THE POVESTI OF V. G. RASPUTIN: GENRE, LANGUAGE AND STYLE

by

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Abstract

Valentin Grigorevič Rasputin (b. 1937) is widely acknowledged as a major author by both Soviet and Western critics of contemporary Russian literature. His characters and settings deal with the inhabitants of the Siberian countryside (where Rasputin was born, raised, and continues to live), but the themes and questions that he presents in his works have broader import in their complex moral and social dilemmas.

This study represents one of the first book-length attempts at a comprehensive analysis of Rasputin's prose style. It considers his four povesti 'novellas' as a unified corpus. Den'gi dlja Marii (Money for Maria), Poslednij srok (The Final Hours), Živi i pomni (Live and Remember), and Proščanie s Matěroj (Farewell to Matera) were all written between 1967 and 1976. Since 1976, Rasputin has not published a major work and this hiatus makes it appropriate to treat the povesti as a coherent body of writings.

This thesis is composed of two parts. The Introduction outlines Rasputin's personal and literary biographies as well as various critical responses to his works. Chapter I examines some critical approaches to the povesti, Rasputin's preferred genre, and then discusses some general features of the povesti as employed by Rasputin. His four povesti are treated in Chapter II, both individually and with regard to their common aspects of plot structure, conflict, and time structure. As well, recurrent character types, themes, and motifs are outlined, and the characterization of Rasputin's major personages, particularly his heroine, is examined.

Chapters III and IV treat two of Rasputin's povesti in greater detail. In Chapter III, the classical literary forms of tragedy and myth are applied to Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj respectively. Chapter IV provides a close formal analysis of the various stylistic features and devices from which Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj
are composed. These are identified in separate discussions of language, narrative technique, use of internal speech forms, imagistic devices and figurative language, and use of devices, commonly found in folklore. Živi i pomeni and Proščanie s Matěoj are generally considered to be Rasputin's most mature and accomplished works and they are juxtaposed and their style analyzed from this point of view. However, the broader purpose of this chapter is to provide a systematic analysis of the most typical and important features of Rasputin's prose style using Živi i pomeni and Proščanie s Matěoj as models for discussion. Elements of style which unite all his povesti include: a narrative text written in flawless, literary Russian into which is blended a distinct mixture of dialectal, jargon, and sub-standard language elements; a close identification of the narrator with the points of view of his characters; lyricism of the narrative text and its attention to minute detail in terse descriptions of landscape and natural phenomena; the reflection of the mood of Rasputin's protagonists in depictions of natural phenomena; the coexistence of Christian symbols and images with folk symbolism and imagery; the use of the dream and dream symbolism, visions, and semi-conscious mental and emotive states that reveal the characters from within.

The Conclusion of this thesis discusses Rasputin's most recent works--stories written in the first half of the 1980s, and identifies features of continuity and change between them and his earlier prose. To conclude, Rasputin's place within the Soviet Russian literary process is discussed with particular reference to the "village theme" and "village prose." Common features which unite Rasputin with writers of "village prose" are outlined. Qualitative and fundamental differences are then discussed in some detail.

The milieu in Rasputin's povesti is typically Soviet and Siberian, and such localizing features as Siberian dialect and Russian folklore are basic components in his work. However, in its portrayal of psychology and emotions, in its representation of the
dynamics of social and personal relationships, and in its emphasis on the ethical dilemmas of a modernizing society, the prose of Valentin Rasputin is accessible to the general and non-Russian reader.
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Note on Transliteration

The system of transliteration used throughout this dissertation is the international system for the transliteration of Russian used by linguists and scholars specializing in Russian and Slavic studies. The system and its specific usages appear in J. Thomas Shaw, *The Transliteration of Modern Russian for English-language Publications* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967).
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INTRODUCTION

Valentin Grigorević Rasputin, (b. 1937), the author of a relatively small collection of povesti 'novellas', short stories, and sketches is, by critical and popular acclaim, one of the most sensitive and thought-provoking writers living in the Soviet Union today. A native Siberian who still lives in Irkutsk, Rasputin's perceptions of and perspective on the world have been conditioned by the physical, social, and cultural factors of that environment. The influence of these factors is revealed in his prose by his choice of characters, the language of both his narration and dialogue, and his descriptions of nature and landscape which differ considerably from those of writers who were born and raised in the urban literary capitals of the European Soviet Union. Rasputin's prose is written with acute insight into human nature—he has intimate knowledge of his heroes and their problems (several works include autobiographical elements), and his descriptive narrative and lyrical landscapes are often linked with and augment the mood of his characters. His writings are regionally specific: people and settings depict ordinary folk of the Siberian countryside. Yet in their appeal to fundamental human values to resolve complex ethical and social problems (such as the degeneration of moral standards and the subsequent poverty of character and soul, or the loss of one's roots), the themes and questions he addresses are of universal import.

Stylistically, Rasputin is a masterful creator of direct uttered and internal speech which is often composed in regional Siberian dialect, as well as a fine painter of landscape and mood accomplished in the contemporary literary Russian language. It is within his preferred povesti genre that he is best able to develop his themes and demonstrate his control of structure and style. His four povesti, Den'gli dip. Marii (Money for Maria, 1967), Poslednij srok (The Final Hours, 1970), Živi i pomni (Live and
Remember, 1974), and Proščanie s Materoj (Farewell to Matéra, 1976), resonate with the entire gamut of shared, semi-articulated knowledge, feelings and perceptions about social and cultural life, values and ethics, and religious belief that has accumulated over the centuries and that may be perceived as the Russian soul. This is the source of Rasputin's various images and tones whose range includes the mythic, religious, folk, tragic and lyrical and which, from the perspective of this Russian world, speak about problems and themes that are of global significance.

Although Rasputin is not a prolific writer, his work to date has been sufficient to place him in the foreground of Soviet literature and gain him widespread recognition. The total number of copies of Rasputin's works published in the Soviet Union has surpassed five million. This attests both to his popularity and to the respect which is granted him by Soviet literary authorities. His stories have been abridged or illustrated specifically for the large reading audience of children and adolescents and his povesti have been popularized and dramatized for stage and screen.

There already exists in the Soviet Union a large body of critical literature dealing with all of Rasputin's prose pieces, especially his povesti. This literature covers the full spectrum of criticism from reviews to scholarly papers on specific aspects of Rasputin's work and it reflects various opinions about his thematics, style, lexicon, and weltanschauung. Rasputin's place in the Soviet literary process has been analyzed and articles have begun to appear discussing the significance of Rasputin's work in the general context of the Russian literary tradition.

It is useful to examine some relevant extra-literary areas before beginning an examination of Rasputin's work. Separate sections will deal with his biography and the autobiographical elements which find their way into his prose, Rasputin's views on the function of literature, his personal assessment of his own characters and themes, as well
as an overview of the criticism written about Rasputin's prose by Soviet and Western scholars.

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Relatively little is known except the general outlines of Rasputin's life. As a writer who is still alive and working, the biographical details of his life have not been collected and organized in any systematic way. Another contributing factor to the paucity of information about Rasputin is that the author is a private and secluded personality who continues to live in the Siberian city of Irkutsk but who spends his summers in a cottage on the shores of Lake Bajkal.

What is known about Rasputin's life is as follows: he was born on March 15, 1937 in Ust'-Uda, a village on the Angara River roughly half-way between Irkutsk and Bratsk. "My father was a peasant and later worked in a timber collective, he served in the army and fought in the war. . . . In a word, he was like everyone else. My mother worked, she was a housewife, and she barely managed with her family and with other things that came up. She always had more than enough to worry about."5

Rasputin's childhood was spent in Atalanka, a small town on the lower Angara. His boyhood bridges the years during and immediately after World War II and those difficult childhood years made a deep impression on him. He grew up without a father, living by the strict moral rules of a peasant family. The impressions of his boyhood were given expression in two of his short stories, "My s Dimkoi" and "Uroki francuzskogo," which depict the stresses and strains on people at that time, to which the children were very sensitive.
As a young man, Rasputin considered a career in teaching. He left his native parts for the first time in 1954 when he entered the historical-philological department of Irkutsk University. In his third year he was left without a stipend but through friends he was able to find work with an Irkutsk youth newspaper, *Sovetskaja molodëž* ('Soviet Youth'). Originally accepted to work as a librarian, Rasputin soon found himself writing about "firemen and the collection of scrap metal".  

Rasputin graduated from university in 1959 with majors in history and literature while still working as a journalist. He spent a brief period working at a television studio and then moved to Krasnojarsk. His first non-journalistic piece appeared in 1961, the short story "Ja zabyl sprosit' u Leški . . ." ("I Forgot to ask Leška . . .") in the journal *Angara*. According to Rasputin, he had started working on a sketch (*očerk*) for the newspaper while on assignment at a timber collective, but a short story resulted instead.  

For the next six years, Rasputin worked as a travelling correspondent for the newspapers *Krasnojarskij rabočij* (*The Krasnojarsk Worker*) and *Krasnojarskij komsomolec* (*The Krasnojarsk Komsomol*). This was a job that gave him the opportunity to see the land between the Enisej, Angara, and Lena Rivers. He spent time at the building site of the Krasnojarsk Hydroelectric Station and with the road crews working on the Abakan–Tajšet Line. Living and working under such conditions in the far reaches of Siberia, Rasputin inevitably contacted interesting and colourful people, newcomers to Siberia such as field-geologists with great aspirations for discoveries. He also became acquainted with the native people of the region, the hunters of Tofalaria.  

In 1964, Rasputin was informed of a forthcoming conference of young writers in the town of Čita. In his seven years of working as a journalist, he felt that he had seen much which would be of interest to the reading public, so he wrote five stories
which he took to the conference. These stories were published in a small booklet and subsequently, in 1967, Rasputin was accepted into the Union of Soviet Writers.8

Rasputin's first publications, two books of stories, appeared in 1966. *Kostrovye novyx gorodov (Stokers of New Cities)* is a collection of sketches dealing mainly with the panorama of large-scale construction which occurred in Siberia in the 1950s and 1960s and with the men involved in this activity such as geologists, builders, and surveyors. *Kraj vozle samogo neba (The Land Next to the Very Sky)* is a collection of stories and sketches about the people of the Sajan, a mountainous region of Siberia whence comes the name of the book. Of these first attempts in prose Rasputin later said: "The expression 'romanticism of the taiga' at that time had not yet disappeared from our newspaper columns and I thus also paid my tribute to this exaggeration."9 However, in his romanticized depictions of the Tofy, a small Siberian people, in the portrayals of their mores, customs, and way of life, were conceived many ideas and themes to be found in Rasputin's later major prose.

The following year, 1967, marked the publication of another collection of stories, *Čelovek s etogo sveta (A Man from This World)*. The main value of this publication lay in the fact that it revealed Rasputin's new concentration on daily life in the Siberian Russian village and contained his first important piece of prose fiction, the story "Vasilij i Vasilisa". It is from the figure of Vasilisa that Rasputin's depiction of Russian female types originates.

1967 also saw the publication of Rasputin's *povest' Den'gi dlja Marii (Money for Maria)* in the journal *Sibirskie ognı (Siberian Lights)*. This was his first attempt at writing in what was to become the definitive genre in his oeuvre.10 *Den'gi dlja Marii* raised a storm of critical analyses and discussion despite its simple composition for it gave the reader some insight into the changing social and moral face of the modern
Soviet village.

Complete critical recognition and greater public popularity came to Rasputin with the publication of the *povest* *Poslednij srok* in the journal *Naš sovremennik* (*Our Contemporary*). This work came to occupy an important position in the discussion about "village prose" and "village prose writers" which was then centred on such works as *Privyčnoe delo* by Vasilij Belov, *Derevenskie koni* by Fedor Abramov, and the stories of Vasilij Šukšin.

Almost four years separate *Poslednij srok* from Rasputin's next *povest* *Živi i pomni*. In the interim, in 1972 *Naš sovremennik* published his autobiographical sketch "Vniz i vverx po tečeniju: istorija odnoj poezdk" ("Upstream, Downstream: The Story of a Journey") which takes us back to the places and times of his childhood, and, in 1973, an autobiographical story, "Uroki francuzskogo" ("French Lessons") appeared in the weekly *Literaturnaja Rossia* (*Literary Russia*). This story is about a child living in a post-war Siberian village and is dedicated to one of Rasputin's own school-teachers, Anastasija Kopylova. The incident which prompted the writing of both the sketch and the story was a journey that Rasputin took down the Angara and Ilim Rivers before the creation of the Ust'-Ilimsk Sea. He spent time in his native parts and witnessed how people dealt with the trauma of relocating entire villages. "My native village in its time . . . fell into a zone for flooding in connection with the Bratsk Hydroelectric Station and it was necessary to move it to a new spot. Before the filling of the Ust'-Ilimsk Sea, I took a trip down the Angara and Ilim Rivers and saw how people parted with their land. This is not the easy, painless process that it might seem to be, and we will feel the consequences for a long time."¹¹

The 1974 publication of *Živi i pomni* in *Naš sovremennik* evoked another wave of critical acclaim and discussion. Rasputin has said that it was originally conceived as a
povest' about love and that "... [his] main task was to show the character of the Russian woman. to show the self-denying, kind, and honest woman, who is able to realize the guilt of someone dear as her own personal guilt." Rasputin placed this character and subject matter in the setting of the Siberian village during the war years, and the povest' that resulted was unexpected, courageous and one of the best works written using the war as a background.

In 1976, Rasputin's fourth povest' was published in Naš sovremennik. Proščanie s Matěroj deals with topical problems in Soviet life concerning the effects of what is popularly called the "scientific-technical revolution" on the following areas: man and his environment, man, technology and progress, man and the experience of past generations. Because of the painful exactness of Rasputin's interpretation of such problems, critical opinion regarding Proščanie s Matěroj was varied and sometimes harsh. His themes had touched a sensitive nerve for industrialization and technological progress are unceasingly stressed in plans for domestic economic development and are central to the Soviet self-image and concept of international prestige. Nonetheless, Rasputin's place in contemporary Russian literature was acknowledged by the literary establishment when in 1977 he was hailed for his "brilliant talent" and was awarded the coveted State Prize for Literature.

The seven-year period from 1969 to 1976 has been Rasputin's most prolific period to date. After the publication of Proščanie s Matěroj only a sketch and a few short essays had appeared until the story "Čto peredat' vorone?" ("What Shall I Tell the Crow?") was published in the journal Sibir' (Siberia) in late 1981 breaking a five-year literary silence. The delay in publication of Rasputin's work was in large part due to an unfortunate incident which occurred in March of 1980 when the author was mugged by four men in Irkutsk. After demanding the jeans and jean shirt he was
wearing, they hit him across the forehead with a metal pipe causing a temporary memory loss and lengthy medical treatment including two operations in Moscow.

1982 seems to be the year of Rasputin's reappearance on the literary scene: early in that year several stories followed one another in quick succession. "Nataša" appeared in a March edition of Sovetskaja kul' tura (Soviet Culture), a lengthy excerpt from "Vek živi-vek ljubi" ("Live and Love a Lifetime") was published in the April edition of Priroda i čelovek (Nature and Man), and in July the four stories named above along with another entitled "Ne mogu-u-u-t!" ("I ca-a-an't!") were published together by Naš sovremennik. Finally, a collection of old and new stories and publicistic essays entitled Vek živi-vek ljubi was published in late 1982 by the Moscow publishing house "Molodaja gvardija." Rasputin's latest work, a short povest' entitled "Požar" ("The Fire") first appeared in the July 1985 edition of Naš sovremennik and has already been included in his latest collection of works to appear in book form, a 1985 publication again entitled Vek živi-vek ljubi.

Rasputin's recent stories reveal a matured author who again introduces a clear autobiographical note into his fiction. Some of these stories are intensely personal and meditational, two being written from a first-person narrative perspective and one with a child protagonist. Again they echo images, devices, and themes with which we are familiar from his povesti, particularly those dealing with the interrelationship of man and nature.

There are indications in two of the stories that Rasputin's writing is tending toward introspection for all of the action occurs within the thoughts, recollections, and dreams of the narrator-protagonist. Even in the stories which are more typical of Rasputin's earlier prose, there are indications of a similar introverted quality in the narrator and his lyrical descriptions of nature. In these stories, nature evokes specific
states of mind in man and Rasputin describes in detail the various sensations which result from the elevated psychological state of his hero.

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Rasputin's biography for the present necessarily acquires the contours of "creative biography" for very little is known about the private details of his life which would reveal Rasputin, the man. Thus it is helpful to refer to additional and established autobiographical elements found in Rasputin's work which have not been discussed earlier. These facts supplement his critical biography as it now exists and make the central concerns and themes in his work stand out in relief against life experience. Although Rasputin believes that it is important for a writer to describe events in his stories so that readers perceive everything that happens in the book as the essence and the truth of life, he does admit to a number of autobiographical references in his work. The impact of the journey to his native village before it was flooded subsequently inspired the basic theme in Proščanie s Materoj, and there are other clear examples of links between occurrences or conditions in Rasputin's life with those in his work. For example, as a child immediately following the war, Rasputin recalls an event which made a lasting impression on him:

I remember that not far from my village during my childhood, a deserter was apprehended. He had been hiding for a long time, just as in my povest' [Živi i pomnji], along the banks of the Angara River, and lived removed from human settlement. . . . I remember how they led him through the village and with what condemnation and lack of understanding my fellow villagers looked at him. And although I was only a small boy at that time, the impression made was deep, it sunk in, and after many years returned and came to life . . ."
This childhood memory has emerged from time to time in different forms in Rasputin's work. The first time is in the story "My s Dimkoj" ("Dima and I") in which the school-boy protagonists discuss in a mature way what it means to be "lost without information." Later, in the povest' Poslednij srok, while walking through the woods near the village of her childhood, Ljusja suddenly remembers how she came across a deserter. And, of course, in Živi i pomni, Andrej Gus'kov is the deserter who comes back to his native regions and hides from all except his wife.

Rasputin has also used prototypes from real life to create his convincing characters of old women. The heroine of Poslednij srok, Anna, was largely drawn from his grandmother: "I had a very nice, very good grandmother, Maria Gerasimovna who knew many songs, tales, and legends. She was my model for Anna in Poslednij srok." In another interview, Rasputin admits that:

It was quite easy for me to write Poslednij srok. Before me the picture of how my grandmother lay on her deathbed came to life; she accepted her death peacefully and naturally, wanting in those last days to be pleasant to people, not wanting to be in the way or a burden to them. . . . Dar'ja to me is a continuation of Anna. I knew that there was a danger of repetition in character, language, and life philosophy, but I felt that I could not write the povest' without a character like Dar'ja because the old woman Anna in Poslednij srok was not able in those circumstances to say everything that she had wanted to say to us—the people of a new generation.

The final statement in this quoted passage suggests another source of information about Valentin Rasputin, namely his opinions and platforms on various aspects of literature and on responsibility of authorship with specific reference to his own works. Such insights are provided in a series of interviews in which Rasputin actively engaged from the mid to the late 1970s and which appeared in various literary journals. The candid and direct nature of his remarks is, I think, essentially a mask which he has
carefully constructed. It creates a distance between the author and his choice of subject matter, his diagnostic treatment of it, and his characteristic method of ambiguous conclusion in order to minimize the criticism which he has anticipated and received from some Soviet critics. Rasputin's ideas about his artistic programme are interesting in terms of his respected as well as controversial position vis à vis literary critics and his popularity with readers. Rasputin understands writing to be an ongoing mutual exchange between reader and author, a relationship which is enriching to both:

I doubt very much if any real writer can of his own will decide what to write about, what problems to deal with in his books, what kinds of characters to present, or what directions the heroes will take. This is merely a . . . deceptive independence. . . . It is up to the writer to realize and name in a literary discovery what torments people subconsciously and to indicate the pressure point that does not have a release valve.  

