive passages, monologues and discussions, and adopt a didactic stance, which he did not like to do. As he admitted in the same letter, he was trying to "enter life, and not look at it from outside."¹ This concern was connected with his earlier desire to "remember the intelligent too," as he wrote in 1881, and to understand "the tragic nature of [the intelligentsia's] relationship with the people. . . ." ²

In 1886 Ertel wrote "Mineral'nye vody" ("Mineral Waters," published in SS), the story of how a young intelligent named Shigaev comes to realize, on a trip to a spa, that he is unfit to "join the crowd . . . [and] take part in social concerns."³

¹Pis'ma 55. "стараюсь снова втереться в жизнь, чтобы не смотреть на нее со стороны."

²Pis'ma 41 (to Chistiakov, M.N., 10 August 1881). "вспомнить и об интеллигентном человеке . . . и трагический характер ее отношений к народу. . . ."

³SS vol. 3, 193. "вмещаться в толпу . . . [и] понести общих забот."

As Nikiforov notes, the story is structured to isolate the hero and to distinguish him from all the other characters.⁴ As he encounters pessimists, populists, moralizers and sybarites, Shigaev is disillusioned by them all, for he finds their lives dreary and full of futile pursuits. Ertel was seeking a hero who had his own voice. As Ertel would explain to Chistiakov on August 3, 1889, if "the drowning of one's I in the common life" was to be made normative, then life would be robbed of its charm. He compared the role of the individual to that of an instrument in an orchestra, whose task it was to play its own part.⁵

If with "Mineral'nye vody" Ertel turned his attention to the predicament of the individual in the group, in Dve pary ("Two Couples," RM, 1887) he challenged a Tolstoyan principle in the interests of the individual. While the influence of Tolstoy is to be found in certain allusions and structural similarities to Anna Karenina, a polemical intent indicates that he began to question his "teacher" not long after he had turned to him for advice, and specifically to assert that individuals had to determine their own vocation, for (as he would later write) to assume that the authentic inner life was to be necessarily expressed in particular and pre-determined forms was "utter pretension."⁶

⁴v. V. Nikiforov, "Tvorchestvo A.I. Ertelia: k peresmotru istoricheskogo-literaturnogo znachenii," Thesis, Moscow SU, 1983, 46ff.

⁵Pis'ma 157. "потопить свое я в жизни общего."

Dve pary, set in Samara, where Ertel had once gone for treatment, is the story of one populist-minded landowning couple which seeks, and fails, to arrange the life and happiness of a peasant couple. Stylistically the story represents a middle way between the descriptive, Turgenevan Notes of a Steppe-dweller and the more simple and unadorned stories on greed. In Dve pary Ertel's descriptive passages are brief, and incorporated rather more (than in Zapiski) into the narrative. At the same time he never strays for long from his story. The work similarly avoids the two poles of blunt didacticism and description for its own sake; now the influence of Tolstoy's great novels is evident, while the tendency to instruct is transformed into a need to polemicize against him. The result is a story which contains a teaching on the simple life where Ertel clearly questions the universality of the call.

For an example of Ertel's stylistic via media we can turn to the beginning of the tale, where the peasant couple, Fedor and Lizutka, are alone outside and surrounded with a sense of pleasant vitality: the roosters have crowed announcing the morning, the fresh scent of the spring grass is in the air, and one can hear the neighing of a horse. Fedor is not only in love: after Lizutka has freed herself from his embrace and invited him to visit, Fedor sits down in the cool wet grass, surveys the sunrise, and feels his youth and strength. In this contented state, as his "soul was filled more and more with a

feeling of peaceful happiness,"⁷ Fedor contemplates the landscape, and how everything around prepares to greet the sunrise: a bird flutters, the steppe and the fields begin to redden, the crosses on the wooden church in the distance glitter, and the mist seems to be the breath of the earth which is awakening all around him.⁸

The "romantic" connection between Fedor's renewed, freshly-perceived, world and his inner state is obvious. Although such a descriptive passage does not exist for its own sake, it is still sustained enough to suggest that Ertel was not addressing the people, but the intelligentsia, whose concerns he had begun to address in Zapiski. No longer limiting himself to the formulaic constraints of his stories on greed, Ertel weaves together two love intrigues, complicating an otherwise straightforward plot, even incorporating sustained discourse into the dialogue.

The "weaving" is characteristic of Tolstoy's Anna Karenina.⁹ In fact, the love stories in Dve pary are a sort of social downsizing of those in Tolstoy's novel, which in an early draft was entitled Dva braka ("Two Marriages").¹⁰ Once we have

⁶pis'ma 202.

⁷SS vol. 4, 10. "И на душе у Федора все шире и шире росло спокойной радости."

⁸SS vol. 4, 9-10.

⁹B. L. Bessonov draws attention not only to this structural similarity, but points to examples of Tolstoyan "repetitions and intonation" in Ertel's Dve pary. "A.I. Ertel' i Lev Tolstoy," Russkaia Literatura 4 (1969): 153.

been introduced to the peasant couple (who reflect the "wholesome" Kitty-Levin relationship), we meet Vronskii's counterpart, Sergei Petrovich, who is also in love. A guest in Samara is Maria Pavlovna Letiatina, who longs for the simple life and imagines that Sergei Petrovich's country lifestyle and devotion to work and schools will suit her far better than the oppressive St. Petersburg society to which her husband is attached. Unlike the Karenin marriage, however, the Letiatin relationship was open-ended from the start. According to the progressive ideas of the 1860's, the couple agreed to separate if one should ever cease to love the other. Maria Pavlovna had admired and agreed to marry Letiatin, an enlightened, "bathed in cologne" banker for his reasoned outlook on life, and brought up their son Kolia according to the customs of the society to which they belonged.

It was not too long before this lifestyle became tormenting for Maria Pavlovna, so she sought relief in various philanthropic activities, literary salons, high-society Evangelical circles with Lord Radstock's preaching, and even by taking part in seances. Needless to say, this new direction was perceived by her husband as a nervous disorder, and soon the Letiatins were at a spa on a doctor's recommendation. Once in Samara, however, Letiatin longs for his orderly, progressive Petersburg life, while his wife is determined to stay. An argument between Sergei Petrovich and Letiatin, in which Maria Pavlovna sides with the former and his presumed love of the

¹⁰Tolstoy, PSS vol. 20, 92.

simple country life, hastens Letiatin's return to Petersburg, leaving Maria Pavlovna and Sergei Petrovich to pursue their relationship.

At this point further parallels with Tolstoy's novel, if not his biography, become prominent. These include Maria Pavlovna's visit to Samara for health reasons, where Tolstoy took kumys treatment in 1871,¹¹ and (alluding to Anna Karenina) the slighting reference to Letiatin as a banker, the problem of an only son, references to philanthropic societies and Lord Radstock's evangelistic services in St. Petersburg,¹² and indeed the non-judgmental portrayal of adultery.

In response to Chertkov, who had evidently criticized Ertel for his sympathetic portrayal of an "adulteress," Ertel explained that her divorce was justified on the grounds that Letiatin was a "rational animal," and that the two had not been equals.¹³ Maria Pavlovna, in any case, justified her separation with her new-found relief and sense of purpose with regards to the people. She contented herself with summer visits from her son and the pleasures of the simple life: the fresh country air and haymaking with Sergei Petrovich.

In the meantime Lizutka and Fedor's love has progressed, and for a moment it seems as though the two couples will be

¹¹C.J.G. Turner, A Karenina Companion, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1993) 3.

¹²While the reference to Evangelical circles is made only in passing here, in chapter four on Smena the connection will be more significant.

¹³pis'ma 99.

brought together in a proper, harmonious simple life once Sergei Petrovich is successful as Fedor's matchmaker. Fedor and Lizutka's love is soon complicated, however, by the good intentions of Maria Pavlovna, who wishes to grow closer to the people, and those of Sergei Petrovich, who is eager to see the young lovers properly established with land of their own. So Maria Pavlovna, recognizing that her "soul had not gone on fire with love for [the people] because their faces, dress, language and customs were foreign to her,"¹⁴ decides to host Lizutka and her friend Daria for tea. Their visit proves a comical disaster where neither party is entirely at fault:

The girls entered [the small room next to Maria Pavlovna's boudoir] . . . smiling at one another, urging one another on, then stopping in embarrassment once inside.

"Greetings, my dear guests!," said Maria Pavlovna, red as can be, as she hurled herself towards them. Then, thinking for a moment about what she should do, she embraced the first girl, not noticing whether it was Lizutka or Daria, and kissed her somewhere on the upper part of the face; she was more successful with the other girl: she kissed her right on the lips.¹⁵

Managing to get her abashed and unusually over-dressed guests to sit for tea, Maria Pavlovna has to endure the girls' constant expressions of gratitude, which Lizutka and Daria feel obliged to utter after gulping down every cup of tea. With an empty samovar, little to discuss, and the disappointment that the

¹⁴SS vol. 4, 67. "но душа ее не загоралась жалостью и любовью к ним, потому что их лица, их костюмы, язык и обычаи были слишком чужды ей."

¹⁵SS vol. 4, 69ff.

girls seem so much more pleasant in their own environment, Maria Pavlovna asks the girls to sing. The visit becomes all the more awkward, however, because Lizutka and Daria begin to whisper to one another, giggle, and cover their faces with their shawls as each urges the other to begin. Finally they produce, or rather "squeal" (vizzhali) some "wild nonsense" (dikuiu chepukhu) about "'Poleon" in Moscow, much to Maria Pavlovna's distress:

What [she] had heard before . . . she had enjoyed so much and had almost always moved her soul; but she had never heard folk songs from such a close range... And, my God, what sort of song was this!¹⁶

Sergei Petrovich's efforts are more focused on arranging Fedor and Lizutka's marriage and material security. But in this he assumes that his generosity is perceived as such by those he wishes to favour. He manages to convince Lizutka's parents that she should marry Fedor now that the two will have land of their own, but Lizutka's parents regret that things are not arranged according to proper customs, and that they have not even met Fedor's family. In the meantime, a much more meek Fedor (on account of his indebtedness) has been persuaded not to accept the land, and Sergei Petrovich's plan is ruined, causing him to call the peasants "savages" and curse his philanthropy.

So with their efforts spoiled, Sergei Petrovich and Maria Pavlovna find less appeal in the simple life, and take up chess and cards, reading "so called classics" without discussing them, and frequently seeking refuge in Moscow. In this way the two

¹⁶SS vol. 4, 72.

couples, rather than being drawn together, are worse off than at the start, where we at least observed that Sergei Petrovich was somewhat successful in overcoming the social barriers that existed between him and Fedor.

L. E. Obolenskii, editor of Russkoe bogatstvo from 1882 to 1892 (when the journal was sympathetic towards Tolstoyan philosophy), reads Sergei Petrovich's efforts as signs of the intelligentsia's "liberal" leanings and inability to perform authentic actions, and severely judges his moral integrity for his compromise.¹⁷ Where Obolenskii under-rates Sergei Petrovich, he over-rates Maria Pavlovna, suggesting with hope that she might still find the true simple life she seeks. On both counts Obolenskii misreads Ertel: while Maria Pavlovna's divorce might be justified, she is portrayed as one whose lack of "balance [in her] soul"¹⁸ has made her just as incapable as her new husband of the ideal simple life, and Sergei Petrovich's compromise need not be understood entirely negatively. Ertel himself, as Sebastian Garrett writes, came to have "the money to indulge his taste for the best, both for himself and for others. No expense was spared on his daughter's education; any jewelry he bought his family was choice. . . . His travelling toiletries were of cut glass and silver, and he liked a box at the opera."¹⁹ It seems safer to interpret the characters of

¹⁷L. E. Obolenskii, "Intelligentnaia neumelost': kriticheskii etiud," Russkoe bogatstvo 11 (1887): 211ff.

¹⁸SS vol. 4, 19. "равновеси[е] души"

Maria Pavlovna and Sergei Petrovich in light of Ertel's moderation with regard to possessions.

The parallel we have drawn between this story and Anna Karenina decisively breaks down at this point. If we expected to find a wholesome alternative to the older couple in the love between Fedor and Lizutka, we are quickly disappointed. It turns out that, while they might not be "savages," the peasants certainly seem to be very human. After the wedding is called off, Fedor and his friends spend an evening with a certain Frosia drinking and dancing, which frightens away Lizutka as she notices her Fedor make advances to their hostess. But none of them is condemned, which suggests that the story has no real villains.

While Obolenskii's hopeful reading of Maria Pavlovna might be questioned on the grounds that it takes us beyond the text, one must be careful not to assume that Sergei Petrovich and Maria Pavlovna's return to refined ways indicates a sure vulgarization of the two and, as such, a debunking of Tolstoy's teachings on the simple life.²⁰ To be sure, the older couple's attitude towards the people is naive and paternalistic, and they do seem unable or unwilling to "work for others." Their inability can be seen, for instance (as Obolenskii explains) in Maria Pavlovna's failure to undertake to teach the peasant children, as she might have done according to the populist

¹⁹S. Garrett, "A.I. Ertel': Letters to his Daughter," M.A. thesis, U of Birmingham, 1982, 29.

²⁰Nikiforov, "Tvorchestvo A. I. Ertelia," 60ff.

agenda. One asks, however, whether the polarizing of the two couples is meant to be understood as an indictment of the intelligentsia in general, or as a questioning of the universal call, whether populist or Tolstoyan, to the simple life.

What the story appears to teach is that enforced populism fails to take the complexity of life seriously. As it happened, historical circumstances including cultural barriers and different native environments made Sergei Petrovich and Maria Pavlovna's attempts to become one with the people not only impossible, but comical. In this manner neither party, in the end, is entirely to blame, and Ertel's story commends itself as one which is intended to inspire good will, and in which only the universal call to the simple life is condemned.

"The Sacrifice of One Child:" "Chervonets"

With his concern for the individual in the group Ertel turns, as one might have expected, to Dostoyevsky. As he wrote to Chertkov on 17 August 1888, "How is one to reconcile the dualism which results from opposing matter to reason: that dualism which . . . caused . . . Ivan Karamazov to raise the standard of revolt against the Lord God?"²¹

In his story "Chervonets" ("The Gold Coin," Krasnyi tsvetok, 1889) Ertel portrays a young man who is tempted to justify the sacrifice of one individual for the good of society. Inspired by his readings of François Coppée (1842-1908),²² "Chervonets" is the story of a compulsive gambler, Andrei, who steals a gold coin from a six-year-old beggar girl and wins a fortune with it in a Paris casino. The Devil in the guise of a "little Pole" named Dronskii tempts him twice: first he tells him what the winning number is to be: then, after Andrei has won his fortune, he tempts him to justify his theft (from the girl who has now frozen to death) by seeing to it that the money is put towards charitable causes. After all, says Dronskii, someone else would have stolen the money anyway and used it on

²¹Pis'ma 93. "Каким образом примирить получающийся из сопоставления разума и материи дуализм, тот дуализм, который . . . заставлял . . . Ивана Карамазова [поднимать знамя бунта] против Господа Бога?"

²²A. Lezhnev, afterword, Gardeniny, by A. I. Ertel (Moscow: Academia, 1933) 492-93. Lezhnev writes that "Chervonets" was an adaptation of Coppée's "Liudor," and was to be included in Gardeniny as a tale by I. Fedotych.

drink. No sooner does Andrei begin to find this idea appealing than death, appearing in the hollow-cheeked face of a child, knocks at his door.

While what motivates Andrei to steal in the first place is his greed, the real message of the story seems to lie in the moral dilemma which he faces once he has won the money, and as he confronts his own responsibility for injustice. A good deal of the story is devoted to his dialogue about injustice with Dronskii, who insists that the "One who ordered things" is to be blamed for the fact that some have plenty while others starve. Dronskii disappears, while Andrei is torn between his feeling of responsibility for the girl's soul and the compelling notion that the well-being of humanity can be built on her sacrifice. This echoes Ivan Karamazov's challenge to his brother Alesha:

[I]magine that you are charged with building the edifice of human destiny, whose ultimate aim is to bring people happiness . . . but that in order to achieve this it is essential and unavoidable to torture just one little speck of creation, that same little child beating her breast with her little fists, and imagine that this edifice has to be erected on her unexpiated tears. Would you agree to be the architect under those conditions?²³

Where Ertel stood is clear from what he wrote to Korolenko: "I simply fail to understand," he explained in February, 1890, "how

²³F. M. Dostoyevsky, The Karamazov Brothers, trans. I. Avsey, (New York: Oxford UP, 1994) 308.

any good can result from the sacrifice of one life. . . . Ivan in the singular contains an infinite world in his soul."²⁴

Concerned at this point with two principal philosophical confrontations--the problems of free will versus determinism, and now of the individual in the group--Ertel begins a quest for synthesis which will inform his philosophy of "compromise," which we shall examine in Part Two.

²⁴pis'ma 185. "Я решительно не понимаю, как можно ценить какие-либо блага ценою загубленной жизни. . . . Иван в единственном числе вмещает в душе своей такой бесконечный мир."

Part Two

Compromise

Ertel's philosophy of "compromise" was an outgrowth, as suggested in the last chapter, of his desire to reconcile determinism with free will, and to define the place of the individual in the group. If in August 1888 he could boldly say that human will is determined by reason (which was to be considered a reliable faculty) and the laws of causality,¹ by March 1889 he admitted to a turn in his philosophy: reason was not "such a great force" after all.² While he still acknowledged the power of one's circumstances in shaping one's world view, he insisted that belief in any determined future could not account for the courage to live. Recognizing this tension Ertel concluded that all human knowing had to be linked with the human capacity to love.³

In 1929 Bunin wrote that Ertel "felt with all his being that a rigid following of a principle is cold and deadly; that the warmth of life lies in compromise. . . ."⁴ What dominated his philosophy through 1891 was the urge to synthesize. For this reason he would envision Gardeniny as a novel in which Providence could be reconciled with diverse world views, and

¹Pis'ma 86-90.

²Pis'ma 145. "вовсе не такая сила."

³Pis'ma 133.

⁴I. Bunin, Memories and Portraits 128.

Smena as one in which individuals of diverse backgrounds could converge in "the struggle" to reform Russia. By way of providing the ideological background for these two novels we shall examine Ertel's philosophy of compromise as it related to moral conduct, institutions, and art.

As Parsons notes, the "fairly consistent and original 'philosophy'" articulated in Ertel's correspondence was met with considerable enthusiasm by the Vekhi writers when the collected letters were edited by Gershenzon in 1909.⁵ The value of the collection was not found strictly in its philosophical content, however. In his letters the author maintains a Russian tradition, begun as early as the country's origins and continued by (among others) Novikov, of writing epistolary polemics on social and moral issues in provocative, sometimes poetic, epistolary prose. As P. Struve noted:

For their importance and depth, for the superb energy and exactness of their language the letters of A.I. Ertel' must become a classic work of our epistolary literature . . . It is impossible to exhaust in any article the wealth of ideas and observations contained in his Letters.⁶

⁵Parsons, 176. The three Vekhi writers who gave attention to Ertel's thought were M. Gershenzon, S. Frank, and P. Struve. They were among those prominent intellectuals who in 1909 published Vekhi, or Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia, and were part of the Russian religious renaissance at the turn of the century which was characterized by a move away from materialism and positivism towards a religious or metaphysical philosophy.

⁶P. Struve, "Na raznye temy," RM 1 (1909), second pagination: 113 (as translated by Parsons, 176).

For this reason we will pay attention to both thought and craft as we study Ertel's correspondence (to December 1891).

As a "God-seeker" of his time, Ertel sought answers, as Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii remarks, to the two questions "Where is Truth?" and "What is to be done?"⁷ Gershenzon, who understood Ertel's philosophy to be essentially practical, stressed his interest in the second question by noting that what Ertel wished to know was "what does life allow, and what does life require?"⁸ In any case, Ertel's disagreement with Tolstoy can be understood in the light of the questions Gershenzon emphasizes because what Ertel disputed were the more ethical and practical (as opposed to purely philosophical or theological) teachings of Tolstoy. Ertel deeply admired Tolstoy for his initiative in those concerns which were "allowed," but parted company with him when it came to be assumed that those good and proper convictions for some were to be "required" of all. Ertel's attitude can be summed up with two comments:

. . . Tolstoy has once again and with unusual strength introduced the concept of Truth into social consciousness, so that no matter what

⁷D. N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, Sobranie sochinenii vol. 9 (St. Petersburg, 1914) 160.

⁸M. Gershenzon, "Mirovozzrenie A. I. Ertelia," in Ertel's Pis'ma, v. We note that Gershenzon's conclusions were not based on an acquaintance with Ertel's work as a whole, but rather the philosophy expressed in Gershenzon's own selection of Ertel's letters. As he wrote in a letter of Nov. 1908 to M.V. Ertel, Gershenzon expressed his desire to have complete independence in editing Ertel's letters so that he could focus on his own interests (State Library of the Russian Federation, Manuscript division, fond 349, karton 9, ed. khr. 73).

happens, no matter how hard Pobedonostsev and Co. try to silence him . . . Truth remains.⁹

I won't deny that there is a great deal in L.N. Tolstoy's thought which I find true and strikingly profound, but I disagree with him when it comes to [his position on] civic organizations, institutions, the means for combatting evil and to a certain extent so called civilization. . . . He has always attracted me not as a "teacher," but as an unusually rare example of intellect and that which is referred to as talent.¹⁰

Moral Conduct

From a stance of what might be termed "moral pluralism," whereby "even the greatest individuals have been and are often right for themselves personally and only in part for others,"¹¹ Ertel questioned Tolstoy's universal summons to the simple life and (what he understood to be) the pursuit of perfection for its own sake.¹²

Well acquainted with Confession, Ertel was aware of Tolstoy's tendency to perceive the authentic life as one devoted to self-perfection. While this "Buddhist" and individualist (as

⁹Pis'ma 215.

¹⁰Pis'ma 181-2.

¹¹Pis'ma 267. "самые даже великие люди человечества, часто бывали и бывают правы для себя лично и только отчасти правы для других."

¹²With regards to Tolstoy's insistence on non-violence, Parsons discusses Ertel's third option between pacifism and revolutionary violence: the "bloodless principle of struggle." This principle recognized the necessity of actions which had to be carried out within the bounds of what was historically possible (Parsons, 183).

Ertel perceived it) inclination had its place in the life devoted to the good of others, its asceticism and preference given to the pursuit of martyrdom led ultimately (and paradoxically) to the dissolution of the "I" in the whole. Like Chekhov, Ertel could not imagine the kind of after-life where the individual was to be absorbed into the whole, or as in Tolstoy's vision, where one was, in Ertel's view, "poured out into space."¹³ "Self-denial," Ertel explained to Chertkov, "seems to me just as much a 'refraction of nature' as . . . life for the belly. . . . Everything in moderation, everything in moderation, my friend! I think every life should evolve . . . gradually. . . ."¹⁴ Life as it ought to be, Ertel believed, need not require such sacrifices:

As wonderful as it is that Christ lived, I'll risk impertinence and say that my outlook on the future is comforting only when I can imagine that such sacrifices and heroic illumination are impossible. . . . 'To give one's life for others' is a great thing, but not a daily one, or the sort of deed which one must pursue at all cost.¹⁵

Ertel admitted to Korolenko that he did not believe Tolstoy belonged to those who, pursuing self-perfection for its own sake, distanced themselves from quotidian and worldly concerns. However, in his teachings one did find an approval of that sort

¹³Pis'ma 163. "быть разлитым в мировом пространстве."

¹⁴Pis'ma 158. "Самоотречение мне представляется таким же «преломлением естества», как . . . жизнь для утробы. . . . Все в меру, все в меру, друг! Мне кажется, что жизнь каждого человека должна совершаться . . . в постепенстве роста. . . ."

¹⁵Pis'ma 159-60.

of life, and for this reason Ertel felt he must oppose Tolstoy's ascetic anarchy and refusal to participate in civic structures.¹⁶ Elsewhere Ertel included Tolstoy among those "utopians" who instead of seeking unity in "endless diversity" longed for formal unity, insisting that the means to such an end was to obliterate the diversity and disregard the contradictions of life.¹⁷

Institutions

Ertel's moral pluralism did not imply moral relativism. He insisted, as Gershenzon observed, on an "absolute understanding of truth, and relative application of it."¹⁸ This objectivist understanding with qualifications had implications for his view of history, which he generally regarded as purposeful. As he wrote in February, 1890, true progress is "that gradual development of solidarity between people, that constant broadening of people's consciousness, [and] that growth of humane and, consequently, just understanding."¹⁹ Where Tolstoy emphasized the Kingdom of Heaven "within," and expected, as Ertel perceived, immediate change to bring about that end, Ertel insisted that

¹⁶Pis'ma 189.

¹⁷Pis'ma 237.

¹⁸Pis'ma XIII.

¹⁹Pis'ma 186. "то постепенное развитие солидарности между людьми, то непрерывающее расширение в людях сознания, то нарастание гуманных, а следовательно, и справедливых понятий."

in nature it has been demonstrated that there have never been sudden occurrences or cataclysms. Nor can there be any in human nature. As soon as a person attempts them he becomes exhausted and, voluntarily or otherwise, a victim of 'prematurity' ("prezhdevremennost").²⁰

He perceived, instead, that the "Kingdom," like progress, comes about gradually. His "anti-catastrophic" view of history is evident in a letter to Chertkov, dated 4 July 1888, where he describes his sense of belonging to his rural homeland, in spite of the lure of the city. His letter demonstrates, additionally, the way in which he attempts to persuade by appealing to his reader's aesthetic sensibilities:

After four years, I'm back in my native land. . . .
 What strength do I find, what power in these
 fields which stretch into the blue distance,
 in this wind which carries the scent of the
 earth and wormwood, in the monotonous sound
 of the bell, in these villages scattered
 here and there! The forest prattles and its
 birds greet me with their clear voices... The
 church tower I know so well seems to smile as
 it moves majestically from behind a rise in
 the ground. . . . How pleasant and how sad
 I feel: inside I sense tears welling up for
 some unknown reason, but at the same time all
 is bright and good so that a gentle, child-like
 joy fills my being... Home, I'm home.²¹

In expressing the hold one's environment has on the individual and giving preference to the "ordinary" and rural (but lasting) Ertel was appealing to a prosaic sensibility. Ultimately it was this aspect of Tolstoy's art which left the most lasting impression on Ertel, for "what was foretold by Isaiah and the

²⁰Pis'ma 64.

²¹Pis'ma 63.

angels at Bethlehem . . ." would not happen, Ertel believed, "instinctively or cataclysmically, but by the combined efforts of 'the meek,' on the one hand, and by the 'historical chain of events' on the other."²²

On the basis of this view of progress and the "Kingdom of God" Ertel advocated a much more practical attitude towards those institutions which Tolstoy rejected on principle, namely the government and the university.²³ To deny the institution of government, Ertel argued, was to "hang in mid air"; on the other hand, one had to struggle against it, as government was ideally not an end in itself, and society ought to come together freely.²⁴ Similarly one had to tolerate the university's "evils" of exams, ranks, and research limitations while trying to put into practice the notion of the free university, recognizing, in the meantime, that it would be counter-productive for a Mendeleev to sell his research equipment on every occasion for charity.²⁵

In the same letter (to Chertkov) Ertel employs another analogy to advocate a balance between charity, science and art.

²²Pis'ma 267. "наступит предсказанное Исаией и возглашенное вифлеемскими ангелами . . . не наитием, не катаклизмами, а именно тем, что «равнодействующая» будет подвигаться выше и выше усилиями «нищих», с одной стороны, и «историческим ходом» события--с другой."

²³In later years Ertel would also defend the institution of the Church, as we shall see in the Conclusion, while perceiving evil in the alliance of Church and State.

²⁴Pis'ma 192.

²⁵Pis'ma 108-110.

Christ, he writes, has come to Russia during Nicholas' reign (1825-55) and gathered together a following of former prisoners and downtrodden who now love one another and await God's reign on earth. In the meantime Christ is arrested and sentenced to death, his apostles are educated on half-digested Schopenhauer, and Hegel and Descartes preach the "good news" about living the simple life according to the teachings of Jesus. Then, as the message is popularized, the power comes into the hands of a dictator, so that eventually universities and art galleries are destroyed, while writers, scientists and artists are exiled. Ertel interprets his parable by saying that "a moral teaching, no matter how great, is insufficient for the good of humanity without knowledge and art."²⁶

Art

Just as institutions were to be seen as a means to an end, works of the imagination were not to exist for their own sake. It was in emphasizing different functions of art, however, that Ertel avoided both Tolstoy's reductionism and what Tolstoy criticized as "refined" art, lacking in universal appeal. While Ertel recognized the didactic function of art, he insisted that "art [exists] not only to teach, but to provide enjoyment."²⁷

²⁶Pis'ma 105. "нравственное учение, как бы оно ни было высоко, слишком недостаточно для блага людей без знания и искусства."

²⁷Pis'ma 79. "искусство не для того только, чтобы научать, но и для того, чтобы жизнь вмещала и наслаждение искусством."

A writer of Russia's "realist" tradition, Ertel believed in the writer's duty to depict life truthfully. He was confident in the writer's capacity to write "objectively," for he criticized as too subjective Beecher Stowe's description (in Uncle Tom's Cabin) of the negro as utterly good and the plantation owner as evil to the same degree. The writer's task, he insisted, was to demonstrate that "no one is to blame." As he wrote to Nikolaev on 6 March 1891:

In essence no one is to blame, that is my point. . . . [This fact] does not exclude struggle [to come to the truth], but in that struggle one must not forget the individual; one must remember that Katkov is the result of certain influences and circumstances, while Chernyshevsky of others. . . . Of course, in the practical realm--in political life, for instance--it is difficult to maintain this position. . . . [But] in the realm of art, which Hugo refers to as Grand Art, there is no place for malice and calls for violence, for neither malice nor violence is compatible with Truth. . . .²⁸

At the same time art was to pronounce "a judgment about reality in the name of changeless, intransient truth."²⁹ The apparent contradiction between this and his nonjudgmental, "no fault" principle can be explained by his praise of Dickens, who presented life with all its "authentic characteristics," but who at the same time brought "the reader through a series of good and evil deeds towards noble thoughts and feelings" [emphasis

²⁸Pis'ma 246-7.

²⁹Pis'ma 188. "суд-то над [действительностью] во имя незыблемой, непреходящей правды."

added].³⁰ Ertel did not deny that individuals commit evil deeds; he was simply confident that the writer could (and should) make judgments about what was ultimately good and true without condemning the evildoer.

True to a philosophy of "compromise," Ertel took Tolstoy "in moderation." Where both he and Tolstoy recognized the duty of the writer to "tell the truth," Ertel could not, for very long, limit his audience to the narod, and thus depict life as it ought to be according to a certain dogma. He made the effort instead to write fiction which faulted no one, while "pointing towards" objective truth, beauty and goodness. Where both Ertel and Tolstoy recognized the dangers of art for its own sake, Ertel insisted on the duty of art to give pleasure. Finally, where both writers sought to instruct, Ertel believed that any moral mandate that was not allied with reason was doomed to fail. This view caused Ertel to question Tolstoy's desire for a cataclysmic realization of the Kingdom of God, but to give preference to a view of the Kingdom which was more compatible with what we have called "moral pluralism" in conduct, historical necessity with regards to institutions, and the notion of progress as he understood it.

While a Providential Hand in history is evident in Gardeniny and Smena, the two novels are equally dialogical, for each voice or world view was to be understood only as it related

³⁰Pis'ma 80. "вести читателя сквозь вереницу злых и добрых человеческих дел и поступков--к добрым и благородным мыслям и чувствам."

to others. Ertel was very hopeful about the possibilities for dialogue between people of good will, and for this reason had little patience for misrepresentation. As he insisted to M. N. Chistiakov on 20 July 1889: "One can speak ill of another person only when one gives the full picture of that person, or when speaking with someone who is already well acquainted with that person and can complete the picture with the good one has failed to mention."³¹

³¹pis'ma 153. "О людях злое можно говорить, но с одним условием: или когда даешь полную картину того человека, о котором говоришь, или когда говоришь с тем, кто и без тебя отлично знает того человека, значит, может к твоему злomu прибавить для полноты картины все то доброе, что знает про человека. "

Chapter Three

Providential Polyphony in Gardeniny

But that is the beginning
of a new story--the
story of the gradual
rebirth of a man, the
story of his gradual
regeneration. . . .

--Crime and Punishment¹

When Ertel's administrative exile in Tver' had ended in early 1888 he moved to his family farm on the Gryaznusha river, Voronezh uyezd, and wrote his magnum opus: Gardeniny, ikh dvornia, priverzhentsy i vragi ("The Gardenins, their Servants, Retainers and Enemies," RM, 1889; published in book form in 1890).

Of epic dimensions and scope, Gardeniny is a "panoramic" novel of Russian society in the 1870's when, as Levin remarked in Anna Karenina, "everything [had] been turned upside down and [was] only just taking shape."² In Ertel's words, the novel depicted

. . . that period in public consciousness when ideas are reborn, beliefs are modified, new forms of community powerfully accelerate one's critical stance towards life, when an almost opposite new world-view sprouts. At the same time [it depicts] that free current of thought which is independent of the superficial forms of community, and the providential gravitation of

¹F.M. Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment, trans. and intro. D. Magarshack (New York: Penguin Books, 1966) 559.

²L.N. Tolstoy, Anna Karenina, trans. and intro. R. Edmonds (New York: Penguin Books, 1978) 352.

man towards the light. . . .³

In the same letter Ertel explained that he wished "to recall certain individuals from [his] personal past,"⁴ which suggests that sources for the novel were drawn from his own biography as well as from social history.

Ertel's novel is both social and personal, public and private, for he took it for granted that the particular embodied the universal. As Donna Orwin writes, there was "a general predisposition in nineteenth century Russia to see the individual as the embodiment of the Spirit of the time."⁵ For a sober assessment, therefore, of both the "spirit" of the 1870's and his own past, Ertel set the novel nearly twenty years back in time.

Most of the action takes place on or near the ancestral lands of the Gardenins in south central Russia. The gentry family itself provides only the frame, as it were, for the narrative, while the main characters are among those whose lives revolve around the estate or the hero. The central figures (identified for the time being by profession and/or relationship with the hero) include: the estate manager (father of the hero), the horse trainer, a joiner (hero's primary mentor), two merchants (also mentors to the hero), and a medical student (hero's "double"). Lesser figures include those women with whom

³Pis'ma 172-3.

⁴Pis'ma 172. "кое-какие фигуры из собственного прошлого."

⁵Orwin, 8.

the hero shares varying degrees of intimacy, a sectarian, the parish priests, the clerk, and finally the housekeeper. At the centre we find Nikolai Rakhmannyi, whose "gradual regeneration" gives the novel a plot.

Nikolai's story unfolds on two levels: intellectual and moral. His intellectual development takes him, with the aid of his mentors, from Orthodoxy through positivism to a philosophy of "small deeds." On the moral plane his development comes about through a specific romantic relationship which initially results in his estrangement from a friend, for he seduces that man's wife. The reconciliation with his friend which comes years later is truly momentous, for in it the two dimensions of Nikolai's development reach a climax: he begs forgiveness of his friend, who as his mentor had placed within him the seed of a spiritual philosophy which was now bearing fruit, and who now "released" his wife to join Nikolai (as he himself was departing on a pilgrimage). However, while the relational conflict is resolved, the last stage of Nikolai's intellectual development raises a conflict which is left untouched. This has to do with his philosophy of "small deeds," which increasingly becomes tempered by a "Buddhist" preoccupation with ceaseless change which undercuts his confidence in lasting progress.

Gardeniny has rarely been criticised as a panoramic novel. With the exception of I. Tkhorzhevskii, who wrote that the steppe region depicted was "lazy . . . [and] enveloped in sleep and stagnation,"⁶ most critics find in the novel something

worthy of artistic appreciation. Tolstoy, in his preface to the 1908 edition of Gardeniny, praised Ertel's knowledge of folk life and popular language;⁷ Gol'tsev applauded Ertel's thorough acquaintance with various currents in religious thought;⁸ Salikovskii wrote that "rarely does one find in our contemporary literature such a broad and rich panorama of life;"⁹ Soviet critics generally saw Ertel as an artist whose work tells "the truth" about the collapse of the old social order and the advent of capitalism in Russia.¹⁰

Few critics, however, have perceived in the novel the development of an adequate central idea. Karonin accused Ertel of stringing together too many episodes artificially,¹¹

⁶I. Tkhorzhevskii, Russkaia literatura (Paris: Vozrozhdenie, 1946) 432. "ленивая... [и] еще объятая сном и застоєм."

⁷L.N. Tolstoy, preface, SS vol. 5, by A. I. Ertel, 8 (Repr. PSS vol. 37: 243).

⁸V.A. Gol'tsev, "Literatura i zhizn'," RM 1 (1890), second pagination: 203.

⁹A. Salikovskii, "Sovremennye techeniia v obshchestvennoi zhizni," Russkoe bogatstvo 11 (1890): 143. "Не часто в нашей литературе, особенно современной, приходится встречать такую широкую и богатую панораму жизни. . . ."

¹⁰G. A. Kostin writes, for example, that "Ertel faithfully and broadly depicts, with a knowledge of the conditions and way of life, the Gardenin estate and the village peasants... [He] shows that the general laws of capitalism's growth enveloped even this remote region." ("Широко и правдиво, со знанием условий жизни и быта описывает Эртель гарденинскую дворянскую и крестьянскую деревню... Писатель показывает, что общие законы развития капитализма захватили и это захолустье.") Istoriia russkoi literatury, vol. 9 (Moscow-Leningrad: ANSSSR, 1956) 162-3.

¹¹S. Karonin, Sochineniia, vol. 2 (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1958) 582.

Salikovskii could find in the novel no plot to speak of,¹² and Protopopov found neither authentic characters nor an overarching theme.¹³ Batiushkov was the most generous in this regard: "[Ertel] does not give us an integrated understanding of life, but ably relates the episodes of life. Therein lie both his strength and weakness; he observes and seeks, but sees only the change, not the whole organic process."¹⁴ Ertel seems to have admitted to this weakness when he wrote: "What resulted was not a novel in the real sense but a chronicle--and perhaps a boring one. . . . What I've produced is material for a novel, and not a novel."¹⁵

On one level a response to these criticisms is perhaps unnecessary. If what was sought as a "central idea" was a clear argument in favour of one socio-political movement or another, then Gardeniny is to be commended for the plurality of ideas represented. On another level the slow pace, great attention to detail, ethnographic sketches, and the occasional "detachable" episode, or "delineated segment,"¹⁶ require some justification,

¹²Salikovsky, 144.

¹³М. Protopopov, "Tendentsioznyi roman," Severnyi vestnik 2 (1890): 53.

¹⁴Ф. Batiushkov, introduction, SS vol. 1, by A. I. Ertel, xxxii-xxxiv. "Он не дает целостного миропонимания жизни, но умело рассказывает эпизоды жизни. В этом его сила и его слабость. Он присматривается, ищет, наблюдает, но видит лишь смену явлений, а не органический целостный процесс."

¹⁵pis'ma 173-4. "Вместо романа в настоящем значении этого слова вышла хроника и, может быть, достаточно скучная. . . . Вот и вышел не роман, а материал для романа."

otherwise the novel can be said to suffer from a certain lack of focus. Indeed, not all of the episodes have an obvious role in the plot.

Nevertheless, within the framework of what G. S. Morson calls "sideshadowing," understood as the "antithesis of foreshadowing . . . [and that which] conveys the sense that actual events might just as well not have happened,"¹⁷ the above inconsistencies can and do have their role in the kind of novel where multiple possibilities are created through rich detail, episodes which "go nowhere," and where characters are doubled.¹⁸ While he recognized the apparent deficiencies, Ertel was relatively pleased with his "material for a novel," as he wrote to Gol'tsev, mentioning in particular certain portraits and ethnographic sketches. Elsewhere he expressed hope in its value, as well as a clear overall objective: "I pray to God that I might have been able to show in what manner one can exclaim . . . Yes, life is possible!"¹⁹

Ertel recognized that his novel was to serve more than one function. This chapter will therefore be divided into three

¹⁶R. Gustafson, Leo Tolstoy: Resident and Stranger (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986) 41.

¹⁷G.S. Morson, Narrative and Freedom (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994) 117-18.

¹⁸By "doubling of characters" Morson means that "fundamental principle of plot construction in Karamazov . . . in which major characters . . . possess a series of doubles, . . . each of whom acts out possible lives for a doubled and redoubled hero." Morson, Narrative 140.

¹⁹pis'ma 129. "Молю Бога лишь о том, чтобы удалось показать, каким образом . . . можно воскликнуть: Да, жить можно!"

sections, the first of which, "Confrontation," deals with Ertel's ethnographic impulse: the desire to "document" a period of transition. With attention to setting, routines, the equestrian theme, and the novel's main characters, we will examine the principal forms of confrontation with which the novel is concerned. The second section, entitled "Dialogue," concerns the epistemological impulse in the novel, whereby the author employs a doubling device to create and display dialogue. The third section, "Progress," will consider the novel's didactic impulse as reflected in its central theme: the gradual and "providential gravitation of man towards the light."²⁰

Confrontation

Founded by retired Brigadier General Iurii Gardenin in 1768, the village of Annenskoe (as we learn in I/2) was situated in a picturesque but remote steppe region of south central Russia, a hundred and twenty versts from the nearest city. A hundred years later it was still isolated, as the nearest railroad was eighteen versts away and the inhabitants of the village were only vaguely aware of the existence of banks, railways, telegraphs and governing bodies. Even though the town regularly received issues of "Son of the Fatherland" and "Horsebreeding Magazine," they preferred to be connected with the wider world by means of "live" news (i.e. through individuals). The river which ran through Annenskoe had been

²⁰Pis'ma 173. "провиденциальное тяготение человека к свету"

turned into ponds, now full of geese and ducks, and surrounded by peasant dwellings and maple, lime and birch trees.

The estate itself, called Gardenino, stands on two sides of a pond. On one side are located enormous horse stables, a riding house, a barn, store rooms, ice houses, a kitchen, the laundry, the housekeeper's quarters, and the manor house itself with balconies which face the pond. The wings of the mansion house the office and dwellings for the jockeys, the driver, stable hands, smiths, the cook, and the butler, right up to (in order of importance) the clerk, the horse trainer and the estate manager. On the other side of the pond stand more barns, a granary and threshing floor.

The daily routines about the estate, when the novel opens in 1871, are still related strictly to maintaining the estate itself: the manager makes daily rounds and the horse trainer oversees the stud farm, while at the lowest level the common labourers work in the fields.

While the horse trainer and estate manager conduct their affairs with strict authority, supervision at the lower levels of society is showing signs of change. In the fields, for instance, the estate manager's son's light-hearted interaction with common peasants draws attention to the fact that their basic needs are being overlooked, and suggests that rigid class barriers are breaking down. Dressed in coarse hempen shirts, high tucked-in old skirts, and "revealing bare dirty legs," Grun'ka and Dashka are raking manure on a spring day when they see Nikolai approaching. Dashka begins:

"Mikolka's going to see us, and just look at us!"

"The devil take him," answered [Grun'ka] in a coarse voice. "We're not gentry ladies. When there's manure to fling around you can't get all done up."

"Hey, Grun'ka, I see you're getting squeamy. I notice you smarten yourself up, but swear all the same. . . . One's little heart pines away when a nice little friend is around. Why hide it?"

"He's no darling of mine. You have him, the chubby devil! Hang him around your neck, if you like him. As for me, I could stand a century without him. I won't cry. . . . Oh, you're getting on my nerves too, Dashka, with your speeches!"²¹

Nevertheless, Dashka notices that Grun'ka continues to try to look her best. When Nikolai approaches he says with feigned severity: "You're raking unevenly, you devils!," whereupon Grun'ka retorts: "Get in here and show us then. . . . It's easy to be bright when you're sitting on the peasant's neck. . . . You've probably put away your flat cakes and tea, while Dashutka and I chewed a bit of bread, which is all we have."²² After this, Nikolai promises them lunch in the cherry grove.

This brief episode is concerned not only with change and the peasant question. With Dashka's provocative diminutives (serdechko, druzhocek) used to tease her friend, and Grun'ka's hyperbolic "get all done up" (obriazhat'sia), "manure to fling around" (navoz raskidyvat') and "put away" (natreskalsia, from

²¹SS vol. 6, 37.

²²SS vol. 6, 37. "--Вы чего неровно разбрасываете, черти? . . . --А ты слезь да покажи, как надо . . . больно вы умны на шее-то на мужицкой сидоче. . . . Ты небось чаю да сдобных лепешек натрескался, а мы с Дашуткой пожевали хлебушка, вот тебе и вся еда."

tresk: "crack"), one is given examples of the vivid peasant speech for which Tolstoy particularly enjoyed the novel.

Only the first chapter of the novel, which exists primarily for contrast, is set away from Gardenino or its environs. There we meet three of the Gardenins themselves: Tat'iana Ivanovna (a widow), Eliz, and Iurii (Rafail, the youngest, is only mentioned) in their St. Petersburg home, from which they visit their estate in the summer, unless they have to go abroad for Eliz's health.

We are first introduced to Iurii, who is about sixteen, has fair skin, dark eyebrows and sparkling eyes, dressed in a blue ulanka and riding pants. He makes his appearance by jumping from the bannisters to grab the maid, exclaiming in a half-serious tone: "And whad'ya have under that apron?"²³ This confident sense of authority is also reflected in the way he addresses his doorkeeper Grigorii:

I don't understand, Grigorii, why we don't bring people from Annenskoe, but instead hire all sorts of tradesmen and so on, eh? I understand you; you're a hussar, a sergeant major, and so on. You know, I'm going to be a hussar. The life hussars, eh? From Annenskoe we only have Iliushka, and no one else. Maman's maids are German. . . . I'd like for all our servants to be our own serfs. You understand, it's a proper manor house when the people are your own.²⁴

We learn that Iurii is his mother's favourite, and, based on her morning routine (which includes a bath, a French novel and a massage administered by the German maid) and manner with

²³SS vol. 5, 14. "Эт-та, что несешь под фартуком?"

²⁴SS vol. 5, 14-15.

her servants, that both she and her son cherish their gentry authority and habits. When told of her son's morning behaviour with the maid, and the fact that he had yelled at a young gardener for not taking off his hat, "Tatyana Ivanovna grinned fondly, with secret pride," and said: "Tell [the gardener] not to let that happen. It's bad for Iurii Konstantinovich's health to get angry. Better yet, why not let him go, and don't hire among the merchants."²⁵ Tat'iana Ivanovna's secure status is reinforced by her housekeeper, whose letter expresses loyal subservience, particularly with its choice of endearing diminutives:

"You've delighted us, your faithful servants, lady mistress, with your desire to spend the whole summer at Annenskoe. We, your faithful servants, admit that we have been miserable without my lady's bright eyes (glazki). As an old woman, I have been especially sad. And on their ancestral lands the kids (detki) will be able to run about more freely."²⁶

As a day in the luxurious life of the Gardenins in their city home comes to be juxtaposed with the routines of those at the bottom of the social ladder on the provincial estate, so the St. Petersburg-Gardenino opposition stands for one of the fundamental sources of conflict in the novel: the confrontation between "cataclysmic" and "prosaic" world views.²⁷ St.

²⁵SS vol. 5, 27. "Татьяна Ивановна нежно, с тайною гордостью усмехнулась. . . --Ты скажи ему, чтобы этого не было. Юрию Константиновичу вредно сердиться. Или, вообще, не лучше его уволить? . . . и не бери от купцов."

²⁶SS vol. 5, 29.

Petersburg, as projected in the first chapter, stands as a source of decisive action for two reasons. First, it is there that Efrem, the horse trainer's son, is involved with a circle which will be spreading its revolutionary propaganda throughout the countryside. Second, there Iurii Gardenin aspires to prominence with a military career and intends to issue directives concerning the affairs of his family estate in due course. As he says to his servant:

You know, Grigorii, the manager at Annenskoe has served thirty years. You can imagine how much he's stolen. . . . But I intend to bring all that to order, military-like, old chap. . . . What if I took you, Grigorii, as a horse-trainer. How about it?²⁸

And in due course Iurii sends this same Grigorii to replace the horse trainer at Gardenino. At Gardenino, however, such efforts and directives are foreign, and indeed unwelcome.

The first chapter serves to raise yet another central source of conflict: the confrontation between "fathers and sons." The housekeeper addresses this social problem in her letter: "What has come of our times, my lady. Children have no respect for their elders."²⁹ Here she is referring to Efrem, who has enrolled in medical school, refusing to work on the

²⁷Ertel uses the term "cataclysmic" of an event which is not inherent in nature, and which, if realized, victimizes those who attempt to bring such events about (*Pis'ma* 64). I use the term "prosaic" to characterize Ertel's attention to what is by contrast natural, ordinary, and everyday.

²⁸*SS* vol. 5, 15.

²⁹*SS* vol. 5, 29. "Вот времена какие настали, сударыня: дети почитают родителей за ничто."

horse farm for his father. In St. Petersburg he shows further disrespect by refusing Tat'iana Ivanovna's offer of lodging. This is matched by Eliz's disrespect for her "selfish" mother, driven by her concern for the city's poor: during a ride she comes across a drunken woman who is being beaten, and demands permission to take her home.³⁰

The family conflict introduced here comes to be extended more generally to the confrontation between the old and the new social orders. Representing and looking after the interests of the old order are the Gardenin family's principal "retainers," which include Kapiton Averianych, the strict horse trainer and father of Efrem, and Martin Lukianych, the authoritarian estate manager, who in addition to overseeing the estate is preoccupied with his son Nikolai's development as a suitable future manager. Both fathers suffer the same fate: Kapiton is eventually ordered by Iurii Gardenin to cede his job to the less efficient Grigorii, then Martin is replaced by Pereverzev, whose management skills and qualifications are more up-to-date. Then both men lose their sons to a different vocation: Efrem, we saw, joins a revolutionary movement, while Nikolai becomes a merchant.

Nikolai, Efrem, and other important characters make up the new order, whether actively opposing the old ways as "enemies" (like Efrem) or by representing diverse aspects of a changing

³⁰Eliz has, incidentally, been reading Crime and Punishment, and her near re-enactment of one of Raskolnikov's gestures is one of several Dostoyevskian images in the novel.

Russia. These include: Ivan Fedotych, the joiner and pacifist "new Christian" who embodies certain Tolstoyan principles; Arefii Suknoval, a protestant iconoclast who "knows his Bible;" Kosma Rukodeev, a wealthy and enlightened merchant; Il'ia Finogenych Eferov, a merchant and admirer of Novikov;³¹ Father Aleksandr, a priest of the "new formation;" and Agei Danilych, a free-thinking clerk who reads Voltaire. It must be mentioned that the retainer/enemy distinction is not meant to be rigid. Agei, for instance, stands on the borderline with his belief that Russia should not have abolished serfdom, while opposing the "ignorance" of traditional religious belief.

Ertel wished to depict in his novel "new forms of public opinion . . . [and the time] during which an almost opposite new world view burgeons,"³² and here we have indicated some of the reasons for that transformation: the ordinary and provincial is being favoured above progressive city life; the retainers' sons seek new vocations and are replaced by new men whose "improvement" on the work of their predecessors is ambiguous; and traditional customs and certainties are challenged by a plurality of options and ideas. In such an environment where "new forms of public opinion" offer conflicting answers to the question "what is to be done?" the ethical dimension of the

³¹Novikov, N. I. (1744-1818), Russian journalist, publisher, Freemason and philanthropist.

³²pis'ma 172-3. "новые формы общественности . . . [и тот период,] когда пускает ростки иное мировоззрение, почти противоположное первоначальному."

novel becomes central. As we shall see below, the novel's equestrian theme plays an important role in that dimension.

Gardeniny contains episodes and action which "lead nowhere," as we have suggested, in the sense that they have no obvious role in the plot. An example of such is the beginning itself, where Iurii Gardenin is presented in considerable detail, but quickly brushed aside, and remembered only briefly later on. As Morson argues, these episodes provide the context within which those things that do happen (such as coincidences, which defy contingency) are truly momentous "because we know from experience that these events might just as readily not have happened."³³ In Ertel's case we have what appears to be a deliberate rejection of the notion that events take place only in the capitals, for example, and in the lives and aspirations of the elite. Thus Iurii is left in the novel's frame, and true events are sought in the second chapter, far from the capital cities, and in the ordinary lives of the people on a provincial estate.

In one sense, any ethnographic sketch in Gardeniny can also be perceived to "lead nowhere." Skabichevskii severely criticized the novel because

a good half of the novel is taken up with the description of customs and way of life in the stables of a large horse farm; the author initiates you into all the genealogical details of various racers and trotters, mutual intrigues, scheming, insults and arguments between stable hands and drivers, as well as into their lives

³³Morson, Narrative 159.

outside during various sports; the life of each stable hand and driver is depicted in full detail. For this reason the novel takes on a rather stud-farm like character, so that one is from time to time confused as to who the hero is, whether Efrem Kapitonov, Nikolai Rakhmannyi, or Krolik the stallion.³⁴

Skabichevskii is, of course, unfair. Only five (of twenty-six) chapters are either directly or partially concerned with those aspects he lists, and there is no doubt that Nikolai emerges as the novel's hero. Moreover, a closer look at the horse theme shows that it plays a significant role for reasons which are not obvious on a first reading. All the relatively insignificant events related to horse breeding amount to decisions and actions with profound implications. We shall therefore examine the events connected with the race in order to understand the function of an episode which might otherwise be perceived to be entirely detachable.

In I/6 we learn that Kapiton was preparing to replace his senior jockey, Onisim, with the proud and quick-tempered but able Efim, nicknamed "Gypsy." It was a well known fact that Krolik's performance was not improving with Onisim, and since the other jockeys (and the horse-trainer above all) had great aspirations for money and fame, Onisim had no friends, but only a large family to take care of. The rumour of Kapiton's intentions has reached everyone but Onisim, who when dismissed can only mumble: "I beg your pardon. . . . I've won so many

³⁴A.M. Skabichevsky, "Literaturnaia khronika. «Gardeniny...», roman A.I. Ertelia, Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta 342 (14 Dec. 1890): 2 (as quoted in Nikiforov, 79-80).

awards... certificates... watches; I've been mentioned in the magazines... What's the reason?"³⁵ To his great dismay and his family's grief he is required to leave Gardenino, and in II/6 Nikolai is troubled to find him at a fair working as an actor in a manner degrading to himself and his family.

Thus Kapiton's minor decision to dismiss a minor employee (Onisim refers to himself as a "little person," which stresses his place in society, and suggests his kinship with Gogol's or Dostoyevsky's "little folk") impoverishes a whole family, which angers Nikolai as he is moved with pity at Onisim's new circumstances. At the same time, Kapiton's action secures for Krolik a promising driver, who will eventually take him to the big race at Khrenovoe. A similar pattern is repeated with Iurii, who dismisses Kapiton himself, and later the estate manager, with no apparent thought given to the possible consequences.

In II/7 we have the account of Krolik's race, with which the equestrian theme culminates. By itself the description of the race was intended to be enjoyed for its own sake; and indeed it was, for Gol'tsev reported that, when in one installment the story ended at a dramatic point in the race, telegrams arrived in the editorial office asking for the results.³⁶ Mirsky, too, wrote that "one of the most memorable episodes is the account of

³⁵SS vol. 5, 161. "Но позвольте. . . . Сколько, может, имею наград... лист... часы... Обозначен в журналах. По какому случаю?"

³⁶v. G. Korolenko, Pis'ma 1888-1921 (P, 1922) 300-1.

a trotting match at Khrenovaya [sic], which holds its own even by the side of the race scene in Anna Karenina."³⁷

The race is held at Khrenovoe, where Kapiton has already arrived to inspect Krolik and see to it that Efim is sober. The rival horse Groznyi is owned by a certain Mal'chikov, who hopes that his horse will win the race so he can boost the reputation of his stud farm which he would like to sell. Suspense is built as Kapiton worries about Krolik's competition, watches the crowds arrive, tries to avoid jockeys and other horse farmers, and looks at portraits of famous race horses.

The drivers' attitudes on the next day differ significantly. Groznyi's driver sits happily and confidently, while Efim seems possessed by some evil force. When Efim was first introduced to Krolik he had shouted at the horse with unusual severity, so that Krolik would be still in his presence; now as "Efim's face turned from olive-colour to saffron, [and his] eyes looked something between drunk and mad," Fedotka the stable hand experienced "terror like never before in the presence of the driver."³⁸ Efim's control over Krolik proves successful: while Groznyi leads the race until close to the end, Krolik overtakes him "with proud and calm assurance of his

³⁷D.S. Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature (NY: Vintage Books, 1958) 352-3.

³⁸SS vol. 6, 164. "Лицо Ефима сделалось из оливкового каким-то шафранным, глаза были не то пьяные, не то бешенные. Никогда еще Федотка не чувствовал такого страха перед наездником."

strength. . . ."39 But alas, around midnight Fedotka announces that Krolik is ill, and soon after the horse dies.

Krolik's death, which comes as a surprise and causes considerable grief, is highly symbolic, and draws attention to the special role of the race in the novel. As Kapiton made every effort to win the race and bring about closure (reflected in Efim's sinister control over Krolik), the horse's death stands as a reminder that the race, like life, is meant to be open, and that small decisions matter. In his study of the race scene in Anna Karenina, Georg Lukacs writes that in Tolstoy's novel the race represents "a crisis in a great drama," unlike the race scene in Zola's Nana, which was more of a delineated sketch.⁴⁰ In Gardeniny the race has a great deal to do with the plot, for Krolik's death foreshadows the death of Efrem's mother (in the next chapter), who dies of a stroke when Kapiton curses Efrem for confronting him over his mistreatment of Fedotka. In sum, Kapiton's desire for control and failure to attend to the lesser decisions inevitably (for contingency is thwarted) result in further loss: after his mother's death Efrem decides to leave Gardenino.

³⁹SS vol. 6, 168. "с гордым и спокойным сознанием своей силы"

⁴⁰Georg Lukacs, Writer and Critic and Other Essays (NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1970) 110-11.

Dialogue

In addition to different forms of confrontation, Gardeniny is concerned with dialogue. Nikiforov has written that Gardeniny is first and foremost a novel of ideas, in which characters either stand or fall in accordance with their capacity to reason.⁴¹ While it is true that the novel is philosophical, clear distinctions between individuals of greater and weaker capacity to reason are blurred in this work where the oppositions presented to the reader do not produce mere synthesis, but together display a field of possibilities. Here we shall examine closely the way in which the novel's pairs or "doubles," either through open discourse or some other structural means, confront one another philosophically. We shall observe how an enlightened world view confronts "ignorance," and how two religious sectarians, two priests, and finally two merchants present conflicting options.

Agei Danilych the clerk is the most educated man in the Gardenino community, and is respected for his honesty, learning and sobriety. As a young man he had been severely punished on account of his love for Felitsata Nikanorovna (the housekeeper), so that he is now a rather solitary man. As an admirer of Voltaire, Agei is the resident unbeliever, and for this reason the subject of (particularly) Kapiton's ridicule. On one occasion Kapiton provokes him, saying:

⁴¹Nikiforov, "Tvorchestvo A. I. Ertelia," 69.

'And you, Freemason, say there's no God. . . .
 But look at the beauty all around us... How
 lovely and marvelous it is!'. . .
 'It's nature, if you care to know,' answered
 Agei Danilych, . . . 'ignorance calls it
 the work of God.'⁴²

In Agei's vocabulary "ignorance" is what "nature" must contend with. "Is it really a sin," he asks in a discussion of fasting, "if I had ham on Friday? Now if I starve myself . . . or stuff my stomach with radishes that's a true sin, since I would be sinning against nature itself."⁴³ On one occasion Kapiton dictates to him, in religious language, a letter to Efrem: "Tell . . . [him] to fast, attend divine service and partake of the holy mysteries every year without fail. For if God has mercy on sinners, then how much more will he on those who keep his laws."⁴⁴ Agei suggests an alternative version:

Who writes such ignorance, especially to an educated man. . . . Here's how [you should put it]: "Through humble conviction and belief I advise you, my dear son, not to neglect the practices of the Catholic religion, but to carry out with fair diligence that which [it] prescribes with regards to the liturgy, confession, and participation in the sacrament. You will through this observance do a pleasant deed for your parents, and according to our faith pleasing to the Creator. For the Creator made all that is for good and for the sake of the excellent and proper florescence of nature."⁴⁵

⁴²SS vol. 5, 79.

⁴³SS vol. 5, 90. "Ужели сие сочтется за грех, коли я в пятницу ветчины поел? Вот ежели я голодом привожу себя в уныние, естосмак редькой набиваю, это подлинно грех: понеже грешу против самой натуры. . . ."

⁴⁴SS vol. 5, 90. "Выводи . . . говеть же тебе, сын мой Ефрем, а такожде и приобщаться святых и страшных таин беспрерывно кажинный год. Ибо ежели Господь грешников милует, то кольми паче соблюдающих правила."

Although his instructions have lost their force, Kapiton cannot help but agree to Agei's version, saying: "Not bad, clever."⁴⁶

Alas it is nature itself which kills Agei, as he is the first victim of the cholera epidemic which comes through Gardenino in the summer of 1871. In his death we see a parallel with Turgenev's Bazarov, who similarly, as an unbeliever, dies the victim of an infection. The sad irony in Agei's case is that he can only counter the "ignorance" around him with a natural determinism, reflected in his words as he lies dying: "I deliberately maintain that there won't be anything. . . . You fool yourselves with fables."⁴⁷ Thus the freethinker boldly, but defiantly, meets his end without the last rites as the woman he loved pleads: "Ageiushko, . . . Father Grigorii is on his way . . . depart with God's grace!"⁴⁸

Between atheism and presumably superstitious belief stand two important figures: Ivan Fedotych and Arefii Suknoval. If in The Brothers Karamazov, as one critic has observed,⁴⁹ Dostoyevsky dealt with two ways of Orthodoxy, namely the kenotic and the rigorous (through Zosima and Ferapont, respectively), Ertel presents a roughly corresponding pair through Ivan and

⁴⁵SS vol. 5, 91.

⁴⁶SS vol. 5, 91. "Ничего, ловко."

⁴⁷SS vol. 5, 308. "Нарочито утверждаю, что ничего не будет-с... Баснями дурачитесь...."