Rasputin is convinced of the necessity of reader response to the author and this conviction is a major reason for his decision not to "dot his i's and cross his t's" either in his prose or in his interviews. He wants the reader to draw his own conclusions based on personal experience and convictions. He has a great respect for the art of reading and in several interviews states unequivocally that "reading is work and thinking and least of all do I want, by suggesting a ready answer, to doom the reader's thoughts to non-participation and rest." Writers must identify and introduce "sore spots" but should not judge or resolve the questions that are placed in the work. Instead the reader should be encouraged to think about the problems with the same candour with which they were introduced:

It is better to leave a question open. I have my opinion, others have contrasting opinions. After the povest' Proščanie s Matěroj, I received such a mountain of letters that I became alarmed: it meant that these problems
were troubling many people. And not only in Siberia. . . . Here we are talking not only about the loss of several hectares, but about something bigger and more basic that is related to man's inner world.\textsuperscript{19}

Rasputin is often classified as a writer of "village prose," a literary current that was extremely strong in Soviet writing of the 1960s and 1970s and which has been well-documented and analyzed. Rasputin shares much in common with writers of prose about the village (\textit{dereven\v{c}iki}) although his works extend well beyond the limits of this trend which portrays the village, traditional value system, the agrarian way of life, and the culture of the Russian countryside as being a source of traditional goodness and wisdom pitted against the evils of urbanization, industrialization, and technology. The \textit{dereven\v{c}iki} reconstruct the reality of daily life in the Russian countryside through use of regional dialect in dialogue and monologue, and an intense depiction of social surrounding (poverty, deprivation, discontent in the countryside) and cultural detail (\textit{bytopisanie}). The best writers of "village prose" (V. \v{S}uk\v{s}in, V. Tendrjakov, V. Belov) avoid the excesses of a nationalistic orientation usually associated with the portrayal of folk traditions, values, and customs. They portray Soviet village life from the point of view of the historical processes that have occurred there in the past decades, namely collectivization and industrialization, increased economic hardship during and after World War II, and the mass movement of the rural population and latterly rural youth to urban centres. Rasputin sees the division of Russian prose into "village prose," prose about World War II, "city," and "youth" prose as being very conditional. He associates himself with the \textit{dereven\v{c}iki} inasmuch as he would much rather characterize his own work and that of his colleagues as a "moral study of the personality." He reproaches as superficial the critics who see partriarchalism as the main goal in writing about the village: "This isn't so. These writers actively come out against the obsolete traditions of village life. But it
is very important that in changing conditions a person not lose the significant and beautiful moral achievements of the past and that he remain spiritually good and open-hearted. Rasputin views the transformation of the spiritual world in the Russian countryside as a process which it is vital to record because "this world of millions of people is being transformed, will disappear and tomorrow will be unlike it is today. Who, if not the writer, will engrave this process?"

Rasputin takes further issue with those critics who see "village prose" simply as the opposition of the country to the city. Village prose writers do not deal with

... insignificant, regional problems but with those of general importance to man, problems which are equally important for the country and the city and for young people, not with invented problems ... but with problems which reveal the necessity to search for causal relationships in many of today's social phenomena. In other words, "village prose" is able to locate the nerve endings on that huge body that we call "the people".

In interviews as well as in his publicism, Rasputin repeats a motif which is found in his povesti and other prose—the theme of the continuity of generations translates into the ethical concept of "moral memory":

A person does not stand firmly, does not live confidently without this feeling, without closeness to the activity and fate of his forefathers, without the comprehension from within of his responsibility for the place given him in the general scheme of things, to be who he is.

As strongly as Rasputin feels about the links through time between the past, present, and future, and the obligations and duties which these place on generations to follow, he is very definite in the view that there is a personal side of life which is equally vital to the well-being of an individual. Here he reveals an affinity with his
contemporaries such as V. Aksenov (b. 1933), A. Bitov (b. 1937) whose early literary
careers are associated with the flamboyant "youth prose" of the 1960s. Deming Brown
suggests that:

... the dominant mood of this writing ... [was] especially against the
well-established inclination to measure the worth of an individual in terms of
the degree to which he conforms to a rigid social and ideological pattern,
rather than in terms of the richness and uniqueness of his personality.²⁴

In recent interviews, Rasputin has emphasized his views on the importance of
identifying the interests and addressing the private concerns of the individual within
literature: "... one should not forget that one's personal life, a person's feelings and
thoughts comprise the major part of his life. I am trying 'to reconcile the soul with
life'; I am trying to understand but not to dismiss or accept things merely on faith, I
am trying to understand the Russian soul ..."²⁵ It is significant that Rasputin reaches
such a reconciliation within himself and that his concept of the individual can be
accommodated within the demands that past and future make upon a person:

Your son grows up ... to repeat and continue the movement of things
which was begun even before your time, to raise children, to complete the
circle of life—there is a great truth in this, a great significance as there
should be. ... But for all this, there is also something which you, not
your father or grandfather, but you personally brought to your life to make
people happy and to be remembered by. I repeat again: the personal is
very important.²⁶

Rasputin feels that the word "conscience" (sovest') is used far too often and too
freely in the Soviet Union today and this view is important for Rasputin's concept of
the individual's place within the collective. "Conscience at times is understood as duty.
And what is duty? This is responsibility before others. But conscience is shame. It is
responsibility before oneself."

The paired ideas of duty and guilt, conscience and shame are vital themes within Rasputin's work, placing him squarely within the tradition which views Russian writing as serving the moral upbringing and conscience of the reader. His belief in the ennobling aims of literature is demonstrated in the statement that "scholarly but cold books and education produce an immorality that is simply more educated and refined . . . [but] wise, kind, sincere, and honourable books promote high moral standards." One of Rasputin's favourite theses which he calls "education of the emotions" (vospitanie čuvstv) confirms his determination to serve the honourable aims of literature in his own prose: "I believe . . . that genuine problems facing us should not be discussed in whispers or in tongue-twisters, and that truth, truth and only truth should direct the hand of the writer." 

The large body of critical literature which has been amassed in the Soviet Union dealing with Rasputin's works is now increasingly being supplemented by scholarly studies of Western critics, particularly in the United States. One of the few points concerning Valentin Rasputin and his works which Soviet and Western commentators can agree upon is the fact that Rasputin is an author of considerable talent and import who is much more than a chronicler of daily life (bytopisatel') and its reality. In the following brief examination of the major trends in both Soviet and Western thought regarding Rasputin and his work the intention is not to evaluate the criticism but to present a view of how he is perceived from within the Soviet Union and from outside its borders. Although some aspects of the critical work do find common ground between East and West,
generally the critical approach to and the interpretation of the elements investigated are quite different and I will attempt to characterize these differences in the discussion below.

Soviet criticism over the two decades of Rasputin's literary career has hailed him as a gifted author but opinions about his presentation of social and philosophical themes and his strong committed protagonists who actualize them have been varied. On the one hand, critics speak of the artistic merit of his prose, while on the other hand several are quick to indicate his ideological shortcomings. This ambiguous relationship with many Soviet critics is due to the fact that, much like his turn-of-the-century predecessor Anton Čexov, Rasputin presents a diagnosis where critics demand a prognosis. The ideological norms of Socialist Realism apply to Rasputin's prose but his moral realism is out of place within that structure. Thus, the publication of each successive work after the *povest* Den'gi dlja Marii became a source of disagreement amongst Soviet critics and literary authorities.

Beginning in the mid-1960s with the appearance of his first collections of stories and sketches, critics regarded Rasputin politely as a promising young writer while reproaching him for "exoticism" in regard to his presentation of the taiga and its inhabitants. *Den'gi dlja Marii* caught the attention of the Moscow critics both because of the nature of the conflict presented and because of the craftsmanship evident in the *povest*. It was not lauded as a great piece of prose, but was numbered amongst the works appearing as a new wave of "village prose" and was considered a successful analysis of everyday village life which unfortunately fell into "... idealization and sentimentality. ... The elderly pair are depicted in an overly 'sugary' way."³⁰

With the 1970 publication of Poslednij srok, Rasputin’s prose had matured and had acquired definite individual features. The critics began to investigate stylistic features of the works such as subject matter (sjužet), conflict, genre specifics of the *povesti*, and
questions of psychology. By the mid-1970s analysis of method and style had become the main question in criticism of Rasputin's work. For example, of *Poslednij srok*, S. Zalygin wrote: "... most important for me is the sensation of completeness in this work. ... I have learned about the heroes just as much as I was supposed to learn about them." The respected critic, M. Čudakova, praises Rasputin for giving Anna, his heroine, "an opportunity to express herself, he listens to her without interrupting or hurrying her. ... When one reads the story one cannot rid oneself of the sensation that the author is not the 'creator' of Anna's language, but rather a listener and that he follows her speech together with us." 

Nevertheless with the appearance of *Poslednij srok*, Rasputin qualified in the eyes of some critics as a defender of a centuries-old patriarchalism in the Russian peasantry. Other critics, however, understood Rasputin's concentration on the past and on traditional values and customs as the depiction of an historical moment when moral habits, norms, and attitudes connected with ways of life established through the years was being broken down and rapidly restructured. Rasputin, they said, was portraying characters who were experiencing a unique set of thoughts and feelings under these social circumstances. This then, was one of the first major sources of disagreement about Rasputin's prose in Soviet criticism.

With the publication of *Živi i pomni* and Rasputin's objective treatment of individual psychologies in sensitive, universally relevant, ethical areas, many critics realized that Rasputin was not in the mainstream of "village prose." Now criticism had to deal with Rasputin's unique and sympathetic approach to such highly-charged ethical issues as suicide, desertion, individual and collective conscience, and responsibility. Opinions of Nastena's suicide, for example, ranged from "a crude and unforgiveable blunder" to the thought that it is a "higher judgement" of Andrej. Andrej Gus'kov's decision not to
return to the front lines of World War Two but to return home after his release from the hospital is not viewed sympathetically by Soviet critics and only a few articles have suggested that perhaps the circumstances were to blame and that the crime and the criminal should be regarded separately. An extreme line taken in regard to the question of desertion is that of F. Kuznecov who writes that Andrej is guilty but that even Nastena's love for her husband becomes a crime for it motivates her harbouring of a war criminal. A more moderate strain represented by E. Starikova suggests that both protagonists and especially Nastena act in ways which are understandable and natural given the extreme historical circumstances in which they find themselves. Nastena acts as "a natural human being in an unnatural situation". Despite the controversy and discussion, many Soviet critics regard this povest' as Rasputin's most successful.

B. Pankin writes that Živi i pomni is the only example in Rasputin's works in which the idea (zamysl) and the execution (voplošenie) turn out to be in complete harmony with one another.

Prošanje s Materoj provoked another round of strong and mixed reaction in Soviet criticism. Rasputin was criticized for elements that had been praised in previous works. He was rebuked on stylistic and thematic grounds for identification with his characters and for non-interference with the narrative flow, as well as for his portrayal of the Russian village and its place in a 20th century technologically oriented society.

Official criticism reproved Rasputin, again in varying degrees, for viewing the events which transpire on Matera exclusively through the eyes of the inhabitants of the island. He has been criticized for paying little attention to socially active people in reference to the absence or critical portrayal of those who are in charge of the implementation of official Soviet plans. Several critics shared the judgement voiced by E. Sidorov that Rasputin's "tendentiousness has overstepped the limits of objectivity." It is indicative of
the intense level of discussion which Rasputin's *povesti* stimulated that the literary journal *Voprosy literatury* (*Questions of Literature*) dedicated some eighty pages of its second issue of 1977 to a discussion of the works of Rasputin. The five critical articles in this issue alone reflect the wide range of critical reaction to Rasputin's work.¹

Soviet criticism has displayed some inconsistency in evaluating Rasputin's prose and his place in Soviet Russian literature. An illustration of this confusion is the fact that, despite the debate that has revolved around Rasputin's *povesti*, the usual clear correspondence of critical stance in an article to the views of the literary journal in which it is published has not occurred. The important literary publications such as *Novyi mir* (*New World*), *Družba narodov* (*Friendship of Peoples*), *Voprosy literatury*, and *Literaturnaja gazeta* (*Literary Gazette*), each of which is traditionally associated with either liberal or conservative literary views, have all printed more than one article on Rasputin's work which reveal differences of view between themselves. On the other hand it is significant that the publishing house and literary journal which publish and republish Rasputin's prose have remained constant: *Molodaja gvardija* is the organ of the *Komsomol* (Young Communist League) Central Committee and thus represents views of the literary "establishment," and *Naš sovremennik* has published the works of the leading derevenščiki such as V. Belov, F. Abramov, V. Astaf'ev, V. Šukšin. A connection between the two agencies can be made if we consider the remarks of two separate observers. G. Svirskij suggests that *Molodaja gvardija* snapped up Rasputin because it was in need of a fresh, young, talented writer of pure Russian origins from the countryside to counteract an urban-oriented and increasingly experimental prose that was gaining popularity.² In another, perhaps less subjective assessment, G. Hosking states that *Naš sovremennik*

... managed to establish a reputation for publishing interesting works fairly regularly. ... [T]o some extent, [it] can be identified ... with Russian
nationalism. . . . There is . . . a feeling that the Soviet Union is threatened by a faceless "international technocracy" . . . which undermines people's roots as embodied in their language, folklore, history and traditions. *Naš sovremennik* is . . . keen to revive elements of Russian national tradition, especially those associated with the village.*

In summation, then, Soviet critical literature has categorized Rasputin as a *derevenščik* of lyrical–meditative bent who often breaks with reality and reveals a unique sensibility to human and natural phenomena. Conservative literary views have condemned him of "naturalism" in the depiction of cruel life situations, and accused him of supporting "defenders of narrow-mindedness and apologists of stagnation and indolence who look at everything that is new and fresh with suspicion." More liberal–minded critics such as B. Pankin, N. Kotenko, E. Starikova, and S. Zalygin have regularly turned their attention to the psychology of Rasputin's characters and the way they perceive their world as well as to an investigation of the conflicts in his works.

Western criticism from its perspective tends also to place certain expectations on Rasputin who is " . . . in some ways becoming the hope of Soviet literature. If he is not diverted into the dead–end paths of nationalistic writing . . . there is every chance that he will justify the hopes placed in him." Critics often speculate, usually in their conclusions, about both Rasputin's personal and literary future. C. Proffer, for example, forsees that " . . . given Rasputin's realism and honesty, it will be extremely difficult for him to remain detached . . . [and] he may discover that he has written something so truthful and so good that it will be unpublishable in his homeland."

The matter of veracity (*pravdivost*) is central to a critical view articulated by Jurij Mal'čev, that Rasputin is the most talented, conscientious and truthful author in a select group of "intermediate writers" (*promezhutočnye pisateli*) that includes V. Belov, Ju. Trifonov, V. Šukšin, F. Abramov, and others. They are able to publish controversial
works about problems and deficiencies (nedostatki) in the Soviet Union that represent only a portion of the entire truth and thus they inadvertently serve the interests of the Soviet literary establishment by "masking the chasm."\textsuperscript{4} \textsuperscript{7}

Valentin Rasputin strikes one with the originality of his talent [and] his precisely-expressed authorial individuality which is so rare today not only in Soviet literature but also in the intermediate literature. . . . Rasputin almost never lowers himself to petty concessions to the censor in the form of loyal expressions strewn here and there . . . and one can not find an outright lie in his works except for the very rarest exception. . . .\textsuperscript{4} \textsuperscript{8}

However good Rasputin’s prose may be and however honourable his intentions in presenting Soviet reality (in Mal’cev’s opinion Poslednij srok is an extremely seditious work) Mal’cev holds that Rasputin is guilty, though to a lesser degree than his colleagues, of writing verisimilitudes (pravdopodobija) and not absolute truth (pravdivost’).\textsuperscript{4} \textsuperscript{9}

Perhaps the most extreme Western critical stance expounds the view that Rasputin’s writing, particularly Proščanie s Matěroj, is apocalyptic, a view which freely interprets Rasputin’s major themes as political:

In order to break the chain linking the centuries through the age-old continuity in Russian spiritual life, traditions, and ideas, it was necessary to drown Matyora—Russia over and over again in a sea of non—being and historical amnesia—in a sea of blood—depriving her of her very roots.\textsuperscript{5} \textsuperscript{6}

Such rather intense preoccupation with the political and social content of Rasputin’s prose is characteristic of the early period of Rasputin criticism when his position was somewhat of a curiosity for literary specialists in the West, for given the deaths of the V. Šukšin and Ju. Trifonov and the emigration of such writers as V. Aksenov, G. Maksimov, V. Vojnović, Rasputin was one of the few authors remaining
in the Soviet Union whom Western criticism regarded as a major literary figure.

On the whole, Western criticism of Rasputin's prose is still small in volume and basically focused on his last two povesti, Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj. Some approaches of Western critics parallel those of their Soviet counterparts. D. Brown, R. Hingley, G. Hosking, and N. Shneidman categorize Rasputin as a writer of "village prose" and discuss him in relation to other derevensčiki such as F. Abramov, S. Zalygin, and V. Belov, but agree that Rasputin stands out amongst them by virtue of his more universal concerns. Other critics accuse Rasputin of living in the past and of anamnesis. To some extent Western critical interest in Rasputin concentrates on features in his work which have either produced controversy or have been ignored in the Soviet Union. A major case in point is the interest shown by Western studies in the many clear religious and Christian allusions and references in Rasputin's work which are identified and interpreted as his "spirituality" or "religious symbolism".

Rasputin's systems of images and symbols and his wide use of folklore elements are features of his style that are discussed by Soviet and Western critics alike, but a fundamental discrepancy in interpretation extends even to terminology. Specific features which are identified by most critics include Rasputin's portrayal of animated nature, his depiction of pre-Christian as well as Christian custom and ritual, his use of symbols and images from both folkloric and religious sources, and his use of dreams. Soviet critics group all of these features together and tag them as "the national aesthetic experience" (narodno-ëstetičeskij opyt) while Western critics examine Rasputin's spirituality, often in the overtly religious sense. Western critics often conclude that the preoccupation of Rasputin and other derevensčiki with folk tradition, values, and customs is a "search for values to replace those of a Marxist-Leninist ideology that quite obviously does not satisfy many fundamental spiritual needs." A corollary conclusion which completely
dissociates these traditional features of Russian life from present-day Soviet society is that in Rasputin's work "the residual morality is Christian or even pre-Christian rather than communist."\(^5\)\(^a\) The implication that traditional religious values might provide a source of stabilization for disoriented modern man is tolerated and easily justified by Soviet critics and editors. During a discussion with the editors of *Naš sovremennik*, Geoffrey Hosking was told that

... they [the editors] were not interested in any particular denomination, but felt that in a world torn from its moorings, a religious outlook could strengthen man's sense of solidarity with his fellows, his self-discipline, his devotion to duty, and his readiness to sacrifice himself for a worthy cause. ... When I asked if their outlook was not contrary to Marxism, they replied that they were opposed to "crude Marxism."\(^5\)\(^a\)

Thus, images and symbols in Rasputin's work which have as their source the Bible or religious parable tend to be of paramount interest for Western specialists, while Soviet critics ignore the overtly religious elements, vaguely referring to those features that do not classify as folklore or folk experience as "spiritual elements" (*duxovnye elementy*) with a secular emphasis on their moral or social import. Neither Soviet nor Western criticism, however, acknowledges that folklore, tradition, customs, spirituality, and religiosity are tightly bonded and that the main phenomena of cultural, social, and religious life flow from common sources.