⁴⁸SS vol. 5, 309. "Агеюшко... Вот отец Григорий сейчас придет... отойди с благодатью!"

⁴⁹A. Menn, Radostnaia vest' (Moscow: Vita-Tsentr, 1992) 309.

Arefii. Ertel's intent was to convey a sense of the "underground current of thought,"⁵⁰ but fearing censorship he admitted that there was a great deal about which he was forced to remain silent. Nevertheless, through Ivan Fedotych and Arefii Suknoval is presented the dialogue between two types of religious dissent.

Before we meet the two in conversation we know very little about them: Arefii is said to be "devising a new faith,"⁵¹ and is described as a thinking, literate muzhik who loves to talk about God, while Martin Lukianych admires the old joiner, Ivan Fedotych, but thinks of him as lazy.

On this occasion, which we learn is their third meeting, Arefii makes his commitment to the Bible quite clear. When Nikolai refuses milk (because it is a time of fasting) Arefii looks at him sarcastically and accuses him of not knowing the Scriptures. Nikolai objects, saying, "So do you think we don't need to go to church either?,"⁵² and Arefii has an appropriate quotation from the Bible:

Go to Jerusalem, as well as church, if you like. . . . Have you not read that "the time will come and has now come, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for such worshippers seeks the Father to worship Him?"⁵³

⁵⁰Pis'ma 128. "подводное течение"

⁵¹SS vol. 5, 98. "[н]овую веру обдумывает"

⁵²SS vol. 5, 104. "Этак ты придумаешь, что и в церковь не надо ходить?"

⁵³SS vol. 5, 104. (John 4:23)

Then he explains to Ivan, picking up on their previous conversation, that he agrees with Isaac the Syrian's understanding of hell as temporary, for I John 4:16 teaches that "God is love," while in I Corinthians 13: 4-8 St. Paul writes that "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Ivan complains that Arefii loves to cite texts, and wonders what he makes of the Church council which proclaimed Origen's belief in the temporary nature of hell as heretical. "I don't accept the councils,"⁵⁴ responds Arefii.

As the conversation proceeds, the opposition between contemplative and dogmatic ways of religion becomes more evident. "With what wisdom is God's world made! Why all the quarrelling, insults, lies and hatred?"⁵⁵ Arefii responds with his messianic hope that the reign of the "prince of darkness" will soon end, telling of a certain community where people live in brotherhood, orphans are taken care of, the hungry are fed, and there is no vice: proof of the efficacy of life according to the Scriptures.⁵⁶ With this Arefii challenges Ivan to get to work, for the "harvest is plenty and the labourers are few,"

⁵⁴SS vol. 5, 105. "Я вселенским соборам не верю. . . ." The Church Council referred to is Constantinople, 553.

⁵⁵SS vol. 5, 107. "Сколь мудро устроен мир Божий! . . . Для чего, подумаешь, обида, ложь, человеконенавистничество? . . ."

⁵⁶The particular community referred to here is probably the branch of the "Molokan" Sect (see footnote 60) which F. Conybeare refers to as one of the "Communists." These evangelical sectarians lived according to the model of the Early Church as described in the Book of Acts. Russian Dissenters (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962) 327ff.

cease to serve the devil, and "take up his cross."⁵⁷ All along Ivan either agrees, raises a minor qualification, or appeals to a more prosaic spirituality: "You see those churches? The church bells will be calling the people to mass, and to pray for their sins. . . ."⁵⁸

Ertel took great pains to insist on Ivan Fedotych's authenticity when Chertkov criticized his portrait of him as not "true to life." While pleased with Arefii, Chertkov accused Ertel of placing in Ivan his own views, for simple sectarians whom Ivan represented could not have shared his "Renan-like historical-artistic view of the Church."⁵⁹ Ertel reminded Chertkov that the time depicted was not the present, but 1870 (actually it was 1871), when relations between the priest and peasants were not so hostile, and when the church's cupolas and bells "signified what they ought to: the passing forms of the great essence that lives in each soul."⁶⁰ Moreover, Ivan was not a simple peasant, but a "wisdom lover" (*liubomudr*) who was well-read, had lived abroad, and had developed the inclusivist attitude towards people of other faiths as expressed in his notion that "[n]ot only Christians, but Jews, Turks and heathens

⁵⁷SS vol. 5, 108-9. "жатва велика, а жнецов нетути. . . . Кресть на себя принять. . . ." (Matthew 9:37; Mark 8:34)

⁵⁸SS vol. 5, 108. "Видишь. . . храмы [sic] Божий. . . Вот маленько годя гул пойдет колокольный: народушко к вечерням поплетется. . . молиться о грехах. . . ."

⁵⁹pis'ma 122. "Ренановский историческо-пейзажный взгляд на церковь."

⁶⁰pis'ma 125. "означали то, что им и нужно означать: преходящие формы той великой сущности, которая живет в душе каждого человека."

have the spark of God and His love in their hearts."⁶¹ For his acceptance of milk during the fast and frequent appeals to Scripture one might identify Arefii with the Molokan sect, which was distinguished for the primacy it gave to Scripture (above tradition), its iconoclastic rejection of sacraments (their name derived from "milk" for their acceptance of milk when it was forbidden by the fast), and belief in the millennial reign of Christ on earth.⁶²

Towards the end of the novel we find that Arefii has gained a convert, for Ivan joins his religious community. Their coming together on Arefii's territory is ultimately ambiguous, however. On the one hand Nikolai reacts negatively, for in his view Arefii's dogmatic (today we might say "fundamentalist") form of religious practice seems unnatural. On the other hand Ivan seems to have found authentic religious practice among his more rigorous brethren (and indeed they are seeing to the needs of the community and refraining from vice). Perhaps, given that there was room for diversity of opinion and practice, Ivan chose to join Arefii not because it was "required," but because it was "allowed." We recall that when offered milk he had said "I see no sin in it, but I won't take it."⁶³ The issue of dogma raised earlier in their discussion was left unanswered: when

⁶¹SS vol. 5, 112. "не токмо у христиан,-- у жидов, у турок, у язычников которых--у всех искра Божия, у всех зажжена любовь в сердце."

⁶²Conybeare, 291.

⁶³SS vol. 5, 104. "греха в этом не вижу, но не потребляю."

told that an eternal hell was incompatible with a God of love. Ivan had pointed out how problematic it was to always appeal to Scripture and books.⁶⁴

Two priests, whom we meet in I/10, present a picture of the established church in transition. The fact that they are placed in competition with one another, in much the same way as are Ivan and Arefii, is made explicit in the chapter's subheading: "Father Grigorii and Father Aleksandr, and which of the two is better."⁶⁵

The younger priest is introduced as he is celebrating the liturgy. A large, well-fed man with chubby cheeks, bulging eyes and a bright red but sparse growth for a beard, Father Aleksandr "celebrated with grandeur," and his "thick shoulders sometimes shook as though he felt epaulettes on them."⁶⁶ His thick, heavy hand holds the cross and raises the cup too freely, as though he has not yet "adapted" to his office.⁶⁷ With these details we realize that the new priest in town was a confident, but inexperienced man who was aware of his important status. His teaching on the Holy Trinity following the liturgy reflects his recent training in dogmatic theology and, as he admits, his desire to instruct the people.

⁶⁴SS vol. 5, 105. "Все из писания, все из книг!"

⁶⁵SS vol. 5, 231. "Отец Григорий и отец Александр и кто из них лучше?"

⁶⁶SS vol. 5, 247-8. "служил весьма благолепно"; "[его] плотные плечи встряхивались, так, как будто чувствовали на себе эполеты. . . ."

⁶⁷SS vol. 5, 248. "приспособиться"

Fr. Grigorii represents the old school of clerics. As he comments when he and Fr. Aleksandr (his son-in-law) are guests at Martin Lukianych's home:

Just think, Lukianych . . . what they taught us! We'd go over and over our hermeneutics and homiletics, get thrashed as slaves of the Lord with countless stinging rods. That's proper learning, I say. You won't believe who we studied. Feofan Prokopovich. Yes. But Aleksandr just made it through Macarius, sat down and cranked out a sermon in half an hour.⁶⁸

While his training might be outdated (although Prokopovich was a progressive for his time), as well as his customs (he thrusts his hand to his host's lips, while Fr. Aleksandr avoids the ceremony), Fr. Grigorii does not display the arrogance of his son-in-law with regards to manual labour or the people:

The people are growing poor. . . . You come, celebrate, you're handed a ten copeck piece, and you feel ashamed to accept it. . . . Only by means of labour, only by means of callouses have I earned my sustenance, I say.⁶⁹

Father Aleksandr, on the other hand, thinks that such work is not proper for a priest: "Think about it, Martin Lukianych, how is my parishioner going to respect me if I smell, pardon my expression, of cow manure? In Europe they look down on such a thing."⁷⁰

⁶⁸SS, vol. 5, 253-4. F. Prokopovich (1681-1736), Archbishop of Novgorod in 1720, supporter of Peter the Great's reforms; Macarius (1482-1563), Metropolitan of Moscow in 1542 and compiler of Chet'i minei (a collection of religious texts arranged for reading throughout the year).

⁶⁹SS vol. 5, 254.

Fr. Aleksandr had tried to win the approval of Nikolai and Martin Lukianych. At the end of his sermon he had impressed and given Martin a sense of importance as he spoke of those "gifts . . . which determine our special vocation and place among our fellow men," which included that of "overseeing, building, and governing the estate. . . ." ⁷¹ Once at the Rakhmannyis' home he commends Nikolai for assisting his father, but just as quickly changes his mind in Nikolai's favour when the latter says that he finds other forms of learning more productive. By the end of the visit neither Nikolai nor his father is fond of the new priest.

A fourth dialogue takes place on the secular front, where two merchants are juxtaposed. The first is Kosma Vasilievich Rukodeev, a wealthy merchant who impresses Nikolai by speaking to him as an equal, addressing him by his name and patronymic and shaking his hand. On business, and waiting for Martin Lukianych's return, Rukodeev reads a poem Nikolai has written and criticizes its outdated theme and poor rhyme scheme, but encourages Nikolai to continue writing. Rukodeev, Nikolai notices, "glanced at his massive golden watch, slowly pulled out of one pocket his massive silver cigarette case, and from the other his massive amber cigarette holder," ⁷² then offers Nikolai

⁷⁰SS, vol. 5, 255: "Посудите, Мартин Лукьяныч, какое ко мне будет уважение от прихожанина, если я, с позволением сказать, буду коровьим навозом пахнуть? В Европе на это не так смотрят."

⁷¹SS vol. 5, 249. "таланты, которыми определено наше особое призвание и место в кругу наших ближних. . . . Иному [Творец] даровал талант надзирать за порядком, домостроительствовать, приобщать препорученное господином имение. . . ."

a cigarette. All of this impresses the young man, who is most honoured when Rukodeev promises to lend him Darwin and Nekrasov,⁷³ and invites him to town. He insists that all men are citizens and "brothers," including the peasant, and deals in a very civilized manner, as it seems to his new admirer: instead of swearing and asking for special consideration, he simply and politely speaks of the "state of the market in London, the over-development of sheep-breeding in Australia,"⁷⁴ and other such things which make him sound informed and cultured. As the business dealings progress, however, Rukodeev and Martin Lukianych become increasingly drunk, and Rukodeev admits to a certain inconsistency: "We drink because we're swine... We sit on the peasant's necks. . . . Don't follow our example. . . . We're descended from apes... It's been proven."⁷⁵ Once at Rukodeev's home Nikolai is told not to bother with Pushkin, who "has long been consigned to the rubbish bin,"⁷⁶ and is given about twenty "progressive" books for his "development."

⁷²SS vol. 5, 129. "посмотрел на свои массивные золотые часы, не спеша вынул из одного кармана массивный серебряный портсигар, из другого-- массивный янтарный мундштук...."

⁷³Nekrasov, N.A. (1821-78), Poet of the "Realist School" in Russian poetry who depicted the hard life of the peasants in his work.

⁷⁴SS vol. 5, 136. "положение рынка в Лондоне, на чрезмерное развитие овцеводства в Австралии"

⁷⁵SS vol. 5, 138. "Потому и пьем, что свиньи... на шее народной сидим. . . . Не берите с нас пример. . . . Все из обезьяны!... Это доказано. . . ."

⁷⁶SS vol. 5, 198. "давно уж в хлам сдали"

In II/6 Nikolai meets the other merchant, Il'ia Finogenych (an ironmonger by trade), who invites him home. There Nikolai finds unusual cleanliness and order, and that his host is indeed a lover of books (as Rukodeev had said). Mirroring Rukodeev, he suggests that Nikolai read Pushkin, "immerse [him]self in books, work and life" and "chisel away [at ignorance] . . . while you have the strength!"⁷⁷ During the cholera epidemic, he says, he helped organize a committee for relief work. It was only a "drop in the ocean," but the sense of "community grows all the same, which is a great thing."⁷⁸ He then invites Nikolai to learn his trade as his apprentice, after which he can open his own shop. "Dealing in iron products is an honourable thing to do," he pronounces, and he concludes with what could be his motto: "Horseshoes, axes and pitchforks are my wares, and books are my friends."⁷⁹ We quote extensively here because Il'ia Finogenych's choice of words is significant: "chisel away" and "drop in the sea" are indicative of his practical, "small deeds" philosophy.

When Nikolai is working for him several months later, he reiterates his hopeful philosophy:

One hardly expects, planting an oak tree, to
enjoy its shade, but plants it anyway. . . . Every

⁷⁷SS vol. 6, 149-50. "вникай в книги, в дела, в жизни . . . долби [невежество] . . . пока сил хватит. . . ."

⁷⁸SS vol. 6, 150. "капля в море, . . . [но] гражданственность развивается, вот что большое дело."

⁷⁹SS vol. 6, 151. "железная торговля все-таки пристройна. . . . У меня подковы, топоры, вилы--товар, а книги--друзья."

idea grows and gives fruit. Look at history, and recall Novikov and Radishchev... Was not serfdom a terrible thing? But we didn't doubt, and dared to dream against it, and planted the dream... And we reap the fruits!⁸⁰

A fifth "double" is made up of Nikolai and Efrem, whose lives represent two options for the young intellectual of the time. Their interaction will be considered in the third section.

Gol'tsev wrote that Ertel depicted the currents of religious thought not only with knowledge of his subject, but with love.⁸¹ Indeed Ertel refrains from resolving the issues in favour of one side or another in various ways. In Agei's case his freethinking option has the strength accorded to the minority, where the traditional majority view has ossified and become intolerant of hesitation and doubt. Moreover, his circumstances evoke sympathy, and his honesty, learning and consistency earn him the community's respect. In the case of the two sectarians the dialogue is sustained by unresolved issues. Likewise, when his old priest's ways are being challenged by "progressive" ones (which presumably might make the Church more dynamic) Nikolai is puzzled and asks "How can you compare them?" Finally, whereas Il'ia Finogenych creates a better impression than his double, Rukodeev nevertheless plays

⁸⁰SS vol. 6, 259. A.N. Radishchev (1749-1802), writer and (like Novikov) a freemason. For his A Journey from Petersburg to Moscow, 1790, he was exiled to Siberia after Catherine found the work subversive.

⁸¹Gol'tsev, "Literatura i zhizn'" 203.

an important role in Nikolai's development, and even recognizes his own weakness.

Ultimately what renders the novel "polyphonic" and the various views of life genuine options is the fact that each character is most authentic when using his own distinctive voice. A rather amusing instance of the failure to do so is found in Kapiton's "authoritative" discourse (in the letter he dictates to Agei), which Agei harshly dubs "ignorant." Agei, in the meantime, is compelled to put in sophisticated terms what is being dictated to him. Thus God's mercy on sinners, for instance, is rendered in terms of human enlightenment. Arefii Suknoval's appeal to the authority of Scripture is similarly challenged by Ivan Fedotych, who encourages him not to "quote from books," but (by implication) to use his own words. Ivan Fedotych uses his own language by (re)telling stories, which frees him from the limits imposed by propositional language.

Progress

Ultimately diversity and dialogue in the novel do not exist for their own sake. Rather, they provide the context for a divinely-guided quest for authenticity. As early as September 1885 Ertel had explained to Tolstoy that he wished to write a saint's life, in which there would be "less mysticism and more authentic, holy deeds."⁸² This intention was to a great extent fulfilled in Gardeniny, in which his hero is guided through a

⁸²pis'ma 56. "поменьше мистики, а поболее подлинного, святого дела."

series of mentorships towards greater insight and maturity, and in which, as he wrote to Gol'tsev four years later, the reader might find "much that was instructive."⁸³ In the remainder of this chapter we shall discuss that aspect which relates to the author's didactic impulse: Nikolai's story, and the relationship between his life and the authentic Christian life (as understood by Ertel).

The Nikolai we meet in Part I (which covers approximately five months) is a young man who, like many budding intellectuals of the time, is having the foundation of God and tradition pulled out from under him. We learn that he had never read the gospels and knew only a synopsis of the Old and New Testaments, but that until his meeting with Rukodeev, his first mentor, he faithfully practiced the Orthodox religion: he took great pleasure in attending the liturgy, and sensed the wonder and joy as he prayed and went to early mass. As the narrator tells us, Nikolai enjoyed the "glorious, brisk morning, the dawnbreak on the pale sky, the steppe . . . [and] the grand but dismal lenten bells."⁸⁴ At the same time, "[h]e unconsciously took in and put into practice everything that seemed to him bright, joyous, pleasant, . . ."⁸⁵ so that he never thought of scrutinizing his beliefs. Sometimes his soul was even moved with dreams "of life

⁸³Pis'ma 172. "много поучительного"

⁸⁴SS vol. 5, 123. "Славный утренний холодок, заря на бледном небе, степь . . . [и] важно унылый великопостный звон. . . ."

⁸⁵SS vol. 5, 121. "Он бессознательно впитывал в себя и претворял все, что казалось ему светлым, радостным, приятным. . . ."

progress. . . ."⁸⁹ The secularization process taking place in society is underscored by the inability of the priests to offer a rebuttal. Father Aleksandr simply adapts, like a chameleon, to the person he wishes to please, and Fr. Grigorii, whose prayers in church Nikolai remembers, seems to belong to the past.

For further mentorship Nikolai turns outside the church, although at this point he visits Ivan Fedotych because he likes to hear him tell stories, not because he is a man of learning and spiritual insight. In fact he puts Ivan down as a "mystic." Thus on one occasion Nikolai visits him (with Tat'iana, Ivan's youthful wife, present) and gets into an argument over whether killing is justified under any circumstances. Ivan insists that "if one is permitted to kill then there is no sin, and nothing to repent of,"⁹⁰ whereas Nikolai responds that in some cases killing is the lesser of two evils. Nikolai has known Rukodeev for only two months, but already he finds no meaning in Ivan's religious language ("sin, soul, repentance, hell and heaven"⁹¹).

On this particular visit, however, Nikolai does not wish to prolong the debate because he feels drawn to Tat'iana, and he decides to find common ground:

I understand that violence is inhumane. . . .

⁸⁹SS vol. 5, 253. "Есть, по всей вероятности, и более продуктивные [науки]. . . Я думаю, естествознание или политическая экономия неизмерно лучше содействуют цивилизации, нежели сельское хозяйство. . . . Я понимаю науку как могущественный двигатель прогресса. . . ."

⁹⁰SS vol. 5, 263. "коли убить возможно, значит, и греха нету, значит, и каяться не в чем?"

⁹¹SS vol. 5, 264. "душа, грех, покаяние, ад, рай"

But on the other hand, Ivan Fedotych, in the papers they're predicting that so many will die in the cholera epidemic... and for what reason?⁹²

Ivan appeals to the book of Job: "the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord,"⁹³ while Nikolai looks "daringly" at his wife, and says: "I agree entirely. . . . Essentially, life is nothing. . . . It all amounts to this: one must see to it that life does not pass us by in vain, and that it might be remembered for something."⁹⁴

This comment does not satisfy Ivan, who proceeds to tell his story of "Faustin the Wise," a version of the Faust legend which tells us more about Ivan (as we shall see towards the end of the chapter), since Nikolai pays little attention as his thoughts are on Tat'iana, while hers are on her own desire for some "yet unexperienced and unprecedented happiness."⁹⁵ Only the end of the story, apparently, affects the listeners: when Faust's curse is removed because of his earnest prayer Tat'iana bursts into tears (she tells Ivan that it's because he tells stories with such passion), while Nikolai (motivated by Tat'iana's tears, perhaps, or the notion that "if all is forgiven, all is permitted"), "suddenly found in himself the

⁹²SS vol. 5, 264.

⁹³SS vol. 5, 264. "Он дал, Он и взял, буди имя Его благословенно!"

⁹⁴SS vol. 5, 265. "С этим я совершенно согласен. . . . Собственно говоря, жизнь--копейка. . . . Весь вопрос в том, лишь бы она зря не пошла, было бы ее чем помянуть. . . ."

⁹⁵SS vol. 5, 271 "какого-то не испытанного, не виданного счастья. . . ."

desire to carry out the wildest and unbelievable deeds."⁹⁶ And, indeed, Nikolai reminds Ivan of some unfinished business, and takes the opportunity in Ivan's absence to seduce Tat'iana. Shortly after, reluctant to speak again with Ivan, he hurries past him with a look of "fear, shame and dismay."⁹⁷ Later the shame turns to hatred when Tat'iana rejects his advances.

While the cholera's aftermath is a thing of the past for many in Gardenino by winter (still 1871), the epidemic and other events and impressions in Nikolai's life "took deep root in his soul."⁹⁸ In some respects he had turned over a new leaf, and indeed Part II is the story of Nikolai's gradual rebirth.

The story of Nikolai's progress is the account of his growing ability to "enter life," which for Ertel was marked by the growing capacity to love and to know.⁹⁹ To look for decisive moments of conversion in Nikolai's life would be, according to the notion of gradual regeneration, to miss the point. It is only towards the end of the novel, in fact, that he is "confirmed" with Finogenych's blessing as he is sent out to do good deeds for his "suffering brother."¹⁰⁰ This understanding of "coming to the light" is consistent with

⁹⁶SS vol. 5, 274. "вдруг заметил в себе какую-то опрометчивую готовность на самые дикие и невероятные поступки."

⁹⁷SS vol. 5, 279. "ужаса, стыда, растерянности"

⁹⁸SS vol. 6, 30. "залегли ему в душу"

⁹⁹pis'ma 133.

¹⁰⁰SS vol. 6, 275. "страдающего брата"

Ertel's own experience (and it goes without saying that Nikolai's story is in various respects autobiographical), for he understood development as taking place more by means of completion and inclusion than by rejection of previously held beliefs.

The first signs of Nikolai's rebirth are found in his sense of oneness with the people. He had begun diligently to teach Fedotka to read, had written an article which dealt with the epidemic, Fr. Aleksandr's high fees, divisions in Annenskoe, bribery, and general disrespect for the people, and was now unable to carry out properly his duties as estate manager's son because he had difficulty being strict and collecting fines. Indeed his attraction to Grun'ka is indicative not only of his youth, but of his close relationship with the people (who even call him "Mikolka"). For such fraternizing he is severely chastized by his father, who nevertheless "understands:" "I realize you're at that age. . . . Go and buy a shawl or something."¹⁰¹ Ultimately Martin's authority and class barriers win out, and Grun'ka becomes for Nikolai only a fond memory.

Nikolai's next "stage" is brought about by his third mentor, Efrem, who returns to Gardenino in the spring (1872) and finds in Nikolai, whose article he has just read, signs of "liberating ideas"¹⁰² and a potential recruit in the

¹⁰¹SS vol. 6, 50. "Я понимаю, что ты в эдаком возрасте. . . . Ну, купи там платок, что ли. . . ."

¹⁰²SS vol. 6, 101. "освободительных идей" Efrem's efforts to mentor Nikolai prefigures what K. Clark regards as a major theme

revolutionary cause. "Do you think it quite necessary [to write about] family divisions¹⁰³ [and] priests' extortions?," he asks. "Would it not be better to struggle against the general reasons for the disintegration?"¹⁰⁴ Ertel devotes considerable attention to Efrem's story, which serves as a counterpoint to Nikolai's and extends the dialogic dimension of the novel. At first Nikolai is timid in the presence of this "student of the Imperial Academy,"¹⁰⁵ but then he keeps his distance, as the "general reasons for the disintegration" of society are not clear to him, and in any case Efrem's estrangement from his family is just the sort of thing that concerns him. In his letter to a friend, Efrem speaks of Nikolai as one whose conscience is awakening and who is beginning to think, but who has no passion for plans such as those Efrem outlines for action. As he writes:

As long as the conversation remains within the region of theory, whether political, philosophical or moral, he listens attentively, asks questions, often agrees excitedly; but as soon as we get to "what is to be done?" he either utters some nonsense or remains silent, gazing obstinately downwards.¹⁰⁶

of the Soviet novel The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981).

¹⁰³I.e. the division of farms among the sons, as opposed to retaining them as family concerns.

¹⁰⁴SS vol. 6, 62. "Семейные разделы, поборы попа, -- вы думаете, это очень важно?... Разве не лучше бороться с общими причинами разорения?"

¹⁰⁵SS vol. 6, 35. "Студент императорской академии"

¹⁰⁶SS vol. 6, 102.

Efrem's letter clearly reveals his intention to spread revolutionary ideas, although his "literature" is still locked away because, we are led to assume, the soil is not yet ready as circumstances have changed little since the reforms. Efrem complains that there are still "no protests, [and] no sense of individual rights."¹⁰⁷

Nikolai's attentiveness to those "lesser" causes for disintegration is what distinguishes him from Efrem. For while Efrem might now be actively working for the cause as he helps Nikolai financially in his efforts to open a school and tutors Eliz in political economics, he is unable to see how deeply he is hurting his parents. His estrangement bears the sort of tragic nature reminiscent of the gap between Bazarov and his parents. Efrem's return home is a delight to his parents: Kapiton is eager to show him around the horse farm, while his pious mother takes great pains to get his room ready, complete with an icon of Efrem's "little angel." But Efrem accepts their expressions of affection indifferently, seeks to avoid their company, and breaks decisively with them (in II/8) when, after an argument with Kapiton, his mother dies, and Efrem leaves Gardenino for good.

In their last encounter Efrem and Nikolai are still opposed on the question of "what is to be done?" "So what do you intend to do with yourself," Efrem asks, "Are you staying behind to turn sour and look after the Gardenins' interests?"¹⁰⁸ Nikolai

¹⁰⁷SS vol. 6, 102. "протестов нет, чувство личности отсутствует"

explains that he has to earn a living somehow, and that he might go into business. Efrem responds:

[O]ur purpose is not in a career. We're yesterday's slaves, Nikolai Martinych. . . . Who fed us, gave us to drink, clothed us, and gave us the means to read books, study and develop our minds? Our brother! And shall we spit on him, engage in business, and establish our careers?¹⁰⁹

Nikolai responds quietly with "God willing, we'll get our school going," but Efrem insists that by going into business Nikolai will be "stealing with one hand, while giving out a half-copeck piece with the other." Nikolai asks, more softly still, "where can I go?,"¹¹⁰ unable to respond to Efrem's proposal.

Nikolai's reluctance to join Efrem had by now some concrete reasons. His sense of what needed to be done was being developed by Il'ia Finogenych, his fourth and final mentor.¹¹¹ Il'ia, as we recall, had recommended a life of balance, where learning and a concern for the well-being of others could go hand-in-hand with trade. He had made it clear that his products were "authentic peasant wares,"¹¹² presumably in distinction from

¹⁰⁸SS vol. 6, 184. "Ну, а вы что намерены делать с собою? Так и останетесь киснуть в Гарденине и наблюдать господские интересы?"

¹⁰⁹SS vol. 6, 184ff.

¹¹⁰SS vol. 6, 184. "--Вот, Бог даст, школу образуем. . . . -- . . . А вы к чему готовитесь? Одной рукой грабить, а другою раздавать по грошику? . . . -- Но куда деться?"

¹¹¹The fact that Nikolai recognized the mentorship of the four individuals we have seen is made explicit in II/10, where he mentions each of them by name. (SS, vol. 6, 223).

¹¹²SS vol. 6, 151. "товар подлинно крестьянский"

those associated with foreign investment and industry which would hurt domestic initiative.

Circumstances in Nikolai's life eventually lead him away from Gardenino to Il'ia's home to be apprenticed. First of all Nikolai, together with Vera (who has been hired to teach at Gardenino's school), comes to feel isolated and without direction, since their school is not proving much of a success. Iurii Gardenin's order to have Kapiton dismissed, which (along with the loss of his son) leads the horse trainer to hang himself, creates a poor atmosphere on the estate. The second reason is that Nikolai and Vera are being drawn apart. Although the two had expressed interest in one another, and Nikolai had confessed to her his previous loves, he appears incapable of proposing to her. It becomes clear later that it is in Nikolai's nature to hesitate, as he did with Grun'ka, who complained that she had waited long enough. When he receives a letter from Vera after he is already gone he decides immediately to write to her and propose, but considers it wise to address initially an issue raised in her letter concerning Pereverzev, Martin Lukianych's replacement as estate manager. For some time he gives thought to what he would like to say, but gets distracted by his work, and finally writes the letter, omitting his original intent. When she visits him he is already engaged to Il'ia's daughter, so that Vera returns to marry Pereverzev. Nikolai's passive nature, at any rate, seems at least in part a reflection of his "elder's" contemplative quality. As he admits to Vera:

If I am the kind of person you see before you now, that is, if I sufficiently understand where the truth lies and for whom one ought to be concerned, then I am obliged to the joiner.¹¹³

Nikolai finds himself working for Il'ia with his father's blessing, but sad to have left Gardenino. As soon as Varia, Il'ia's daughter, entices him into an embrace and whispers affectionate words to him, calling him her fiance, Nikolai finds himself engaged to someone he does not love. When he thinks of how she compares to Vera, Grun'ka and especially Tat'iana, he shudders but feels obligated to marry. Il'ia is displeased with Nikolai, for he suspects that he has proposed for the sake of Varia's dowry (she has a sizeable sum allotted to her). When he finally learns that Nikolai had not actually proposed but had been coerced, Il'ia "frees" him of his obligation (which echoes God's grace bestowed on Faustin the Wise).

From the above we realize that Nikolai senses the obligation to do what seems right, and that Il'ia has acted as a second "elder" to him. Nikolai admits to him that it was wrong to go along with his daughter, and confesses: "I have two shameful deeds on my conscience. You know about the first. . . ." ¹¹⁴ Il'ia responds with the "penance:" Nikolai is to immerse himself in his work, which will keep his soul from shameful behaviour, and Il'ia recommends that he now take some goods on credit and open his own shop, for which Nikolai is very grateful. Nikolai is sent with a blessing:

¹¹³SS vol. 6, 221.

¹¹⁴SS vol. 6, 274. "Имею две подлости на душе, --вы знаете о первой. . . ."