Rasputin might most aptly be described as a writer of moral-philosophical prose whose approach to life is in broad categories—man and nature and their relationship within the development of society, man and his relationship with others, man and his relationship with himself. Important moral questions are voiced, and in his latter works, social and political concerns predominate. Thus, while Rasputin's work is directly connected to the life of the Siberian countryside, he does not have a peasant bias. His
prose speaks of developments occurring throughout Soviet society, and indeed some global ones, and it addresses problems that need to be solved.

Rasputin has chosen peasant women as his heroes, including the elderly village grandmother. His woman hero represents stability and home, she remains even if all else is destroyed. Men in Rasputin's prose are transient, moving in and out of the setting in the work, living in the world outside, depending on the women to provide the stable centre. It is left to the women to embody memory and continuity, two qualities which Rasputin values greatly. His women are not weak in spirit or in morals. They combine a traditional peasant psychology about duty, responsibility and love with a great independence and strength of will which link them to the finest heroines of 19th century Russian literature including Puškin's Tat'jana and Dostoevskij's Son'ja Marmeladova, as well as to the society around them and to the world beyond.

Rasputin's protagonists, men and women alike, are totally absorbed in nature. Their moods, emotions, and passions are associated with nature's cycles and their actions are usually accompanied by some image of nature, be it mid-summer mowing, a fierce snowstorm, or ice breaking on the rivers in spring. Rasputin's treatment of death is a good example of how his characters feel at one within the natural cycle of things. Both life and death are understood.

This dissertation is an attempt to identify and analyze the essential aspects of the prose style of Valentin Rasputin in order to understand the well-rounded completeness of his works. Because the povest' has been Rasputin's most successful genre, this study is largely limited to a discussion of his four povesti including a detailed stylistic analysis of the two works Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj. The contents consist of four chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter considers the basic question of genre. Rasputin's preferred genre is the povest' 'novella' and his conformity to the basic
demands of the genre as well as the introduction of some elements not often found in the *povesti* are discussed. Chapter II examines Rasputin's four *povesti*, *Den'gi dlja Marii*, *Poslednij srok*, *Živi i pomni*, and *Proščanie s Matěroj*, in terms of plot development, major thematic concerns, and characterization. Chapters III and IV concentrate on *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj* as the most mature and representative examples of Rasputin's work. A detailed comparative analysis of the works is offered, beginning in Chapter III with a discussion of *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj* as tragedy and myth. Chapter IV opens with an examination of Rasputin's language in these *povesti*. The speech of his characters as well as the language of the authorial text is discussed in terms of the dialect, jargon, and oral folklore elements that are found within them. The analysis of *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj* then proceeds to a discussion of Rasputin's style and examines such devices as narrative technique, internal speech, imagistic devices and figurative language, and folklore devices. It is in this chapter that the many interconnected elements of tradition, custom, folklore, myth and religion are discussed, not in isolation from one another, but emphasizing the integrated relationship which results in prose of moral and social force. The Conclusion discusses Rasputin's latest works and the marked introspective and internalized concentration in them after his five-year literary silence. It also attempts to establish Rasputin's place both amongst his literary contemporaries and within the Russian literary tradition.
Notes

1. According to a bibliography collected in 1983 at the Lenin Library in Moscow, Rasputin's short stories have been published over four dozen times in various journals. Although there have been several collections of his stories, they generally appear in book form as accompaniment to one or two of his povesti 'novellas'. In journal and book publications, Rasputin's four important povesti have appeared on multiple occasions: Den'gi dža Marii has been published eleven times, Poslednij srok ten times, Živi i pomni eighteen times, and Proščanie s Matërój six times. The publishing house Molodaya gvardija has to date published four editions of Rasputin's four povesti in 1976, 1978, 1980 and 1982. Rasputin's work has been translated into other languages of the Soviet Union, notably the Baltic and other East Slavic languages.

Since this bibliography was compiled a two-volume collection comprised of Rasputin's four povesti, some stories and sketches, was published by Molodaya gvardija in 1984.

2. Rasputin's works which have been published by children's publishers include V. Rasputin, Kraj vozle samogo neba (Moscow: Malyš, 1982) and V. Rasputin, Uroki francuzskogo (Moscow: Sovetskaja Rossija, 1981). Den'gi dža Marii, Poslednij srok, and Živi i pomni have been staged by major theatrical companies in Moscow and Leningrad, the latter two by the Moscow Arts Theatre. "Vasilij i Vasilisa" Rasputin's first major story and Proščanie s Matërój have both been made into films, the former in 1981, the latter in 1982.

3. According to a bibliography collected in 1983 at the Lenin Library in Moscow, close to 300 articles on Rasputin and his work have been published in the Soviet Union. Two books by Siberian critics have also been written about Rasputin: N. S. Tenditnik, Otvetstvenost' talanta (Irkutsk: Vostočno-sibirske kniznoe izdatel'stvo, 1978) and V. N. Šapošnikov, Valentin Rasputin (Novosibirsk: Zapadno-sibirske kniznoe izdatel'stvo, 1978).

Five dissertations for the degree of "Candidate of Sciences" have been completed dealing with the work of Valentin Rasputin, two of which concentrate solely on Rasputin's prose while others treat his work in a comparative manner.

4. Meeting with faculty and students of Moscow State University, December 19, 1976. During the course of this recorded discussion, Rasputin stated that he feels best when he is by himself, that crowds of people tire him, and that during times of personal crises, he prefers to be left in solitude.


7. V. Rasputin, "Vsë ostaëtsja ljudjam" n. pag.
Letter received from Valentin Rasputin, 28 July 1985. In this letter he confirms the year of acceptance into the Writers' Union. In answer to my question of when he became a member of the Executive of the Writers' Union he replied, "... I honestly don't know. This honorary, elected position which carries no obligation, believe me, hardly affects me, and I don't remember when it happened."


Rasputin had originally begun a short story on the theme of the subsequent Den'gi dlja Marii but he decided to use the longer povest' genre in order to extend the plot to include social and ethical commentary on problems of modern Soviet village life.


In the story "Nataša," the narrator is lying in a hospital and in a semi-conscious state he sees death close to him. This would seem to be directly related to Rasputin's own recent experience in the hospital with head injuries.


Rasputin, "Peredo mnoj oživajut kartiny," n. pag.


Rasputin, "Pravo pisat'," p. 172. Earlier in the interview, Rasputin refers to this "something" as "the loss of moral values ... [T]he moral side of a problem interests me - man and what he gains or loses morally. I don't believe in man torn from his land and heritage for then he becomes indifferent to everything" (p. 172).


Rasputin, "Byt' samim soboj," p. 146.


Afanas'ev, p. 4.


Kuznecov, p. 341.


A round-table discussion of critics organized by the journal *Voprosy literature* concluded that in *Proščanie s Matěroj* "... the author’s voice appears to be diluted in the narrative. The author's position merges with the position of his heroine and becomes quite vulnerable." *Voprosy literature*, No. 2 (1977), p. 81.

*Voprosy literature*, p. 81.


"Proza Valentina Rasputina," *Voprosy literature*, No. 2 (1977), pp. 3–81. In this collection of five critical articles, opinions about Rasputin’s work differ. O. Salynskij in his article "Dom i dorogi," suggests that Rasputin opposes the idea of movement and progress with one of peace and contentment within the "home" and that the concept of
"home" is pervasive in all of Rasputin's povesti in his system of central images; V. Ostotskij in "Ne sliškom li dołgoe èto proščanie?" calls Proščanie s Matëroy creatively unsuccessful, merely an elegiac, sentimental drama; the position of Ju. Seleznev in "Zemlja ili territorija?" refutes the preceding critiques and states that the image of Matëra is an especially successful fusion of philosophical, social, and psychological themes. The two remaining articles by A. Ovcarenko, "Vernost' svoej probleme" and E. Starikova, "Obratìmsja k žìzni," deal with Rasputin's prose in the Soviet literary process and compare his works with those of such 20th century Soviet writers as L. Leonov, A. Platonov and M. Šolokov.


5 Svirskij, p. 434.


8 Mal'cev, pp. 288–289.

9 Mal'cev, p. 316.

10 Svirskij, p. 442.

11 See L. Bagby, "A Concurrence of Psychological and Narrative Structures: Anamnesis in Valentin Rasputin's 'Upstream, Downstream'," Canadian Slavonic Papers, 22, No. 3 (1980), 388–399. Bagby suggests that in Rasputin's work there is a psychological dynamic which amounts to "those mechanisms of avoidance which reduce our experience of the present and cast us into the past out of the fear of the unknown, of the future, and ultimately of impermanence and death" (p. 388).


For studies dealing with Rasputin's religious symbolism, see G. E. Mikkelson, "Religious Symbolism in Valentin Rasputin's Tale 'Live and Remember'," in Studies in

53 Brown, p. 252.


CHAPTER I: The Povest': A Genre Study of Rasputin's Prose

Valentin Rasputin has favoured and mastered the genre of povest' or novella which is a traditionally popular genre in Russian literature.¹ Unlike many other contemporary Russian writers of povesti including S. Zalygin, V. Tendrjakov, V. Belov, F. Abramov, Rasputin has never written a long novel and his most successful and acclaimed works have been his povesti. A short discussion of this genre and Rasputin's contribution to it is an important initial step in the examination of his major works.

Numerous attempts have been made by literary scholars to define the povest', which, by common agreement, is not a novel but to a certain extent approaches it. Through overt or implied contrast of povest' to novel, critics, in their work on specific prose pieces, resolve the problem most often in terms of numbers—number of characters, number of plots, and length (between 10,000 and 30,000 words). However, Rasputin as an author explains his choice of the povest' genre for his major work by speaking of "essence" when he compares his povest' to the novel:

I think that my povest' approaches the novel if one does not consider its smaller size and scope. The matter lies not so much in generic definition as in essence, in how much life is present or absent in the povest' or novel, with what purpose and lesson and voice it is present. . . . I chose the povest' genre because it allows me to take highly emotional material just to the point where there is no danger for me as author that the reader will lose interest in the work.²

Certainly the volume of material in Rasputin's povesti is abundant enough for longer works, but Rasputin in his preference for the povest' gives us only the information that we need about his characters, and no more. His plots revolve around a single event, situations and relationships are early and quickly described, and a narrow
time-frame—sometimes a few days, at most a few months—encases the events and characters. His povesti are set in the present with flashbacks and dreams providing supplementary background information and psychological depth. Another common approach to the povest' is illustrated in the comment of one western critic that

The most striking element shared by almost all the great pieces in this genre is their outright concentration upon traditional problems of philosophy, the boldness of their ventures in generality, the evidence they give of direct and profound moral concern. We are not entitled to suppose . . . that such works were composed from the point of view first of general ideas and philosophic problems and paradoxes. . . . What we may insist is that these works combine with their actions a most explicit awareness of themselves as parables, as philosophic myths. . . .

In order to elucidate the mechanics and dynamics of the povest' as employed by Rasputin it is useful to examine and consolidate the major points in contemporary concepts of and approaches to the genre, paying special attention to the compact organization of the povest' as well as to the nature of its thematics and resultant ethical overtones.

Russian literary theory tends to compare the structural and thematic peculiarities of the povest' with the two genres that bound it on either side of the generic spectrum, the rasskaz 'story' and the roman 'novel'. B. Mejlax, editor of Russkaja povest' XIX veka (The Russian Povest' of the Nineteenth Century) suggests that:

. . . the flexibility of the povest' makes a strict definition difficult, but still allows one to separate it from the story (which by size but also by content is a less capacious genre and relatively limited in its time-space parameters) and from the novel (which is distinguished by significant large-scale events, practically unlimited potential for development in time, and by a combination of parallel plot lines which come together in definite thematic focus).
It is the problem of these genres' being adjacent rather than opposed to one another which makes a clear-cut definition of povest' inherently difficult for they tend to overlap boundaries and to interpenetrate each other. Recent Soviet literary theory however does not see this intermediate position of the genre as a negative factor. Traditional views of the povest' in older criticism which sees it as a "training ground" for the creation of the "superior" novel are refuted:

... although the povest' was, among other things, a type of laboratory toward the novel, it was always able to preserve its individual and independent significance and value. The mobility of the povest', the flexibility of its parameters between long story and short novel is not a drawback, but a specific feature of the povest'. Thanks to this flexibility, the povest' may be "compressed" or "extended" to a greater or lesser degree and it quickly masters new literary techniques and expressive devices.  

The ability of the povest' to embrace many elements of structure, plot, and thematics in that grey area between story and novel is reflected in a number of varying typologies which have been suggested in Soviet literary theory, none of which prove to be genre-defining.  

Along with the moderate length and scope of the povest' Soviet literary theory suggests other parameter-forming features. These include a clear plot-line which is perceived as developing chronologically despite some time shifts, a strong authorial presence or point of view in the narration which maintains unity in the work (the povest' often contains autobiographical or biographical elements), some digressions and philosophical reflections, and heroes who are usually introduced at a crucial moment in their lives and who reveal themselves through their crisis.  

The editors of Sovremennaja russkaja sovetskaja povest' (The Contemporary Russian Soviet Povest') suggest that what is needed in the continuing clarification of the
'povest' as genre is "a systematic approach, taking into account not only one or two, but all basic parameters of the phenomenon, not giving a simple definition of the 'povest' structure, but a concrete examination of its elements." 7 Graham Good's stimulating article, "Notes on the Novella," provides at least one attempt at such an approach and it represents a very lucid attempt to collate various ideas and perspectives on the 'povest'/novella especially in its complex relationship with the novel.

A fundamental proposal in Good's essay is that the term "novella" be used to refer to both short and medium-length works of fiction which, Good suggests, "have enough in common in form, content and history to justify opposing them conjointly to the novel in the German manner, and employing a two-part model (novella/novel) in preference to a three-part one (story/novella/novel)." 8 It is clear that Good's proposal might erase ambiguous forms at the end of the scale where istorija, rasskaz, short story and long tale all converge. It does, however, leave intact that controversy which deals with the minimum requirements of the novel and the maximum potentials of the 'povest'/novella.

Many of Good's suggestions and conclusions about the novella will be applied to the 'povest' in general and to Rasputin's 'povest' in particular in order to assess his works both in terms of their convention and in terms of their innovation. It is useful for two reasons to view Rasputin's 'povesti' thus, first because of the fact that the 'povesti' of the best writers of contemporary Russian literature at a period of decline in the Russian novel have acquired definite features of the novel. Secondly, Good's proposal to group short and medium-length prose together with the single term "novella" may be appropriately applied to Rasputin's prose since he has written exclusively in the genres of rasskaz, očerk, and 'povest'. Moreover as Deming Brown points out about recent Russian short fiction:
The urge to make fuller statements and to explore situations more deeply has caused narratives to expand. . . . As a consequence, the boundary line between the short story (rasskaz) and the short novel (povest')—always a vague one—has approached obliteration in recent years.9

An obvious structural feature of Rasputin's four major povesti which penetrates into the territory of the novel is that of length. Good suggests that the length of the povest'/novella be related to the attention span of the reader at a single sitting and that two or more povesti must be grouped to comprise a book. At least two of Rasputin's povesti, Živi i pomni and Prošcanie s Matěroj, are of sufficient length to have been published separately (a basic feature of the novel) and Poslednij srok stretches the limit of the criterion of attention span.

A vital element of the povest' according to Good is its retention of stronger oral characteristics than the novel which may be detected in tone, style, or overtly in the structure of the povest'. In contrast to the novel, the povest' is a re-created "telling." The oral quality of the povest' presupposes that the story-teller and his audience are present together and in communication. This contrasts with the "literary" nature of the novel for "in the novella, narrator and listener are fictively copresent, but the character is absent (even if he is the author's earlier self); in the novel, writer and reader are both in private, in isolation from each other."10 All of Rasputin's povesti reveal a narrative structure of dual nature for one of its obvious features, most clearly defined in Živi i pomni and Prošcanie s Matěroj, is that the oral quality of the povest' is combined with a classically-written, lyrical narration more typical of the novel.

Despite the structural and stylistic proximity of Rasputin's major povesti to the novel, the majority of their vital features relate them to the povest'. This is especially true of Rasputin's narrator through whom we receive recollections and are persuaded as to the truth of what has transpired. Good suggests that in the povest'/novella we trust
the narrator. This differs fundamentally from the novel's stance of self-sufficiency and documentary truthfulness in which "it sets itself to contain the world, or be self-contained, or both."¹¹ We have only to recall the criticism levelled at Rasputin for his later work, namely that he, the author, was indistinguishable from the point of view of his narrator, to understand how the povest¹ narrator may be trusted.

Good also discusses a basic feature of the conclusion in the povest¹/novella which is that the conclusion is foretold within the beginning of the povest¹. Indeed, in the beginnings of most of Rasputin's povesti there is a strong indication that the end is known to the narrator, but suspense is maintained through to the conclusion. The event, no matter how tragic, is thus recalled at a distance with a sense of drama and retrospection which is enhanced by the unhurried and peaceful tone of the narration. A sense of inevitability accompanies this retrospective narrative because the action ends before the telling begins. "The novella's opening projects a story whose past completeness strengthens the living presentness of its telling".¹² Rasputin's Proščanie s Materoj opens thus: "Once again spring had come, taking its place in the never-ending order, but it was the last spring for Matera, the island and the village that bore the same name."¹³ The fact that Rasputin never carries his story to its conclusion but leaves it to the reader to find an ending is his specific artistic resolution of that dictate of the povest¹ that the end be found within the beginning.

Good points out that the nature of the povest¹ is intensive in contrast to the extensive nature of the novel. This distinction has basic consequences for characterization and plot. In this regard, Good suggests that for characterization, "the appropriate method is dramatic or symbolic revelation rather than gradual development."¹⁴ Certainly this is true in Rasputin's characterization of his heroines, all of whom are presented dramatically and three of whom, Anna, Nastena and Dar'ja, are characterized symbolically representing
such constants as earth, motherhood, life, and tradition.

Intensiveness in terms of plot leads to much in the *povest'* being explained by fate and destiny, because "the novella is too short to build up evidence for a social-secular theory of causation, and hence is often fatalistic in implication."\(^{15}\) In the *povest'*, attention is usually focused on natural or extraordinary phenomena. In Rasputin's work, this is evident in the natural or man-made calamities, the visions and dreams, and the deterioration and death of individuals which all comprise plot elements. Thus, Rasputin's attitude toward fate that Western critics tend to interpret as his spirituality or religiosity and that Soviet critics tend to view as his *narodnost'* 'national quality', may to a large degree be conditioned by the demands of his chosen genre.\(^{16}\) In a similar way, "the balance between . . . the observed world and the world of law . . . give to works in this genre the characteristic of ruthlessness."\(^{17}\) Thus the sense of inevitability pervading the retrospective narration discussed above leads critics to comment on the tone of hopelessness in Rasputin's *povesti*.

That the *povest'*/novella contains an element of the unexpected in setting, plot or both, is a feature which Good discusses in detail:

Unlike the traditional stories of epic and romance whose outcome is already well known, the novella's story has not been normally heard before. . . . Novelty of setting implies a distance between social or geographical experience of the audience, and the experience, way of life, or sub-culture described in the novella.\(^{18}\)

Rasputin's *povesti* are set in the Siberian countryside, a detail which, geographically if not socially, distances the experience of the reader from the daily life of the characters. Another element of the unexpected found in Rasputin's *povesti* are the figures, premonitions, and dreams which border on the fantastic. In almost every instance such
elements in his works result in novelty rather than fantasy. A fantastic element does nonetheless find a place in Rasputin's writing in the figure of the Xozjain 'Master' which appears in Proščanie s Matěroj as an important symbolic and thematic figure.