[You can thank me] with your life, Nikolushka,
 with good works done for your suffering brother.
 I seek no other form of gratitude. . . . My
 blessing on you as you venture to do good
 (na podvig dobryi).¹¹⁵

As a new store owner Nikolai finds Il'ia's advice helpful, for his new concerns and busy life help alleviate his pain over losing Vera. But when he is not busy with journalism, visits to the zemstvo meetings and local school affairs Nikolai finds himself drinking excessively and feeling depressed about the constant change going on around him. As he learns, Gardenino would now be unrecognizable to him, for the horse farm has been sold, the steppe has been divided up into countless fields, livestock has been brought in, and new buildings are being constructed all the time. Later he learns that a distillery operates on the estate.

Nikolai's thirst for life, we learn, reappears with Ivan Fedotych's visit to his shop. There Ivan tells Nikolai the story of one man's adultery, which brings Nikolai to Ivan's feet asking for forgiveness. Later Nikolai meets Tat'iana and his son Vania and takes part in Ivan's service of Scripture reading and singing, where he is moved especially by the reading of the passage from I Corinthians which Arefii had quoted earlier. As the service goes on, however, he finds that he prefers Ivan in his old setting, for here denial and sacrifice (and not the "fulness of life"¹¹⁶) is being encouraged, and he imagines that

¹¹⁵SS vol. 6, 275.

¹¹⁶SS vol. 6, 295. "полнота жизни"

Tat'iana feels the same. Nikolai continues to visit Tat'iana and their son, and finds joy in the fact that they are "not committing a sin" (in her vocabulary), or "not doing a shameful deed" (in his).¹¹⁷ Eventually Ivan departs on a final pilgrimage, leaving him and Tat'iana to live together. The marriage is, given the circumstances, still unofficial, which causes Martin Lukianych's sense of religious propriety considerable strain.

New Shores

In the epilogue (II/14), entitled "Ten Years Later," we find Nikolai serving on the zemstvo, befriending Rafail Gardenin (who seems sympathetic to Nikolai's liberal democratic efforts in government), and extending help to Pavlik, a young man from Gardenino who shows promise. As is to be expected, some "loose ends" are tied up: Iurii has made for himself a good career in the army, Il'ia has died, Efrem has been removed (or perhaps imprisoned or worse), Rukodeev still drinks heavily, and Vera now suffers from nerves and is mostly depressed over her failed populist efforts.

Emphasizing the political dimension of the novel, Nikiforov concludes that Ertel's ideal was embodied in both Nikolai and Pereverzev, whose efforts were most in line with the author's sympathies as a "bourgeois democrat."¹¹⁸ As Ertel explained,

¹¹⁷SS vol. 6, 297. "не совершают грех"; "не делают подлости"

¹¹⁸Nikiforov, "Tvorchestvo A. I. Ertelia" 99. "Эртель остается на позициях буржуазного демократа." In a diary entry of 1881 Ertel

however, his novel's central idea (krasnaia nit') was contained in two types of moral development. Ivan's represented "free" development, which took place in spite of his circumstances (social, political, or otherwise), whereas Nikolai's stood for the (far more common) form which required that those circumstances be more or less conducive to the individual's development.¹¹⁹ This seems to indicate that what concerned the author was that which happened "from above," and emphasizes the notion that the ideal was not to be sought in a program or prescription for coming "to the light," but in the very fact that man does come to the light "providentially."

This represents a kind of universalism according to which no one is ultimately excluded from the authentic life in Gardeniny (hence, perhaps, the discussion on the temporary nature of hell, and the reference to St. Paul's "love . . . hopes all things.") By the same token, one can be left with a sense of ambiguity, if Nikolai's experience is taken to be the only authentic one, as to whether the "good life" really matters in the end. So it appears, at least, with Nikolai's thoughts and feelings about "life in general" with which the novel concludes:

Everything flows . . . everything changes.

wrote of his plans to write a "political" novel in which the fate of the intelligentsia would be depicted. N. L. Brodskii, "Iz literaturnykh proektov A. I. Ertelia," RM (9) 1911, second pagination: 61. The fact that he had even named his hero Evdokim Rakhmanin led critics to assume that what became Gardeniny was fundamentally, indeed exclusively, a political work.

¹¹⁹Pis'ma 173.

Everything heads towards that which is called the 'future.' And all 'will be devoured by the jaws of eternity,' where there is no future! . . . And as Nikolai contemplated this ceaseless succession of life, that restless struggle between black and white . . . in him the feeling of sadness with which he left Gardenino faded, and together with it disappeared that happy feeling which he enjoyed as he thought of Pavlik, Rafail Konstantinovich, and about the fact that he would arrive home, and that he had a wife and children, and that all was wonderful.¹²⁰

As it turns out, Nikolai is not "there yet," in spite of the authority he enjoys as a respected man in the community. In many ways he has only begun, for he shares with the young theological student in Chekhov's "The Student" (1898) a feeling of despair with regards to history:

Cringing in the cold, [the student] reflected that just such a wind had blown in the days of Riurik, Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great. Their times had known just such ferocious poverty and hunger. . . All these horrors had been, still were, and would continue to be, and the passing of another thousand years would make things no better.¹²¹

Nikolai had advised Rafail, we recall, on how to avoid despair, but here he finds himself captive to a certain despondency in the face of that endless struggle between good and evil.

Ertel's confident "providential progress of man towards the light" is ultimately paradoxical. The openness which has marked the novel, whereby the individual's "small" choices are crucial and possibilities are "sideshadowed," would appear to be inconsistent with the notion that a person's progress was

¹²⁰SS vol. 6, 328-9.

¹²¹A. Chekhov, "The Student," trans. R. Hingley, The Oxford Chekhov, vol.9 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1961) 105.

governed by divine providence. Whether Ertel considered the apparent inconsistency between this and his injunction that one "must enter life" without set doctrines we cannot be sure; in any case his novel provides the setting in which one might consider the way in which, as Morson writes, "two temporalities could . . . interact to shape the world as we know it."¹²²

While content to live (and counsel others) according to Il'ia's philosophy of progress (which took for granted the idea that actions done for "our suffering brother" would bear fruit, just as Novikov and Radishchev's deeds had resulted in freedom for the serfs), Nikolai finds that he loses hope when thinking about life "in general" of a reason which would make his temporal efforts worthwhile. Recalling Batiushkov's comment that Ertel does not present the reader with "an integrated understanding of life," one wonders whether it could be that in Gardeniny one finds only a practical philosophy, without any reference to or hope for life "in general." After all, Ertel once wrote: "Why are we sentenced to death? . . . Let the one who wrote the book think about [the fact that death seems to render everything meaningless]."¹²³

Ertel's liberal protestant distrust of revelation nevertheless assumed a Storyteller for the story which one can know only in part. The novel's "providential attraction towards the light," which implies closure and inevitable progress, at

¹²²Morson, Narrative 169.

¹²³Pis'ma 161. "Почему мы приговорены к [смерти]? . . . Пусть думает об этом тот, кто написал книгу."

the same time implies a temporality which cannot be known through human reason. In this regard Nikolai arrives at the same existential crisis experienced by Ivan Fedotych, who found his way beyond the crisis not with his mind, but with his heart. We recall that he had said to Nikolai that if killing were permitted there could be no sin (countering, as it were, Ivan Karamazov's "if there is no God, all is permitted"). But in Ivan Fedotych's story of Faustin the Wise, as it turns out, God is merciful, which Nikolai arguably takes as a licence for self-indulgence. In fact Ivan Fedotych is tempted (in a dream in which he, like Faust, faces the Devil) to believe that his actions do not matter, for if God is omnipotent and omniscient, and nothing is done outside his will, then all is permitted and he should get his revenge on Tat'iana. When Ivan says that he cannot kill because to kill is of the devil, the devil asks: "Have you seen the devil? You blaspheme, for you say God is omnipresent! Where do you find a place for the devil, perhaps in God?"¹²⁴ At this point the devil suggests there is no God, and leads Ivan to contemplate suicide, telling him that his death can only mean nothingness or final understanding. Ivan begins to weep, a "sweet sadness" overcomes him, and he wakes from his dream.

For Ivan, as with Faustin the Wise, and even Nikolai (when he is freed from his obligation to Varia, for instance), God is merciful. But what was permitted and what was not could only be

¹²⁴SS vol. 5, 281. "Где ты его видел, дьявола-то? Да и кошунствуешь: иже везде сый Господь! Где же ты дьяволу-то нашел место? В Боге что ли?"

known in one's "soul," as Ivan had explained to Nikolai earlier, for there was no rational way to reconcile an omnipresent good God with evil. Thus Ivan counsels Nikolai to consider his own life of less value than anyone else's, and to remember that when it comes to seeking the meaning of life in the face of death and injustice we have only human reason to help us.

Providence in Gardeniny is therefore found as it might be perceived in The Brothers Karamazov, where the life "lived for others" is passed from one individual to another as a gift. The "grace" which flows from Zosima to Alesha to the children is to be found in that which both Ivan and Il'ia pass on to Nikolai, who towards the end counsels Rafail Gardenin and aids Pavlik. One must note, too, that in both novels grace is manifested in repentance, for Nikolai's desire for life returns after he confesses his "shameful deed" to Ivan Fedotych.

We have suggested ways in which the novel creates openness through dialogue and "sideshadowing." A second way in which the novel points outside itself to another temporality (in addition to appealing to Providence) is in its "aperture,"¹²⁵ or failure to finally close, in the sense that another story remains to be told. Crime and Punishment anticipated "the story of the gradual renewal of a man" which Gardeniny could only begin to tell, for humanity has not arrived (and thus continues to tell stories--many of which are based on the myth of the

¹²⁵By this term Morson designates the means by which Tolstoy, for example, wrote in such a way as to avoid closure and the "impression of completeness" (Morson, Narrative 169).

journey). To be sure, the epilogue conventionally tied together loose ends, but in so doing it only drew greater attention to the way in which Nikolai's dilemma was left unresolved: while he might reasonably expect progress "in particular" (that is, in time), progress "in general" would have to take its place among other possible futures until understood "by the soul."

Chapter Four
Inertia and "The Struggle" in Smena

Say not the struggle
nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds
 are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor
 faileth,
And as things have been,
 things remain.

--A. H. Clough¹

In late 1890 Ertel rented a farm at Empelevo (now Trudovoe, near Voronezh) and, with enthusiasm and confident plans to manage the property, set to work on his second novel, Smena ("The Change," RM, 1891).

The novel opens in 1885 at a crucial point in the life of the Mansurov clan² as their family estate is turned over to renters by the impoverished and elderly Evgeniia Mansurova, who dies immediately thereafter. She is survived by her grandchildren, Elizaveta Petrovna, living on the estate, and Andrei Petrovich, in St. Petersburg.

Most of Part I is devoted to Andrei's life in the city, where he is on the verge of resigning his job as he becomes increasingly disillusioned with city life. Four episodes provide insight into his desire to leave: his failed romance

¹A.H. Clough (1819-61), "Say not the struggle nought availeth," The Poems of Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. F.L. Mulhauser, (New York: Oxford UP, 1974) 206.

²The historical Mansurov family dates to the 14th century. See Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' vol. 23 (St. Petersburg, 1896) 553.

with Liudmila Gorenskaia, the hostess of a lively high-society soirée; a visit with Maria Fidler, a wealthy woman who would like to include him in her plans to organize a commune; his visit with his aunt Klarisa Sodomtseva, a wealthy evangelical Christian who is interested in his conversion; finally his acquaintance with a group of steppe-dwellers, who with their involvement in some form of service to the people present Mansurov with an alternative to his present lifestyle.

In Part II we find the Mansurovs on their estate, where Andrei is preparing to go abroad for medical treatment and Elizaveta has become a supporter of her former pupil Alexei Koniakhin (hereafter Alesha) in his preaching and teaching activities. When Alesha and Elizaveta have set out on a pilgrimage we meet the members of the local group of those engaged in "the struggle" (defined by the author as those efforts "in word, conviction, peaceful action and way of life which . . . affect people's consciousness and, consequently, how they live."³): Fedor Prytkov, a member of the zemstvo and chief of the statistics department; various statisticians who have set aside their intended vocations as artists, doctors and scholars in order to earn money; Ivan Alferov, merchant, philanthropist and member of the zemstvo; Elena Prytkova, sister of Fedor and teacher with populist sympathies, and others.

When Andrei returns from abroad he never makes it home to the estate. On his way he stops in Alferov's hometown, where he

³pis'ma 321. "словом, убеждением, мирными поступками, образом жизни которая . . . изменяет сознание людей. а следовательно, и порядки."

finds the filth and lack of care appalling. A discussion with Alferov on progress and the struggle leaves him depressed, contemplating suicide. As it happens, Alferov, Prytkov and Mansurov find themselves in a brothel when the latter is hit and killed by a stray bullet.

With Mansurov buried, Elizaveta and Alesha return from their pilgrimage, welcomed back by the "brethren." Elizaveta then sees to the affairs of the estate with the help of Fedor Prytkov, who helps her dissolve the existing lease (to his brother Ilia), and leases the land to her peasants. With this settled she moves into a flat with Elena Prytkova in town, and comes to teach in the school on her family estate.

In some ways Smena recalls Ertel's previous works. Structurally the novel bears resemblance to Zapiski, where the protagonist's isolation is defined through a series of encounters. As in Gardeniny, one meets in Smena numerous secondary characters, and finds the same attention to the ordinary and prosaic: in both novels the city stands for individualistic values which undermine the struggle. This is suggested initially by the fact that Mansurov disappoints the guests at a high-society soirée by bringing along Alferov, "a most ordinary member of the zemstvo."⁴

Unlike Gardeniny, however, Smena is not wide in scope. In his second novel Ertel does not set about to describe in detail

⁴Smena 109. "самый обыкновенный землец" (In this chapter I quote from the more accessible edition of the novel published by Chekhov Press, New York, 1954)

the way of life in the country, nor is his hero's story in any way like an epic. Mansurov's tragedy lies precisely in the fact that he cannot enter the struggle, which was seen to take place in the rural areas, nor can he cope with change ("smena"). For such a hero Ertel was bound to choose a character who is "static," or, as he explained to Gol'tsev, a "philosophical pessimist."⁵

Reception of Smena has on the whole not been very positive. The most favourable comment was offered by Gleb Uspenskii: "He writes so well. It's charming! [Ertel] has freed himself from Tolstoyan asceticism and given freedom to his great talent. The entire first part is magnificent."⁶ Mikhailovskii, however, accused Ertel of overpopulating his work and "somewhat scornfully and skeptically observing the hubbub of his own creations" so that in the end it was unclear "what exactly constitutes Smena in Ertel's novel, . . . [and] in which direction the change is headed, whether it leads to good or ill."⁷ Soviet criticism reveals the standard biases: one writer maintained that Ertel failed to communicate any hope in the creative strength of the people;⁸ another chastized him for

⁵Kizevetter, 231.

⁶Kizevetter, 195. "Отлично он пишет, прелесть! Видимо, он освободился от толстовского скопчества и дал волю своему сильному таланту. Вся первая часть - превосходна."

⁷N. K. Mikhailovskii, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii vol. 6, (St. Petersburg, 1909) 972. "в чем именно состоит «Смена» в романе г. Эртеля, . . . в которую сторону смена направляется, к добру или к худу ведет."

⁸A. S. Bushmin, ed., Istoriia russkoi literatury (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983) 83.

settling for a "small deeds" philosophy;⁹ while Nikiforov saw the novel as marking a turning point for the worse as Ertel adopted an "elementary democracy . . . with a religious basis."¹⁰

Mikhailovskii's complaint concerning the novel's message could be understood positively, for it underscores Ertel's concern to chronicle change and diversity without taking sides. In fact the beginning of an adequate appreciation of this novel which, in spite of its reprinting in 1954 in the United States, has scarcely been examined, must bear in mind the author's conviction that his duty as an artist was to withhold judgement. In fact, Ertel's words "no one is to blame" were originally written with specific reference to Smena.¹¹ True to his intentions, Ertel managed to tell the story of a superfluous man and the struggle he was unfit to join, without rendering him entirely superfluous or the struggle meaningless. His novel stands out, moreover, for its attention to the multi-faceted nature of Russian society during what was perceived as an ideologically chaotic time. Of particular interest is Ertel's depiction of popular religious trends in an era of persecution.¹²

⁹D. D. Blagoi, ed., Istoriia russkoi literatury (Moscow: Nauka, 1964) 638.

¹⁰V.V. Nikiforov, "Tvorchestvo A. I. Ertelia," abstract, 10. "стихийного демократизма . . . на религиозной основе"

¹¹Pis'ma 246.

The tension between inertia and struggle suggested above is underscored by other crucial conflicts. Mansurov is a victim of change, or, in the author's words, that

metamorphosis taking place today, whereby members of the intelligentsia with gentry habits and upbringing, with their nerves, traditions, feelings, and to a great extent ideas, surrender their places to far less refined and even crude people who are nevertheless much more able to engage in the struggle."¹³

Elizaveta, on the other hand, introduces a competing image: "It's not change that's taking place today," she muses, "but confluence, and that's been known for a long time. Even in the seventies, and perhaps earlier, the raznochintsy and the gentry merged into a common stream."¹⁴ So while for some the gentry is replaced by individuals more suited for the struggle, for others people of various religious and socio-economic backgrounds come together in that common task.

As in Gardeniny, Ertel's plan included not only the "panoramic" elements of diversity, change and confluence mentioned above, but also attention to spiritual quest.¹⁵ This

¹²For a discussion of Pobedonostsev's dealings with Russian protestants see Durasoff, S. The Russian Protestants (Cranbury, NJ: Assoc. UP, 1969) 44ff.

¹³Pis'ma 209.

¹⁴Smena 93. "Не смена совершается, но слияние, и это давно известно. Еще в семидесятых годах, еще раньше, смешались в общем течении разночинцы и дворяне...."

¹⁵Structurally certain parallels can be (and have been) drawn between the two works. Both novels, as noted, devote considerable attention to religious sectarianism and changes in the social landscape, and various characters from the first novel "reemerge" in the second: there is a certain kinship between Elizaveta Mansurova and Eliz Gardenina, Andrei Mansurov and Rafail Gardenin, as well as Alferov and Nikolai Rakhmanny.

feature, found especially in the life of Alesha, draws out the related conflicts of the individual versus the collective and freedom versus necessity: Mansurov's pessimism binds him to the necessity dictated by his type, while Alesha's life exemplifies the sort of freedom which the struggle needed.

The chief interest of this novel, and indeed the key to a fresh reading, is found in the way in which it deals with the conflicts indicated above. Since Smena is first and foremost a philosophical novel, this chapter will be structured as follows: First we will examine Mansurov's inability to "enter life," looking for the source of his pessimism. Second we will follow him through four circles which offer alternative philosophies of life, observing the way in which each of these illumines his character and is illumined through the encounter. Third we will consider "the struggle" as that point of confluence of which Elizaveta spoke, and look especially at the life of Alesha. In conclusion we will examine two principal ways in which the novel holds inertia and the struggle in tension.

Philosophical Pessimism

We know little of Mansurov's family background except that his grandfather was a romantic idealist,¹⁶ his mother a populist who had committed suicide (contributing somehow to her husband's

Istoriia russkogo romana, ed. A. S. Bushmin (Moscow-Leningrad: 1962-64) 495.

¹⁶This is suggested by his correspondence, which Elizaveta scans (Smena 94).

death), and his grandmother a woman who deeply resented the way in which her granddaughter Elizaveta had been influenced by her mother's populism. She was relieved, however, that Andrei "had not fed on his mother's poison."¹⁷

In a letter to his sister, Andrei introduces her to his philosophy:

The whole world seems to me sometimes a funeral procession. . . . Why I can't say, but I'll agree with Shakia Muni: "wise is the child who is born weeping" . . . It seems to me . . . that those of us who are younger are too experienced and rich in that wisdom of Ecclesiastes in which there is so much sadness."¹⁸

But in the same letter he asserts, with hope in a sense of duty as a member of the gentry, that change does not confront the nobility. With this conviction he can exclaim: "To rule . . . [o]ne needs talent, nerves, and to develop a taste for that which is common to all mankind, the eternal and the mystical. . . . We'll fight!"¹⁹

In fact, Andrei is ever torn between a sense of duty to his class to withstand the forces of change and the conviction that there could be no essential change to be withstood. His pessimism is brought out particularly when he encounters grand schemes for the renewal of the world. Speaking to Maria Fidler, for example, he recites some lines of his verse:

¹⁷Smena 36. "Материнного яду не сосал."

¹⁸Smena 89-90.

¹⁹Smena 91. "Для того, чтобы верховодить . . . [н]адо иметь талант, иметь нервы, надо приобрести вкус к общечеловеческому, к вечному, к мистическому. . . . Повоюем!"

Filled with wild strength,
 The wave surged once again --
 And the wanderer is carried to the sea...
 No more desire to endure,
 Only to die remains
 A pitiful plaything of fate,
 Without strength, without a moan,
 Without struggle!²⁰

Fidler's reaction, that she had read those lines somewhere else, reminds Mansurov that "we for ever resemble someone or something,"²¹ reinforcing his sad conviction that the round of life produces nothing truly new.

Like Nikolai Rakhmanny (in Gardeniny), Andrei is indecisive when it comes to romance and matrimony. Although he and Liudmila Mikhailovna love one another, she cannot commit herself to him fully because of his hesitation. "The only one who has the right to marry," he explains when his friend Alferov suggests he find some way to wed, "is the one who . . . has a role to play, a future, who says plainly: 'I wish to be fruitful and multiply and populate the land.'"²²

The substance of Mansurov's philosophy is found in his love of Sir Edwin Arnold's The Light of Asia²³ and Buddhism, which has reinforced "his indifference towards so-called politics,

²⁰Smena 112.

²¹Smena 113. "мы вечно на кого-нибудь или на что-нибудь похожи."

²²Smena 164. "Имеет право жениться лишь тот, . . . у которого есть роль, есть будущее, кто прямо так-таки и заявляет: хочу плодиться и множиться и заселять землю."

²³Published in 1879, a book which did so much to popularize Buddhism.

his disgust for the so-called family hearth," and populist ideas.²⁴ Arnold's work inspires him to write a story of the Buddha in Russian, but he soon realizes that he can not find the right tone. Mansurov chooses not to practise the teachings of the Buddha, but only to turn his thoughts to the one "who likened life to an eternal change of empty illusions and fleeting reflections"²⁵ whenever he encounters even the slightest confidence in the renewal of the world. At bottom Mansurov's philosophy is a reaction against positivism, for he accepts the Kantian view that man experiences only phenomena. For this reason he can treat Alesha, who boldly seeks the "unknowable,"²⁶ as an object of study, and not as an equal.

The fact that Ertel himself began a life of the Buddha, at Chertkov's request, but cut his work short because he could not find the "right tone,"²⁷ led Nikiforov to link Ertel with his hero.²⁸ There is little to suggest, however, that Ertel was drawn to Buddhism as a philosophy. In fact he makes his own inclination quite clear:

In a word, if Heine is right that humanity is made up of Hellenes and Jews, then I must consider myself a Hellene. At the same time

²⁴Smena 184. "его равнодушие к так называемой политике и отвращение к так называемому семейному очагу. . . ."

²⁵Smena 185. "кто уподобил жизнь вечной смене пустых призраков и мимолетных отражений."

²⁶Smena 239. "непознаваемое"

²⁷Pisma 165.

²⁸Nikiforov, "Tvorchestvo A. I. Ertelia" 107.

I can't help but feel the deepest admiration
for the 'Jewish' or Buddhist traits in V[ladimir]
G[rigorievich Chertkov], which govern his soul
so strongly. . . .²⁹

For this reason it would be safer to link Mansurov to Chertkov (and there are other reasons, as we shall see), although Mansurov has his literary predecessors. His kinship with Baturin in Zapiski stepniaka is clear, as well as with other "superfluous" characters in Russian letters.

After his years abroad Mansurov has even less reason to join the struggle. Although he is recommended for a position on the zemstvo, his impressions of Russia are of a backward nation with filthy provincial towns and poor business practices. To make things worse, of course, he is ill. Only in the home of a certain Dormidonych is his desire to struggle aroused as his host's son plays a march from Pushkin's The Prophet. Inspired, presumably, by Pushkin's bold "set the hearts of men on fire with My Word,"³⁰ Mansurov feels that he can transcend the difficulties Russia presents and exclaim "We'll fight, damn it, we'll fight!"³¹

In a final discussion of progress and the struggle Mansurov dismisses his friends' hopes as idyllic and useless. Finally he despairs and, as though announcing his end, says: "How sad life

²⁹Pis'ma 156.

³⁰A. S. Pushkin, "Prorok," Polnoe sobranie sochinenii vol. 2 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1977-79) 304. "Глаголом жги сердца людей."

³¹Smena 340. "Повоюем, чорт возьми, повоюем!"

is and how sweet it would be to die instead of spinning on this wheel."³²

Four Alternatives

Just as Turgenev's Bazarov finds himself isolated as he fails to find his place in society, so too Mansurov is progressively alienated from St. Petersburg society in the four episodes that we shall examine now.

We first meet Mansurov at a lively soirée on January 17, 1886 hosted by the Gorenskiis, Sergei Ivanovich and Liudmila Mikhailovna, in their St. Petersburg home. A special dignitary that evening is a Moscow lawyer by the name of Rogov, whose erudite speech on Tolstoy, with due references to Plato, Augustine, Thomas More, Kant, the gospels, and Fet,³³ demonstrates his command of the arguments for and against Tolstoy. His "academic," distanced approach, which seems to be designed to attract more attention to his own erudition than to the ideas, disturbs the young student KretoV who asks: "The young people would like to know, what is the meaning of life?" Rogov's answer was to "live and let live."³⁴

Underscoring Rogov's individualistic motto, the whole gathering is characterized by individuals seeking their own

³²Smena 365. "Как грустна жизнь и как сладко бы умереть вместо того, чтобы вертеться в этом колесе. . . ."

³³Smena 120.

³⁴Smena 120. "-- . . . молодежь желает знать, в чем же смысл жизни?
-- живи и жить давай другим."

self-interests. Rogov strives to impress his hostess, while Mansurov and Liudmila Mikhailovna's affair is exposed: he, in love with Liudmila Mikhailovna, is disturbed by the attention that she pays to Rogov, while she in turn questions him about his conversation with Fidler. In the background, a promising young pianist sits down to play with a look that makes it quite clear that she will play without the least concern for the guests' opinions.³⁵

Ertel intended to depict here the "exotic and nervous existence" of high society.³⁶ Indeed Liudmila Mikhailovna never escapes, for even at the end of the novel she is found keeping herself busy in order to avoid thinking of her unhappiness.³⁷ The fact that in this context Mansurov finds himself furthest from the struggle is underscored by his friend Alferov's remark that the evening was "full of talk and little action,"³⁸ and Kretov's dismay over Rogov's individualistic credo.

Equally remote from the struggle are Fidler's plans to organize a commune. While at the soirée Mansurov had listened to her plans and hopes for a bright future by building a community in America or the Caucasus, in the next chapter (appropriately entitled "Those Who Seek a City"³⁹) he visits

³⁵Smena 117.

³⁶Pis'ma 209. "экзотически-нервическое существование"

³⁷Smena 417.

³⁸Smena 122. "визгу много, а шерсти нет." (From the Russian proverb: "Стриг черт свинью; визгу много, а шерсти нет." "The devil sheared the swine; there was a lot of squealing, but no wool.")

Fidler in her home and meets a certain Bashutskii, whom Fidler has consulted on her plans. This man, who had wandered in the southern United States and Australia, explained that the communes belonged to the "brides and grooms of the world to come"⁴⁰ who had forsaken worldly ways and chosen to live together according to an agreed moral code. In the colony's place of gathering there would stand statues of Apollo and Venus: symbols of spiritual and bodily perfection.

Modelled in part after William Frey or one of his close followers, the portrait of Bashutskii provides a clear instance of Ertel's blurring of the distinction between fact and fiction in Smena, for we are told that Mansurov had introduced at the Gorenskii's soiree a follower of Frey. Frey (whose real name was Vladimir Konstantinovich Geins, 1839-88) had gone to America in the 1870's to organize a commune, moved to England in 1884, and in October 1885 met with Tolstoy, who was clearly impressed with his stories of communal life.⁴¹ Although he makes no mention of it in his collected letters, Ertel would have either met or learned of Frey through Tolstoy in the same year.⁴²

³⁹Smena 137. "Взыскующие града" (Hebrews 13:14)

⁴⁰Smena 143 "женихи и невесты грядущего"

⁴¹See Tolstoy's PSS vol. 63, 296. The friendship between the two was cut short when Frey learned of Tolstoy's disregard for Comte's positivism, to which he subscribed. For a study of Frey's activities in the United States, see A. Yarmolinsky's A Russian's American Dream (Lawrence: U of Kansas P, 1965).

⁴²It appears that Ertel was acquainted with the minor writer G. Machtet, who in the 1870's joined Frey's colony in the United States. See Ertel's 20 June 1886 letter to Machtet in Put' 1 (1913): 32.

The individualism in Frey's form of communism (for in seeking the "world to come" the adherents distanced themselves from the struggle) is brought out this time by Mansurov. Previously he had reacted to Fidler's hopes as simply illusory, but now the idea strikes him as utter nonsense. To make things worse Fidler effectively proposes to Mansurov, telling him after they kiss that she would not be opposed to their living as man and wife without marrying. Insisting that he's a confirmed bachelor, Mansurov departs with plans to leave the city altogether.

If the two extremes described above distanced one from the struggle, the next two episodes bring Mansurov into contact with circles which are closer to the centre. While Fidler had her plans for Mansurov's salvation in a community of "the world to come," Klarisa Sodomtseva had her own plans for her nephew. Intending to go to his uncle's for permission to resign his post, Mansurov proceeds to the Sodomtsevs', where he happens to arrive as his aunt is leading her group in song:

There is room, there is! O make haste to come in!
 He has welcomed many sinners there,
 But there is still a place for you,
 They are washed in Christ's blood,
 Christ is calling, and will cleanse even you.⁴³

As he imagines that the faithful are thinking that his arrival at that particular time is the work of God, he notices the "same hypocritical faces of the two maids, . . . the senior coachman . . . who had been forbidden once and for all to let out his

⁴³Smena 154.

frenzied howl, and that same mixture of sincere and deep faith, simple-minded dullness, hysterical enthusiasm with suppressed servility and base obsequiousness."⁴⁴ After the song, aunt Klarisa reads the Biblical story of the healing at Bethesda (John 5) and begins to preach (in her English accent) about "that great number of sick, blind, lame and withered who nourish hope in the troubled waters and arrogantly expect to be saved without knowing Christ and denying his grace."⁴⁵ Then she proceeds to ask those proud individuals to believe in Christ before the gates close.

Described here is clearly one of the evangelical circles which arose from the ministry of Lord Radstock as early as 1874. As E. Heier suspects, Chertkov's mother, Elena Ivanovna Chertkova, brought Radstock to Russia, whereupon under Pashkov evangelical services came to be hosted in the homes of St. Petersburg's elite. These services were simple, and included prayer, singing, Bible reading and spontaneous explanation of the passage. The messages were likewise straightforward: the way to God was to be found in the atoning work of Christ, and all were invited to surrender their lives to Christ and be saved.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Smena 154. "те же лицемерные лица двух горничных, ... старший кучер ... которому раз навсегда запрещено было издавать свой неистовый рев, все та же смесь искренней и глубокой веры, простодушной тупости, истерического подъема духа, с затаенным холопством и низменными искательствами."

⁴⁵Smena 155. "великое множество больных, слепых, хромых, иссохших питают ожидание на мутную воду и имеют высокомерное мнение спастись, не зная Христа и отвергая благодать Его."

As the evangelical Elena Ivanovna is concerned with her son's spiritual state as he turns to Tolstoy and eastern religion,⁴⁷ so too Klarisa is concerned for the soul of Andrei (here we see another reflection of Chertkov in Mansurov). After the service, however, Mansurov explains to his aunt that the whole service seemed to him "foreign and completely alien to the spirit of the Russian people."⁴⁸ When his aunt insists that the majority of the faithful are the very Russian people, Mansurov can only object that they are all in her service. He sees his aunt as one concerned for the people only insofar as they become evangelical Christians, and secretly condemns her for her paternalistic attitude towards them.

That Ertel's hero does not in this instance reflect the views of his author, is shown by the fact that Ertel perceived Russian evangelicalism to be closer to the struggle than Mansurov's impression would lead one to believe. This is evident in the way Ertel rebuked his friend M. N. Chistiakov for his disdainful attitude towards Chertkov's mother: "How can you demand," Ertel asked, "that she do good in your way, and not her own?" He explained in the same letter that to attack others within the struggle was counterproductive because the struggle was only for conquering evil.⁴⁹

⁴⁶E. Heier, Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860-1900 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970) 20ff.

⁴⁷See A.N. Wilson's Tolstoy (New York: W W Norton, 1988) 343ff.

⁴⁸Smena 157. "кажется переводом с иностранного и совершенно чуждым духу русского народа."

As if to show him the way home, Mansurov meets in the next episode a group of "steppe-dwellers" who impress him with their "nature, truth, simplicity, and life."⁵⁰ These include Egor Gnevyshev, who plans to serve on the zemstvo, Elena Prytkova, a populist who hopes to teach in the village school, Agafokl Tselokupskii, a lawyer, Nagaitsev, a doctor and anarchist, Bushmarin, a populist artist, and others. If at first he has everyone's label determined, as the visit progresses these classifications become confused: the Tolstoyan announces his rejection of Tolstoy, for instance, so that "it became impossible to tell who was the populist, who the socialist, and who the liberal."⁵¹ In the end, however, Alferov brought order:

You, Ferapontov, are going to the country to be a doctor. You, Boriskin, can only paint village themes. . . . [I]t's all for the good of the people. It's not because one's a populist, another a socialist, and you, Afanasy Lukich, follow Tolstoy, but because we ourselves are the people.⁵²

Before leaving the city Mansurov visits Liudmila Mikhailovna again, but he finds himself bored with her, and finally gives her up when he realizes that she has begun an affair with Rogov. On the train home he travels with some of his new acquaintances, but chooses to remain alone. With dream-like

⁴⁹Pis'ma 149. "С какой стати вы предъявляете к ней такие требования, то-есть, чтобы она делала добро по-вашему, а не по-своему?"

⁵⁰Smena 182. "натура, правда, простота, жизнь"

⁵¹Smena 180. "сделалось невозможно разобрать, кто же народник, и социалист, и либерал."

⁵²Smena 180.

images of all his St. Petersburg relatives and acquaintances flashing before his eyes, uttering their respective credos, Mansurov exclaims: "What wild dissonance! What noise! How everything moves and flies, making haste to disappear in the abyss without suspecting it!"⁵³

With confused thoughts and a sense of despair Mansurov goes home unable to find meaning in any of the answers offered to Kretov's question: "What is the meaning of life?" The extreme options, "to live and let live" or to organize a commune, he finds untenable. He finds evangelical piety contrary to the Russian spirit, and service to the people too confusing and "prosaic." He, whose ancestors had "saved Rome," refused to accept Alferov's modest proposal to "press close to the land"⁵⁴ through service on the local zemstvo.

It would be easy to underestimate the role of Ertel's friendship with Chertkov in the situation in the novel and the conflict outlined above. As Garrett observes, between the two men "there was an almost complete divergence of views;"⁵⁵ nevertheless, their deep friendship survived through several years of debate. One thing that Ertel wished to convince his friend of was that the individual life needed to be held in balance by the corporate life,⁵⁶ for he perceived in Chertkov's

⁵³Smena 225. "Какая сумасбродная разногласица! Какой гул! Как все движется и летит, торопясь исчезнуть в пучине и не подозревая о том!"

⁵⁴Smena 166. "приникни ты, например, к земле. . . ."

⁵⁵Garrett, VII.

ascetic passion a certain rejection of modest efforts or "small deeds" undertaken for the good of society within institutions. So the friendship between Mansurov and Alferov that is strengthened through debate reflects a similar real-life bond between Ertel and Chertkov.

The Struggle

As Alferov suggests, the struggle was to be understood as a force which gathered together individuals of diverse persuasions around the task of seeking the common good. His understanding closely reflects Ertel's idea that serving the people was more important than any particular agenda, whether populist or otherwise. As Parsons notes:

[Ertel's] view of Russia and his formulae of social behaviour were based upon a profoundly moral and reasoned individual outlook, which was independent of sectional interests and party programmes, having its roots in the Christian tradition.⁵⁷

Some of those engaged in the struggle in Smena were superfluous in their own right, for the present circumstances did not allow them to pursue careers for which they had trained. Afanasy Boriskin, a populist artist, found that as he tried to paint his "A Last Farewell" (depicting emigrants as they set out on the road) he could not justify his work in the same way as the rest of his family did more urgent and practical jobs. Besides, he

⁵⁶Pis'ma 168. "Разумное соединение индивидуальности и общего, личных запросов жизни и общечеловеческих--вот в чем вопрос."

⁵⁷Parsons, 191.

was interrupted with requests for portraits and to repaint the iconostasis which was peeling. As it turned out, when Boriskin declined he was chastized for failing both God and his family, and so decided to find a village inhabited by other members of the intelligentsia. In the meantime, however, he needed money, so he joined the statistics department.

Others joined Boriskin there because of similarly unfavourable circumstances. Ferapontov, trained as a doctor, found that he could not treat patients during the typhoid epidemic, but could only certify and write reports since proper treatment required more hygienic conditions, and less poverty and ignorance. An aspiring member of the town council, Bushmarin needed employment while he waited for his populist dissertation to be published.

These and many more find a temporary solution working as statisticians under Fedor Prytkov, whose duty it is as Chief of Statistics to employ people in the work of compiling data on demographics, agriculture, deaths, taxes, prices of goods and the like. In addition he selects and trains individuals for active service in the zemstvo. As it was not taken for granted that the zemstvo was the proper means to channel one's efforts, in seeking candidates Prytkov is not always successful. On one occasion, for instance, he is discouraged to learn that an ideal candidate (an extraordinarily polite, attentive and sincere youth) sees the zemstvo as founded on nihilistic ideas. This student intends to consult John of Kronstadt when he finishes his course because he feels that he can not manage without

proper spiritual guidance in the present perplexing times. Prytkov also seeks out Mansurov, whom Alferov had recommended, although Mansurov hesitates.

In spite of opposition, then, Prytkov's department becomes a place of confluence. Against the opposition of both "anti-nihilists" and those who find the philosophy of small deeds un compelling, Prytkov defends his belief in the peaceful means of struggle, a belief in an evolutionary view of progress, and hope in institutions. As he explains:

We all know examples of superbly organized, honest, progressive zemstva. . . . This is not because such and such a zemstvo is wholly good, . . . but because here and there are two or three men, or many dozens . . . and it suddenly happens that there are enough of them to give taste to the porridge. A mass of people . . . is always a mass, that is, soft, formless dough. . . . Enter it as a live and active element; become a ferment, leaven, yeast... You can be sure the dough will rise leavened!⁵⁸

Serving on the zemstvo is Alferov, a merchant, philanthropist, and for Mansurov a person of goodwill, as evidenced particularly in his efforts to open a public library. On one occasion Alferov affirms that "all roads lead to Rome,"⁵⁹ which is consistent with his conciliatory approach to the various ways to serve the people, whether on the zemstvo or in honest trade. In Alferov and Prytkov one sees reflections of Il'ia Finogenych in Gardeniny, and examples of those "more capable in the struggle."

⁵⁸Smena 356. (as translated by Parsons, 184)

⁵⁹Smena 346. "все дороги ведут в Рим."

How Ertel envisaged Alesha is best explained in a letter to Nikolaev dated 6 March 1891: "In all honesty I'll say that the peasant intelligentsia, only concerned about the soul and truth, . . . digging into the holy fathers and the scriptures, and seeking a new faith . . . as far as I'm concerned offers a greater hope of progress than the notorious raznochinets."⁶⁰ A few months later he explained, again to Nikolaev:

I've written that my sympathies are more with the Aleshas than the raznochinets . . . because the Aleshas are more free than Bazarov and his heirs. That strange and complicated way in which Aleshas seek the truth . . . can lead one into a swamp, but it has its merits: here everything is put to the test, experienced . . . so that everything is one's own (svoe), not taken from books or theories, i.e. someone else's (chuzhikh).⁶¹

Alesha plays no small role in the novel. In fact he can be regarded as Mansurov's double, or alter ego, for as Andrei's philosophy leads to despair, Alesha's takes him through depression and into a life of learning and service. The fact which underscores this kinship and doubling is their literal kinship: much to her surprise, and disbelief, Elizaveta learns that her pupil Alesha is actually a cousin because they shared the same grandfather.⁶²

⁶⁰Pis'ma 249. "И по совести скажу, мужицкая интеллигенция, та, что всего хлопочет о душе да о правде . . . и роется в творениях святых отцов, в св. писании, ищет новой веры . . . для меня более залог прогресса, нежели пресловутый разночинец."

⁶¹Pis'ma 277.

⁶²Smena 87.

Ertel's desire to write a saint's life is most clearly seen in Alesha, for Alesha's development follows the pattern of the traditional vita: As a youth he is "set apart" as a contemplative, his journey is then overseen by an elder, and he becomes a person of influence as a result of his piety and learning.

Given copies of the Psalter, the Bible and the Patericon by his (presumed) grandfather, Alesha reads these works with great interest even as a youth. At first, however, his readings render him "a nervous youth with a feverish glitter in his eyes and a look of anguish and perplexity."⁶³ Then he meets a learned elder who gives him hope in reason and the writings of the Church fathers. Little by little his piety (he takes a vow of chastity) and learning bring him considerable attention, and Alesha himself is sought out as an elder.

Soon, however, Alesha finds himself once again perplexed. He finds that the way of the scriptures denies life, whereas the way of reason affirms it, and this presents him with bewildering dualisms, where matter, sin, and truth are either denied or rejected. Through this, too, Alesha finds his way with a healthy inquisitiveness and the conclusion that "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." This idea allows him to "accept everything" while recognizing the limitations of any one way of knowing.⁶⁴

⁶³Smena 81. "нервного юношу с лихорадочным блеском в глазах, с выражением какой-то тоски и растерянности."

By Part II Alesha has had considerable influence on Elizaveta. Frustrated with her brother's attitude towards Alesha's bold efforts to know the "unknowable," Elizaveta admits now that she is no longer indifferent to questions of "God, the soul and eternity," and believes (unlike before) that "our intimate link with . . . and a true understanding of the people will come about only once we have become brothers. . . . No, I don't study Alesha. I am terribly happy that I love him, and that his ideas are neither simply amusing nor ethnographic material."⁶⁵ In fact now she delights in the prospect of joining Alesha on a pilgrimage, and being part of that great company of people who can say "We have no earthly city, but seek the one to come."⁶⁶

Before his pilgrimage Alesha is tempted by a certain Agaf'ia, a member of his fellowship, who wishes to seduce him as they make their way to an evening service. "We can repent afterwards," she suggests, but Alesha will not give in. "The

⁶⁴Smena 97. "Иде же дух Господень, тут свобода." Alesha does not fit neatly into any of the sects of late nineteenth-century Russia. With his desire to "accept everything" he reflects Ivan Fedotych's spirituality; in other ways his activities can be compared to those of the Stundists (house meetings of prayer and Scripture reading), who did not break with the Orthodox Church until the 1870's. See Andrew Blane's "Protestant Sects in Late Imperial Russia," The Religious World of Russian Culture: Russia and Orthodoxy: Volume II, ed. A. Blane (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) 272-3.

⁶⁵Smena 240. "интимная, душевная наша связь с народом--и . . . истинное понимание народа--наступит лишь тогда, когда мы будем братьями. . . . Нет, нет, я не изучаю Алешу. Я ужасно рада, что люблю его, что для меня его мысли не курьез и не этнографический материал."

⁶⁶Smena 247. "«Не имамы зде пребывающа града, но грядущего взыскуем»"

Kingdom of heaven," he responds, "is found through effort, not sin. If you had pure reason I would explain this, but you are stupid."⁶⁷ At the service (of readings and songs) the whole group is tempted by a visiting sectarian to give up the church, icons and clergy, and accept only the authority of the Bible. This Alesha counters with what might be seen as his credo, when the guest asks how he proposes to find the truth if not through the Scriptures: "[I]n pure reason, if you wish to know. It can be found in the Scriptures, in Socrates the pagan, in books and songs . . . and even in you and me."⁶⁸ He adds that to live the holy life means to give to those in need.

In this way Alesha's life serves as a bridge, as it were, between opposite means of struggle. His implicit rejection of culture⁶⁹ in his quest for the heavenly city echoes, and endorses, the evangelical protestant assumption that the people could "come to Christ" in a culturally neutral way, without regard for their Russian heritage. At the same time his life does not distance him from the people, for he meets with his community to seek the Truth and to help those in need. These actions attract a populist, Elizaveta, who might otherwise have

⁶⁷Smena 264. "--А мы покаемся... а?
-- . . . царствие Небесное через усилие, а не через грехи.
Кабы ты имела в себе чистый разум, я бы растолковал
тебе, а то ты глупа. . . ."

⁶⁸Smena 269. "Сила в чистом разуме, коли хочешь знать, --он же есть и в Писании, и вон в Сократе-язычнике, и в книжках, и в песнях . . . и в нас с тобой."

⁶⁹For a study of the traditional ways in which Christianity has related to culture, see H. Richard Niebuhr's Christ and Culture (New York: Harper and Row, 1951) 45ff.

engaged in a wholly secular struggle, and give her reason to hope in the eternal significance of the struggle. Thus Alesha's community comes to symbolize the confluence which Elizaveta saw occurring in Russian society.

In conclusion, Smena holds inertia and the struggle in tension in two principal ways. Firstly, Mansurov, in spite of his inertia, is not to be seen as entirely superfluous. Secondly, the inertia/struggle tension is paralleled and supported by the individual/collective conflict, so that in the end a real tension, and therefore choice, remains.

In his recent study of the superfluous type in Russian letters, David Patterson tries to understand superfluity "from within," rather than consider the type largely in terms of his alienation from society, as conventionally understood.⁷⁰ Instead his "difficulty lies in the failure of encounter; the word is offered but is not received." He mimics and remains within the "safe confines of the imprint on a page," fails to act on his word, and lacks a relationship with the Sacred.⁷¹

Mansurov, in fact, fits Patterson's mold well. He "mimics" other pessimists in his poetry (which to Fidler was unoriginal); he speaks little at social gatherings, so that his character is

⁷⁰William Harkins, for example, describes the superfluous man as "a hero who is sensitive to social and ethical problems but who fails to act, partly because of personal weakness, partly because of political and social restraints." Dictionary of Russian Literature (London: Allen, 1957) 373.

⁷¹David Patterson, Exile: The Sense of Alienation in Modern Russian Letters (U Press of Kentucky, 1995) 4ff.

revealed more in his writing than anything else; he preaches Buddhist ideas but does not practise them; finally, he is in practice an agnostic because God is utterly unknowable. In general, the diversity of thought and opinion presents itself to him only as "wild dissonance," so that he is ultimately unable to encounter the Word.

At the same time the struggle is not easily entered. This is true first because of its ambiguous nature, whereby those who engaged in it represented diverse paths and convictions. The student whom Prytkov interviewed emphasized this fact in requiring spiritual guidance. Second, some individuals are by circumstance more free to join. The "poison" which Elizaveta had inherited had made her open to the struggle, while its absence in Andrei had made him reluctant to pursue small deeds. Instead he thought of action in terms of "saving Rome" and defending his class against the forces of change. For this reason his accidental death could be seen as inevitable, and patterned after the deaths of Turgenev's heroes (Insarov, et al.).⁷²

⁷²Although there would be some disagreement here. Gol'tsev, for instance, wrote: "It seems to me that the pattern [referring to Fedor Prytkov's idea that Mansurov's death represented "the schematic depiction of the gentry's lot"] had not smothered life, that there might have been for Mansurov a reasonable alternative, and that Ecclesiastes and Liudmila Mikhailovna had not killed his vital activity." Gol'tsev, V.A. "Raznochinets i dvorianskaia kul'tura," Literaturnye ocherki (Moscow, 1895): 8 ("Нам думается, что схема не покрыла жизни, что для Мансурова мог быть и разумный выход, экклезиаст и Людмила Михайловна не убили в нем жизнедеятельности."). This view fails to take Mansurov's despair seriously, however.

Although Mansurov's death fails to reconcile his mourners, it does serve to bring out the value of his life. At his funeral one individual tries to speak for him by saying that all "dreams of life, a family, farming and the zemstvo . . . are complete nonsense," and that life was only useful insofar as it prepared us for death.⁷³ Elena Prytkova, who loved Mansurov, feels offended by this view, protesting: "I hate your 'march of things,' do you hear? . . . To suffer and be tormented is better than your nirvana . . . or to forget that he lived, thought and strove . . . not so very long ago . . . and so kindly."⁷⁴ Elena's defense of Mansurov brings out at least one reason to admire a man believed to be gripped by inertia: she argues that the fact that he lived and thought and strove spoke far more against a meaningless "march of things" than could anything that he actually said or strove for. Ultimately Mansurov is not "to blame," for his goodness has had some role to play in the lives of those around him.

The individual vs. collective conflict is brought out by the fact that the quest for the heavenly city, whether in aunt Klarisa's or in Alesha's way, is made a real option. Ertel stands behind Alesha not only because he saw in his type considerable freedom and a voice of his own, but because his life involved quest. That search, which as we saw took the form

⁷³Smena 380. "мечты о жизни, семья, хозяйство, земство, . . . все это абсолютный вздор. . . ."

⁷⁴Smena 382. "Ненавижу ваш «ход вещей . . .» Слышите ли? . . . Мучиться, страдать -- лучше, нежели ваша nirvana . . . нежели забыть, что вот он жил, мыслил, стремился . . . и так еще недавно . . . и так ласково. . . ."

of the saint's life, inspired Elizaveta to seek "the heavenly city" and to delight in doing so.

At the same time Elizaveta's experience is dynamic, and her experience points to the dangers of neglecting present concerns. After their pilgrimage she and Alesha are welcomed back by their "brothers and sisters," who enjoy hearing Alesha's account of their encounters with people of diverse sects and of his unswerving insistence on "pure reason." The attention he is given results in a misunderstanding between him and Elizaveta, however, and she accuses him of pursuing his theology for its own sake, while showing less concern for the people. Through this final scene, then, Elizaveta comes to embody the individual vs. collective tension: she has sought the "world to come" with Alesha, but for her the struggle must still include service to the people.

Part Three

"Counter Idea"

In speaking of Ertel's philosophy as one of compromise, Bunin at the same time drew attention to its dynamic quality, whereby Ertel saw life "in a new, ever-changing light."¹ If from 1889 to 1891 and in his novels Ertel was generally hopeful about Russia's future through Providence and "the struggle," in 1892 a "counter idea" philosophy began to be explicit in his writings. While in his novels dialogue was already at work and a prosaic, anti-cataclysmic outlook on history was implicit, in his last works he hesitated to synthesize, grew increasingly suspicious of laws which guarantee progress, and devoted greater attention to individual, existential concerns.²

From 1891 onwards Ertel had sufficient reason to question his confidence in "small deeds." To begin, he had observed considerable misery as he worked with victims of the famine in 1891, and had received little help from the zemstvo in his building of a village school the following year.³ Further, his

¹I. Bunin, Memories and Portraits, trans. V. Traill and R. Chancellor (London: John Lehmann, 1951) 129.

²According to Emerson and Morson, the most notable "Counter Idea" thinkers include (the early) Tolstoy, Herzen, Chekhov, Bakhtin, and the Vekhi writers. See Morson, "Time and the Intelligentsia" 84; C. Emerson and G.S. Morson, Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics (Stanford UP, 1990) 23. It seems appropriate that N. Duddington (nee Ertel) should have studied (under N. O. Lossky) and translated works of the Russian religious renaissance, especially N. Berdiaev's The Destiny of Man, S. Frank's God With Us, and N. O. Lossky's The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge.

efforts were complicated by the debts which he had incurred, while his vision for a small society of civic-minded individuals had met with discouragement.⁴ On 16 August 1892 he wrote to Chertkov:

Our times seem to me distressingly difficult and mysterious... I still believe that everything is getting better, but it's also true that the road in that direction seems to entail unusual deviations towards evil. It's sad to see how darkness thickens, and that in the struggle against it only a few flames flicker.⁵

In April 1895 he would write, again to Chertkov: "[S]ometimes I think that work in the public sector is completely fruitless in our dear land."⁶ Eventually Ertel came to see in his society the sort of "anarchy . . . depicted by Shchedrin in The History of Glupov [Istoriia odnogo goroda, 1869]," and conclude that "[i]t's frightening to live in this 'moment' of the historical process."⁷

³See Ertel's "Makar'evskoe popechitel'stvo" ("The Trusteeship of Makar'e") RM 1 (1893).

⁴As S. Garrett notes: "In a letter [of 1894] to M. I. Tokmakova, brim-full with enthusiasm and optimism, [Ertel] writes of his hopes for the formation of a group of educated, like-minded people who will take on the defence of peasant interests of every kind and organise free, voluntary medical assistance, loan facilities, a farm management station and educational trips for children. . . . Ertel never again reached quite that height of enthusiasm in his correspondence" (xxii-iii).

⁵Pis'ma 290.

⁶Pis'ma 333. "иногда я думаю о совершенной бесплодности общественной деятельности в пределах нашего любезного отечества."

⁷Pis'ma 364. "анархия . . . которую изобразил Щедрин в истории города Глупова. Жутко жить в этом «моменте» исторического процесса."

As Ertel considered the proper course of action given his circumstances, he met with extremes: "I feel organically repulsed at the idea of Revolution understood as aggression, [and the way of personal self-perfection] interests me little."⁸ What he began to seek as a third way was a more foundational, less conspicuous, means of action aimed at the transformation of society through "practical activity devoted to raising the material and moral level of the peasantry,"⁹ and the inculcation of good "habits."

The course of action which suited Ertel still reflected his passion for compromise, which was in any case now tempered by the realization that what his country needed was not "perestroika," for there was nothing to rebuild, but to lay the kind of foundation for a stable society. As he wrote in October 1898, "Throughout Russian history there have been countless ideas and fantasies, but no 'habits,' unless one counts disorderly habits in all spheres of life."¹⁰ If during his time the clergy tended to see in Christianity, as V. Ternavtsev observed, "only a 'beyond the grave' ideal, leaving behind the social dimension of life,"¹¹ while the radical intelligentsia

⁸Pis'ma 334. "к революции в смысле насилия я чувствую органическое отвращение, [жить в сфере нравственного, личного самоусовершенствования] мало меня интересует."

⁹Parsons, 188.

¹⁰Pis'ma 370. "В русской истории идей и фантазий ужасно много, «навыков» же никаких, если не считать навыков к беспорядку решительно во всех сферах жизни. . . ."

was confident in a bright future within history, Ertel's via media was to participate "in the most intimate interests of the people" and establish common ground with Christ's teachings as a basis.¹²

Ertel's philosophical development now caused him to stress the need for art to be linked intimately with faith. While he continued to insist that art should be "saturated with the flesh and blood of reality," he now emphasized that creativity was impoverished if it were not "ignited by the flames of religion or a deep philosophical world view."¹³ With less emphasis on didactic and "panoramic" concerns, Ertel turned in his later fiction towards more subjective concerns.

In the remaining chapters we shall examine two works in which hope in progress or the Kingdom of Heaven must contend with despair over evil and retrogression in Russia.

¹¹A. Men', Kul'tura i dukhovnoe voskhozhdenie (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1992) 243. V. Ternavtsev, a member of the Holy Synod, was sympathetic to the concerns of the intelligentsia with regards to the Church.

¹²Pis'ma 3. "принимая участие в самых интимных интересах [народа]."

¹³Pis'ma 304-6. "формулы художника всегда должны быть напоены плотью и кровью действительности"; "Творчество оскудевает, когда оно не согрето пламенем религии или глубокого философского мировоззрения."

Chapter Five

Hope and Despair in "Dukhovidtsy"

On 3 August 1893 Ertel wrote to Gol'tsev: "In three months or so I'll probably have a manuscript for you. But this manuscript is coming out sad, and, indeed, out of obligation; not just in the crude sense of the word, but in the delicate sense too, but nevertheless out of obligation."¹ Ertel was referring to "Dukhovidtsy," ("Clairvoyants," RM, 1893), a story in which existential questions of death, hope and ultimate meaning are raised. At the heart of the story there is profound despair; society appears to be concerned only with petty affairs and evil seems to thwart progress and charity, although a somewhat perplexed narrator's hope suggests a response.

The writing of "Dukhovidtsy" took place during those years when symbolism was first taking root in Russia in the early 1890's, and Ertel's story clearly reflects that trend with its "decadent" themes of suicide, the extraordinary, the search for a reality beyond this world and its fear that the beyond was evil and demonic. Ertel's acquaintance with Garshin, who in 1888 committed suicide, and Garshin's stories of the early 1880's which in some ways anticipate the symbolist trend, must have served as some motivation for Ertel's turn towards such themes. In a speech on Garshin Ertel wrote:

¹pis'ma 325. "[М]есяца через три я, вероятно, смогу предъявить вам некоторую рукопись. Но рукопись эта осуществляется не весело и, право, почти по обязанности. Т.-е. не в одном грубом значении этого слова, а и в деликатном, но все-таки--по обязанности."

I can only tremble as I think of those spiritual torments which he must have endured as he was reviewing and revivifying his impressions in order to write such things as Four Days, Recollections of Private Ivanov, Red Flower, and Nadezhda Nikolaevna! . . . In his prime and the most joyous time of his life he became acquainted with the horrors of the most savage and incomprehensible side of human life. . . .²

Despite the "dark side" of Garshin's work, Ertel praised his fellow writer for belonging to the "world of Truth, Goodness and Beauty," and for pointing in the direction of that world.³

Perhaps even more direct motivation for "Dukhovidtsy" came from Chekhov's Ward Six (1892),⁴ which Ertel admired, referring to the story as a "profound and masterly work."⁵ Questions associated with Ragin (in Ward Six) of the insanity of good people (who pursue exclusively spiritual matters), immortality, and despair over efforts to work towards progress associated with Ragin are all reflected in Raich and Ignatii Vasil'evich in Ertel's story.

In Ertel's "Dukhovidtsy," as in Garshin's stories and Chekhov's "Ward Six," evil and despair speak loudly. In this

²A. I. Ertel, "O Garshine," in Krasnyi tsvetok (St. Petersburg, 1889) 48.

³Ertel, O Garshine 52 ff.

⁴And, by extension perhaps, Dostoevsky, since Chekhov's story in many ways recalls the speech, action and narrative of Brothers Karamazov, as Andrew Durkin argues in "Chekhov's Response to Dostoevsky: The Case of Ward Six," Slavic Review 40 (1981) 49-59.

⁵Zapiski ot dela rukopisei gosud. biblioteki im. Lenina (Moscow, 1941) 94.

chapter we will study the theme of despair in "Dukhovidtsy," then consider whether a response of hope is suggested within the story.⁶

Set in a provincial Russian town, and narrated by a local resident, "Dukhovidtsy" is a "case study" (like Smena) in philosophical pessimism. In this instance, however, the protagonist's pessimism leads to despair and suicide. What distinguishes the story from the novel is its attention to the uncanny, as well as the fact that the new pessimist has actually engaged in the "struggle" and grown weary of it.

Raich, the main character and a newcomer to the town, is a wealthy, solitary man who can be cold and abrupt. His background is sketchy: he has spent some time in internal exile, which suggests his involvement with revolutionaries, and has recently helped with famine relief. Another central figure in the story is Ignatii Vasil'evich, a sort of holy fool with interests in philosophy, metaphysics, and the simple life in the manner of Tolstoy. What distinguishes him from Raich is that his depression has not reached despair, although his obsession with "mystical places" is of great concern to his wife.

At a regular gathering in Ignatii Vasil'evich's home, his wife, Nina Arkad'evna, explains the reasons for her husband's condition: life in the country had given him an interest in philosophical "nonsense" and made him emotionally disturbed. There he had claimed to hear the wind's enchanting music in the

⁶See Appendix A for a study of the parallels between Chekhov's "The Head Gardener's Tale" (1894) and this story.

shed, had come to love the worst seasons of the year, and from his walks to Fedino (a stretch of river where years before his friend had drowned along with a herd of horses) he would return a different man. Afraid for her husband's sanity she moved him to town, where he was now installed in the civil service.

Eventually, alone with the narrator and Raich in his study around the fireplace, Ignatii Vasil'evich turns out the lamps and tells his listeners about "Grachi" ("Rooks"): a "mystical" place by a river where nature's great suffering is intensely felt, and whose inherent evil is something only the common people understand. As a young man of eighteen he and his best friend Fedia had once felt its terrifying nature and heard what seemed to be a call for help from a particular stretch of the river. Later Fedia had drowned in that spot (for which it came to be known as Fedino), and Ignatii Vasil'evich became convinced that life is meaningless, and that death, which destroys individuality, offers no hope of reconciliation, or even nirvana.

Raich, whose comments elsewhere reflect his interest in theosophy,⁷ immediately objects to Ignatii Vasil'evich's disbelief in the afterlife, upon which Ignatii Vasil'evich predicts Raich will shoot himself since he is not afraid of death. When Ignatii Vasil'evich explains how he lost Fedia's friendship when he failed to cover up the fact that Fedia had

⁷Raich's acquaintance with theosophy is suggested by his reference to Isis: "One must dare . . . to look Isis in the eyes" ("Надо сметь . . . глянуть в очи Изида." SS vol.7, 506). Ertel deals with theosophy more fully in the Kar'era Strukova.

stolen some apples, Raich tells how he, as an onlooker at Fedia's trial, witnessed the flogging and how Fedia resisted, biting one of the guards, with an excited mob looking on. "We killed in him," Raich exclaims, "the clearest, brightest thing: that which was for him the image of God."⁸ Raich insists, however, that because there is no good and evil, but only a chain of cause and effect, no one is to blame for this crime, neither the onlookers, Ignatii Vasil'evich, nor Ignatii Vasil'evich's father, who had him punished. In fact, there is nothing to believe in.