Given the novelty of plot and setting in the povest' it is to be expected that the characters are also distinctive. Good proposes that the povest'/novella treats types of people who are either outside of society or removed from the experience of the reader. Thus, he characterizes the novella as being "the revelation through a crisis of the essence of a way of life removed from the mainstream of society." Certainly this is quintessential Rasputin with his female heroes fighting insurmountable odds and placed in difficult social circumstances. While each of the specific crises is removed from the direct experience of the majority of readers, the events Rasputin deals with, while peripheral, are not unfamiliar and the isolation and rejection of the main characters in each of his major povesti make a strong statement by implication about life at the centre of society.

Good relates the oral and social nature of the povest'/novella to the fact that the genre tends to be a repository for bits of folk wisdom, for didacticism, and for philosophizing on the human condition by the narrator as well as the characters. These elements are unmistakably present in Rasputin's work in the form of folk sayings, proverbs, and articulation of life-philosophies, and they complement his sometimes indirect method of examining the relationships and attitudes of his characters through their moral stance.

The final point to be discussed in this conceptualization of the povest' genre is an important one in terms of Rasputin's povesti for it deals with the association of the novella with tragic drama. Good suggests in his conclusion that tragedy, in the sense of the immediate suffering of the hero before a live audience, is rarely found in the
povest'/novella for the decline of a character into isolation or death as a fate which is inevitable is tragedy of a different magnitude. The narration of the povest' implies retrospection and therefore a degree of distance. But Good does present a provocative idea by Howard Nemerov which is pertinent to Rasputin's later work. Nemerov defines the novella "not as a compromise between novel and short story, but as something like the ideal and primary form, suggestively allied in simplicity and even in length with the tragedies of antiquity, and dealing in effect with equivalent materials." Rasputin's work substantiates this view. Some of his earlier stories and all of his major povesti deal with inherently tragic situations, particularly Živi i pomni and Prošcanie s Materoj in which tragedy is indisputable. Both Nastena and Dar'ja make an ethical choice which results in their death—the former resolves to protect her husband even at the ultimate cost of her own life and the latter decides not to abandon her doomed island. True to the tragic form, there is a fatefulness of organization and detail in the stories of Nastena and Dar'ja. Despite the active assertion of will and responsibility by each woman, in their respective dilemmas whichever way they turn is the wrong way. Through his most mature heroes, Rasputin has succeeded in introducing an intensely tragic view of life into his povest'.

Although it is sometimes necessary to define in order to classify, I think that the above conceptualization of the povest'/novella is more helpful than any existing strict definition of the genre. In the remaining sections of my work, I will continue to use the traditional terms povest' and rasskaz as labels to signify a concept rather than to imply an exhaustive definition. Indeed the above discussion is intended first and foremost to illustrate the flexible parameters of the povest'/novella, the extent to which Rasputin's povesti fall within these creative parameters, and the extent to which he makes us redefine the genre to fit his art.
In the following chapter I shall examine the major thematic areas of Rasputin's *povesti* which by their emphasis on morals and ethics are themes which have certainly been addressed by the novel as well as by the *povest*'. Rasputin's loyalty to and mastery of the *povest*' as his preferred genre may have much to do with the potential it provides the author to express moral and philosophic views in a concentrated, succinct manner. This feature accommodates well the acute nature of Rasputin's social and ethical thematics.
Notes

1 I have chosen to translate povest' into English literary terminology as "novella" rather than "short novel" based on the argument forwarded by Graham Good that "novella" is "gradually gaining acceptance in English amongst publishers, writers and latterly, critics, to denote a fictional prose narrative of 'medium'length." See Graham Good, "Notes on the Novella," Novel: A Forum on Fiction, 10, No. 3 (1977), p. 198.


5 Mejłax, p. 533.

6 Examples of various typologies of the povest' which have been developed include the thematic approach (i.e. the military, family and daily life, village, and love povest'), the problematic-thematic approach (i.e. the moral–psychological, social, romantic, philosophic, lyrical, lyrical–publicistic povest'), and the formal approach based on aspects of plot and structure (i.e. the povest'–sketch, the povest'–in–stories, the povest'–novel, and the descriptive, lyrical, and publicistic povesti).

7 V. A. Kovalev, ed., Sovremennaja russkaja sovetskaja povest' (Leningrad: Nauka, 1975), p. 262. They go on to list exactly which elements they have in mind: "We mean here conflict and the problem of the hero, the limits and character of the description of daily life, the individuation of the heroes and their lives, the role of the story-teller in particular in regard to a 'chronicled' narration, autobiographical qualities, limits and originality of documentary sources, 'authenticity of fact', stylistic ornamentation and linguistic devices, artistic and historical time, etc." (p. 262.)

8 Good, p. 200. Good lists here four other points based on an historical approach to the prose novella, which justify his proposal.


10 Good, p. 211.

11 Good, p. 211.

12 Good, p. 211.


Nemerov expounds a similar view in regard to the demands of this genre. "The ideal [is that] every detail should at once seem fairly chosen by probable observation, and be in fact the product of a developing inner necessity. . . . In this sense we sometimes feel the protagonists of short novels to be the victims not of fate or of the gods so much as of literary styles and laws of composition," p. 241.


16 Nemerov, p. 241.


18 Good, p. 206.

19 Good, p. 206.

20 Nemerov, p. 245.
CHAPTER II: Plot, Theme, and Characterization

in Rasputin's *Povesti*

The four *povesti* of Valentin Rasputin form a corpus which is not only generically unified, but which forms an artistic and philosophical whole. This unity is composed of a number of elements, but fundamentally it is the result of the steady maturation of Rasputin's prose in aspects of plot, theme, characterization, and style which progress from *povest' to povest'* in close interrelationship.

In this chapter I will examine Rasputin's four major works not only individually but also in terms of their commonality in aspects of plot structure—especially the points where the *povesti* begin and end—conflict, time structure, and Rasputin's use of the device of flashback. Following an examination of some major themes and motifs in the works, I will go on to outline some of the major character types found in the *povesti* as well as to discuss Rasputin's characterization of his heroes and other personages.

There are certain similarities between Rasputin's *povesti* which are obvious. They are all set in the Siberian village and countryside, a setting from which the heroes and virtually all the characters are drawn. His characters speak in the dialect of the Siberian countryside and most protagonists are deeply rooted in Russian folk life (traditions, customs, values), and in the distant past of Russian cultural life, although some are struggling with or have rejected such elements. The works are focused on a difficult, inherently tragic moment in a character's life when he finds himself isolated from his family and his community. Rasputin uses this situation to examine the behaviour and psychology of his heroes and those interacting with him in an attempt to understand the moral fibre of people who are compelled to act in a concentrated and cruel situation. Thus, with his highly localized prose, Rasputin does not directly concentrate on society
but rather on a single village, family or person. At the same time, he reveals broad implications for his own, and sometimes for the whole of modern society.

A key element in Rasputin's prose is the relationship of the hero to the plot action. All of the plots are initiated before the *povesti* begin by an event that has occurred or by a situation that has arisen which produce crises demanding that the characters act: in *Poslednij srok*, it is the impending death of an old woman, in *Zivi i pomni*, the secret arrival of a deserter from the frontlines in World War II, and in *Prošcanie s Matěrą*, the imminent flooding of an island for a hydroelectric project. All of these situations establish the suspense in the work immediately and set up the conditions under which the characters must act. Although the event may threaten a family or an entire settlement, it is the hero of the *povest* who is placed in a particularly crucial position in which there is little room to manoeuvre in order to avoid an outcome which is, for all intents and purposes, inevitable. The suspense in all of Rasputin's *povesti* is built upon a pervasive feeling within the plot that time is running out. His heroes face a limited amount of time before the plots reach their inevitable conclusions—a threat of jail for Maria, Anna's death, the judgement and death of Nastena, the flooding of Matěra and the spiritual disintegration of its inhabitants all loom large in the works. This structure was established in Rasputin's first *povest*'. *Den'gi dlja Marii*, and continued through his later works.

The distinctive feature of Rasputin's characterization, his concentration on a female hero, the village woman, was established earlier in his short stories and sketches of the mid-1960s. The female hero was developed further in all of his *povesti* and in them the main focus is on the actions of the heroine, although the increase in the active participation and direction which the female hero demonstrates between Rasputin's first *povest* and the last is striking. The dependence and frailty of Maria in *Den'gi dlja*
Marii ultimately develop into the independence and militancy of Dar'ja in Proščanie s Matěroj. As the heroine gains strength and confidence, the outlines of the plot change accordingly. Maria is a victim of her circumstances whereas Nastena in Živi i pomni and Dar'ja have progressed and matured to win moral and spiritual victories over their circumstances. Thus it is essential to be aware of the heroine vis à vis the plot action in Rasputin's povesti and this relationship will be referred to again in the discussion of his characterizations. The point should be made here, though, that in Rasputin's work characterization is dominant over plot, an observation which Rasputin corroborates:
"Everything comes from characterization, the entire work develops around the hero's character."

1 Structure and Plot

Let us now turn to an examination of some of the main structural features of each work taken in chronological order of publication in order to discuss features both unique in each and common to all four povesti.

The earliest povest', Den'gi dlja Marii, centres on the plight of Maria who is persuaded against her better judgement to take a shopkeeper's job that no one else will fill. From this time on, she is marked as the target of an inevitable shortage. An inspector arrives to take inventory, and Maria is found to be one thousand roubles short. She is virtually incapacitated by the discovery despite the five-day reprieve that the inspector gives her to recover the money. Relying totally on her husband Kuz'ma to obtain the large sum, Maria places both herself and Kuz'ma in a position of dependence in regard to their fellow villagers and their decision to help or to ignore Maria's dilemma and impending prison term.
The *povest* chronicles Kuz'ma's wanderings from house to house in the village, a structure which A. Dyrdin suggests is reminiscent of Russian journey tales with the occurrence of unexpected problems and of a series of tests of the hero. The action focuses on the revelation of particular character types through their attitude toward money. Early on, the director of the collective farm promises Kuz'ma that the *kolxoz* will lend him the entire sum of one thousand roubles but in two months after the annual accounts are turned in. This pledge establishes a condition of temporariness to Kuz'ma's appeals for loans, a condition which should make it easier for Kuz'ma's fellow villagers to lend him money. Predictably, there are generous villagers represented by the elderly Ded Gordej who has nothing of his own to give so he borrows from his son, and the ailing Auntie Natalja, who sacrifices the money she has put aside for her funeral and wake. These compassionate characters are contrasted to the selfish and self-centred—to Stepanida, a woman of no small wealth, who refuses to admit it and share it, to the dispassionate school-teacher Evgenij Nikolaevič who begrudgingly gives Kuz'ma nominal financial aid and insincere moral encouragement, and the nameless collective farm chairman, who had himself served time in jail for an action which the Party authorities had considered a crime, even though it was undertaken for the good of the collective farm under extenuating circumstances. Through the pressure of this chairman, the five professionals on the collective farm staff agree to loan a month's salary to Kuz'ma. Amongst their number a similar breakdown occurs as did amongst the villagers: some give willingly, while others begrudge the loan. The bookkeeper maliciously spends his complete salary and the agronomist's wife visits Kuz'ma to demand her husband's salary back, accusing Kuz'ma of being without conscience.

As the final day approaches, Kuz'ma is still several hundred roubles short. The only person left to turn to is his brother Aleksej, who lives in an unnamed city, having
left and forgotten his native village long ago. Despite Maria’s strong doubts that Aleksej will help, Kuz’ma sets out for the city. The train trip introduces us briefly to another set of characters and their varying attitudes to Kuz’ma’s village behaviour and appearance, attitudes which range from hostility to and a contempt for the village, to good-natured condescension, to genuine empathy and compassion.

Kuz’ma finally reaches his brother’s door, and as he prepares to knock, invoking Maria to "pray for me," the povest’ ends. This type of ambiguous conclusion is typical of the structure of Rasputin’s povesti and the way in which he uses climax and dénouement: both Den’gi dlja Marii and Proščanie s Matěroj end abruptly at the climax of the work, and the dénouement in Poslednij srok is but one sentence. Even in Živi i pomni, which is a well-structured tragedy, the elements of climax, falling action, and catastrophe follow in extremely rapid succession. His endings do not resolve the many loose ends in the works and there sometimes follow from this unanswered questions about the fate of his main characters. In Den’gi dlja Marii as in Proščanie s Matěroj, we do not know definitely what happens to either Maria or Dar’ja. In Poslednij srok and Živi i pomni, the story of the heroine is brought to completion, while the direction that those lives around her will take is left open to conjecture. As we have seen in the introductory discussion, Rasputin explains his use of the ambiguous conclusion as being rooted in his ideas regarding the function of literature.

In Den’gi dlja Marii, Rasputin establishes the fundamental contrast and conflict which runs throughout his povesti. Much of the action in them is directed by the interaction of two distinct ways of life. One is the village way of life and the moral norms associated with it and the other is the way of life found in the city. The latter sphere is extended by Rasputin to include government authority and sometimes modern society as a whole. Unlike many of the derevenščiki with whom Rasputin is often
grouped, Rasputin does not set up this contrast as an opposition between town and country, with the village representative of all that is good and the city, all that is evil. Rather, he relates one to the other and suggests that there are positive and negative aspects in both ways of life; in the final analysis it is the attitude of people toward one another, the human factor, which is crucial. Rasputin explains this idea further:

 Much in a human being depends on his attitude toward those around him. Alienation is the most dangerous thing that can happen in the character of a human being who has fallen into certain circumstances. How often, alas, does one encounter a situation in which one person does not hear or does not want to hear another.³

Thus, Rasputin does not present us with an idealized village nor does he divide his characters according to a positive-village, negative-city formulation. Two short passages from Den'gi dlja Marii serve to illustrate Rasputin's objectivity in regard to the realities of life in the Russian village and city. The first is a conversation that Kuz'ma has on the train with his travelling companions, an elderly couple and a young man from the village. The woman, who herself is village-born, extols the virtues she perceives there:

Human kindness, respect for one's elders, industriousness, all come from the village, said the old lady as she looked at her husband. And this time it was she who turned to her husband. "Isn't that right, Sergej?" she asked. "Probably."⁴

However, the young man's drunken and vulgar behaviour negates all of the qualities she has praised, and her husband is prompted to remind her that, "Disrespect for women also comes from the village" (p. 620).
In a second scene, Ded Gordej sits talking with Kuz’ma and thoughtfully compares two of his fellow villagers in terms of their willingness to help others. In doing so, he points out the changing system of ethics in the village:

"Petr Larionov, poor fool, has nothing to give. He’d give you the whole world if it was his. That’s how life is---Evgenij Nikolaevič lives next door to Petr Larionov, and the two of them as different as heaven and earth. Born in the same place, speak the same language, but no, there is no sense of kinship . . ." (p. 600).

The basic conflict in Rasputin’s povesti, rather than being simplistically between village and city is really rooted in two differing norms of daily reality—one which is grounded in a family and community ethic and in an altruistic attitude which pledges aid to one’s family, friends, and fellow villagers, and the other which is based on a routine of self-centred interests. Rasputin perceives the latter moral norm as becoming increasingly dominant. The specific conflict in Den’gi dlja Marii between the power of money and the effect it has on the characters’ willingness to share it with a friend in real need illustrates Rasputin’s view. In the behaviour of such characters as Stepanida, the bookkeeper, and the agronomist’s wife, all natives of the village, the author demonstrates that individual selfishness and callousness are qualities not exclusive to city life. However, the underlying issue is the changing ethical condition of the village where a sense of brotherhood and community is being lost, where old traditions are disappearing. In his interviews, Rasputin has spoken many times about this change:

Life today is changing with unusual rapidity. There are many who rush through it, but I decided to talk about life that is quiet. . . Over the endless spaces of Siberia . . . there are a great many people who live a measured, long-established way of life . . . [and] they are our contemporaries. They live in the same period as we and create immense material wealth. They are living people with their destinies and passions. . .
The point is absolutely not the preservation of the old-time village. The point is the inner life of millions of people which is changing, disappearing, and tomorrow will not be the same as it is today.  

A related but distinct second conflict in Den'gi dlja Marii is a recurrent thematic concern in all of Rasputin's povesti. This is the relationship between the present and the past. Running parallel to this opposition is a central theme and a basic constructive principle in Rasputin's works—the concept of memory. Through the characters who in some way help Kuz'ma, we understand that to remember is an essential part of the living of a good life. However, Rasputin repeatedly shows us another aspect of memory when it has been severed from its source and abandoned. In Den'gi dlja Marii, Kuz'ma's brother Aleksej has long ago forgotten his past, and in return his village and past have forgotten him. Judging by passing references to Aleksej in the povest', he appears to be so alienated from anything connected to the village (including his family), that he will not respond to Kuz'ma's appeal for financial aid.

There is a third important thematic conflict in Den'gi dlja Marii. This is the pull between individual and collective needs, a conflict which although appearing under different circumstances and with varying emphasis, recurs as a major conflict in the later povest', Živi i pomni and with modifications in Proščanie s Matēroj, where the conflict is between a smaller and a larger collective. The conflict between individual and collective in Den'gi dlja Marii is centred on Maria's agreement to work in the village store after several refusals and much persuasion. It is through appeals to her conscience that Maria finally accepts the position:

He [the chairman of the village soviet] knew how to get to them and he began talking about how somebody was needed to help out the village until Nadja Voroncova could begin work, for without a store the village had exhausted itself and Maria was the most suitable person for this. . . .
Maria knew that someone really did have to help out and... with an expression of suffering, she listened to the chairman: she was tormented because to refuse any longer seemed to be wrong, but she was terrified of accepting. (p. 587)

The thousand-rouble shortage uncovered by the inventory is the vehicle by which we can see the villagers' reactions to a misfortune suffered by one of their own, a misfortune brought on only because Maria acted out of her sense of conscience for the common good. However, support for Maria, whether financial or moral, is not unanimous. For example, Nadja Voroncova, the woman who reneged on her promise to relieve Maria of her duties at the store, voices a sentiment which lays the blame squarely on Maria and frees the other villagers of any collective responsibility for her decision:

In a back street by the river Nadja Voroncova stopped Maria and told her that she, Maria, had obviously been crazy when she accepted the store and that she put herself into prison, no one else. It had been clear that that store would lead to no good. (p. 591)

The character Stepanida is Maria's moral opposite; no amount of appeals to her conscience will compel her to part with her money even for the sake of a friend. Her brigade leader, Kuz'ma's friend Vasiliy, pleads with her to no avail: "'Give it to them, Stepanida. I'm asking you in the name of the whole village. It's that serious'" (p. 614). In Stepanida we see the other side of the individual vs. collective conflict, where an individual is strong enough not to yield to collective pressure or the community ethic.

The time structure in Den'gi dlja Marii is interesting: the basic temporal setting is the day that Kuz'ma goes to the city to see his brother, and all events on that day
(bus ride, train station, train ride, etc.) are recounted in the present tense. However all of the information we receive about Maria and the search for the thousand roubles is recounted in the past tense, and most of the action has occurred in the immediate past three-day period. Thus, *Den'gi dlja Marii* is largely retrospective and is structured on the alternation between present and past of both Kuz'ma's and the narrator's thoughts. Rasputin relies very heavily on flashback to enhance the actuality of the plot and this structural device is used and refined in all of the *povesti*. The flashback may be from the point of view of either Kuz'ma or the narrator and it contains information about the immediate past or the distant past. This device is pivotal to Rasputin's development of psychology, motivation, and action.