As Raich prepares to leave, Ignatii Vasil'evich warns the narrator (who has sat through the evening in silent disbelief) that Raich intends to shoot himself. On an out-of-town walk with Raich, a now somewhat more sympathetic narrator learns more of Raich's despair. According to Raich, the meaning of life will be found only in the next world, and one must have faith in the unknown, so as to have the courage to become one with it at any moment. As they walk Raich hears some enchanting music, and senses he is being called from the world beyond. He goes on to say that because of evil and injustice there cannot be any hope of "heaven on earth, nor God in heaven."⁹ Ignatii Vasil'evich holds on to life because he has love, but he (Raich), on the other hand, lost the woman he loved. Raich believes that any progress will only be temporary, and confesses

⁸SS vol 7, 500. "Мы убили в нем самое чистое, самое светлое . . . в котором отражался для него образ Бога."

⁹SS vol 7, 509. "на земле нет правды, на небе--Бога."

he does not have the strength to wait for its coming, since he sees no immediate signs.

The narrator, deeply moved by this pathetic man's condition and confession, invites him home for breakfast. Raich, however, asks for forgiveness as he turns down the invitation with a look that tells the narrator that he is the closest person to him on earth. After sleeping through the next day the narrator learns that Raich has taken his own life, at "Grachi." Since that terrible event a few days ago passers-by in town have not ceased to make inquiries.

"Dukhovidtsy" was received enthusiastically by Chekhov, who on reading the story described Ertel as a "magnificent artist."¹⁰ I. Dzhonson considered it one of Ertel's best works, despite the fact that it was buried in old journals and was not very popular. In 1908 he wrote "the whole story is magnificent, full of enchanting lyricism and profoundly sad beauty."¹¹ Soviet critics have not been so enthusiastic, however. Spasibenko's study hardly mentions the story, Kostin wrote that "Dukhovidtsy," along with those works written after it, "no longer had any significant content;"¹² and Nikiforov regarded

¹⁰A.P. Chekhov (letter to Ertel, 15 Oct 1894), PSSP vol.5:2 (Moscow: Nauka, 1977) 328.

¹¹I. Dzhonson, "Zabytyi pisatel'," Kievskie vesti, 23 June 1908: (page unknown).

¹²G.A. Kostin, "A.I. Ertel'," in Istoriia russkoi literatury vol. 9 (Moscow-Leningrad: ANSSSR, 1956) 166.

the story as flawed and inferior to Ertel's earlier works because its heroes "even communicate with the world beyond."¹³

"Dukhovidtsy" can be considered Ertel's most psychologically probing work thus far, for in the story the two principal characters speak at great length about very personal concerns.¹⁴ The setting around the fireplace reinforces the intimacy of the confessions made, while the narrator's increasing sensitivity towards the two men encourages the same.

On the surface, the story's tragedy lies in Raich's suicide. To intensify that tragic event the story possesses a remarkable sense of progression and focus, whereby Raich's gradual isolation is emphasized. In Part I he is one guest among several at the evening gathering. Before long the guests divide into two groups: one goes into another room to play cards while a second group, which includes Ignatii Vasil'evich, Nina Arkad'evna, a certain tax assessor, the narrator, and Raich remains in the study. Nina Arkad'evna tries to keep this group intact (because she is afraid to leave Raich and her husband alone without adequate supervision) by asking the tax assessor to speak, but the card game has his greater attention. Ignatii Vasil'evich, Raich and the narrator are then left in the study, where Ignatii Vasil'evich tells his story, which lasts through the end of Part II. Raich tells his in Part III, and is then left alone with the narrator when Ignatii Vasil'evich leaves the

¹³Nikiforov, "Tvorchestvo A. I. Ertelia," abstract, 12.

¹⁴This reflects Ertel's acquaintance with, especially, Tolstoy's Confession.

study. In the final part the narrator himself tries to avoid further separation, as it were, by inviting Raich home for breakfast and to continue discussing his concerns. Raich, however, turns down the offer and is left entirely alone "to get some rest."

The suicide is the sign and outcome of a more profound tragedy: an intense despair, which lies at the heart of the story and revolves around the person of Fedia. For both Ignatii Vasil'evich and Raich, Fedia represents a traumatic, tragic memory. For Ignatii Vasil'evich the loss of his best friend led him to conclude that there never would be "peace on earth, goodwill among men,"¹⁵ and for Raich the slaying of the image of God in Fedia served to prove to Raich that there is neither good and evil nor God. Neither is there room for the two to find comfort in their common experience. In this sense the intimacy of their confessions becomes tragic. Here we shall examine how their stories build on one another as the theme of despair is developed.

One stylistic feature is worthy of mention at the outset, not only because it stands out so forcefully but because it sheds light on Ignatii Vasil'evich's state of mind and character. When relating the story of his loss of Fedia's friendship, Ignatii Vasil'evich's ends each of nine digressions with the words "but that's not the point." Since those digressions touch upon the origins of his "mysticism," or suggest unresolved issues between him and his wife or his

¹⁵SS vol 7, 494. "на земле мир и в человецех благоволение."

father, the repetition of the phrase underscores the fact that Ignatii Vasil'evich has many concerns, any of which could be spoken of at length. Thus when Raich asks whether suicides occur at "Grachi" regularly, Ignatii Vasil'evich might have answered simply and briefly, but instead he takes advantage of Raich's interest to vent those concerns. While Ignatii Vasil'evich's statement might also suggest some degree of incoherence in his story and lack of concentration, his story is nevertheless focused, as his despair is first expressed generally and theoretically, then specifically and personally.

The notion that suffering leads to despair is raised at the beginning of Ignatii's story:

Let me tell you, concealed in the depths of nature is great suffering. You suppose that nature finds it easy--like water off a duck's back--to destroy, decompose and do evil. . . . The whole meaning of [humanity's] existence is saturated with poison... Yes, just have a look: humanity rejoices, falls in love, multiplies, sings and dances. Only the most insightful know that it's all a dream, vanity, a shadow of the fleeting mist, and that life is terrible.¹⁶

In fact there is no reason to hope that things will change. Humanity is in its November, he continues, and what lies before us is war and destruction. As an example of a place where he senses nature's suffering he mentions "Grachi," whose inherent evil he feels the way the people do, and predicts that a tragedy will take place there.

¹⁶SS vol 7, 488.

The first reason for his despair has to do with his mystical experience with nature on the night he went to "Grachi" with Fedia:

Suddenly another murmur rolled in the thicket, sounding like the tramping of horses, neighing, crackling, and a despairing call for help. . . . Losing my senses from fear I once again glanced around the surroundings. The glade was silent and white, all around stood a wall of trees, whose bare tops were covered in mist. That's all there was... Yes, dear sirs, nature has mysteries other than those fussed over in laboratories. There are places, sounds, and forms in which the tragic essence of so-called matter is revealed with astounding clarity. I understood this then. I felt it.¹⁷

The incident that night, which for him speaks of a future tragedy, is a turning point in Ignatii Vasil'evich's life. It is further complicated by his second reason for despair: the loss of his best friend, which causes him to conclude that life has no meaning:

I thought humanity could be set on the right path, that the course of history could be ennobled. . . . I used to dream that there was "peace on earth and goodwill among men," and believe that if to the present all signs were to the contrary it was because history had been mistaken for seven thousand years... I no longer dream or bother. I know that this tragic disorder exists in nature itself, that the very essence of existence is poisoned with meaninglessness, and that there will never be reconciliation, even in death. What is death, you ask? Oh, dear sirs, death is no more than an intermediate state. Consciousness has nowhere to go, and that's why life is so terrible, as is death. If only we could hope for the comfort of nirvana... But there's no such thing. There can't be. There won't be. Before us lies a most

¹⁷SS vol 7, 493-4.

certain eternity, and that is the most bitter and true thing one could devise.¹⁸

Ignatii Vasil'evich comes to believe that friendship is impossible between master and servant. Fedia, planning to get married, begins to avoid him as he feels the pressure of his peasant class to break ties with his friend. In retaliation Ignatii Vasil'evich fails to protect Fedia when he is caught stealing, and is then paid back with a cynical laugh when he tries to apologize. He loses his best friend for good when Fedia drowns with the herd of horses.

In contrast to Ignatii Vasil'evich's story, Raich's speech is blunt, to the point, controlled and monotonous. As it becomes more personal (in the final part) his story is told, remarks the narrator, as in excerpts from a book containing his life's thoughts and feelings.¹⁹ These qualities reflect his introspection and mental anguish, both of which become explicit in his story.

What takes one by surprise about Raich's story is the fact that he was actually present at Fedia's flogging. He begins by describing the court scene orchestrated by grey-bearded, indifferent "patriarchs" who order Fedia's birch lashings as an excited mob looks on. On his way to his punishment Fedia bites someone's hand, causing quite a stir and provoking extra lashes.

¹⁸SS vol 7, 494.

¹⁹SS vol 7, 511. "Казалось, что внутри он читает какую-то большую книгу: всю свою жизнь с ее мыслями и чувствами, и только короткие отрывки из этой книги произносит вслух."

Raich shows how appalled he was with the whole scene, and even includes himself, an onlooker, in the blame for Fedia's torture:

Raich suddenly pulled his hands away from his face. I cannot express the infinite sadness which it revealed. 'Murder,' he said. 'In fact it was worse than murder, you know. We killed the purest, brightest thing in him... With our filthy hands we soiled and defiled that transparent source that reflected the image of God in him... Yes, and we're even pleased with ourselves that we brought him down to our level.'²⁰

In blaming everyone, however, he blames no one:

'Comfort yourself,' he said [addressing Ignatii Vasil'evich]. 'You're not to blame for this, neither is your father, nor the judges, the butchers, nor even that aesthete of torture--the tavern-keeper's son. Everything runs just like an engine, in which the steam is raised without our knowledge.'²¹

In fact, since everything runs "just like an engine," Raich offers a rational explanation for the tragedy. He suggests that on the night before his death by drowning Fedia himself went to that stretch

with an axe in hand, slit the ice, then covered it over with snow. He knew that when the ice cracked and the sound rang out like a shot the horses would crowd together, pile up and go to the bottom.'²²

While Raich differs from Ignatii Vasil'evich on the explanation for Fedia's death, they are of one mind in other ways. First, he shares Ignatii Vasil'evich's doubt about the

²⁰SS vol 7, 500.

²¹SS vol 7, 501.

²²SS vol 7, 502.

possibility of peace on earth, because he experienced his own selfish ambition disguised as charity when he was involved with famine victims. Perceiving this same selfishness in others, and observing the pain human beings inflict on one another at Fedia's flogging, for example, he is convinced that humanity's condition is hopeless.

Second, Raich has grown tired of society and weary with life, which he perceives as a theatrical performance which amuses but fails to penetrate the darkness. Here the dark study, where he sits with the narrator and Ignatii Vasil'evich, and the frivolous card game in the next room, echoes this contrast. Moreover, when Nina Arkad'evna comments on the tax assessor's charitable work, Raich's face expresses "indescribable disgust," and later, in Part IV, he explains to the narrator:

'It's all a sham,' muttered Raich.
 'Are you referring to the evening gathering?'
 'Yes... to life. As though everyone
 had important affairs and were pleased with life.'
 'Do you mean to suggest that poor Ignatii
 Vasil'evich is right?'
 'He's the most perceptive of them all, at
 any rate. A great mystery has touched him and
 shaken him up... He feels the dark side of
 this wretched game... and its foul deception.
 In the past such individuals were called God's
 fools and considered holy; today they are simply
 considered eccentrics or mad. Truth... These
 eccentrics are closer to it than balanced people.'²³

Third, Raich has come to perceive nature in the way that Ignatii Vasil'evich described it. On his walk with the

²³SS vol 7, 506.

narrator, Raich hears nature's "conversation," and echoes Ignatii Vasil'evich's earlier assertion that "there are places, sounds and forms in which the tragic essence of so-called matter is revealed with astounding clarity:"

'What amazing music!,' he exclaimed. I looked at him, confounded.

'Don't you hear the sounds?,' he asked. "Do you really not understand these voices that take nature by surprise, or their intimate conversation?... But you don't understand me. You think I'm mad.' I mumbled what came to mind at the moment. Then, half a verst from the road, a monastery suddenly appeared in a clearing of the fog.

'Look,' said Raich. 'Consider how insignificant people are when compared with that which they have the audacity to call inanimate matter. See the walls, towers, centuries-old oaks, the dark cracks in the loop-holes, the flame of the icon-lamps above the gates... That's all there is to it, unless you look more closely. What significant forms! What reverie, what import, what mystery in those lines, those somber oaks with arms extended, those moss-covered walls and towers, that icon lamp's gentle light! And what harmony between it all and the fog, the moonlit night, the straight highway and those thickets in the distance!²⁴

Raich confesses, however, that he, unlike Ignatii Vasil'evich, does not fear death, but is even intrigued and compelled by "the other side," and longs to "get behind the scenes finally into that real and terrible reality, whose substance we symbolize only partially in our religion and art."²⁵ Neither is that next world necessarily terrible; it can

²⁴SS vol 7, 507-8.

²⁵SS vol 7, 509. "проникнуть за кулисы, в ту настоящую и страшную действительность, содержание которой мы только отчасти символизируем в нашем искусстве, в нашей религии."

be no worse than the torments and meaningless suffering of this life which make faith in God impossible.

Two things might have given Raich hope. From time to time he had felt that a new day would dawn, but now he is convinced that it would only be for an instant, "because humanity's innate savagery will quickly hide the sun."²⁶ His most personal reason for despair, however, is the death of the woman he loved. So it is that this mysterious, lonely man, loses all hope and commits suicide.

What the two men's stories suggest is that the world is fundamentally disordered: humanity is utterly fallen, nature is indifferent, and suffering is meaningless.²⁷ These "truths," we have seen, are evident in various ways: society reflects humanity's selfishness, so that progress and any hope of the "Kingdom of Heaven on earth" is always thwarted by human "savagery," and reconciliation is made impossible by the unbridgeable gap between social classes; nature's indifference is experienced personally and observed in the disinterested judges and excited mob at Fedia's flogging; finally the meaninglessness of suffering is underscored by the notion that even death will bring no reconciliation.

²⁶SS vol 7, 510. "потому что врожденная дикость не замедлит заслонить это солнце."

²⁷Here one might suggest Schopenhauer as a source for these notions, given that Ertel was once again dealing with the philosophical pessimism which he had encountered both in his formative years and his reading of Tolstoy's Confession.

We have learned how the tragedy of suicide is intensified by a structural feature which brings about Raich's isolation. From another angle, however, his prominence is emphasized, which has a different effect. As a resident of the town, the narrator, as we learned at the end of Part IV, is forced to answer questions about the incident, so his story is at least an effort to examine the events that led to Raich's suicide. Thus at the outset he introduces the "general" motivating environment: shallow society and a "disturbed" individual's concerns. This setting serves to draw Raich, an individual with some of the same preoccupations as Ignatii Vasil'evich, into the story as an interested listener. During Ignatii Vasil'evich's story he is drawn gradually out of the background as the story completely absorbs his attention. Then Raich tells his own story, which brings him to the centre of the reader's attention. Finally, when he and the narrator are alone, Raich comes to the very foreground as his philosophical comments give way to more personal ones, which offer the narrator Raich's deepest motives for taking his own life. What the narrator does in bringing about Raich's prominence is to expose the layers of motivation towards despair, an understanding of which is at least the beginning of a response to the despair as encountered in this story.

A further suggestion of a response is seen in another structural feature which draws attention to the narrator's dilemma. In the story we meet two "clairvoyants:" Nina Arkad'evna's relationship with the first, her husband, stands in

contrast to the one that develops between Raich and the narrator. Nina Arkad'evna has taken charge of her husband's life so that he continues to be a nuisance and burden for her. The narrator, on the other hand, is torn throughout the story between getting away from such people ("I must get home! . . . And may God be with these strange people who can never be helped"²⁸) and being a friend, as seen at the very end when it becomes obvious to him that Raich has found in him a true friend. A sensitive response to such individuals is thus embodied in the narrator, even though Raich's suicide is not made less tragic; in fact the tragedy is intensified by the narrator's expression of compassion (accentuated by the morning sunlight), which would otherwise promise hope.

The narrator's "objective" stance throughout the story allows hope to be given some voice. His objectivity is suggested initially by the fact that he has to convey the story to the public, and is seen, for example, in his sympathy towards Ignatii Vasil'evich, while noticing the grief expressed in Nina Arkad'evna's eyes. His authority, however, is somewhat undercut and relativized by his other voice, which suggests not sympathy or compassion, but disapproval and sarcasm:

Then when Ignatii Vasil'evich said that Raich would shoot himself, and the latter simply grinned, I was struck. I forced a laugh and exclaimed loudly: 'Well, sirs, it seems we've talked ourselves silly!' Both looked at me with uncomprehending eyes. I think they were even surprised that there was a

²⁸SS vol 7, 511. "Домой, домой!.. И Бог с ними, с этими странными людьми, которым нельзя помочь."

third person in their midst.²⁹

It remains true, nevertheless, that despite his frustration the narrator does not interrupt or use his authority as narrator in any other way to pass judgment on anyone. In becoming relativized, his voice becomes "dialogic," so that a message of hope can be sought through the interaction of the various voices.

Ertel's own "objective" stance would allow those various "voices" to have their own integrity and for Truth to be tentative. Like the narrator who questions the pessimism of the two clairvoyants, Ertel questions despair over "our permanent home." In one letter to his daughter he put it this way:

It is terribly difficult to reduce the great variety of human souls to the unity of any concrete rubric. So also the rubric "to have no abiding city"... For some souls it is actually essential, for the purposes of "seeking the city which is to come," but for others, once our "city" is not an "abiding" one, they are not able even to think about things to come. In general the norm, it seems to me, should be the "abiding city," for without it there would arise a disorder that troubles every soul, and the earth would be overgrown with thorns and thistles.³⁰

This practical hope in "this world" can be seen in the narrator's question "Why go on living, if one does not believe?"³¹ and comment "that will lead to a wall . . . then

²⁹SS vol 7, 495.

³⁰Pis'ma 393. Biblical references are to Hebrews 13:14 ("abiding city") and Genesis 3:18 ("thorns and thistles").

³¹SS vol 7, 502. "Зачем же жить, если не верить?"

despair,"³² both of which he utters in the context of Raich's resignation to the idea that "all is vanity" in this world and that progress and "peace on earth" are impossible.

Another "truth" is expressed in Raich's voice in his conclusion about the "murder" of Fedia, which we have seen above. Raich believed that we (humanity) killed in Fedia "the image of God," and that "no one is to blame" because everything is determined, and freedom of choice is illusory. Raich's words are a clear echo of Ertel's belief that, in the realm of art at least, "no one is to blame."³³

In "Dukhovidtsy," then, the truth of the matter can be known only by giving both despair and hope a voice and context, as Ertel does. While the will to believe³⁴ does not refute Raich's determinism, it contends with it, so that Ignatii Vasil'evich's fatalism (as also Raich's sophisticated version) exists in tension with, and is defined by, hope. At the same time the undercutting of the narrator's authority serves to distribute authority, as it were, so that any voice is potentially, in Bakhtin's language, "internally persuasive,"³⁵ and both his and Raich's voices are given authenticity.

If in "Dukhovidtsy" Ertel addressed the reasons for hope and despair with regards to progress and the "Kingdom of Heaven"

³²SS vol 7, 506. "Он приведет к стене . . . и к отчаянию."

³³pis'ma 246.

³⁴"The Will to Believe" is the title of William James' (1842-1910) famous essay.

³⁵M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," The Dialogic Imagination, ed. M. Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 342.

in general, in his last work he turned to Russia's tragic inability to recognize her bond with the West.

Chapter Six

Matter and Spirit, or Russia and the West, in
Kar'era Strukova

Nobody yet knows what
matter is, where it
came from, whither it
is bound, or what is
its ultimate relation
to spirit.

--Rufus Jones¹

Set in the mid-1880's, Ertel's last published work, Kar'era Strukova ("Strukov's Career," Severnyi vestnik, 1895), is the story of Natalia and Alexei Strukov's frustrated efforts to bring about social change in their provincial Russian town. The povest' is reminiscent of Dve pary (1886), where Sergei Petrovich and Maria Pavlovna fail in their efforts to become one with the people.

Alexei and Natasha meet in London, where he has been writing a study of the application of Marxist theory to ground rent, while she is travelling with her father. United by their desire to return to Russia and serve the people, the two marry and settle down in a Volga town. Soon, however, Alexei begins to grow dissatisfied with the ordinariness of his work as Justice of the Peace, while Natasha is faced with opposition in her efforts as trustee to reform the local school. At this point her father, Petr Perelygin, befriends a certain Doctor Buchnev, an anarchist and spiritualist, whose friendship with Natasha threatens her relationship with Alexei. The marriage

¹Rufus Jones, Spirit in Man (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1941) 21.

disintegrates, in the end, not so much because of Buchnev, but because Strukov has grown bored with life and love, while Natasha is compelled to go abroad for her father's health and her two sons' education. Left alone, Strukov commits suicide.

From the above sketch, which echoes the disenchantment of the couple in Dve pary, it would appear that Kar'era Strukova was written, as Bessonov writes, "on the inertia of [Ertel's] previous conceptions."² Dzhonson describes the povest', however, as "a shining example of the full maturity of Ertel's talent" and a "masterpiece of our literature for its excellent artistic merit, for the brightness and strength of the psychological analysis, for its vivid character portraits, and for the depth of the social, family and individual issues raised in it."³ Since "Clairvoyants" Ertel's concerns had grown more subjective and psychologically probing as he grew dissatisfied with "the struggle" as he had come to understand it.

If Ertel's notion that an abstract work of thought lay behind every significant and authentic work of art applies to Kar'era Strukova,⁴ then on one level the thought behind it

²B.L. Bessonov, "A.I. Ertel'- Avtor Gardeninykh," Gardeniny by A. I. Ertel (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1960) 28.

³Dzhonson, n.p. "яркий образчик полной зрелости Эртелевского таланта . . . ; один из шедевров нашей литературы и по замечательной художественности, и по яркости и силе психологического анализа, и по колоритности разных фигурирующих в ней типов, и по глубине поставленных в ней вопросов общественной, семейной и личной жизни."

⁴Pis'ma 305. "нет того настоящего и значительного произведения искусства, которому не предшествовала бы отвлеченная работа мысли."

revolves around a rather ironic tension between Russia and the West. While Alexei and Natasha return to Russia with nostalgia and a sense of duty towards their country, what they actually bring home is a vision of Russia's transformation along Western lines. Pereygin, in the meantime, believes that the Truth lies with the East and its Church Fathers,⁵ although he admires Western rationalism at the same time.

On another level the West vs. Russia conflict is symbolic of a more universal one between "spirit" (with preference given to the intellect and the individual) and "matter" (with preference given to the land and the collective). With a look at each of the four main characters in turn we shall examine each one's relationship to this universal conflict, and in conclusion we shall define the tragic nature of Kar'era Strukova.

Spirit Denied

While Andrei Mansurov (in Smena) was driven to despair over an understanding of history that was strictly cyclical, and Raich (in "Clairvoyants") was so overwhelmed by evil and injustice that he ceased to believe in goodness (whether human or divine), Strukov's despair comes about differently. As a Marxist he believes in progress and the classless society of the bright future, but he loses hope not because he ceases to

⁵SS vol. 4, 135-6.

believe in that new world, but because his modest efforts become "prosaic" and wearisome, rendering him indifferent to life.

Perelygin points out the fundamental inconsistency in Strukov's philosophy at the outset. As Strukov falls in love with Natasha he is prone to believe in love as something sacred, so that he is angered at Perelygin's suggestion that free love is natural and reasonable, and would actually obliterate prostitution. To his comment "What you are saying is blasphemous! What you are saying is godless!" Perelygin responds:

But that's all metaphysics. . . . Where's the sacredness? What is godlessness? You've correctly noted that it's all in matter, in what is observable, and facts. . . . You've noted yourself: Who moves history? Heat, clothes, food. And I simply add: the sexual apparatus. You say that today's social structures will give way to communal ones, and I agree--that is with regards to my topic.⁶ [emphasis added]

Perelygin rejects socialism as nonsense because "the 'herd' can't break with decayed ways of thinking and the 'chosen' have no need of socialism."⁷ Strukov, however, continues to believe in Russia and (although not explicitly) the "Spirit" which will guide her forward, while remaining committed to "the facts." As he and Natasha fall in love she is prepared to overlook this inconsistency and love "his way," even though she points out that his "reasoning involves a leap to which [he] has no right

⁶SS vol. 4, 140-1.

⁷SS vol. 4, 142. "«стадо» с обветшалым порядком мышления разорвать не может, а «избранные» не нуждаются в социализме. . . ."

if all there is is matter."⁸ Their love, moreover, is bound up with the hope that back in Russia they would, as Natasha hoped, "create miracles together."⁹

Reflecting Ertel's notion that "in nature there have never been . . . cataclysms,"¹⁰ Strukov believed that Russia's transformation was to come about gradually, with no need for revolution, and hoped that

the Russia of Gogol and Shchedrin would [like the England of Dickens and Thackeray] also become an anachronism not through "revolution", but the gradual development of consciousness, lawfulness, prosperity, through bloodless sacrifices, cultural efforts, and the accomplishment of modest tasks.¹¹

But once immersed in those efforts he cannot find the patience to see beyond human greed and a deteriorating economy. With this outlook, and the loss of his wife's friendship to the doctor, he gradually grows cold towards her, takes to drinking heavily, and despairs. Finally, having spoken to his wife of his plans to return to his native village, he jumps from a ship into the Volga and drowns. Underscoring his attachment to the land and Russia, was his concern that in going abroad his children would become "groundless" ("bespochvennye").¹²

⁸SS vol. 4, 150. "в твоих рассуждениях есть скачок, на который ты не имеешь право, если только одна материя."

⁹SS vol. 4, 149. "А, натворим мы с тобой чудес!"

¹⁰Pis'ma 64. "Теперь уже доказано, что в природе не было . . . катаклизмов."

¹¹SS vol. 4, 158.

¹²SS vol. 4, 294.

Mind over Matter

If Strukov's world view is materialistic, Doctor Buchnev's philosophy of "mind over matter" represents its opposite.

Invited to be Perehygin's personal doctor, Buchnev is a solid, serious man of about forty who strikes Natasha as simplehearted and Strukov as nearly insane.¹³ Educated in a reformatory as a boy, he subsequently enrolled in the medical academy. In addition, he had studied religious history, worked on a colony in the United States with William Frey, and delved into spiritualism and theosophy under Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott while in London. His training as a surgeon combined with theosophy ("the antithesis of materialism of any kind"¹⁴) had made of him a practitioner of alternative medicine, and a firm believer in minimal medical intervention and the mind's authority over the body. Like Raich, he believes that what is truly real lies beyond matter and the grave, from where he claims to hear voices.¹⁵

¹³SS vol. 4, 238.

¹⁴Lewis Spence, Encyclopedia of Occultism (New York: University Books, 1960) 410.

¹⁵SS vol. 4, 249. "«Не хочу болеть» это самое верное лекарство." ("The best medicine is 'I do not wish to be sick'.") Buchnev is in all likelihood modelled after a specific follower of Frey, Stephen Briggs, who, as we learn from Yarmolinsky, was a "hygienic physician and surgeon," advocate of vegetarianism, hydropathy, women's rights, and a spiritualist. As a spiritualist and follower of Frey he would have shared Frey's dualistic belief in "the immortality of the soul, living in Humanity, and the immortality of the body which mingles with the earth." Yarmolinsky, 131.

The fact that Buchnev is not an entirely misguided soul is made evident initially through his friendship with Natasha. The independent and straightforward manner expressed in his belief that one should "live as [one] please[s], speak and act openly . . . not lie and not fear"¹⁶ comes as a relief to her, for she has just given up her school trusteeship and is inclined to accept Buchnev's notion that service through institutions is a waste of time. Later his goodness is demonstrated through two events which reveal his love of "dogs and children."¹⁷ The first involves the old miller Agafon, a hermit-like and cranky Old Believer who hates the doctor, curses him as an instrument of the Devil, and even urges his dog to attack him. Buchnev does not respond with animosity, however, and on one occasion even manages to tame Turka (who would only come near her master), winning the admiration of the children in the community. Later in the story, Buchnev impresses even Strukov, who otherwise despises him, with his "touching simplicity of interaction"¹⁸ with a group of boys around a campfire.

At the same time Buchnev is profoundly unhappy. He drinks heavily to avoid hearing the voices "from the other side,"¹⁹

¹⁶SS vol. 4, 245-6. "жить как мне хочется, говорить и делать прямо . . . не лгать и не бояться."

¹⁷SS vol. 4, 248. (As Natasha explains) "Детей и собак он очень любит."

¹⁸SS vol. 4, 272. "Как вы достигли такой умилительной простоты отношений?"

¹⁹SS vol. 4, 251. "оттуда"

and at heart he wishes that "so called immortality were a mystery [and not] cold, determined, autumn-day reality."²⁰ His wish reflects an idea Ertel expressed to Pogozheva even as he was writing Kar'era Strukova: "If the sciences occultes were real and could solve the riddle of existence, as physics can the riddle of lightning and thunder, then everything would be immensely boring."²¹

The scene around the campfire, which is at first delightful for Strukov, is unfortunately spoiled by the doctor. While Strukov recalls Turgenev's "Bezhin Meadow" and imagines Buchnev to be an integral part of the scenario, the doctor is quick to distance himself from such a "romantic" connection when Strukov comments:

"You simply don't love Russia."
 "But there's nothing in her to love."
 "But I find you here in . . . a purely
 Russian and Turgenevan context..."
 "It could just as easily have been
 America, England, a Bret Hartian or
 Dickensian setting."²²

Buchnev insists that Russia will inevitably "drink herself to death" and, like all matter, decompose.²³ In a scene reminiscent of Raich and Ignatii Vasilievich's cynical

²⁰SS vol. 4, 277. "А если бы то, что называют бессмертием, была тайна. . . . Но это--холодная, определенная, как осенний день, действительность."

²¹pis'ma 337. "Если бы «Sciences occultes» были действительны и могли бы разрешить загадку бытия, как физика загадку молнии и грома, то это была бы огромная скука."

²²SS vol. 4, 273.

²³SS vol. 4, 272. "сопьется"

conversation (in "Clairvoyants"), Strukov is won over by Buchnev's pessimism as the two discuss how "all is relative" and speak of suicide as a means to escape their loneliness. In this way the two, we conclude, arrive at a point of despair from opposite directions: the doctor from a crude immaterialism with its abolition of mystery, Strukov from a materialism which denies it.

Spirit and Matter in Tension

Natasha emerges as the central character in the story, for in her the tension between matter and spirit is most pronounced. Honoring her husband's vocation she is drawn close to the land and the Russian people (indeed closer than he ever could be with his theoretical knowledge of Russian provincial life); at the same time she is independent, open to Buchnev's "mind over matter" philosophy, and ready, when it becomes clear to her that her marriage has ended, to uproot her children and take them to be educated abroad.

Natasha's centrality is established additionally by the fact that she is the one character whose outlook is not already defined; rather, her philosophy is dynamic, and constructed throughout the story in relationship with the "men in her life." In Natasha one might say that Ertel has "found" his heroine: In Volkhonskaia baryshnia (The Lady of Volkhonsk, 1883) he presents a populist woman "in the making;" in Dve pary (1886) she comes with a plan to serve the people; in Gardeniny (1889) she is "educated" by a revolutionary; in Smena (1890-1) she is informed

more by the "mood" of populism (as a form of Christian service), but is still a secondary figure; now in Kar'era Strukova she is close to the people by nature, spiritually motivated, practical and independent.

Since Natasha is very much her "father's daughter," as she herself observes,²⁴ here we will consider Perelygin and his influence in her outlook, then examine the dynamic tension between spirit and matter reflected through her relationships with Strukov and Buchnev.

As one of Ertel's most individualized characters, Perelygin possesses a rather complex world view. On the one hand he is a staunch iconoclast, rejecting all conventions and ceremonies (with one exception, as we shall note). When Natasha and Strukov announce to him their engagement he encourages them to live together before a ceremony is required or necessary. "That way the divorce," he jokes, "will be cheaper if you take it into your heads to separate."²⁵ Further on we learn that he supports communes where both marriage and personal property are rejected. In relation to Strukov, at least, his iconoclasm proves justified, for he has the insight to realize that Strukov's love is simply passion which will die once satisfied.²⁶

²⁴SS vol. 4, 147. "дочь своего отца"

²⁵SS vol. 4, 153. "Этак и развод обойдется дешево, ежели вздумаете расходиться."

²⁶SS vol. 4, 162.

At the same time Perelygin admires Avvakum for his "unquenchable zeal," claims to follow the "Spasovo" sect of the "priestless" Old Believers, insists on the necessity of crossing oneself with two fingers (in Old Believer fashion), and maintains that the truth is on the side of the East, Origen and other Eastern Fathers.²⁷ Moreover, he makes sharp "chosen"/"herd" distinctions which cause him to dismiss Western religious thought outright. Thus, for instance, he calls Renan, whose Life of Jesus he considers nonsense, a "phrase-monger" and "little Jew."²⁸

The apparent contradictions in Perelygin's outlook can be explained by Zenkovskii's observation that the Spasovo sect, "with its religious indifferentism more closely resembles eighteenth-century agnosticism or skepticism than authentic Old Believer ways."²⁹ In fact what Perelygin truly holds dear are "good habits" and a healthy curiosity.³⁰ As Natasha notes, with her father's approval, he is "a freethinker to the core"

²⁷SS vol. 4, 135. "ревность неугасимая" As they came to be called, the "Old Believers" opposed Nikon's reforms of Church ritual and liturgical texts in the 1660's. Opposed to Westernizing forces in the Russian Church, the Old Believers did much to uphold Russia's messianic role in the world and the idea of Moscow as the "Third Rome." Archpriest Avvakum's autobiography is a classic of Old Believer literature.

²⁸SS vol. 4, 133-6. "фразер" "жидок"

²⁹S.A. Zenkovsky, Russkoe staroobriadchestvo (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1970) 475. "... своей религиозной индифферентностью скорее напоминают западного типа агностиков или скептиков восемнадцатого века, чем подлинное старообрядчество."

³⁰SS vol. 4, 161-2. "здравые привычки"

who eagerly debates theological questions "only to give his mind some diversion."³¹ Out of curiosity he collects coins, crosses, icons and manuscripts; for the amusement of "the herd"³² he is at work on a translation of Courdaveaux's Comment se sont formés les dogmes;³³ and for his own amusement he keeps the company of a "young blonde" escort until the early hours of the morning.³⁴

Perelygin's philosophy is, in the final analysis, no less inconsistent than Strukov's. While he faults Strukov for bringing God into the realm of observable fact, he himself, reducing everything to matter, looks forward to the common life based on free love and the "sexual apparatus:" a vision just as utopian as his son-in-law's.

One trait which Natasha inherits from her father is an Avvakum-like rigorous strain which causes her to dominate Strukov. One notes, for instance, that she seems to have a clearer vision of his vocation than he does, despite the fact that at twenty-two she is several years younger:

Have you not thought of anything to do with your life? . . . And haven't you come up with any of your own thoughts? . . . It's time to get to work. . . . Your work is in Russia, not in scholarship. . . . If you can't be original as a scholar, then be original in life."³⁵

³¹SS vol. 4, 137. "безграничный вольнодумец; . . . только для . . . игры ума."

³²SS vol. 4, 136. "для стада"

³³p.C.V. Courdaveaux (1821-1910 or 1912), French Professor of Philosophy and author of various works in philosophy and classics.

³⁴SS vol. 4, 184. "желтоволосая девица"

³⁵SS vol. 4, 126.

So instead of making his small contribution to Marxist scholarship, Strukov decides that "what he had really longed for was to go to the Russian countryside and [engage in] modest cultural efforts."³⁶

Raised among Old Believers, Natasha has another model of piety before her: Avvakum's wife, in whose spirit she endeavours to submit to her husband. In fact the rigorous and kenotic tension in Natasha's life offers additional support for her centrality: "I would have gone into the fire, suffered hunger or cold with you,"³⁷ she tells Strukov as they part. Indeed she makes numerous efforts to draw close to him, but by this time he has grown jealous of her friendship with Buchnev.

Another way in which Natasha emulates her father allows her to cope with that which her husband comes to loathe. As they grow dissatisfied with their efforts within institutions and their relationship loses its romance, only Natasha is able to devote her energies to "good habits."³⁸ She finds, to Strukov's dismay, that her work is now with the proper upbringing of their children, the ordering of their home, and a simple lifestyle.

³⁶SS vol. 4, 149: "самые затаенные его мечты всегда влекли его в русскую глушь, в деревню, на скромную культурную работу."

³⁷SS vol. 4, 314. "Я бы с тобой в огонь пошла, на голод, на холод бы пошла. . . ." Natasha's words clearly echo those of Avvakum "about sweetness of death by fire" ("Аввакум писал о сладости . . . огненной смерти," SS vol. 4, 254). For a discussion of "rigorous" and "kenotic" models of piety in Russian literature see M. Ziolkowski, Hagiography in Russian Literature (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988).

³⁸SS vol. 4, 230. "[надо] учиться жертвовать . . . [п]оложением, состоянием, привычками . . . жизнью наконец."

As we learned earlier, Natasha's desire to return to Russia was motivated by a love for the simple people and the country, while his was out of a love for "humanity" in general, as an abstraction. Content to live by "Christ's teachings and the lessons of human nature,"³⁹ she is naturally more at home than her husband with the daily chores on the farm, on closer terms with the people, and begins to loathe the world of ideas and Moscow's theatre, music and high society--Strukov's only relief at this point.

Buchnev's arrival in Natasha's life is thus timely, for she finds herself attracted to the doctor as a friend, admiring his down-to-earth manner and love of simplicity. While she finds him to be an unhappy man and faults him for his failure to recognize a distinction between good and evil, she ultimately has little choice but to side with him against her husband.

With his belief in the soul's immortality, Buchnev makes up for Strukov in another important way. Impressed by the fact that as a doctor he actually believes in the next world, Natasha has her own mystical experience endorsed. As she fell in love with Strukov, for instance, she longed to "forget her 'sober' views, surrender to extraordinary forces, and return to her distant childhood when she lived as in a dream and reality was inseparably interwoven with miracles."⁴⁰ With these emotions

³⁹SS vol. 4, 230. "Этому учит Христос и наша человеческая природа."

⁴⁰SS vol. 4, 164. "забыть свои «трезвые» взгляды, отдаться во власть чрезвычайных влияний, перейти в то далекое детство, когда жилось точно во сне и действительность неразрывно сплеталась с чудесами."

she pays one last visit to Westminster Abbey, where "everything . . . was transfigured from material substance into mystical."⁴¹ There, even as an Old Believer's daughter, she senses a mystical union with the West as she weeps, makes the sign of the cross with two fingers, and whispers "half-forgotten prayers" as

the organ thundered; the choir's numerous voices blended into a complex harmony, [and] the marble kings, knights, and poets--England's great people--were brought somehow alive by the coloured rays. . . .⁴²

Ultimately Buchnev gives Natasha every reason to focus on that occupation which Strukov perceives to be of less importance than the "greater" task of working for progress: the raising of their sons Petr and Alexei. Not only did the doctor endear himself to Natasha with his love of children, but he persuaded her that the work which was needed was more basic. When she asked what one was to do if not serve through institutions, Buchnev responded:

I answer, do what you like. . . . But to influence others one needs first of all to stop at nothing, and secondly, to determine what demands first priority. . . . You built on sand. One shouldn't build, but instead clear a foundation down to the subsoil.⁴³

Thus, when she senses that her life is falling apart over her marriage, Natasha finds that her sons are her salvation. Recalling the lines of the Old Believer poem: "Lovely mother

⁴¹SS vol. 4, 165. "Все . . . преобразилось из вещественного в мистическое."

⁴²SS vol. 4, 165.

⁴³SS vol. 4, 245.

desert. . . . Save me from this troubled world," she returns home to her children and exclaims: "Here's my mother desert. . . . And I need nothing else."⁴⁴ In the end Natasha leaves Russia indefinitely, angry at Strukov's years of compromise, "intelligent little books . . . [and] conversations,"⁴⁵ and indifference towards their children. She does apologize, however, for taking him away from his scholarly vocation, and invites him to visit the children.

Natasha's centrality and dynamic tension are established, in sum, by the way in which she is drawn to both Strukov and Buchnev for different reasons, while she stands between the past and the future: her father and her sons. In contrast to her father, Buchnev and Strukov, whose philosophies are presented as "static," throughout her life (as we observe it), Natasha's struggle has been dynamic: in many ways her views are shaped by her father, but she chooses to marry and follow Strukov against Perehygin's better judgment; she finds her vocation in the simple life with Buchnev's help; and finally she is left to decide on her own what is best for her sons.

To conclude, the tragedy in Kar'era Strukova reaches beyond a broken marriage and Strukov's suicide. While no one is judged, all are left alone and to wander without a home. Buchnev drinks alone in his despair, and exclaims: "The fact of

⁴⁴SS vol. 4, 255-6: "Прекрасная мати пустыня. . . . От смутного мира прими мя. . . . Вот моя мати-пустыня... и ничего мне больше не надо!"

⁴⁵SS vol. 4, 314: "умные книжки . . . [и] разговоры"

the matter is, we're helpless and alone,"⁴⁶ and wanders because it is in his nature. Perelygin leaves Russia for his health, although, as Strukov points out, "for him there exists no fatherland,"⁴⁷ while Natasha is left "as on an island with her own soul"⁴⁸ when she realizes that her marriage is ruined.

In 1888 Ertel had written: "Perhaps Proudhon was right when he said that 'between man and the country in which he was born and lives there exists a unity as between soul and body'."⁴⁹ If this is the case, then the tragedy of Kar'era Strukova lies in the fact that "soul and body" are severed in the end, for Russia, too, is left alone as all but Strukov set sail.

⁴⁶SS vol. 4, 276. "Правда в том, что мы беззащитны и одиноки."

⁴⁷SS vol. 4, 295. "Для него отечества не существует."

⁴⁸SS vol. 4, 262. "как на острове с своей душой"

⁴⁹Pis'ma 64. "Уж не прав ли Прудон, сказав, что «между человеком и страной, в которой он живет и в которой он родился, существует связь, подобная связи между душой и телом. . . ."

Conclusion

James Billington characterizes the period of Ertel's literary output (1880-95) as one of profound cultural depression, during which dreams of utopia and faith in Russia's redemptive role had dwindled, and intellectuals were left to live by a theory of "small deeds" or seek the "beauty in the very sadness of life."¹ From Caryl Emerson's perspective, "the years 1880 to the First World War witnessed a religious revival among the Russian creative intelligentsia."² These apparently contradictory views are equally justified in light of the fact that Ertel's works epitomize those profoundly ambiguous years in Russian letters when, at the end of a "Great Age," members of the creative intelligentsia became preoccupied with the "'eternal' problems of life and death."³

In Ertel's case the "eternal" question revolved around Russia's destiny. As a civic-minded intelligent the question "What is to be done?" was crucial for him, as when he first turned to Tolstoy for advice in 1885 and asked what he was to do given his specific "time and place." While early in his career Ertel sought a clear answer to this socio-political question in populism, positivism, and Tolstoyism, he came to see that any doctrine which hoped to survive needed to be flexible, indeed

¹J. H. Billington, The Icon And the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture (New York: Vintage, 1970) 436-7.

²Emerson, 111.

³Mirsky, 348.

dialogical. As he sought to define for himself a practical philosophy, Ertel turned increasingly to a second, related question, now ethico-metaphysical, regarding his country: Why do anything?, or, put more positively, "Can progress be reasonably expected in any form at all?" As he addressed this question, Ertel came to focus more on individual destiny, which when divorced from Russia's national destiny (as in the case of Kar'era Strukova) represented something tragic.

Bunin's description of Ertel as "a thoroughbred Englishman or Swede and a Russian cattle-dealer rolled into one"⁴ is suggestive of the principal way in which Ertel's life differed from the lives of contemporary Russian writers. Unlike Garshin, Ertel belonged to the working class; unlike Chekhov, Korolenko and Uspenskii, he received no formal education. His love of learning, however, coupled with his training (from age twelve onwards) in estate management, placed him in a unique position with regards to both the people and the intelligentsia. Rather like his hero Nikolai (in Gardeniny), Ertel was too well-acquainted with Russian rural life to embrace populism, or the Tolstoyan view of the peasant as a "noble savage." On the other hand, while his career made of him an efficient manager, his administrative efforts were never divorced from a profound social concern, but always directed towards improving the quality of life of the people. This combination of intellectual and practical concerns is the key to Ertel's passion for

⁴Bunin, Memories and Portraits 119.

"compromise," symbolized by the tension between Russia and the West.

With a view to (re)assessing Ertel's place in Russian literature, here we summarize briefly the way in which his works represent a spiritual (and intellectual) autobiography, discuss the relevance of his thought for today, and conclude with some observations about his narrative style and its relationship to the discourse on the destiny of Russia.

Spiritual Autobiography

If early in life Ertel found the populist movement misguided, the fundamental vision of a transformed Russia and a populist "mood" concerned him throughout his life. In this respect he was closer to Dostoyevsky, who lived with the tension that Russia's transformation "lies in the soil and the common people"⁵ while recognizing "the value and freedom of the individual which was characteristic of the West."⁶ Nevertheless, until his conversion in prison in 1884 Ertel considered himself a philosophical pessimist like his own hero Baturin in Zapiski stepniaka.

In 1885 Ertel recognized in Tolstoy's teachings an answer to his fundamental question regarding progress in the face of ceaseless, cyclical building and destroying. If the "Kingdom of

⁵F. M. Dostoyevsky, Occasional Writings, ed. and trans. D. Magarshack (New York: Random House, 1963) 212.

⁶F. Copleston, Philosophy in Russia: From Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1986) 153.

Heaven" was to be found within the individual, and not in some distant future, then what was required of him was to "live in peace and harmony with all people,"⁷ and, as a writer, to instruct. At that point Ertel chose to write about greed.

Raised among the common people, Ertel could not sustain for long the hope in the transformation of society through basic peasant communities, for he did not share Tolstoy's view of the peasant as a "noble savage." Against Tolstoy's anarchism Ertel began to regard progress as occurring normatively through institutions. With a hopeful view of history and a philosophy of "small deeds" Ertel wrote Gardeniny, a novel in which progress is providential (that is, overseen by a benevolent God), and both personal (through Nikolai) and collective (through civic efforts) despite diversity and change. In Smena, too, the efforts of the governing bodies were to be seen as productive, as were the combined efforts of those capable of taking part in the struggle.

From this point on Ertel makes a significant shift in outlook. Already in his novels reality was presenting itself to him as multi-faceted and uncondusive to any "organizing principle." For him progress becomes a much more open question, particularly as his own, rather frustrated, "small deeds" (in famine relief and educational reform) gave way to more "fundamental" ones: the inculcation of good habits at the most basic levels of society and conscientious oversight of the

⁷Pis'ma 34.

estates entrusted to him. If the notion of progress is present in his last works, "Dukhovidtsy" and Kar'era Strukova, it must contend with other options, for it depends on dialogue, which is open. Highly critical of the radical intelligentsia, he insisted that before any attempts could be made by anyone to bring about the "Kingdom of Heaven" the "soil" needed to be created, which meant to "establish in word and deed a politically conscious and firmly constructed way of life."⁸ Ertel's attitude towards progress at this time could be summed up in the words of J. Maritain: "the aim the Christian sets himself in his temporal activity is not to make this world in itself the Kingdom of God, but [one]. . . which as much as it may prepares for the coming of the Kingdom of God."⁹ With a loss of confidence in inevitable progress, particularly in Russia, Ertel comes to focus more on psychological, subjective, and even other-worldly concerns in his fiction.

A via media

Given his historical circumstances, Ertel's philosophy was more timely and independently constructed than highly original, for it developed in an awareness of the sharp polarization in his society. In his day a way of stability with an Orthodox Russia was enforced by Pobedonostsev, who as head of the

⁸Pis'ma 366. "словом и делом водворять сознательный и твердо построенный быт."

⁹J. Maritain, True Humanism (London: The Centenary Press, 1939) 103-04. Parsons has noted a certain kinship between the two thinkers (Parsons, 190).

Church's Holy Synod from 1880 to 1905 took drastic measures to preserve Russia from all forms of sectarianism.¹⁰ Pobedonostsev's chief opposition was found in the influence and person of Leo Tolstoy, whose anarchism and belief in the basic unity of all religions presented an equally dogmatic, if diametrically opposed, vision for Russia. "As Leskov saw it," writes H. McLean, emphasizing essentially the same split, "spiritual life in the 1890's was suspended between two poles: a pole of good, located at Yasnaya Polyana, and a pole of evil, entrenched at Kronstadt."¹¹

In Russia today a similar polarization could not be more apparent. Archpriest Lev Lebedev, author and theologian, writes that

Russians who wish to revive something in themselves turn to God and to the basic foundations of our Orthodox faith . . . I believe in Russia's revival. For John of Kronstadt, Seraphim of Sarov, and other elders prophesied that not long before the end of human history (Christ's second coming) Russia would be restored as a truly Orthodox nation. Only God knows in what year that will take place.¹²

A similar view of Russian Orthodoxy as the only faith for Russians is presented by the rector of the Moscow theological academy, A. Kuraev. "The Orthodox Church," he writes, "is the

¹⁰In particular Pobedonostsev enacted the law of May 3, 1883, which prohibited the spreading of religious propaganda, and in the following year prohibited a gathering of Protestant sects in St. Petersburg.

¹¹H. McLean, Nikolai Leskov: The Man and his Art (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1977) 596.

¹²Leonid Lerner, interview with Lev Lebedev, Ogonek Feb. 1996: 49.

mother of the Slavs; the best in our culture and hearts comes from her." In the face of what he calls the "Protestant American spiritual occupation of Russia," he reminds the faithful that joining with sectarians in prayer is sufficient grounds for excommunication.¹³ Tolstoy's vision for a unifying religion can be found in the growth of syncretic religions, whereby all orthodoxies are obsolete in the interest of world peace. Ertel's value today as a thinker is to be found in that for which S. Frank admired him in 1910:

[His] insistence on a religious and metaphysical view of life, struggle against dogmatism in theory and practice . . . [and his] understanding of the one-sidedness and error of any abstract moralism, "negation" or "protest"--whether it be Tolstoyan ascetic individualism or the intelligentsia's faith in mechanistic political struggle.¹⁴

Ertel felt compelled to reconcile two extreme positions. With Tolstoy he recognized the evil in the church's close alliance with the state:

Orthodoxy's greatest evil and vileness is to be found in that which even ultra-Orthodox individuals like Khomyakov, Vladimir Solovyov and others fought against: her unnatural ties with the police, gendarme, prison warden, company commander--in a word: the state.¹⁵

On the other hand he believed that the Church's evil

was certainly not to be found in her sacraments, mysteries, grandeur, dogma and rites. Were the Church truly "free," did not hobnob with

¹³A. Kuraev, Vse li ravno kak verit', (Klin: Bratstvo Sviatitelia Tikhona, 1994) 10-18.

¹⁴S.L. Frank, "Pis'ma Ertelia," in Filosofiia i zhizn' (St. Petersburg, 1910) 337.

¹⁵Pis'ma 392.

"secular authorities," and did not turn into a sort of civil-service department, I don't see how she would be any worse than Catholicism or the endless number of Protestant sects. On the contrary, [she would] have greater depth and beauty, and be more humane.¹⁶

As a liberal protestant, Ertel had little patience for institutional religion, whether Eastern or Western, but at the same time he recognized that the forms (i.e. rites, sacraments and formularies) of religion were necessary as long as individuals did not possess the freedom to give religion the dynamic quality it needs.¹⁷ "I shall always maintain," he wrote in the same letter quoted above, "that it is better to have an anachronism than the absence of religion, or cheap, poorly thought out 'freethinking,' in which ignorance and a deep indifference to higher interests and needs of the soul tend to hide."¹⁸

As Parsons notes, Ertel's philosophy anticipates "the lessons of the Vekhi writers to a remarkable degree," for in his criticism of the radical intelligentsia he insisted that any socio-political "struggle" had to have a spiritual basis.¹⁹ One could add that Ertel's philosophy equally anticipates the

¹⁶Pis'ma 392.

¹⁷If Ertel's personal library is any indication, his theology was to a great extent determined by readings of "progressives" such as Strauss, Renan, Harnack, and Feuerbach. (A. I. Ertel', "Katalog nashei biblioteki," Nikitin Museum Archives, Voronezh).

¹⁸Pis'ma 391. "всегда скажу: лучше уж анахронизм, нежели отсутствие религии, нежели дешевое, непродуманное «свободомыслие», под которым чаще всего скрываются невежество и глубокое равнодушие к высшим интересам и запросам духа."

¹⁹Parsons, 178.

religious inclusivism of Fr. Alexander Menn,²⁰ a pastor and theologian whose murder in 1990 speaks of religious intolerance and sharp polarization. While it must remain a matter for speculation that Ertel's philosophical development was leading him, as one cleric suggested,²¹ to Orthodoxy, there is reason to suggest that his influence was such that he served as a bridge, as it were, for the intelligentsia's return to institutional Christianity. One imagines that S. Frank's conversion to Orthodoxy in 1909 had at least something to do with his readings of and enthusiasm for Ertel's philosophy, which he and other Vekhi writers encountered in the same year.²²

²⁰In the popular sense the term "religious inclusivism" is used to characterize an "open" attitude towards other religions and world views, e.g., the attitude of Ivan Fedotych in Gardeniny. As theologians tend to use the term, and if used to characterize Menn's theology of religions, "religious inclusivism" is to be distinguished from "religious exclusivism" (that God is revealed in one religion only, or that salvation requires the explicit affirmation of a particular creed) and the kind of "religious pluralism" expounded (especially) by John Hick and Paul Knitter (that all religions are equally salvific, or valid "paths to God"). Menn affirmed, as an Orthodox Christian, that God is revealed supremely in Jesus Christ and known in the fellowship of the Church, but was not prepared to make a priori judgments about other religions or world views. While Ertel's Christology was more pluralist (i.e. like Tolstoy's) than inclusivist, he did not dismiss rites and doctrine as unnecessary. Whether the Incarnation and Resurrection were "myths" or historical realities, Ertel believed in the truth of these doctrines at some level (Pis'ma 396).

²¹M. Chel'tsov, "Religiozno-filosofskie perezhivaniia A. I. Ertelia," Vera i razum 14 (1910): 211.

²²Suggestive of Ertel's literary influence are: (a) the relationship between his "Dukhovidtsy" and Chekhov's "The Head Gardener's Tale" (examined in Appendix A), and (b) the relationship between Ivan Bunin's Zhizn' Arsen'eva (The Life of Arsenyev, 1930-1939) and at least two of Ertel's works. First,

Narrative style

Taken as a whole, Ertel's works represent a particular, personal quest which was to be understood as universal. This is evident, for instance, in the way in which Nikolai Rakhmanny's development was meant to represent the "providential progress of man." Ertel's objective was in keeping with the "general predisposition in nineteenth century Russia to see the individual as the embodiment of the Spirit of the time."²³

This given, Ertel's works are not polyphonic in the strict sense. Closure (and not "unfinalizability") is plainly prescribed, whether by the vita, the Bildungsroman, or foreshadowing (in the death of Raich). At the same time Ertel's polyphonic vision competes with this closure; as we saw, the problem of freedom in the face of determinism preoccupied Ertel from the start. In fact the paradox of "Providence" and "polyphony" lies at the heart of Ertel's artistic vision, and dictates his narrative style. Here we shall examine some important ways in which the compositional tension between "closed" and "open" narratives is displayed in Ertel's works,

Bunin's autobiographical Bildungsroman appears to have had its genesis in the early 1920's, around the time of his first reading of Gardeniny, in which the gradual maturation of a young man is also traced from youth to adulthood: from the religious experiences as a youth and first impetuous sexual encounter with a married woman to the beginnings of a philosophy of despair over "destruction and decay" and the death of an era. Second, an incident in "Clairvoyants" is echoed in Arsenyev's first awareness of death and evil forces when a peasant boy is killed when his horse falls into a ravine.

²³Orwin, 8.

making reference to the relationship between that tension and the theme of Russia.

If we restrict ourselves to Ertel's mature works (Gardeniny onwards), the work least worthy of the epithet "polyphonic" is Smena. In that novel the hero is defined from the start as a "philosophical pessimist," while his double Alesha plays the relatively predictable role of the saint as required by the vita. His one liberating quality is that he speaks from his own experience of putting everything, we recall, "to the test, . . . so that everything is [his] own [svoe]."

When we turn to Gardeniny we find ourselves on somewhat firmer ground. To begin, as the plot becomes subordinate to the ethnographic narratives (to the extent that some critics ventured to say that the novel had no plot), social diversity comes to the foreground. What is important here is that the diversity is represented ideologically, so that multiple world views are represented schematically, as characters (and groups) are juxtaposed according to their ideologies. While the atheists are divided between revolutionaries and social conservatives (Efrem vs. Agei), believers are divided between sectarian and orthodox, and further divided along exclusive vs. inclusive (Arefii Suknoval vs. Ivan Fedotych) and progressive vs. conservative lines (Fr. Grigorii vs. Fr. Aleksandr), respectively. Social fragmentation is introduced initially through the generation gap (corresponding to old and new orders) between the fathers and their sons, then complicated by the divisive roles of revolutionary zeal (which divides the sons)

and materialism (which divides the two merchants), as well as the diversifying role of economic stratification. If "the most favorable soil for [the polyphonic novel] was . . . precisely in Russia, where capitalism set in almost catastrophically,"²⁴ as Bakhtin writes, then it is significant that Fadeev should note that in Gardeniny "a cross-section of nearly all of post-reform Russia is presented."²⁵

The diversity described above represents, however, only fertile soil for a polyphonic vision. Nikolai's moral development results, naturally, in readings which favour one side of an issue or another. Thus Ivan Fedotych's religious inclusivism and "kenotic" spirituality is to be valued above Arefii Suknoval's exclusive and rather rigorous brand, while a gradualist, "prosaic" philosophy of small deeds is to be preferred to revolution. At the same time not all the oppositions are "cancelled out dialectically."²⁶ Ertel employs different devices which underscore the need for each character to use his own authentic voice (for example, when Arefii Suknoval's constant appeal to Scripture is challenged by Ivan Fedotych), which when accomplished produces more of a plurality of interdependent voices than synthesis. Nikolai's future is entirely open at the end of the novel, as his confidence in

²⁴Bakhtin, Problems 20.

²⁵A. Fadeev, Za tridtsat' let (Moscow: ANSSSR, 1957) 857.

²⁶Bakhtin, Problems 26.

progress faces the possibility that the future might just be swallowed up by eternity, "where there is no future."

The confrontation between philosophical doubles most clearly produces a plurality of options in Ertel's last two works, where instead of "confluence" (as in Smena) or "Providence" one finds "unclustering" and existential concerns. In "Dukhovidtsy," for instance, hope and contingency must stand on an equal footing with despair and determinism. The fatalistic vision of the two "clairvoyants" becomes a true option as the narrator's voice becomes dialogical and unobtrusive. At one point, we remember, it seems to him that the two men have forgotten that he is in their midst, while throughout the evening he grows sympathetic to their stories. He even invites Raich home, against his earlier inclinations, which introduces an element of surprise. In this way fate and freedom are defined in relation to one another: possibility confronts determinism head on, because while Raich was slated to commit suicide according to Ignatii Vasil'evich's prediction, the narrator's freedom, by definition, creates alternatives.

The relationship between Raich and the narrator is similar to the one between Natasha and Alexei in Kar'era Strukova, where fate and free will also do battle. Natasha, a dynamic individual who senses the "complex harmony" of the "choir's numerous voices" in Westminster Abbey, is free, for she embodies the tension between matter and spirit, while her husband is bound by a world view which denies him the latter. Thus the desirability of unity between Russia and the West is brought out

as the future looks dim for Russia, if full of possibility for the free individual.

Part of Ertel's greatness lies in the fact that as an artist he finds inspiration in diverse places and traditions. We have noted the special influences of Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky in shaping his artistic vision, which attests to both his eclecticism and thorough knowledge of the traditions which shape his outlook. Given that he claims those traditions as his own, and the fact that his artistic vision is polyphonic, his works respond to and participate in a dialogue, so that the individual voices they represent are inseparable from their tradition.

On the one hand Ertel can be seen as the ethnographer of the Russian Religious Renaissance of his time. It is to Ertel's works that one must turn for the full diversity of religious life in Russia in the 1880's and 90's, for no group or ideology is passed by. On the other hand this diversity does not exist for its own sake; rather it is the framework in which the author displays, in a timely way, multiple options with regards to Russia and her future. Whether reading Ertel's works in the 1890's or the 1990's, the questions "What is to be done?" and "What can be reasonably expected?" evoke the same replies. The foundation for the Kingdom of Heaven must be built before anything else, but neither progress nor its absence are to be taken for granted, for "nothing conclusive," writes Bakhtin,

"has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken."²⁷

²⁷Bakhtin, Problems 166.

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Appendix A

Between Hope and Despair: Ertel's "Dukhovidtsy"
and Chekhov's "The Head Gardener's Tale"

"The Head Gardener's Tale" ("Rasskaz starshego sadovnika," Russkie vedomosti, Dec. 1894, hereafter "HGT") takes place in a garden on a warm April morning. Three customers, namely the narrator, a neighbouring landowner and a young merchant, converse as their purchases are brought out to their carts. Mikhail Karlovich, the gardener, who listens in on their conversation, is an elderly, kind and respected man considered to be German, although his father was a Swede and mother a Russian. He has joined with the Russian church and loves to read books and discuss Ibsen, for example. He has his weaknesses: "he referred to himself as the head gardener, even though he had no subordinates; he had a rather dignified and haughty expression, and did not tolerate contradictions, and liked for people to listen to him seriously and attentively."¹

Mikhail Karlovich enters the conversation when the topic of justice is raised. The landowner points out a young man who was caught stealing but released on psychological grounds, and says that fairness is no longer to be found. The young merchant agrees, adding that the crime rate has risen. Mikhail Karlovich, on the other hand, is always happy to hear of acquittals, and advocates belief in humanity, which is "possible

¹Chekhov, PSSP vol. 8:1, 342. "он называл себя старшим садовником, хотя младших не было; выражение лица у него было необыкновенно важное и надменное; он не допускал противоречий и любил, чтобы его слушали серьезно и со вниманием."

only for those few who understand and feel Christ."² The narrator agrees that the Mikhail Karlovich has expressed a good thought, whereupon the head gardener tells the "legend" told to him by his grandmother of a saintly doctor who loved and had faith in everyone, but one day was murdered. When the murderer was found he was set free because the judges, and even the townspeople, could not believe anyone was capable of doing such an evil deed. For the town's faith in man and recognition that man is God's "image and likeness," it was said, God forgave all their sins. The narrator concludes the story by noting that his neighbouring landowner wanted to raise an objection, but that Mikhail Karlovich made a gesture that said he did not like objections.