*Den'gi dlja Marii* begins with the description of Kuz'ma's dream on the eve of his departure for the city. It immediately switches into the present time as Kuz'ma takes leave of a sobbing Maria and sets off for the train station in a bus which is buffeted about by a high wind. Thus, the *povest* begins almost at the end of the series of events which it will recount and these same beginning scenes are replayed in fast motion in the conclusion: as Kuz'ma prepares to disembark in the city, he recalls how and when he made the decision to go to his brother. The action in the final section of the *povest* switches rapidly from the past to a present in which the tension and immediacy of Kuz'ma's arrival in the city and approach to Aleksej's home are conveyed by the use of ten short sentences in the present tense, internal speech, and a repeated reference to the falling snow. The time-frame in *Den'gi dlja Marii* is short—five days have been granted Maria to recover the one thousand rouble deficit and the action in the *povest* culminates on the morning of the fourth day with Kuz'ma's knock on his brother's door. In the course of the *povest*, the narrative time shifts six times between present and recent past. *Den'gi dlja Marii*, unlike Rasputin's other
povesti, is not divided into chapters but rather into sections and sequences which are often delineated by time shifts between present, immediate past, and distant past. The sequences set in the present follow Kuz’ma on his journey to the city—first to the train station, then his experiences with two groups of fellow-travellers on the train, and finally his arrival. Interspersed are lengthy segments which detail the events and emotions of the past four days, which sometimes entail a delving into the more distant past as an attempt to understand either the development of events or the psychology of people’s responses to them.

The narration throughout the povesti largely coincides with Kuz’ma’s point of view, but on a few occasions, Maria’s point of view is shown, usually in counterpoint to Kuz’ma’s. One scene in particular will illustrate the resultant dual perception. The section in which it is found describes the history of the ill-fated store and the entire inventory procedure, but one scene is written twice, once giving Kuz’ma’s interpretation of events and, the second time, Maria’s. In this scene, Kuz’ma returns home to tell Maria that the kolxoz chairman will lend them the money as soon as the year’s accounts are turned in:

Something suddenly came over Maria: she leaped up, locked her arms around Kuz’ma’s neck and pulled him onto the bed.
"You foolish woman," he wheezed. "What’s the matter with you, have you gone mad?"
"Kuz’ma!" she called out weakly.
"What are you going on about? They’re going to give us a loan, everything will be fine and you’re like a lunatic."
"Kuz’ma!"
"What is it?"
"Kuz’ma!" her voice grew weaker and weaker.
"I’m here."

He kicked off his boots and lay beside her. Maria was trembling and her shoulders twitched and jerked. He put his arms around her and began to stroke her shoulders with his wide palm. . . . He lay for a while beside
her and then rose. She was sleeping. (pp. 567–568)

Kuz'ma leaves the house to visit Evgenij Nikolaevič. When he returns, Komarixa the fortune-teller is with Maria. Later in the same section, this scene is repeated in condensed form from Maria's point of view. When she hears that a loan will be forthcoming:

... suddenly salvation seemed so real and close that she became frightened fearing that Kuz'ma might miss this opportunity, and flinging her arms around his neck, and pulling him down on the bed, she begged him to save her—it was as if she had suffered a fit. He had shouted at her, then he lay down beside her and caressed her and she, worn out by a sleepless night, had fallen asleep; she didn't sleep as much as lose consciousness, no longer suffering, that is how empty and good her soul felt. (p. 591)

As narrated from Maria's point of view, this scene is very concise and emphasizes what is significant to Maria, namely her fear and her emotional exhaustion. It is followed by a scene in which the village fortune-teller visits Maria and, because the cards bode well, Maria decides to venture forth to help Kuz'ma collect the money. While Kuz'ma is seeing Evgenij Nikolaevič about a loan, Maria visits her girlhood friend Klavka who frightens her with hopeless wailing over her fate, and she is disconcerted by Nadja Voroncova who blames Maria for bringing the trouble upon herself. These two encounters end Maria's timid activities on her own behalf and when the point of view of the narration changes back to that of Kuz'ma, we see Maria as a homebound, mute, and cynical observer of what is taking place around her. Kuz'ma probably knows nothing of Maria's attempt to help herself, but for Maria the experience was a crucial turning point in her attitude toward her situation. Thus, these scenes demonstrate well Rasputin's control of his time structure involving as they do some overlap and the
reader receives maximum understanding of the characters’ psychology and of their emotional state.

The distant past is used by Rasputin to provide background information about events and personages and thus sections in the *povest* describing the past are narrated and descriptive rather than dialogic. By way of flashback, often found as a reflective section in the narrative, the narrator (and sometimes the hero) is able to provide a degree of social commentary which moulds our view of the work. In *Den’gi dlja Marii* one such narrative section describes the history of the store and its employees, how Maria came to work there and the kind of worker she was. This descriptive section continues up to the time of the inventory when it converges with narration and dialogue set in the recent past. A second flashback to the distant past occurs when Kuz’ma, disappointed after a visit to his friend Vasilij, thinks of his brother Aleksej as a person who can help him in his predicament. He recalls unpleasant incidents involving his brother who has become voluntarily estranged from the village and its people. Kuz’ma remembers their father’s funeral seven years earlier and Aleksej’s attitude during and after, he recalls Maria’s stay with Aleksej and his wife while consulting a doctor in their city, and he recalls the visit of one of Aleksej’s school friends during which his brother showed complete indifference to his past. The third narrative digression to a distant past concerns the *kolkhoz* chairman. As Kuz’ma waits in the chairman’s office to meet with the professional workers of the *kolkhoz*, he reflects back to September of 1947 when the chairman secured fuel for the collective farm tractors so that they might bring in a harvest which would otherwise have been lost. Although his means were technically illegal, they were morally sanctionable and the villagers rallied around in his defence. Thus in these examples, flashback functions to make clear social implications about some acquired negative characteristics of transplanted village folk as well as about the legal
system which appears absurd in its inflexibility and inability to cope with human error or with spontaneous decisions.

Some of the flashbacks deal with ethical characterizations as, for example, the lengthy narrative section in which Kuz'ma's practical and frugal attitude toward money is described: "... if he had it, that was fine; but if he didn't, that was fine too" (p. 604). In going to his fellow villagers for help, Kuz'ma feels guilt and shame, despite the fact that he is in great need and that Maria is obviously innocent. He hopes, but in vain, that his friends will have enough trust in him to offer the money themselves without waiting for him to ask and thereby twisting the knife of guilt any deeper into him. This information supplements Kuz'ma's characterization—he is a man whose conscience and sense of honour make the borrowing of money a difficult thing.

Dialogue between characters also gives some avenue for allusions to the past, and specifically to a description of how things used to be. In Rasputin's povesti, such conversations are typically between people of an older generation or between an elder speaking to a younger person. Ded Gordej discusses with Kuz'ma the changed morality in the village for he can't understand why people no longer care about each other as they used to: "'When did village people ever help each other for money? Even if they built a house or knocked together a stove, that's what it was called—help. . . . And now everything is for money. You work for money and you live for money. Everyone's looking to make a gain—it's shameful'" (p. 599).

In Den'gi dlja Marii, Rasputin concentrates on five days in the life of one family. Because of the nature of the dilemma at the centre of the povest', he is able to give his themes a moral investigation and approach them from various moral positions. This povest', like the other three, does not contain exceptional events or characters, for it focuses on the stuff of everyday life. But as his povesti progress, Rasputin delves
deeper and deeper into the psychology of his heroes and that of more minor personages.

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Rasputin's next povest, Poslednij srok, written three years later, reveals this deepened concentration on character and psychology. Where Den'gi dlja Marii centres on one couple and its inter—relationship with its community, Poslednij srok deals almost entirely with intra—family relations. The heroine is a dying, elderly village woman, Anna Stepanovna. Four of her five surviving children gather at her bedside, some travelling considerable distances to be with their mother. In the course of the povest, the rich internal and spiritual world of the old woman is contrasted to the spiritually impoverished, materialistic world of her children. The children arrive in their family home full of compassion and love for their mother and behaving as responsible family members. Upon seeing them, Anna unexpectedly revives for a "final hour" which also proves to be a final hour for her offsprings' moral self—discovery. The crisis of being face—to—face with death temporarily passes, and they revert to behaving as usual—the men get drunk, the women reveal their trivial interests, and they all become embroiled in petty quarrels. It is painful for Anna to witness such behaviour in her children; the scenes of family misunderstanding are contrasted very effectively with the sincere friendship between Anna and her long—time friend, Mironixa. The collapse of Anna's family unit is symbolized by Anna's youngest daughter, Tan'čora, who is described as the most loving of Anna's children, but who inexplicably does not respond to the call to come.

It is the satisfaction of seeing her children again before she dies, and particularly the anticipation of Tan'čora's arrival, that keeps Anna in the twilight zone, "at the very
end of life or at the very beginning of death."? However, when Anna finally acknowledges that Tan'čora will not be coming and tries to coax her death to take her, it is the necessity of seeing Mironixa for a final farewell, of knowing the feeling of a "full, serene, and pure finality to this long and true friendship" (p. 545) that keeps her alive for her last unwanted day in which she no longer hopes for anything.

The children who have gathered become bored and uncomfortable with each other and themselves. Mistaking Anna’s revival for an indication of her recovery they all, except for the son with whom Anna lives in the village, hastily leave despite Anna’s entreaties to wait just a while longer for she will die that very day. They leave without resolving the conflicts between themselves and, even worse, without attempting to soften the pain which they have caused their mother by their conduct. Rasputin ends his povest' with one abrupt sentence: "That night the old woman died" (p. 555).

In Poslednij srok the development of the central female character, Anna, is linked to the unique physical and psychological aspects of her death process and is supplemented by the philosophical and ageless question of the meaning of life and death. Through flashback sequences we learn about Anna’s strong character and psychology while scenes in which Anna actively wrestles with or entices death are the present day manifestations of her spirit. The single external aspect of the plot which consumes Anna and unites her with the action whirling around her bed is her anxious anticipation of Tan'čora and her questions about her absence.

The basic conflicts underlying Poslednij srok are similar to those in Den’gi dlja Marii, but different specifics and dynamics are investigated. The all-encompassing conflict in Poslednij srok is between the past and the present, Anna, with her set of values and mores represents the past, while her children with their deteriorated set of values represent the changes of which the present is comprised. The conflict between past and
present is clearly presented in contrastive pairs which coincide with thematic categories of their relationship: mother–children, collective life–individual life, work ethic–laziness, efficiency–inefficiency, village–city. Although several of these thematic pairs are found both in *Den'gi dija Marii* and in the later *Živi i pomni*, there they play a supportive role to other conflicts and themes. They emerge once again as paramount in Rasputin’s last povesti, *Prošcanie s Materoj*, where the same conflicts and thematic pairs as are found in *Poslednij srok* are examined with great urgency in regard to the fate of an ancient island.

The rift between past and present in *Poslednij srok* is well illustrated by Anna’s non-existent relationship with the world outside her village. She has always lived in the same village while her children have had the chance to leave it for other places. Her perception of the outside world comes mainly through Tan’čora’s letters which amaze her, and she can not understand how people in the city can manage without a plot of land and a cow. What she does understand, however, is that her own village has changed over the years; due to its amalgamation to a *kolxoz* fifty miles away and the establishment of a timberworks nearby with high-paying jobs, Anna’s village is dying from neglect. Anna realizes this and confides to her friend Mironixa that:

> It seems we’re the last two ancient women left on earth. There are no more like us. After us there will be another kind of old woman—literate, up-to-date, and informed about what goes on in the world. But the two of us got lost. This is a different age, not ours. (p. 544)

An aspect of the conflict between past and present is the differing views of mother and children as to how family and village are integrated. Anna begs her children to visit each other and not forget one another. She urges them to come back to visit their native village for she and all their kin will be there. This and similar
conceptualizations of family and generational continuity has led one Soviet critic to suggest that "the main conflict of the story is the conflict between spirituality and the lack of it. . . Anna has a soul while her children have only psychology." One illustration of the correctness of this statement is found in the different way in which Anna's children view the relationship between village and family, based on their own system of values which has changed over the years. For Ljusja, the most urbanized of Anna's children, the village means momentary nostalgia about herself and her family and remorse at having forgotten so much. This proves to be so bothersome to Ljusja that, after her walk in the forest during which memories come flooding back to her, she shows great determination in her haste to leave the village for home. Even for Mixail, who has remained in the village living with his family and mother, the village and family do not represent harmony but rather anxiety; he has the responsibility of caring for an aging mother added to his submerged feelings that he has sacrificed his life by agreeing to stay behind in the village while his siblings left. A release from these feelings and responsibility is provided by his frequent drinking bouts.

A related and sharper conflict occurs between the brothers and the sisters. It is introduced by the bickerings which begin almost as soon as they arrive in Anna's home, but it explodes in the debasing scene in which a frustrated Mixail defies any one of them to take the responsibility for their mother's welfare:

"Come on, I'm offering my cow. Which of you loves mother best? Take her. What are you waiting for? I'm a so-and-so and you're all so good. So then, which of you is the best?" He moved toward Ljusja. "Maybe you? . . . She needs your sense of fairness. You're the most fair of all of us, you know everything. . . ."

"You've gone crazy," gasped Ljusja. "You're a madman!"

". . . Well then maybe you'll take her," he asked Varvara merrily.

"You could use the cow . . . [and] it's always better with a daughter, a daughter won't drink or abuse anybody. Well? . . ."

"We have no place for her to live," said Varvara in confusion. . . .
[Mixail] turned to Il'ja.

"How about you, Il'ja. What do you think about this? . . . Maybe you'll take her home to your wife and she'll look after her. . . . After my place, she could have a rest at your place."

"You drank too much, Mixail," said Il'ja nervously. . . .

"So nobody is willing to take her? . . . Nobody. And nobody needs the cow either. Then, maybe you'll take her without the cow? No again. Fine. . . . Then you can all go out of my house, you know where . . . ."

(pp. 523-524).

Anna's cherished vision of a united family is not shared by her children. The succinct conclusion of the povest', complete with hasty departures and Anna's almost immediate death, confirms the suspicion that, given all we have learned about Anna's children, they will not meet again.

A third area of related conflict has been suggested by G. Hosking. This is the smouldering conflict between the roles of men and women in Poslednij srok. While the women must tend to Anna and make preparations for the impending death and funeral, the men simply retire to the bath-house to drink. This conflict is present in all of Rasputin's povesti, although it is understated and subtle: we have only to look at the irresponsible and selfish actions of Andrej in Živi i pomni and Petruxa and Dar'ja's grandson, Andrej, in Prošcanie s Materoj, to see the potential for conflict between the unequal responsibilities of men and women.

Poslednij srok is divided into ten numbered chapters. Much of the action in the povest' occurs in the present although, as might be expected, there are flashbacks connected with Anna's memories and recollections which have been aroused by the arrival of her children. Her reminiscences flow when she is talking with her old friend Mironixa, or during the nighttime when Anna patiently awaits her imminent but elusive death and recalls herself as a young girl and then a mother who had to bury seven of the twelve children she bore.
Ljusja, Anna's citified daughter is the subject of a chapter-long series of flashbacks from her life in the village. These memories occur to her as she takes a walk through the once-familiar, now long-forgotten woods. Other of Anna's children, particularly Mixail and Il'ja in their bath-house conversations, make references to the past and how things used to be, but these are social comments stemming from dissatisfaction with current situations in the village and countryside.

In a narrative stance which is characteristic of Rasputin's povesti, the narrator is an observer who does not interfere with the course of his protagonists' lives, but whose voice blends in with those of his characters. It is the progressive process of dying which moves the plot along to its inevitable conclusion allowing time for Rasputin to develop the relationships between his characters. Although at first glance the povest' seems preoccupied with the past, it is also about the future, albeit a future which inspires little hope for the survival of the traditional extended family.

Rasputin has said that he considers Poslednij srok to be his most successful work in the sense that: "... I myself value Poslednij srok most of all. It is the most important thing that I had to say. It is as if Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matėroj arise out of Poslednij srok. If I had not written this work, I don't know if I could have written the others."  

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Rasputin's two later and critically-acclaimed povesti, Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matėroj, written respectively four and six years after Poslednij srok, have many features in common and it is often useful to speak about them in relationship to one another. First and foremost, these works both depict a more powerful heroine whose psychological
development is deeper, as is her active involvement in the events surrounding and concerning her. The *povesti* are about Nastena and Dar'ja as much as they are about the large social issues and moral dilemmas associated with desertion in wartime or the steady threat of advancing technology in the contemporary world. In these *povesti*, the event which has occurred and the decision which has been taken before the works begin force both women to face, in a very personal way, their changed circumstances.

Nastena’s husband, Andrej, somewhat inadvertently becomes a deserter during the final days of World War II. Dar’ja’s village and ancestral homeland have been condemned to extinction by flooding. As in the earlier *povesti*, there is a localized circle of personages, who participate in the plot events, but now the heroine is at the centre of and directs those events.

Nastena, in the *povest’ Živi i pomni*, is Rasputin’s most active heroine in the conventional narrative sense that her actions and fate are central to the progression of the plot. In the closing days of World War II, her husband Andrej, who had been reported by the army as missing, appears one night in the family bath-house. From their first encounter, Andrej draws Nastena into a decision to protect him from detection by his fellow villagers and by society for the crime he has unthinkingly committed. The couple have several secret rendezvous and within a short time Nastena’s suspicions that she is pregnant are confirmed. This discovery greatly complicates the plot in regard to Nastena’s actions, for she realizes that she must conceal the pregnancy for as long as possible and then be prepared to bear the brunt of communal judgement, which will condemn her for infidelity to Andrej. Strained to exhaustion by the secret she is keeping, hounded by a villager who has suspicions that Andrej is nearby, Nastena reaches her breaking-point when a search party follows her as she tries to reach her husband to warn him of the circle closing in around him. In an act which is unconsciously
premeditated (she knew what to do after she awoke from a refreshing short sleep). Nastena drowns herself before the search party can reach her. Her suicide was motivated by the accumulated burden of guilt and shame that she felt for herself and Andrej and her desperate concern about the social stigma which would be inherited by her unborn child.

A second plot line runs throughout Živi i pomni which depicts the moral and physical degeneration of Andrej. His plot runs parallel to Nastena's, converging with it at the time of their meetings. After Andrej reveals himself to Nastena, he goes into hiding in an isolated and abandoned cabin on the opposite bank of the river. With no human companionship, Andrej quickly becomes as wild as his surroundings—he learns to howl like a wolf and to kill without human compassion. Andrej's plot line ends abruptly with Nastena's death and thus we do not find out what his fate will be.

The difference in orientation of the plots of Nastena and Andrej is quite distinct: Nastena is influenced by Andrej's presence to the point where even thoughts of him motivate her to take risks on his behalf and to return to him willing to help in any way. She recognizes the power that Andrej exerts over her unexpectedly on one of their meetings as she watches him eat:

[Nastena was amazed] that this ragged and neglected man, now picking bread crumbs from his beard, was the one who caused her to lose sleep at nights and who she wanted to see with all her might. . . . Was it to see him, this man, that she had come, was it over him that she suffered, was it he who had that terrible and desired power over her?

In contrast, Andrej's primary concern is with himself and, when he does remember Nastena, it is usually in terms of how she can save him. For example, when Andrej enters the Gus'kov bath-house that Nastena has heated as a confirmation of her
pregnancy, he is overcome with his own happiness. "Somehow, although she was close by, he didn't think about Nastena, it was good enough for him that the bath-house was hot" (p. 317).

The conclusions of the two plot lines in Živi i pomni are in keeping with the character of the two main personages. Like Andrej, his story ends indecisively and uncertainly while Nastena's suicide concludes her story with finality and dignity. Nastena's suicide attracted much critical as well as public attention and Rasputin was asked on numerous occasions to explain his decision to conclude the povest' in such a way. "Could Nastena have remained alive? . . . Could she, an honest and conscientious person, exhausted by the discord in her own conscience, have gone on living? . . . I also did not want her to perish and originally the povest' ended differently—Andrej committed suicide. But I sensed that this ending to the povest' did not ring true and I rewrote it."¹²

The plot lines of Nastena and Andrej are set against the final days of World War II. The entire village shares a sense of excitement and participation as they prepare to receive their soldiers from the front. Two village celebrations in particular function to emphasize the isolation of the Gus'kovs from the rest of the community. Both the dinner for Maksim Vologžin who has returned from the front injured and the celebration of Victory Day prove to be traumatic events for Nastena. She participates in them and rejoices with her fellow-villagers but is tormented by Andrej's desertion and feels his guilt all the more strongly. She feels morally that she has no right to celebrate for she has somehow betrayed her friends. The duplicity of Nastena's position at these celebrations and on several other occasions, and the guilt that she experiences because of it, eventually undermine her.
The action in Živi i pomni occurs within a span of seven or eight months, from the Epiphany frosts (Epiphany falls on January 6, O.S. and January 19, N.S.), to having time in the middle of summer. The forward movement of the narrative is broken by the characters' and narrator's reflections about the past. These flashbacks give clues as to the characters' psychological motivations for actions and reasoning and provide background information about them as well as about events and setting. Narrative digression is another device which temporarily slows the plot movement. The narration pauses several times with lyrical descriptions of the beauty of the taiga, the breaking up of the ice on the Angara, with detailed accounts of Nastena's and Andrej's feelings and thoughts.

The conflict in Živi i pomni is largely of a psychological nature as Nastena internalizes Andrej's desertion and reflects it upon herself. The village ethic tells her that a wife should support her husband and this she does without carefully thinking through the consequences. These consequences soon become apparent and Nastena experiences tremendous internal conflict for she is torn by feelings of responsibility and compassion for Andrej, guilt and shame for herself, duty toward society, unbounded joy over her pregnancy, and fear for the future of her unborn child.

There is also a clear psychological conflict between Andrej and Nastena which manifests itself several times in Andrej's ability to play on the guilt that he knows Nastena is feeling. His pained ego conflicts repeatedly with Nastena's altruism and his desire to survive at any price contrasts sharply with Nastena's selfless devotion. The main focus of Živi i pomni is on the development of Nastena and Andrej as characters and on the relationship between them. This relationship is the subject of several temporal regressions in the povest': we learn of the circumstances of their marriage four years before the outbreak of war when Andrej had brought Nastena to his parents'
home in Atamanovka, of the life they shared which was becoming increasingly unhappy because of their inability to produce children, of the merry trip that Nastena made to the district centre to see Andrej who was enrolled in a course there. But the strained nature of their relationship in the present and the contrived circumstances in which it must develop, ultimately destroy both their personalities. Andrej's methods of releasing his tensions are destructive: he has an almost overpowering urge to burn down a windmill in his native village so as to leave a reminder of himself, he captures and kills a calf before its mother's eyes out of the urge to destroy. Andrej then turns this physical destructiveness into a psychologically devastating force in his relationship with Nastena as he becomes suspicious and accuses her of wishing to and even planning to abandon him. Thus Andrej's act of desertion determines his personal future and inevitable fate (given the treatment of deserters by the Soviet army), and it exerts a dynamic influence on the course of Nastena's life.

Other conflicts in Živi i pomni exist at a social level. One involves the long-standing conflict between Nastena and Semenovna, Andrej's mother, based on the mother's non-acceptance of an orphan girl from a strange village into her family as her son's wife. For several years the conflict had been submerged, but Semenovna sees Nastena's pregnancy and apparent infidelity to Andrej as confirmation of her original judgement of Nastena.

The broadest and most pervasive conflict in the povest', and one which has already been mentioned in connection with Den'gi dlja Marii, is the clash between the needs and requirements of the individual and those of his society. Andrej has committed a very serious crime by deserting from his army duty and before society he is legally and morally guilty. But the tone of Rasputin's presentation appears to ask that we consider the problem from another point of view--Andrej's. He depicts Andrej's
surprise and subconscious sense of injustice at not being granted the customary
home-leave after a serious injury and suggests that, if not justifiable, at least it is
understandable. Andrej's desertion can be comprehended as a spontaneous, though
reckless act precisely because of his circumstances: three years of front line fighting,
several injuries including a serious one, not one official leave to see his family, a
sudden, unexpected certainty of death if he returned to the battlefield, and an attendant
rush of things which had been left unresolved between himself and Nastena which he
wanted to expiate before his death. The conflict between the individual and the
collective in Andrej's case is the result of the inflexibility of the wartime ethic, for
Andrej knows that he can expect no sympathy either from the military or his
fellow-villagers for his act of desertion committed at a time when many had sacrificed
so much.

Nastena's crime and conflict with her society are not as clearly defined as
Andrej's and are complicated by other factors. From the legal point of view, Nastena
aids a deserter. However, based on Nastena's own sense of marital ethics, which are in
harmony with those of her friends and the Siberian village community as a whole, her
decision to help Andrej is justified by the view that a wife should support her husband
in everything. But Nastena's pregnancy complicates the matter: the very proof of
Nastena's laudable faithfulness to Andrej, her pregnancy, turns into its opposite—evidence
of her infidelity, which carries with it a strong moral condemnation by the community.
To vindicate herself by revealing Andrej's presence is not an option for Nastena for two
reasons: it would be a treacherous act of a wife toward her husband, and as important,
an act of treachery toward her unborn child, for it would be prejudged and damned by
society as the child of a deserter. It becomes clear to Nastena that, either way, the
child will be judged by the community for the moral sin of his father or mother.
Nastena's only real alternative, to leave the village and try to make a life in a more tolerant environment, is never considered. There is some implication that all of wartime and immediate post-war Soviet society would be as rigid and unforgiving as her own village, even of irresponsible but tragic human errors such as Andrej's desertion. However, the reason for Nastena's inability even to consider leaving is based in her own deeply-rooted ethical sense of responsibility, guilt, pity, and forgiveness toward her loved ones and her sense of identity with her surroundings. These attitudes will be discussed in more depth in the investigation of character types and characterization which follows, for they are typical of the women in Rasputin's prose.

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Related ethical attitudes are certainly reflected in Prošcanie s Matěroj, Rasputin's last povest', and are embodied in its main female personages and particularly in the eighty-year-old Dar'ja Pinigina. The plot deals with the last spring and summer of the three-hundred-year-old island and village of Matěra which are scheduled to be flooded by the waters of a huge hydroelectric power project upstream on the Angara River. Dar'ja and a group of elderly villagers who look to her for leadership refuse to leave the island until the last possible moment although everything is done around them to prepare the island for extinction: houses are burned, the harvest is collected, the cemetery is dismantled and levelled, and people have left the island for the new urban-type community which has been provided for them across the river. This is all carried out by outside government agencies, dispassionately and without attention to what has been created and preserved and forms the values and way of life of Matěra's inhabitants. The only opposition to such cold-hearted destruction is provided by the group of men
and women led by Dar'ja. Their two tangible acts of protest occur at the very beginning of the work and again at the very end. The former is an attack in the graveyard on men from a "sanitation commission" who have come to clear the ground of protruding objects. Although a temporary halt is brought to this work, Dar'ja and her friends, for the remainder of the povest', can only be powerless observers of what is occurring. The culmination of the povest' occurs when the group refuses to leave Matëra until the final day scheduled for departures.

The observer nature of Dar'ja's role in Proščanie s Matëroj which is outwardly inactive and lodged in the past is counterbalanced and enhanced by the furious activity occurring within her consciousness. Somewhat like her acknowledged predecessor Anna, Dar'ja is active in a spiritual sense. Her internalized activity does, however, unlike Anna's, lead to externalized responses in her acts of protest in the graveyard, her debates with her grandson Andrej, her preparation of her cottage before it is burned down, and her obstinacy about leaving Matëra.

Proščanie s Matëroj, similarly to Živi i pomni, is set primarily in the present. Typically, Rasputin uses flashback as a narrative device to inform the reader of some particulars of Matëra's history and animated spirit, of the backgrounds of Dar'ja and the various folk who compose Dar'ja's group of friends, and of Bogodul, a character who could well be out of a Russian folk-tale. Dar'ja's dreams, visions, and reflections create an impression of reminiscence for they are rooted in the past but completely related to the progression of events occurring in the present. These devices, especially Dar'ja's interior monologues, slow the forward movement of the story much in the same way as do the flashbacks.

Proščanie s Matëroj is the most rhetorical of Rasputin's povesti and its message is clearly and easily understood. It presents us, in a very straightforward manner, with the
ethical implications of human progress in the depiction of how technology and industrialization encroach upon a region which has been hitherto untouched. Rasputin's vehicles for discussing the moral and social problems inherent in rapid change are his characters who represent different generations in several of Matéra's families. The three generations of Pinigins—mother, son, grandson—are the focal characters in the povest', and all of the problems Rasputin presents are discussed from their often conflicting points of view.

The main conflict in Prošcanie s Matéroj is between the moral system of elderly villagers with the morally-different and the sometimes indifferent world of the younger generation and modern society. It includes an investigation into the relationship of the past to the present and poses the question of how much of the past should be sacrificed to build a future in which the advantages are questionable.

Dar'ja's son, Pavel, is of the intermediate generation and the opposition between the absolutes of the old and young generations is reflected in his character. He understands and sympathizes with the opinions and beliefs of both his mother and his son Andrej, yet he questions some of the arguments of both, particularly the question of why progress needs to be attained in such a thoughtless manner:

If it had to be, it had to be, but remembering the soil that would be flooded, the very best, that had been tended and fertilized for centuries by grandfathers and great-grandfathers, land that had fed more than one generation, his heart froze anxiously and uncertainly: was this price not too high? Weren't they overpaying?³

Pavel himself attributes his hesitation and uncertainty about ends and means to his age: "I'm getting old if I can't understand. The young people understand. It doesn't even occur to them to doubt. They accept whatever's done. . . . Everything that
happens is for the best, so that life is more interesting and happier. Just go ahead and live: don’t look around or think’” (p. 78).

There is another pervasive conflict in *Proščanie s Matěroj* which is largely symbolic. This is the struggle between nature and man in which man, despite his tools of progress, is consistently the loser. The description of the fog which blankets the island and keeps away the motorboat which has come for Dar’ja and her friends, and the vain efforts of workers to fell an old and majestic larch which the islanders believe anchors Matěra to the riverbed, bear out Dar’ja’s impassioned plea to her grandson to accept the might of nature and the ultimate weakness of man.

In *Proščanie s Matěroj*, as in *Živi i pomni*, we see the plot as clearly directed by the actions of the heroines. However, there is a second movement of the plot which runs directly counter to the actions of the heroine. This is the general and logical development of events which are outside the control of the heroine, a development set in motion by the crucial events and decisions which have occurred before the *povest’* begins, namely, the decision to flood Matěra, and Andrej’s act of desertion. Such plot development operates within the environment of contemporary Soviet society and is based on the prevailing ethos of that environment.

In both *Proščanie s Matěroj* and *Živi i pomni*, there is an underlying conflict between the prevailing social ethos and those personal, unorthodox (but not unethical) moral choices which are made by the heroines. The prevalent ethos in *Živi i pomni* holds that desertion is a criminal act and in *Proščanie s Matěroj* that technology and progress are unquestionably good and necessary. These beliefs allow no room for alternatives. Because the social ethos in both *povesti* is so rigid, once the heroines decide to set out along a path which diverges from the norm, there can be no reconsideration for them. This is true at a social and collective level as well as at a
very personal one.

A related and recurrent motif in Rasputin's work is the role which fate (sud'ba) plays in a person's life. This motif is an important one for it is linked with the development of Rasputin's heroines and protagonists; a belief in fate often affects their attitude toward the predicaments in which they find themselves. Fate, in their minds, may be the only explanation of what are otherwise inexplicable, illogical, or irrational events, actions, and emotions. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* states that "a man's fate, like his character, is usually the shape or result of a collaboration between forces working from within and from without." Maria, Nastena, and Andrej demonstrate the clearest belief in fate in Rasputin's work. Andrej is convinced that his order to return to the front, and, by extension, his desertion, and his stay with Tan'ja is all the doing of "an otherworldly, cruel will" that is embodied by the hospital administration: "One god, the most important one, had made a decision without rhyme or reason, and all the rest had to agree" (p. 217). He almost completely submits to the forces of fate which he feels "... settling in underfoot. And never leaving [me] for an instant. It's really trapped me. Does what it wants!" (p. 281). His only attempt to regain some control over his life comes in a prayer that Nastena should truly be pregnant so that the child will give meaning to the turn his life has taken. Maria and Nastena are sure that the challenge with which each is confronted and its resolution is part of her fate over which she has little control. Maria decides literally to place her fate in Kuz'ma's hands and thus her character development is quite limited, particularly in contrast to Nastena, who is certain that her fate must include her personal dream of happiness. It is this aspect of her belief in fate that gives Nastena the strength to oppose temporarily the turn that her and Andrej's lives have taken.
Internal forces (together with external ones) supply primary motivation for action
and are "often contradictory or divisive and threaten to split the hero apart." Maria is
fearful, hesitant, and unwilling to work as village shopkeeper, but her sense of civic duty
prompts her to accept. The fact that a deficit will be found during stocktaking is a
foregone conclusion, and Maria is not strong enough to ward off such a fate. As their
story unfolds, Andrej and especially Nastena feel as if they are each two different people
within one body and both parts have a separate memory and life. Nastena, in fact,
feels as if she is being torn into many pieces, that she knows nothing of herself, that
she is in control of nothing.

A sense of not being able to alter the flow of events and their inevitable
outcome, of not being able to reverse a decision is basic to fatalism and this belief is
given added credence in Rasputin's povedi by the inflexibility with which the law and
prevailing social ethos are portrayed. Speaking of Andrej Gus'kov in these terms,
Rasputin has said that: "... a person who sets out on an incorrect path is obliged,
in my opinion, to proceed along it to its inevitable end. Such is the truth of life.
And so with Gus'kov..." 16

So too, by implication, with Nastena and Dar'ja for both povedi end with the
heroine defending her moral choice and subsequent behaviour through her own death.
Nastena and Dar'ja both commit suicide in the river Angara, Nastena by tumbling out
of her boat, and Dar'ja by refusing to leave Matera even in the face of the impending
floodwaters. Despite the fact that they are overcome by the inevitability of the course
of events which each confronts and opposes, their moral and spiritual victories are
unquestionable. Whether Dar'ja's death is physical or whether it is a powerfully written
symbolic death is a moot point. Along with the death of the three-hundred-year-old
Matera, Dar'ja ceases to exist. The future beyond Nastena's or Dar'ja's deaths is not
a matter for speculation in Rasputin's work, for there is no future at all. We do not wonder what happens to Andrej; his story ends with Nastena's death. So too, does the story of the inhabitants who have chosen to move to the new settlement of the "urban type" across the river and abandon their island. Death is most unambiguous in *Proščanie s Matěroj* for, with the flooding of the island, death is pervasive.

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There are several other features of Rasputin's *povesti* which must be considered in a discussion of their unified nature. Among these are thematic concerns and characterization, both of which will be discussed at some length in this chapter. Other features that should be discussed in a general way are the formal devices which Rasputin employs such as language, narration, and system of figurative language. I will briefly characterize the important points of Rasputin's narration and style now, points which will be illustrated at length during a detailed discussion of *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj* in the following chapter.

The language of Rasputin's *povesti* is typically a blend of literary Russian and colloquial forms of speech found in the Siberian countryside, the former being a feature of much of the narration, the latter the language of much of the monologue and dialogue. Narration is omniscient to the point where frequently progressions of monologue or dialogue merge with the voice of the narrator resulting in a point of view that is common to the protagonists and narrator. The narrator in Rasputin's works identifies so strongly with his protagonists, that the horizon of reality of the latter corresponds to that in the mind of the narrator. Thus, we see the action through the eyes of the narrator but with the mind and emotions of the protagonist. Due to the
identification of the narrator with the protagonist, the quality of the narration is quite often incomplete vis à vis more traditional forms of narration; priority is given to the moral and spiritual aspects of an action rather than to concrete outcome. The narrator can describe his characters from without and from within but he cannot provide more information than they can.¹⁷ Structurally, this incompleteness in the mental outlook of the narrator contributes to the unresolved conflicts and ambiguous conclusions that we have already discussed in Rasputin's povesti.

As we have seen, variation in temporal structure through the device of flashback is a common stylistic feature in Rasputin's narrative. His wide use of flashback is conditioned by the point at which the povesti begin, that is, in the middle of a critical situation. Flashback is an essential device by which Rasputin introduces us to his characters, and communicates the action which brought about the situation with which he opens. Thus, flashback is accompanied by variation in narrative tempo. Generally, except in Den'gi dlja Marii where the majority of the action occurs in the past, reminiscences or recollections of the protagonists are conveyed at a slower pace and are reflective or lyrical in tone, while action and conflict in the present are depicted directly, actively and at a quicker pace.

Dreams and visions are frequently employed by Rasputin in his povesti and in both Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Materoj they occupy a central position in the plot. Dreams in his works are to a greater or lesser degree symbolic; the dream bearing the most symbolic intent is the mutual dream shared by Andrej and Nastena in Živi i pomni. However, although symbolic, the dreams are always related to the real-life circumstances of the characters in Rasputin's povesti. For example, Den'gi dlja Marii opens with Kuz'ma's dream that he is knocking on a window asking for "money for Maria." Later in the story, already on the train taking him to the city, Kuz'ma dreams
that a general meeting of the kolxoz gives him the required sum, but that it mysteriously disappears. In Živi i pomni, there are several dreams alluded to by Nastena and Andrej, but the most important one is the dream that they share over thousands of miles. In it, Nastena appears at the front and urges Andrej to come home for she is tired of looking after the children, a dream which presages their illicit meetings and her pregnancy. In Prošcanie s Matěraj, Dar'ja enters a visionary state on several occasions during periods when she is preoccupied with the guilt of abandoning her ancestors. They appear to her and give her counsel and comfort. They instruct her how, in accordance with custom, to prepare her cottage for its end and she accordingly paints and whitewashes it as she pays her final respects. The use of dreams as well as visions by Rasputin function as revelations to the main characters, and aid in maintaining interest or in creating suspense.

Another important feature of Rasputin's style is the creation of special effects in his povesti based on the innate sensitivity of his characters toward the changes in as well as the promises and threats of nature. He composes mood-setting segments of narration which are not only skillful landscape-painting but reflect the moods of his characters at crucial moments. The onset of spring or the approach of fall threshing, for example, are important times in the minds of his protagonists in Prošcanie s Matěraj, Živi i pomni, and Poslednij srok. With its attendant labour and merry-making, the fall threshing is remembered as a time of spiritual rejuvenation and fulfillment by Dar'ja, Nastena, and Ljusja. The violence of the breaking ice on the Angara at the beginning of spring promises a renewal of life, but in Živi i pomni this promise is contrasted to Nastena’s emotions and fears which lead the heroine to her death. Snow-storms, sunlight, and wind are also symbolic of moods and circumstances in Rasputin's work.
Natural elements and natural phenomena are not merely symbols in Rasputin's *povesti*, but are often the objects of animistic and anthropomorphic transformations. Several such elements are found throughout Rasputin's *povesti*: the wind in *Den'gi dlja Marii* which blows deliberately, Anna's sociable death with which she has conversations, the little spirit of memory which dances just beyond Ljusja's sight as it accompanies her on her walk through the woods, the old mill in *Živi i pomni*, and ultimately the figures of the Xozjain 'the Master' and the *carski listven* 'King Larch', who embodies the essential spirit of the island of Matēra. Rasputin's own concept and presentation of nature and natural phenomena in his works are deeply rooted in the folk culture of the Siberian peasant and this facet of his work will be discussed in the following chapters.