Ronald Hingley writes that "HGT" is "a sample of direct didacticism unique in [Chekhov's] mature writings . . . [and] an astonishingly ineffective story from any point of view."³ I wish to suggest that the story is effective precisely because it avoids drawing an extreme conclusion, and that it accomplishes this in much the same way as Ertel's "Dukhovidtsy."

To raise the possibility that Ertel's story might have served as a genesis for "HGT," we note that Chekhov wrote his story in November 1894,⁴ just weeks after he praised

²Chekhov, PSSP vol. 8:1, 343. "доступна только тем немногим, кто понимает и чувствует Христа."

³Hingley, The Oxford Chekhov vol. 7, 10.

⁴L. M. Dolotova, V tvorcheskoi laboratorii Chekhova (Moscow: Nauka, 1974) 37.

"Dukhovidtsy" to Ertel: "It's an excellent work. Let me mention, by the way, that you're a magnificent peizazhist."⁵ In December 1893 he had spoken of it as "one of the best recent items in Moscow."⁶

To begin our comparison of the two works, we note that the settings in each story are reflective of the dominant voice, whether of hope or despair. The setting of "Dukhovidtsy" gives cause for uneasiness in every way. First we note that the story is set at an evening gathering where most of the conversation takes place in a dimly lit study. We then learn that Ignatii Vasil'evich's favourite time of year is late autumn/early winter:

Returning from Moscow I found the wind, rain, foul weather or a fierce blizzard stressful, but he, on the other hand, was in raptures. Returning from walks he would lock himself in his study with the roof rattling, chimney howling, and the shutters banging.⁷

Later when Raich and the narrator leave we are told "It was a foggy, damp, moonlit night. The wide street, whose lime trees on either side had already lost their leaves, was quite deserted."⁸ The two spend this autumn night on a long walk until dawn, but the morning promises little hope:

⁵Chekhov, PSSP 5:2, 328.

⁶Chekhov, PSSP 5:2, 118.

⁷SS vol. 7, 485.

⁸SS vol. 7, 505. "Стояла лунная туманная сырая ночь. Широкая улица, обсаженная по бокам липами, с которых уже на половину облетели листья, была как-то особенно пустынна."

The sun had indeed risen, but how sad it was! For a moment the light of daybreak shone in the east, but in the humid air a painful smile flickered. . . . Then the clouds came in thicker and lower, and only because previously indistinguishable details appeared before us and all became grey, bare and dull, could one realize that the moon had ceased to give its light and now the sun was up. From all sides one sensed cold and shelterlessness.⁹

In contrast, "HGT" is set on a warm April morning in a garden where the birds sing and the flowers bask in the sun: a fitting setting for a story whose dominant voice is that of hope in the goodness of humanity.

A similar polarized contrast can be seen in the way the legal question is dealt with in each story. The question is first raised in "Dukhovidtsy" by Ignatii Vasil'evich when Fedia is caught stealing apples. Ignatii Vasil'evich's father, we learn, sees to it that Fedia is punished without tedious legal proceedings:

"Why," he used to ask, "do we need appeals and procedures? It's all so tedious and expensive. Just use the rod; it's quicker, cheaper, and it hurts." So that's what was done to my friend. A peremptory note was sent to the district authorities, and on the first Sunday Fedia was summoned to court and flogged. I begged for him to be let off, of course, but my father held firmly to his principles. His response to me was that for thirty years he had flogged his serfs, and since he did it fairly he never heard anything but a "thank you" from those who had been punished; in fact, leniency--or worse yet: legal proceedings--only corrupted.¹⁰

⁹SS vol. 7, 510-11.

¹⁰SS vol. 7, 496-7. Given that the story is set in the early 1870's, the unjust legal practices alluded to here are undoubtedly those of the communal tribunal, "whose operations

Raich later tells his own story of Fedia's flogging, observing how Fedia was "murdered" on that occasion, as the punishment only brought out his savage nature by killing in him the "image of God."

In "HGT" we encounter another theft and another murder, but towards both crimes the legal system has proved lenient. In the case of the theft the neighbour landowner is displeased with the way in which the thief has been released on psychological grounds (which, as he notes, has become more common) and complains that as a result people are losing a sense of justice. The leniency, as we know, is upheld by Mikhail Karlovich, who is always glad to hear of acquittals, even when the judges are mistaken. The story his Swedish grandmother told him then takes us to another courtroom where a man is on trial for the murder of the saintly doctor. In this case the judges and crowd, unlike the indifferent "patriarchs" and excited mob in "Dukhovidtsy," unanimously agree that since no one could ever commit such evil the murderer should be set free. For believing in man as the "image of God" the sins of the whole village were forgiven.

If in terms of setting and the justice question "Dukhovidtsy" and "HGT" are at opposite poles, as though one were the negative of the other, there are three important ways in which the stories parallel one another. The first is the way in which Raich and Mikhail Karlovich, the two "spokesmen" for

. . . had been called into question, e.g., by a Moscow Provincial Zemstvo Commission in 1871." Turner, 153-4.

despair and hope, respectively, are introduced and bear a certain resemblance. In both cases the narrator is interested in conveying the individual's strengths and weaknesses: We learn that Raich is a quiet, attractive man of strong will who has devoted time (as did both Chekhov and Ertel) to relief work among famine victims. Mikhail Karlovich is "bright, kind, and respected by all"; Raich is abrupt and has poor social manners, while Mikhail Karlovich does not like to be contradicted and is rather arrogant.

The second similarity is found in the way in which the stories are structured. In each case the story of a narrator with critical distance provides the frame in which one side of the polemic regarding human nature is presented while the other side is scarcely more than implied: In "Dukhovidtsy" Raich and Ignatii Vasil'evich represent the voice of despair, while the narrator himself represents the hopeful response. In "HGT" Mikhail Karlovich takes one position while the neighbour landowner disagrees, even though Mikhail Karlovich is not prepared to hear a rebuttal. In many respects Polakiewicz's assessment below, which challenges Hingley's criticism of "HGT," could apply equally to "Dukhovidtsy":

In its broadest sense, "The Head Gardener's Story" contains the theme of the eternal polemic between those who take an optimistic view of the basic decency of man and those who hold, pessimistically, that man is by nature a degenerate and vicious creature. More specifically, the story presents two conflicting opinions on the efficacy of the legal system: the landowner and the merchant advocate strict adherence to the letter of the law in order to combat man's natural corruption, while the gardener, with his unlimited faith in humanity,

effectively advocates doing away with law courts altogether. Both points of view, being extreme, are unrealistic and untenable. The reader realizes that ultimately a middle ground must be sought between blind faith in man's capacity to be virtuous and unconditional condemnation of man's folly. The narrator of the frame of the story (Chekhov's persona) represents this open-minded middle ground. . . .¹¹

Thirdly, we note that the "fairy tale-like style" which Chekhov admired in Ertel's story is reflected in the head gardener's story, which was passed down to him by his grandmother rather like a legend with no particular time-setting.

With regard to the question of human nature, the stories' endings bring the reader to the same place: somewhere between hope and despair. This is done, on the one hand, through their respective narrators, whose objective stance undercuts the dominant voice. In "Dukhovidtsy" the narrator's objections to Raich are explicit: lack of faith produces despair. In "HGT" the narrator remains objective by being sensitive to both sides of the issue: to Mikhail Karlovich's idea that "only those few who understand and feel Christ" can truly believe in man he responds "Good thought," which given the context implies a "but," since what Mikhail Karlovich has said is intended to evoke only approval; further, when the story in favour of hope in man has been told the narrator observes that an objection was not permitted.

¹¹L. A. Polakiewicz, "Crime and Punishment in Cexov," in Studies in Honor of Xenia Gasiorowska, ed. L. Leighton (Columbus: Slavica, 1982) 60.

On the other hand, the reader is left somewhere between hope and despair in both stories, because of the inconsistencies in Raich and Mikhail Karlovich's characters which, authentic as their positions may be, impair their convictions. Hence one questions Raich's fatalism not only because it leaves no room for hope, but because his withdrawn character and impolite manner suggest renunciation of life. Likewise Mikhail Karlovich's limitless faith in humanity¹² is put in question by his stubbornness, for such an attitude remains oblivious to injustice and to the fact that there is a "tragic sense of life"¹³ where man is subject to his fellow man's savagery.

In sum, we note first of all that in each work a criminal process leads a storyteller (of the tale within the story written by Chekhov or Ertel) to draw an extreme conclusion about human nature. Raich comes to believe that humanity, given the chance, will commit an offence against God's "image and likeness," while the head gardener believes that humanity is inclined to do the reverse. Second, in each case the tale is fairy-tale like, while the setting of the story as a whole is appropriate to the storyteller's conclusions. Finally, both stories feature a narrator who qualifies the storyteller's conclusion, so that hope and despair with regards to human

¹²Here Polakiewicz draws attention to Mikhail Karlovich's fondness for Ibsen, whose impractical idealism Chekhov disliked (Polakiewicz, 62).

¹³I have borrowed this expression from Miguel de Unamuno's essay entitled Del sentimiento tragico de la vida.

nature are never resolved. The combination of these factors, supported by the fact that Chekhov clearly admired Ertel's story, suggests that "Dukhovidtsy" provided Chekhov with an effective means to address the question of human nature in his own work.

Appendix B

Original of Indented Quotes

I: Confrontation

21/ . . . мы вместе с нашей «душою» суть результат бесчисленных видоизменений и приспособлений, не более, и если действуем честно, хорошо, правдиво, живем «свято», то вовсе не в силу каких-то дарованных нам свыше и живущих в нас требований «души», а единственно в силу того, что мы таковы суть, как результаты бесчисленных приспособлений.

22/ . . . почему мне не приходило в голову, как коротка жизнь и как много уходит времени на пустяки и на зло? Я помню, что рядом с этими мыслями во мне произошел тогда необыкновенный подъем чувства любви к людям, явилось страстное желание со всеми примириться, всех простить, со всеми жить в любви и в мире. . .

Chapter One

27/ . . . по-моему решительно нужно расстаться с этими тремя китами народничества: с *долгом, обязанностями* и *расплатою*. Как доктрина, как партия, как учение--«народничество» решительно не выдерживает критики . . .

28/ --Чем же они счастливы-то, Николай Васильевич?--спрошу, бывало, я. --А тем счастливы, скажет, вера в них была, цельность была, врага они ясно видели, идеалы свои ощупывали руками. . . И напрасно я напоминал ему идеалы, ясные как кристалл; он с тихой печалью улыбался. «Да, они ясны,--говорил он.-- Но это ясность теорий, ясность вычислений арифметических. Они ясны до той поры, пока жизнь не затуманит и не загрязнит их. . .»

Chapter Two

58/ Девки вошли. . . пересмеиваясь и подталкивая друг друга, и в замешательстве остановились у дверей.

--Здравствуйте, милые мои гости!-- бросилась к ним, красная как кумач, Марья Павловна и, подумав мгновенно, что ей теперь делать, обняла первую девку, не разобрав даже, Лизутка это или

Дарья, и поцеловала ее куда-то в верхнюю часть лица; с другою дело обошлось благополучнее: она поцеловала ее прямо в губы.

59/ То, что до сих пор слышала она . . . глубоко ей нравилось и почти всегда волновало ее душу; но она никогда не слыхала деревенской песни так близко... И, Боже мой!, что это была за песня!

II: *Compromise*

68/ . . . Толстой лишний раз и с необыкновенною силою вдвинул в общественное сознание понятие о Правде -- и что там не делай, как ни старайся зажать ему рот Победоносцев с Ко, . . . Правда останется.

69/ Не буду отрицать того, что многое в мыслях Л. Н. Т. представляется мне верным и глубоким до поразительности, но я расхожусь с ним в его отношениях к общественности, к учреждениям, к средствам борьбы со злом, и до известной степени -- к так называемой цивилизации . . . Всегда он меня привлекал не как «учитель», а как необыкновенно редкое явление в сфере ума и того, что называют талантом.

70/ . . . великое благо, что был Христос... Но скажу дерзость: грядущее мне рисуется только тогда в утешительном свете, когда я не предполагаю возможным дальнейшее появление таких жертв, такого героического освещения . . . «Положить душу за други» -- великое дело, но не ежедневное дело, не такое, которого, во что бы то ни стало, надо добиваться.

72/ Теперь уже доказано, что в природе не было внезапностей, не было катаклизмов. Не может их быть и в природе человека. А раз человек стремится сделать их -- он измучается и падает вольной или невольной жертвой «преждевременности».

Но вот после 4-х лет отсутствия я на родине . . . Что же это за сила такая, что же это за власть в полях этих, уходящих в синюю даль, в этом ветре, доносящем до меня слабый запах земли и полыни, в этом однообразном звоне ямского колокольчика, в этих поселках, разбросанных там и сям! Вон лес лепечет и приветствует меня звонкими птичьими голосами... Вон знакомая колокольня стройно выдвинулась из-за возвышенности и точно улыбается мне навстречу. . . У, как хорошо и как грустно мне: внутри кипят слезы и разрыдался

неведомо чему, а вместе с этим светло мне и хорошо, и ласковая, детская радость проникает мое существо... Дома я, дома.

75/ В сущности *НИКТО НЕ ВИНОВАТ*, вот в чем дело. . . ; то, что нет виноватых, не исключает борьбы, но в борьбе не надо забывать человека, надо помнить, что Катков -- итог таких-то воздействий и обстоятельств, а Чернышевский -- иных. . . Конечно, в практической жизни, в сфере политики, например, трудно удержаться на этой точке зрения. . . . За всем тем, в сфере того искусства, которое Гюго называет *grand art*, нет места злобе и призывам к насилию, ибо ни злоба, ни насилие несовместны с Правдой. . .

Chapter Three

78/ . . . тот период общественного сознания, когда перерождаются понятия, видоизменяются верования, когда новые формы общественности могущественно двигают рост критического отношения к жизни, когда пускает ростки иное мировоззрение, почти противоположное первоначальному. И рядом с этим мне хотелось изобразить свободное и независимое от внешних форм общественности течение мысли, провиденциальное тяготение человека к свету. . .

86/ --Вот Миколка-то поглядит, какие мы убранные!

--А паралик с ним,-- грубым голосом ответила [Грунька], --Мы не барыни. Навоз раскидывать не станешь обряжаться.

--И-и, погляжу я, Грунька, и привередлива ты! Сама прихорашиваешься, как увидела, а сама ругаешься... Уж чего тут сохнет сердечко по милом дружечке. Чего скрываться!

--На какой он мне родимец! Возьми его себе, пухлявого черта! Повесь на шею, коли люб. А мне хоть бы век не видать -- не заплачу... И-их, и противна ты мне, Дашка, за эти речи!

87/ --Я не понимаю, Григорий, отчего мы не берем людей из Анненского, а нанимаем от разных купцов и тому подобное, а? Я понимаю тебя: ты из гусар, вахмистр и тому подобное. Ты знаешь, я тоже выйду в гусары. В лейб-гусары, а? Но из Анненского у нас Илюшка и больше никого. Горничные у тапал немки. . . А я люблю, чтоб все были наши крепостные. Понимаешь, это настоящий барский дом, когда собственные люди.

88/ «То-то вы нас, верных слуг ваших, обрадовали, матушка барыня, что пожелаете в Анненское на все лето! А мы, ваши верные слуги, признаться, заскучали без ясных господских глазок. Особливо мне, старухе, грустно. Да и деткам-то будет вольготнее разгуляться в своей вотчине.

89/ -- И ты знаешь, Григорий, управляющий в Анненском тридцать лет служит; можешь вообразить, сколько он наворовал!... Но я намерен все это привести в порядок, по-военному, братец!... Ты знаешь, Григорий, я тебя возьму в конюшие, а? Хочешь?

92/ ... добрая половина романа занята описанием нравов и быта конюшен большого барского конного завода; автор посвящает вас во все подробности генеalogий разных скакунов и рысаков, взаимных интриг, подсиживания, переругиваний, ссор и драк конюхов и кучеров как во внутренней конюшенной их жизни, так и во внешней, во время разных sports, причем жизнь каждого конюха и кучера рисуется со всеми ее подробностями, горшками и ухватами. По этому одному роман принимает вполне какой-то конно-заводческий характер, так что порою вы приходите в полное недоумение, кто же главный герой романа, -- Ефрем ли Капитонов, Николай ли Рахманный, или же жеребец Кролик.

98/ --Вот ты, фармазон, говоришь: Бога нет... а смотри, велелепие какое... Что есть красно и что есть чудно!...

--Это натура,--ответствовал Агей Данилыч, ... --для невежества оно точно оказывает Богом...."

--Ну, кто же такое невежество пишет, да еще к образованному человеку?... А по-моему [надо писать] вот эдак-с...: «По нашему простому убеждению и по вере, преподаю совет тебе, сын мой возлюбленный, не противиться установлениям католической религии и с изрядным усердием исполнять то, что католическая религия предписывает в смысле говения, хождения на исповедь и нарочито к причастию. Понеже родителям своим ты чрез сие соблюдение учинишь приятный поступок и между тем по вере нашей Творцу составишь угодное. Ибо Творец все сущее установил на пользу и ради отменно-изрядного процветания натуры».

100/ -- Не токмо в церковь, в Ерусалим, пожалуй, ходи... Аль не читал: «Настанет время и настало уже, когда истинные поклонники будут поклоняться Отцу в духе и истине, ибо таких поклонников Отец ищет себе»?

122/ -- Жизнью, Николушка, делами на пользу страдающего брата. Иной благодарности не ищу. . . Благословляю тебя на подвиг добрый!

124/ Все течет... Все изменяется!... Все стремится к тому, что называют «грядущим»! И все «вечности жерлом пожрется», где нет никакого «грядущего»!... И по мере того как Николай представлял себе эту беспрестанную смену жизни, эту беспокойную игру белого и черного. . . -- в нем затихало то ощущение горечи, с которым он выехал из Гарденина, и вместе исчезало то радостное ощущение, с которым он думал о Павлике, о Рафаиле Константиновиче, о том, что вот приедет домой, а у него жена, дети и все прекрасно.

Chapter Four

135/ . . . та, происходящая ныне, метаморфоза, силою которой сходят со сцены интеллигентные люди барских привычек, барского воспитания, с их нервами, традициями, чувствами, и в значительной степени--идеями, уступая свое место иным, далеко не столь утонченным и даже грубоватым людям, но гораздо более приспособленным к борьбе.

137/ . . . весь мир представляется мне иногда в виде похоронной процессии . . . Отчего, я не знаю, но скажу вместе с Сакья Муни: разумно дитя, что плачет рождаясь . . . [М]не . . . иногда кажется, что мы, скудные годами, слишком богаты опытом и тою экклезиастическою мудростью, в которой так много печали.

138/ Дикой силою полна,
Опять нахлынула волна --
И в море странник унесен...
Охоты больше нет терпеть,
Осталось только умереть
Игрушкой жалкою судьбы,
Без сил, без стога, без борьбы!

139/ Одним словом, если согласиться с Гейне, что род людской делится на эллинов и иудеев, то мне придется причислить себя к эллинам. За всем тем я не могу не чувствовать самого горячего благоговения к тем «иудейским» или буддийским особенностям в натуре В[ладимира] Г[ригорьевича] Черткова], которые столь сильно руководят его душою . . .

144/ Есть место, есть! О поспеши войти!
 Грешников многих принял Он туда,
 Но там еще есть место для тебя, --
 Они омыты кровию Христа,
 Христос зовет, омоет и тебя.

147/ -- Ты, Ферапонтов, в деревню доктором идешь. Ты, Борискин, иначе и писать не можешь, как деревенские сюжеты . . . [В]се дело в интересах народа. Но это не оттого, что тот народник, тот социалист, а ты, Афанасий Лукич, по Толстому, но оттого, что сами-то мы тот же народ.

151/ Все мы знаем примеры отлично поставленных, честных, передовых земств. . . . [Э]то не оттого, что такое-то земство вообще хорошо . . . а оттого, что там и сям есть один, два, три человека, много десятков . . . и вот оказывается за глаза довольно, чтобы дать тон киселю. Масса, какая она ни будь . . . всегда масса, то есть рыхлое и бесформенное тесто. . . . Войдите туда с живым и действенным началом; станьте ферментом, закваской, дрожжами... Будьте уверены, что опара взойдет!

152/ Я как-то писал, что скорее симпатии мои на стороне «Алеш», нежели разночинца . . . потому что в «Алешах» *более свободы*, нежели в Базарове и его наследниках. Тот сложный и мудреный путь, коим «Алеша» стремятся к истине . . . иногда и заводит в болото, но в этом пути есть и достоинства: тут все испробовано, все испытано . . . и в результате -- все свое, а не из книжек и не из теорий, т.е. чужих.

III: "Counter Idea"

161/ Время наше представляется мне мучительно трудным и загадочным . . . То, что идет все к лучшему, в это я еще верю, но путь к этому лучшему сопряжен с необыкновенными отклонениями к худу, -- это тоже верно. Грустно видеть, что тьма все сгущается, и что в борьбе с нею только мигают немногие огоньки . . .

Chapter Five

165/ Я не могу без трепета даже мысленно проследить те душевные истязания, которые он несомненно должен был испытывать, когда оживлял и пересматривал свои впечатления, чтобы написать такие вещи, как «Четыре дня», «Воспоминания рядового Иванова», «Красный цветок», «Надежда Николаевна!» В самую цветущую и жизнерадостную пору жизни он познакомился с ужасами самого дикого и бессмысленного дела, которое только свойственно людям.

172/ Знаете, что я вам доложу? -- В недрах природы скрыто великое страдание. Вы полагаете, ей как с гуся вода губить, разлагаться, злодействовать Весь внутренний смысл [человеческого] существования напоен ядом... Да-с, а глядишь -- оно ликует себе, влюбляется, плодится, поет, пляшет. И только прозорливейшие знают, что это сон, тщета, тень от бегущего дыма, что страшно жить.

173/ Вдруг в чаще раскатился иной гул, -- топот, ржание, треск и отчаянный крик о помощи Сам не свой от страха, я еще раз обвел взглядом окрестности. Белая, молчаливая поляна; кругом стена деревьев, голые вершины которых точно дымились, только и всего... Да, милостивые государи, кроме тех тайн природы, о которых хлопчут в лабораториях, у ней есть и другие тайны; есть места, звуки и очертания, в которых трагическая сущность так называемой материи обнаруживается с изумительной очевидностью. Я это понял тогда, я это почувствовал.

-- . . . я думал, можно изменить человечество, изменить его путь, облагородить тот исторический процесс, в котором отливаются его формы Я мечтал, что «на земле мир и в человецех благоволение», а если до сих пор все напротив, так это оттого, что история семь тысяч лет кряду все ошибалась... Теперь я не мечтаю, не увлекаюсь. Теперь я знаю, что в самой природе существует этот трагический разлад, что самый корень существования заражен ядом бессмыслия, что примирения нет нигде, нигде... даже в смерти. Что такое смерть? Ах, милостивые государи, это ведь переходное состояние, не более. Некуда деться сознанию, некуда, и вот почему страшно жить и страшно умирать. Если бы иметь утешение нирваны... Но ее нет, не может быть, не будет. Впереди несомненная вечность, и это самое горькое и самое верное, что только можно придумать.

175/ Вдруг Раич открыл лицо, и, не могу выразить, какая лежала на нем бесконечная грусть.

-- Убийство! -- сказал он. -- Да знаете ли, что это хуже убийства. Мы убили в нем самое чистое, самое светлое... Мы грязными руками своими замутили и опоганили тот прозрачный источник, в котором отражался для него образ Бога... Да, станем радоваться: мы сравнивали его с собою.

-- Утешьтесь, -- сказал он, -- вы в этом также не виноваты, как не виноват ваш отец, не виноваты судьи, палачи, и даже эстетик истязания--кабатчиков сын. Все идет точно машина, в которой без нашего ведома развели пары.

... с топором в руках, прорубил и заметал снегом узкую скважину по середине плеса. Он знал, что лошади, когда лед треснет и этот треск ружейным выстрелом раскатится в лесу, непременно бросятся в кучу и пойдут ко дну...

176/ -- Это все притворство, -- пробормотал Раич.

-- Вы о журфиксе?

-- Да... о жизни. Что будто бы у всех есть дело и все довольны.

-- Не хотите ли вы сказать, что прав несчастный Игнатий Васильевич?

-- Во всяком случае он прозорливейший из них. Великая тайна коснулась его, потрясла... Он чувствует изнанку этой плохой игры... ее гнусную ложь. Встарину этих потрясенных называли юродивыми и почитали в святых; ныне они--чудаки или сумасшедшие. Истина... Она ближе к этим чудакам, нежели к тем, к уравновешенным.

177/ -- Вот удивительная музыка! -- воскликнул он.

Я с недоумением взглянул на него.

-- Разве вы не слышите звуки? -- сказал он. -- Разве вам недоступны эти голоса захваченной врасплох природы, этот интимный разговор вещей?... Впрочем вы не понимаете меня, вы считаете меня безумным.

Я пробормотал, что пришло в голову. В это время в полуверсте от дороги показался монастырь, внезапно выступив из рассеявшегося тумана.

-- Смотрите, -- сказал Раич, -- судите, как ничтожны люди в сравнении с тем, что они имеют дерзость называть неодушевленной материей. Вот стены, башни, столетние дубы, вот темные щели бойниц, огонек лампадки над воротами... Ничего больше. Но смотрите же пристальнее. Какая значительность очертаний! Сколько задумчивости,

важности, тайны в этих линиях, в этих мрачных дубах с распростертыми руками, в этих поросших мхом стенах, башнях, в кротком сиянии лампадки! И какое созвучие с туманом, с лунною ночью, с линией шоссе, с теми вон перелесками в отдалении! ...

180/ И когда Игнатий Васильевич сказал, что Раич застрелится, а тот усмехнулся на это, -- меня точно толкнуло; я насильственно засмеялся и воскликнул нарочно громко:

-- Ну, господа, мы договорились до чертиков!

Оба взглянули на меня ничего не понимающими глазами; я думаю, даже удивились, что между ними есть посторонний.

181/ Великое разнообразие человеческих душ ужасно трудно подвести к единству какого-нибудь конкретного рецепта. Так и рецепт «не иметь пребывающа града»... Для иной души это действительно необходимо -- в целях «взыскания града грядущаго», но для другой -- раз нет «пребывающа», она до такой степени ожесточается и падает, что и думать не в состоянии о «грядущем». Вообще же *норман*, мне кажется, должен быть «град пребывающий», ибо без него возник бы всякую душу возмущающий беспорядок, и земля заросла бы терниями и волчцами ...

Chapter Six

187/ ... ведь это все метафизика ... Какая такая святыня? Что обозначает безбожие? Вы справедливо изволили говорить: дело ... в материи, в видимости, в фактах-с ... Вы сами изволите утверждать: кто делает историю? -- тепло, одежда, пища. А я добавляю: и половой аппарат-с. Вы говорите: на смену нынешнего строя объявится общинный, -- и я то же провозглашаю... то есть о своем сюжете.

188/ ... гоголевская и щедринская Россия тоже сделается анахронизмом -- и безо всяких «революций», а постепенным развитием сознания, законности, довольства, бескровными жертвами, культурными силами, осуществлением скромных задач.

191/ -- Вы просто не любите Россию.

-- И ничего в ней любить.

-- Однако я вас застаю ... в чисто русской, в тургеневской обстановке...

-- Могли бы застать в Америке, Англии, в бретгартовской, в диккенсовской обстановке.

195/ -- И до сих пор не придумали, что с собой делать? . . . И своих собственных мыслей не приобрели? . . . пора взяться за дело. . . . Ваше дело там, в России, а не по ученой части. . . . Не умеете быть оригинальным в науке, будьте в жизни.

198/ Гремел орган; в сложную гармонию сливались голоса многочисленного хора, в цветных лучах в каком-то новом значении оживали мраморные короли, рыцари, поэты . . .

-- . . . Я отвечаю -- то, что нравится . . . Но для того, чтобы заразить, нужно во-первых: идти напролом, во-вторых -- угадать то самое важное, что стоит на очереди . . . Вы увлеклись строительством на песке. Надо не строить, -- надо до материка расчистить сначала место.

Conclusion

206/ -- Русские люди, которые что-то хотят в себе возродить, восстановить, выбирают духовное обновление через обращение к Богу и к коренным устоям православной нашей веры . . . Я все таки верю в возрождение России. Ибо есть пророчества Иоанна Кронштадтского, Серафима Саровского и других духоносных старцев: незадолго до конца человеческой истории (до второго пришествия Христа) Россия вновь возродится как истинно православное государство. В какой год это произойдет -- знает только Бог.

207/ . . . требование принципиального, религиозно-метафизического осмысления жизни, борьба против догматизма в теории и практике, . . . понимание односторонности и ложности всякого отвлеченного морализма, «отрицания» или «протеста» -- будь то толстовский аскетический индивидуализм или интеллигентская вера в механическую политическую борьбу.

Самый главный вред и гнусность православия заключается в том, против чего боролись даже такие экстра-православные, как Хомяков, Владимир Соловьев и другие, -- в его противоестественном союзе со становой приставом, с жандармом, с тюремщиком, с ротным командиром, -- одним словом, с государством.

Но вовсе не в его таинствах, мистериях, благолепии, догматах, требах. Будь оно действительно «свободною церковью», не якшайся со

«светской властью», не превратись в своего рода департамент -- я решительно не понимаю, чем было бы оно хуже католичества и бесчисленных протестантских сект. Напротив, гораздо глубже, человечнее и красивее ...

Appendix A

225/ -- ... Возвратившись из Москвы, я руками всплеснула. Ветер, дождь, ненастье или свирепая выюга, а он в восторге. Уходит, уезжает, запирается в своем кабинете, -- крыша гремит, в трубе воет, ставни хлопают.

226/ Рассвет действительно наступил, но какой печальный! На мгновение с востока засквозил румянец зари: в воздухе, насыщенном испарениями, точно мелькнула болезненная улыбка... Потом облака нависли гуще и ниже, и только по тому, как в пространстве возникали неразличимые прежде подробности и все сделалось серым, обнаженным, скучным, можно было догадаться, что луна погасла и светит солнце. Отовсюду веяло чем-то холодным и безприютным.

-- ... Зачем, говорил он, протоколы и апелляции: длинно и дорого; то ли дело матушка -- розга: быстро, дешево и больно. Так было поступлено и с моим другом. В волость написали повелительную записку, в первое же воскресенье собрался суд, вызвали Федю и высекли. Конечно я умолял пощадить его, но отец был тверд в этих своих принципах. Он отвечал мне, что тридцать лет порол своих крепостных, и так как порол по справедливости, то кроме «спасибо» от самих же наказанных ничего не слышал, но видел развращающее действие поблажек или, еще хуже, правильного судебного разбирательства.