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2 Thematics

It has become clear in our discussion of plot and structure in Rasputin's *povesti*, that there are certain thematic concerns running throughout the works which are closely connected to the plot structure. In all of his *povesti*, specific conflicts are reflected in two large thematic areas, time and memory, which have application to modern society as a whole. Since the problems raised by these thematic areas ultimately lead to the question of life's (and death's) meaning, Rasputin's typical plot is both dramatic in structure and philosophic in tone.

Rasputin does not dwell on the rediscovery of the past values of the Russian peasantry, but rather his emphasis lies in the recovery of values which are more universal and timeless and on forces which bind families as well as communities together.
He offers these as alternatives to the void articulated in much contemporary Russian literature which is symptomatic not only of Soviet society, but to some extent of all modern, industrialized societies.

It is his overriding concern for a stable set of ethics by which to live that directs Rasputin's choice of theme and the problems raised in his povesti. There are four recurrent thematic areas in his povesti—nature, memory, time, and choice—which examine questions of place, identity, authenticity, alienation, and spirituality. Although Rasputin's themes are largely recurrent in his povesti, the nature of the recurrence is not static but developmental. Corresponding roughly with the chronological appearance of each povesti, and taking into account the variations in accent and emphasis given individual themes, the depth of treatment which they receive is increasingly profound. In this section I will briefly characterize each thematic area and describe the most significant themes and concerns which are voiced in each area.

Rasputin approaches nature as a thematic area from two distinct but interrelated perspectives. The first is an ethical perspective from which he discusses problems of ecology and progress in terms of man's relationship with technology and the environment. A second, more lyrical approach to nature incorporates motifs reflecting the bonds existing between man and his natural surroundings such as the seasons, the landscape (particularly the Angara River), and the elements. These motifs are often developed by means of personification and animism and will be discussed in this context in the formal analyses of Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj which follow.

A second thematic area in the povesti treats the concept of memory. The central motif is the importance of knowing and preserving one's past and traditions in order to maintain the strong emotional moral and cultural supports which they provide to the present and the future and which are the foundations of one's sense of identity and
place in the universal order. Although the overtones of such a motif approximate a neo-slavophile position that might raise questions about Rasputin's social (and political) thinking, its occurrences are tempered and diluted within the context of his prose. The link between life's truth (pravda) and memory that he establishes in his prose contains fundamental qualifications that become evident in Proščanie s Matěroj as both Pavel and Dar'ja search for answers to the moral questions that the move from Matěra has posed. Pavel, after listening to the disparate views of his mother, son and other inhabitants of Matěra, understands before Dar'ja that the root truth of what is occurring is not found in memory alone, but in life itself:

... he felt that in Klavka's words, although not she but a wiser person should have spoken them, as well as in Andrej's reasonings that day when they had met and sat around the table, was contained today's truth, which could not be avoided. ... Like it or not, you had to agree with Andrej, that you can't keep up with today's life on a horse and stuck in old Matěra. (p. 112)

Dar'ja finally accepts this fact after the visionary encounter with her ancestors:

What should a person feel for whose sake many generations had lived? He doesn't feel anything. He doesn't understand anything. And he behaves as if life began with him and will end with him forever. ... You, the dead, tell me: did you find out the whole truth beyond that line? Why did you live? ... What had this thing we call life been, who needed it? Do we need it for something or not? ... "Truth is in the memory. The person without memory is without life."
But she understood: this was not the whole truth. (p. 158)

The concept of the importance of memory within the forward-looking link with truth informs all of Rasputin's povesti, but is stated with particular force and eloquence in Proščanie s Matěroj.
The thematic area of time has as its underlying concept the motif of continuity. There is an acute sense of the link between generations which gives rise to a sense of responsibility before the past and the future. Rasputin presents this link precisely by counterposing three or four generations in his works. This counterposition runs from the past through the present, and into the future and, as we shall see, is deeply embedded in the concept of rod 'kinship community'.

The areas of memory and time overlap and complement each other in Rasputin's work. Several themes incorporating concepts of both time and memory are presented in contrastive pairs. Falling under the rubric of tradition and progress, they include such relationships as mother and children, collective life and individual life, work ethic and laziness, efficiency and inefficiency, village and city. The elements in each pair act as prisms, effectively reflecting one another, and the relationship between past and present is revealed implying their relationship to the future. Thus, Rasputin's themes that appear to be directed toward the past (memory, time, continuity) do not contain a plea for a return to old ways. These themes are concerned with and oriented toward a better understanding of the present and the future.

The fourth area of themes in Rasputin's povesti deals with individual choice and these themes are deeply rooted in morals and values since choice is based on ideas of obligation, duty, responsibility, and guilt, all of which are important motifs in Rasputin's work. Rasputin's protagonists must make choices which are instrumental in defining the future direction of their lives. These choices involve decisions between love (marital or maternal) and civic duty, between a sense of responsibility to oneself and one's family and the judgement of the law and one's community, between alienation and conformity, between life and death. The flow of consequences which each decision brings is depicted by Rasputin as developing, inexorably, according to life's unwritten and intangible laws,
bringing sometimes happiness but often grief.

Despite the division of Rasputin's thematic concerns into four areas for purpose of description, in actual fact none of Rasputin's themes can be treated in isolation from each other because they represent his concern with the preservation of both man's internal and external environments, that is, with a genetic kind of memory which can maintain and develop the moral fabric of life, including the spiritual and incorporeal within an environment which has been protected against man's technological excesses. The interior world thus becomes a part of the external world and the thematic areas form an integrated and interrelated network.

Within Rasputin's network of themes and motifs, the most eternal of questions—the purpose and meaning of life and the mystery of death—sound constantly. These are questions which are addressed by the other themes hinting at possible answers and explanations through characters and plot. These questions absorb the other themes into themselves and they have tangible, if incomplete or tangential manifestations in Rasputin's interpretations. Thus, the themes of nature, memory, time, and choice all ultimately address the question of what in life is meaningful so that death may also be meaningful.

3 Characterization

A more detailed examination of Rasputin's major themes can only be undertaken in conjunction with a discussion of his characters and characterizations. Each of his heroines and protagonists are closely associated with specific themes that have already
been introduced and both themes and characters share a common, often simultaneous, development in the *povesti*. In fact, this interrelationship of theme and character is a contributing factor to the identification of the narrator with the heroes referred to earlier. Another significant result of the relationship between theme and characterization in the *povesti* genre will allow, Rasputin's characters are usually types representing a problem or a theme which is being expounded in the *povest*.

The personages found in Rasputin's *povesti* may be separated into several groups: the heroine, other central characters, sons and daughters, young children, bureaucrats and officials, the peasantry, and folkloric characters. The heroines are only four and are the principle female characters in each *povest*. These are village women of different ages but similar philosophical cast—the elderly Anna and Dar'ja, the middle-aged Maria, and the younger Nastena. The other central characters are those who partner the heroine, usually in a sympathetic way as Kuz'ma does Maria, Mironixa does Anna, Dar'ja's friends Nastas'ja, Katerina, Sima, and Bogodul do her. Andrej partners Nastena in a different way which opposes them to each other instead of uniting them. The characters in the grouping sons and daughters—Anna's five children, and Pavel, Andrej and Petruxa from *Proščanie s Matěroj* to some degree oppose the values of their mothers or grandmothers and are generally characters presented in counterposition to the heroine. The young children presented in Rasputin's *povesti* are not developed extensively but their role in relation to the adult characters around them is important. Ninka, Anna's grand-daughter, and Kol'ka, Sima's grandson, reflect crucial aspects of adult reality with their juvenile honesty and naïveté and sometimes reject what they see around them. Bureaucrats, Party officials, and certain types of city-dwellers are consistently portrayed in
antagonistic roles. The peasantry is significant in Rasputin's work for this is the social
group that the writer knows best from personal experience and from which he draws his
gallery of Siberian types. The final grouping of folkloric characters allows Rasputin to
add a dimension of intangibility and abstractness to his work which complements their
philosophical and sometimes mythic tone. These characters are Bogodul, the wizened old
man who lives on Matëra, and the Xozjain, the invisible master of the island.

Because the povest' by the definition of its genre is not conducive to long
descriptions or extended character development, other devices must be used by the author
in his characterizations to maximize the narrative information. The devices that Rasputin
employs in his characterizations are few and simple, and illustrate his philosophy of
maintaining naturalness in his personages. First and foremost, Rasputin's characters are
identified and characterized by modes of speech. As a conscious exercise, Rasputin
prepares a small vocabulary for each major character which contains words consistent with
their personalities and environments. He maintains that he usually knows how a
color will speak before he knows what they will do: "When I begin to write, I
compose a vocabulary—one old woman should say these words and use these idioms,
another old woman should use others, since each person actively employs his 'own'
words and phrases."19 Thus, each character has a manner of speaking which is
specifically his or hers and Rasputin's style allows for much about characters and events
to be revealed through direct speech forms or interior monologue. Characters are
developed not only by what they say but also by how they say it: Semenovna's speech
in Živi i pomni is characterized by features of a small speech pocket on the Angara
river; when Anna and Mironixa speak to each other they address each other with the
endearing forms of devka 'lass' and starunja 'old woman' even though their age
difference is only four years; Tunguska from Proščanie s Matëroj in her pipe-smoking
Tungusk reticence rarely says more than "Me, Tunguska!" and, of course, Bogodul's beloved word kurva is used for every occasion from the vilest curse to a tender purr of contentment.

Images by which personages conceptualize are also important in Rasputin's characterizations for they reveal a person's manner of looking at life. For example, Rasputin's two elderly heroines, Dar'ja and Anna, who are both preoccupied with the concept of continuity through the generations, conceptualize this theme in similar images but in ways distinctive of their situations and personalities. Anna reveals her image of continuity—a chain to which are continuously being attached new links—through her son Mixail's amazement when his first child was born:

He had only then understood that this was the way things went and would go on for ever and ever . . . when this simple, unavoidable truth, not reserved for him alone, had thrown a new link over him in its never-ending chain . . . And then too . . . he realized that he was mortal as everything on earth is mortal except the earth and sky. And this prompted him to come to his mother and tell her that which she had known for a long, long time and had assumed that he knew as well. (p. 532)

Dar'ja refines this image as she looks at Andrej and Pavel sitting at her table. She speaks of a rope being knotted at one end as a person is born and coming unknotted at the other when a person dies.

Folkloric influences are important to Rasputin's characterizations for they aid in the understanding of a character's psychology. Rasputin's povesti contain many instances of omens, visions, dreams which are vital to the peasant consciousness and integral to their culture. In respect to the heroines and personages to whom dreams occur in the works, they help to elucidate their characters and comment upon their heightened sensitivity, conscience, and compassion.
Nature also plays a vital role in Rasputin's characterizations. Usually the main personages are accompanied by some phenomenon of nature which reflects their inner worlds. For example, in Den'gi dija Marii the motif of the wind is prevalent and it heightens Kuz'ma's sense of alarm and falling spirits. The setting of Poslednij srok in Indian summer, a mellow season of quiet reflection, corresponds perfectly to Anna's physical and mental capacities as her death approaches. Her mind, like the autumn days, is a mixture of fog and the sunshine which tries to warm up the clear air. Such natural phenomena, accompanying and enhancing the characterizations of the main personages can be found repeatedly in Živi i pomni and Proščanje s Matěroj, and the effect of the language in which they are written in terms of orchestration and imagery will be discussed in depth in the following chapter devoted to style and language in the two latter works.

It is apropos to mention here some of Rasputin's own thoughts about and attitudes toward his characters. He has stated that he writes only about the people and the life he knows: "I don't look outside for my heroes. I was born and grew up in the Siberian village about which I have been able to show only the smallest part... [T]he person who cannot understand life around him, will not understand it elsewhere."²⁰ In a typical author's comment he says that he bases his works fundamentally on the naturalness of his characters acting within their own environments: "There is very little invention in my povesti. As a rule, I begin to work proceeding from an actual situation, from actual characters and from the actual conditions of things. They inform me about the circle of action in which external events have the scope to develop... and thus I have little to say in the choice of that action."²¹

Rasputin does not make the judgemental delineation of his characters into positive and negative categories. He claims that these types do not exist for him, only living
characters exist, ones which are credible both to him and to the reader. As an example of this attitude to characterization, he contrasts his portrayals of Kuz'ma in *Den'gi dlya Marii* with those of Anna's children in *Poslednij srok*:

Kuz'ma is almost completely positive by the way he conducts himself even though he is a suffering figure. . . . All the same, I like his type of hero less. In *Poslednij srok*, there are none of this type, all except Anna may be seen as "negative." But I like them more because they participate in the narrative with complex and contradictory life experiences, and thus help me to fulfill my authorial task.²²

We will now examine each grouping of characters individually in order to determine their function and significance within the narrative, the development of which, Rasputin claims, centres on and flows from the characterizations.

(i) The Heroine

The image of the Russian village woman in Rasputin's povesti graphically illustrates some of the irreversible losses which modern society has suffered in terms of human values and compassion. Rasputin has explained in general terms what it is about female characters, particularly village women, that attracts him:

Old women of the countryside have an internal beauty and fascination. They know a lot and speak in an expressive language. . . .
Women possess an amazing sensitivity to the misfortunes of others, and I wanted to write and tell about it.
In the villages of Siberia I am constantly meeting women of strong character. Their fellow villagers know them, come to them for advice, sympathy and support. . . . ²³
Thus, for Rasputin, certain women are the object of a degree of idealization since he sees in them only the best human qualities including selflessness, compassion, and a sense of responsibility and guilt for that which happens around them. The four heroines portrayed in his povesti are from this prototype. In fact, there is a striking progression in the characterization and development of the female hero in Rasputin's earlier stories through his povesti. His most recent heroines, Nastena and Dar'ja, are to some extent refined versions of women in his stories. Dar'ja is the cumulative outcome of several heroines beginning with the old woman in "Staruxa" (1967), Vasilisa in "Vasilij i Vasilisa" (1967), Aunt Natal'ja in Den'gi dlja Marii, through to Anna in Poslednij srok, whom Rasputin has acknowledged as Dar'ja's immediate predecessor. Nastena is the product of a more generalized, collective image of the Russian woman and mother whom Rasputin holds in high esteem.

Rasputin's characterization of Maria in Den'gi dlja Marii is minimal. We learn very little about her—we do not know her family name, how old she is, or what she looks like. The major emphasis in her characterization is psychological and is on such characteristics as her sense of obligation to the village when she agrees to serve them as shopkeeper, her trust in the honesty of others, her kind-heartedness and fairness in dealing with her fellow-villagers, and her sense of responsibility when dealing with the authorities. She is depicted as a guileless and uneducated village woman who still believes in fortune-telling and omens. Maria is the most outrightly skeptical of Rasputin's heroines and her skepticism about her vindication stems from her decision not to fight for herself but to be overcome by fear and doubt. Thus, she states repeatedly that Kuz'ma's brother Aleksej will not give Kuz'ma the money which will save her from jail and, convinced of this, she imagines her jail term in a nightmare. On the other hand, Maria is perhaps the most realistic of Rasputin's heroines. Their dreams
and hopes for a happy outcome to the events in which they are involved are ultimately
dashed, while Maria never really begins to hope for a reprieve from the circumstances of
which she is a victim.

Anna in Poslednij srok is characterized in and by her internalized monologues and
reflections. She is a dying woman with no future to ponder, so instead we come to
know Anna through her reminiscences. Another facet of Anna's characterization is her
life-long and natural rapport with the environment around her. We learn about Anna
through her recollections of the meadows that she worked, the cows she has milked, the
other members of her family both alive and dead, but particularly through her strong
identification with her family home in which she is now dying. The interrelationship
which exists between Anna and the natural world around her is well illustrated by the
description of Anna's last day:

... the day was mild and gentle and evenly descended on the village, but
especially over the old woman's house ... it [the day] flowed quietly and
intimately, protecting someone from a harmful disturbance. ... It seemed
this day knew all about what was going on within it, and perhaps it wanted
to help the old woman somehow, so that she would no longer be in that
stern judgemental spot ... (p. 416).

Anna is also characterized by her friendly relationship with death to which she
addresses herself and talks several times in the povest': "The old woman had thought
about death many times and knew it as she knew herself. In the last few years they
had become good friends; the old woman would often talk to it and death would find
itself a place out of the way, would listen to her sensible whispers and it sighed in
return" (p. 525).

Anna is portrayed as one of the old village women for whom Rasputin confesses
respect and amazement. She does not fear death, for it is a culmination of and release
from an often hard life. Rasputin makes reference to this attitude in one of his interviews: "I am amazed by the calm attitude that old women have toward death which they accept as something to be taken for granted. I think it is their long life experience that has taught them this calm." Anna's placid acceptance of death recalls a similar attitude held by two of Tolstoj's peasant characters—the young peasant Gerasim in "The Death of Ivan Il'ic" and the peasant in "Three Deaths" who is also unafraid of death.

Anna's characterization is closely connected with the theme of time and the continuity of her line through the generations. Anna experiences the need before her death to solve the riddle of the significance of her life. Did she do the best that she could? The sun, which does not abandon Anna throughout this time of crisis, reassures her with its eternalness. The patterns of sunlight on the walls and floor prompt her to consider her own legacy on earth which has been consistent with the renewal of life and the continuity of generations. Anna dies without the secret’s being revealed to her, but she dies at peace having said a final farewell to her old friend Mironixa, having taught Varvara some of the traditional funeral laments, and having heard Mixail's apology and forgiven him for his brutal tirade about his task of looking after his aging mother.

While similarities in philosophy and background do exist, Dar'ja as a continuation of Anna is a much more complete and powerful heroine in terms of psychological development and her active involvement in events. Against Dar'ja's vivid characterization, Anna acquires the muted tones appropriate for a dying woman who has accepted her life as it has been. Dar'ja, however, is an active representative of the past, its ethics, its traditions. She makes it her business to adopt this role in her obstinate dealings with the authorities as well as in her discussions with her son and grandson. She is the leader on the island around whom people gather to discuss their dilemma and she is the
spiritual leader over whom the Xojjain of the island watches and who is receptive to visionary messages from deceased family members. Like Anna's talks with death, Dar'ja's clairvoyance and sensitivity to the memory of her deceased ancestors play a key role in her characterization.

Another facet of Dar'ja's characterization, like Anna's, is her acute sensitivity to her natural environment. During a scene in which Dar'ja is tormented by her heartache and guilt about the way things have turned out for her island, she coaxes herself to sleep with the consolation that: "'The sun will come in the morning and it'll tell you many things. When there is nothing else to live for, it's worth living just for the sun'" (p. 145).

Dar'ja, as Anna before her, strives to solve the question of why she lived, but her sense of unity with the world around her has been severely shaken by the encroachment of technology. Dar'ja's crisis is more profound than Anna's and she doubts her purpose in life to a much greater degree. Unlike Anna, she does not find peace in her questioning. As she sits on a knoll facing the lower reaches of the river with the entire panorama visible to her, a question occurs to her:

Dar'ja tried unsuccessfully to understand a thought that was difficult and beyond her strength: perhaps this was the way things should be. . . . What was she thinking of? What was she trying to understand? But she didn't know that either. She had had to live a long and trying life to admit to herself that she hadn't understood anything about it. (p. 46)

Dar'ja is Rasputin's strongest and most confident heroine who speaks her mind freely and infrequently doubts her actions. Despite the deep doubts about herself and the meaning of her life which Dar'ja suffers, she is able to live out her last days on Matera according to her own will and sense of direction.
The heroine of Živi i pomni, Nastena, is Rasputin's youngest heroine and his most tragic. She is a tragic figure because of the dissonance between her hopes and dreams for happiness in the near future after the war ends and the stark reality of a situation which promises nothing but misery. Like Dar'ja, Nastena is strong-willed and knows what she wants from life, patiently enduring many hardships so that one day her dream of being truly happy can come true. She is a devoted and selfless wife who accepts the guilt for Andrej's desertion for she believes that he had transgressed the law because of his desire to return to her. Her tragedy lies too in her rejection of a simple escape from her situation, the temptation to renounce Andrej and free herself. In her resistance to circumstance and in her conviction that hers is the only possible way, Nastena prepares her own demise.

The capacity to accept the guilt of a loved one as their own is a characteristic of the moral composition of Rasputin's heroines. Anna feels guilt on behalf of her five children; she questions why she had allowed them to leave the village and had then simply waited for them to return home on a visit. Nastena is tormented by the reasons for Andrej's desertion and Dar'ja experiences guilt before her ancestors whom she feels she is abandoning on Matěra. This capacity which Rasputin has attributed to the Russian woman is extended in two instances to male protagonists of similar moral integrity—to Kuz'ma who empathizes with and acts on behalf of his wife Maria, and to Andrej's father, Mixeič, who in a show of compassion, warns Nastena of a search party which has been organized to search for Andrej.

A sense of responsibility is directly related to the heroines' guilt and feelings of duty and pity are derivatives of that guilt. Rasputin's heroines, in a very real way, feel personally responsible for the people they most care about. Nastena articulates her belief that she is responsible for Andrej's desertion on several occasions for she quickly
understands that it is to her, not his parents, his friends, or his native village, that Andrej has returned. Dar'ja is convinced that the plans for flooding Matêra are due to some negligence on her part in her obligation to her ancestors, and Anna blames herself for wanting Tan'čora to come too much, thus preventing her coming: "She [Anna] recalled that joy and unhappiness like to appear unexpectedly, like snow on one's head, and reproached herself because she had waited entirely too urgently and had herself made it hard for Tan'čora to come" (p. 506).

The theme of memory is used effectively by Rasputin to develop the characterization of his heroines in terms of their feelings of responsibility and guilt. Anna and Dar'ja are terror-stricken as they realize that after their deaths no one will know how to continue time-honoured traditions and knowledge which has been handed down through the generations will be lost. Thus, the scene in which Anna teaches Varvara the ancient laments of their culture, and Dar'ja's indignation and grief as she watches her grandson leave Matêra forever without taking proper leave of the island according to tradition embody the old women's understanding of the role of individual memory in the link between past, present, and future.

A feeling experienced by all of Rasputin's heroines concurrent with their guilt is a deep sense of pity for those from whom they have assumed their guilt. Reflecting upon each of her children individually, Anna reviews the course of their lives and sees something which is pitiful about each of them. Nastena intensely pities Andrej, an emotion which he detests and rejects. Dar'ja, commenting on the whole of modern society, tells her grandson, much to his surprise, that she feels sorry for contemporary man who is tiny and insignificant despite his grandiose pretensions.

The Russian woman as mother and centre of the family is fundamental to Rasputin's image structure. All of his heroines are mothers, including Nastena, whose
pregnancy is symbolic of that motherhood. Even Mother Nature is embodied by Mother-Earth and her microcosmic symbol, Matera. It has been suggested in an article by V. Vasil’ev, that the feeling of maternal responsibility for one’s own children is extended in Rasputin’s povesti to a sense of responsibility for people in general. A scene from Živi i pomni in which Liza Vologžina has prepared a celebration for her injured husband Maksim who has returned from the front is illustrative for even though the war is over for Liza at a personal level, she still feels a deep sense of participation in those events. Having taken offence when Nad’ja tells her that the war is over for her now that her husband has returned Liza counters: "Why has it ended for me? You think that just because he’s here I don’t care about anything any more? That’s what you say. I’m not some kind of insensitive woman who can be happy when things are bad for everybody. And I don’t live in a tower, where I see nothing beyond; I live with people" (p. 259).

In their capacity to love and to forgive, Rasputin’s heroines demonstrate a great confidence in the correctness of their values and principles and feel no fear of death. Thus, it is Nastena’s conviction that she is taking the only possible course when she throws herself into the Angara, thus protecting herself and those that she loves by her sacrifice. She removes the immediate threat that the villagers will find Andrej’s hiding place and, in her confusion and shame, she feels that she can spare her unborn child what she fears will be inevitable ostracism. From the faith which she feels regarding the rightness of her life lived according to her moral principles, Anna in Poslednij srok is able to forgive her children their shortcomings and rely upon her own inner resources to die in peace. Similarly, Dar’ja’s strength which is based on similar convictions, supports Matera and its inhabitants in their struggle against the insatiable demands of progress. The actions of Rasputin’s heroines are always based upon the set of
deeply-rooted moral principles by which they live and for these women the world exists as an unfragmented integration of man and nature, of past, present and future.

Through his heroines' deep feelings of responsibility, duty, and guilt, Rasputin reveals a powerful link between people through time and space. This is a spiritual bond which is life-affirming but which possesses a destructive facet. Thus, Nastena never entertains the idea that Andrej may have been unfairly treated in being ordered directly back to the front after his serious injury and promise of leave. Instead, she wonders what in Andrej was lacking, what broke down so that he was not able to withstand the external circumstances around him. Their mutual dream about Nastena with many children confirms for Nastena her guilty belief that she had somehow selfishly persuaded Andrej to come home before his time. Similarly, Dar'ja only briefly ponders the reckless policy of creating hydropower at great human expense. She is more intent on trying to understand her son and especially her grandson who figuratively and literally refuse to stand in the way of the floodwaters.

Rasputin's two later heroines, Nastena and Dar'ja, act with a decisiveness that endows their characterizations with a sense of their strength and courage. However none of his heroines is oblivious to the cruelty and even tragedy of her situation or to the growing alienation from those around her. But she accepts even this without complaint for as V. Vasil'ev suggests, "There is something in the profoundly folk-rooted character of the Russian woman . . . that does not give her the right to make deals with her own conscience and against her feeling of morality." Both Anna and Nastena actively voice this attitude in similar ways, speaking of having no regrets about their circumstances and of not feeling envy of others. As Nastena sees it: "Life was not a piece of clothing; it couldn't be changed ten times. What there is is all yours, and to disown any of it, even the very worst, simply will not do. . . . Let others do as they wished,
but she would live the life that she had begun and would not dash around from one side to the other" (p. 284).

The alienation of Rasputin's heroine grows as she struggles to arrange her life according to the new circumstances which have been imposed upon her, but in crucial ways her attempt to adapt herself does not correspond to the values and ethics of the life around her, and her closest friend or neighbour may become her opponent. Both Maria and Nastena have, according to the ethics of their society, transgressed the law and their growing alienation is concrete. At an official level, Maria is suspected of embezzling one thousand roubles, and Nastena of sheltering a deserter. Both feel unfairly judged but they react in very different ways to their predicament—Maria places her salvation into Kuz'ma's hands, while Nastena rejects her own salvation by deciding to harbour Andrej secretly, hoping that when the facts are learned, the patriarchal morality of her family and villagers will comprehend her decision as his wife. However, with Andrej's refusal to reveal himself and with the disclosure of her pregnancy, Nastena is trapped by the very morality upon which she was depending for support and she is immediately judged for her apparent infidelity: "It was not easy to withstand constantly the stabbing, judgemental looks of people. . . . No one, not even Liza Vologžina, her close friend, tried to bolster her spirits . . ." (p. 383). Although Nad'ja, Nastena's friend, takes her in, Nastena knows that it is only a matter of time before Nad'ja finds out about Nastena's lie to her: "She was lying to Nad'ja who was treating her fairly and honestly, as if she was an accursed enemy. Nad'ja was simple and believed her, but some day she would see that she had been led by the nose and she wouldn't thank her" (p. 389).

Maria and Nastena become conscious of their growing alienation from society after the former is publically accused of theft and after the latter continues to meet with
Andrej and feels the guilt of their prolonged clandestine relationship. However, the seeds of their alienation had been planted much earlier than the occurrence of these events. Maria, having been persuaded against her own better judgement to take the job at the village store, is from that time marked as the target of an inevitable shortage. Nastena, an orphan from another village, had arrived in Atamanovka as Andrej's bride and had never been fully accepted by her mother-in-law. Upon learning of her pregnancy, Semenovna turns Nastena out of the house. Frightened, confused, and very alone, Nastena realizes that she has nowhere to go, no one with whom she can be completely honest. Thus, the pressures of isolation had been pent-up within the lives of the two women and they culminate in the specific circumstances of each povest'. Maria is reduced to a tearful, pessimistic, and inert figure who, in her terror, isolates herself almost completely from society, but Nastena willfully refuses to allow her complete and healthy moral system to be destroyed, even by the strong community pressures that she feels.

In Poslednij srok and Prošcanie s Materoj, the alienation of the heroine is as pervasive as that experienced by Maria and Nastena, but has as its source completely different factors connected with time and the generations. Anna is ready to die and this acceptance of death frightens her children and estranges Anna from them. The only person with whom Anna can talk and who will understand her is the elderly Mironixa, for they share the feeling that they are remnants of another time, uncomfortably living in a time which is not theirs. Age and differing attitudes toward death alienate Anna from her children. In Prošcanie s Matěroj, the little group of elderly villagers which bands together to give each other moral support as the appointed day for the flooding approaches, feel that their kinship with Matěra is stronger and more well-defined than ever before. But, faced with the prospect of leaving the island for a new, modern city,
they all acknowledge, like Anna, that they feel out of place with the times, useless and a burden. Dar'ja's son Pavel is well aware of the alienation which his mother will suffer in her new environment and he fears the outcome of the move. He senses that the fate of Grandpa Egor, who died of a broken heart in his new village, will be the fate of all of the old folk left on Matera.

There is an on-going and pervasive isolation from the world outside of her immediate village which is fundamental to the psychology of Rasputin's heroine and which provides the background upon which her specific case of social alienation rests. To her mind, there is nothing more important beyond her village. Everything exists here for the heroine to find satisfaction, happiness, and a sense of community. But it also contains the potential for discontent, grief, and alienation. As Rasputin depicts it, the village where his heroine lives is a true microcosm and a reality beyond which her mind does not expand. Maria views Kuz'ma's journey to the city where his brother lives with hopelessness—it is associated with unpleasant memories for her, from a time when she was made to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome while staying with Kuz'ma's brother during a medical consultation. Anna and Dar'ja both admit that they have seen nothing outside their villages in the course of their lifetimes. For Anna, the city life which three of her children now lead is completely unfathomable: "... in the end the old woman had to force herself to believe that people didn't starve in the cities either but she couldn't understand how they managed it without their own animals. She couldn't see how they could possibly live at all without that" (p. 509). To Dar'ja, the outside world is a place gone mad with technology and power. Her total isolation from the world beyond Matera is summed up in her attitude toward the new settlement which was to be her home: "For her this new settlement was no nearer or dearer than that America, where they said that people walked on their heads so they wouldn't wear out
Both old women feel that in their time they have acquired a wealth of knowledge about people and life from living in their own environment. They had no need to venture forth to get their knowledge elsewhere: "'Don't you argue with me, Andruška. I've seen little, but I've lived long. What I have seen I've looked at for a long, long time, not in passing, like you'" (p. 96).

Nastena is the only one of Rasputin's heroines who, in the course of the *povest*, physically leaves her village for the district centre. But Atamanovka is still the place which is connected in her mind with happiness, real or imagined. Rasputin's heroines remain behind while the most important people in their lives—their husbands or their children—leave for the world outside and may or may not return. His heroines wait for them within their own familiar and beloved environment.

A crucial consideration in the mind of Rasputin's heroine is if her life has meaning to others, that is, if she is needed, wanted, and can be useful. The older women are particularly concerned with this matter if only because of their age and their growing sense of living without reason. Dar'ja regards her friend Sima with her dependent grandson, and Katerina with the wayward Petruxa and feels that she is not needed by anybody:

... Sima had to raise the little one, Katerina had to worry about Petruxa and hope for his rehabilitation. They were needed by someone, and they would function because of that need, but nobody demanded a thing from her. ... [W]ithout anything to do, without being needed, a person can't live. (p. 144)

Prompted by this sense, Dar'ja and Anna both consider it time for them to die and beg their deaths to come for them. However, Nastena, a much younger woman, also articulates the same ethic about usefulness in life when she envisages her dilemma
with Andrej as part of her fate and thus meaningful: "She would be patient, endure everything that fell to her lot, but to waste one's life away as a worthless woman was something she could not agree to--in that case it would be better not to live" (p. 283).

The characterization of the village heroine in Rasputin's *povesti* is noted for its moral implacability and determination. The strength of her will is born of a set of deeply-rooted ethical values which the heroine will not betray, and the qualities shared by all of them—guilt, forgiveness, pity, responsibility, and duty, are integral facets of their moral systems. Rasputin's heroines demonstrate that, for them, it is not possible to live any other way than that which they have consciously chosen. The implication of their coming into open conflict with either pervasive social mores or the drastic demands and consequences of modern socio-economic development, is perhaps that under these circumstances there can be no qualitative reconciliation between the erroneous acts of an individual (even if justified) and the collective ethos, just as the needs and demands of a small collective must be subordinated to those of the larger even if much of value is lost in the process.

(ii) Other Central Characters

Central characters in Rasputin's *povesti* are those who complement the heroine in some way, either by providing her with moral support, reflecting her actions or actually countering her. There is at least one personage in each *povest' who knows the heroine intimately and plays a vital role in her life. In *Den'gi dlja Marii*, this personage is Maria's husband Kuz'ma who is the hero to Maria's heroine in the work. He is the most active character in the *povest' who undertakes the difficult task of borrowing one thousand roubles on Maria's behalf. He shows many of the same qualities which have
been attributed to Rasputin's heroines—determination, modesty, selflessness to such a degree that he may be said to be Maria's alter-ego. Maria's passive figure is the focal point of the povest' which motivates Kuz'ma's efforts, for if Maria were to go to jail both an individual and a family unit would be destroyed. Kuz'ma understands the tragedy of this situation, both in the personal and in the social sense. Kuz'ma, like Maria, experiences feelings of alienation as he goes from person to person asking for financial help. His main concern is that people will think that he has no conscience, for he understands the value of money earned by hard and long work and money which has been saved for a long-cherished dream. Thus, Kuz'ma experiences intense internal conflict which is aggravated by guilt when he approaches people for their help and this feeling does not allow him to convince or persuade people against their will. Kuz'ma, along with Maria, has been suddenly diverted from the mainstream of life in their village and much about Kuz'ma’s moral essence is revealed through his attitudes, actions, and the decisions that he makes.

In Poslednij srok, it is Mironixa, Anna's lifelong friend, who provides the greatest support and understanding to the dying Anna. She is the only person whom Anna can trust and she functions as a confidante as Anna talks to her about the most vital things left to her in her last hours—about her life and about the art of dying. No profound dialogues occur between the two old women, just short sentences, silences, sighs, and Mironixa's superficial concern for her lost milk-cow. They are kindred spirits, bound together by experiences in their long lives and by their mutual loneliness. The bond between the women is so strong that Anna cannot die until she has parted with Mironixa in the proper way:

In parting the old woman gave Mironixa her hand and Mironixa suddenly started, awkwardly bowed her head, and pressed the woman's hand
to her cheek. Tears flowed from the old woman’s eyes. . . .

Wiping her eyes, the old woman thought that perhaps because of this she had not died during the night: she had not said good-bye to Mironixa, the only real friend she’d had in her life. (p. 545)

Sima and Katerina, Ded Egor and his wife Nastas’ja share a similar function to Mironixa in their loyal and unconditional friendship with Dar’ja in Proščanie s Matěroj. They all represent in some way pieces of Dar’ja’s soul: Ded Egor does not survive his transplant to the new settlement just as Dar’ja would not; Katerina must stand helplessly by as her family home burns, just as Dar’ja must; and Sima shares with her young grandson Kol’ka a relationship of mutual understanding which does not exist between Dar’ja and her grandson Andrej.

Andrej Gus’kov, Nastena’s husband in Živ i pomni is the only central character who actively counterposes the heroine. His story is distinct from Nastena’s and yet through their rendezvous, the flashbacks about their life together, and even when they are hundreds of miles apart through a mutual dream, their stories are very much interconnected. Andrej’s personality is in many respects diametrically opposed to Nastena’s. His desertion after more than three years of front-line duty is largely motivated by his desire to survive which entered his consciousness as the end of the war became increasingly certain. As his normal concern for salvation develops into an ideé-fixe in Andrej’s mind, he succumbs to a growing fear that he will not survive, and he even considers the idea of sustaining a wound on purpose to take him out of the fighting because . . . thousands and thousands of men living with the same hope died before his eyes day after day and they would go on dying, he knew, until the very last moment. Where would they come from if not from the living—him and the others? . . . And succumbing to his terror, not seeing luck before him Andrej carefully played with the thought of being wounded
Andrej’s thoughts of salvation lead him back to Nastena illegally, for what he originally plans to be just a few days, enough time to patch up their foundering marriage and make amends before he returns to the front. However, the days drag on, and Andrej realizes with some amazement that he is a deserter and, in shock, he accepts the deaf-mute Tan’ja’s strength and then demands and takes Nastena’s for his own.

Rasputin depicts Andrej’s sudden conscious fear of death, his emergent will to survive, and even his desertion in a compassionate light. He identifies the psychological processes which occur to change a good and committed soldier into a deserter. We may sympathize with Andrej in some respects but we cannot regard him tragically because although he feels that he has lost control of his own life after the desertion, he actively tries to control Nastena’s life. Andrej is consumed by his idee-fixe to survive, and the challenge presented by his desertion unites all of his egocentric motivations and characteristics together resulting in bouts of blind rage, a degree of wickedness, and the placing of great demands on Nastena. When in a crisis Andrej repeatedly makes compromises that might save him: he resigns himself to numb passivity, he buckles emotionally and morally, and he threatens Nastena either with physical violence, curses, or with plans to go away and leave her alone once again. The fact that Nastena, the tragic figure in the povest’, knows about Andrej’s weaknesses and realizes that she must be strong for both of them, makes her more resolved and absolute with each challenge or stroke of fate.

Andrej’s personality bears a strong egotistical streak which is particularly evident in his reaction to Nastena’s pregnancy; he is unspeakably excited and happy that his line will be continued and that his name will not be forgotten by history. His elation, while
containing the germ of the concept of generation continuity, is due mainly to the sense that this child can justify him in his act of desertion:

"This is everything, I don't need any pardon now. This is more than any pardon. It doesn't matter what happens now, even bury me tomorrow, but if this is true, if he remains after me . . . This is my blood living on . . . ." (p. 272).

Andrej does not truly consider the hardships which face Nastena as he begs her to bear the child for his sake. Later when she publicly acknowledges her pregnancy, Andrej voices his sympathy for her position, but because of his own self-interests and concerns, his sympathy has an insincere ring. Most important, Andrej is incapable of giving Nastena the moral strength that she has given him and so desperately needs in return.

Another trait which is implied about Andrej's character is a certain lack of responsibility. On his way to Nastena, Andrej stays for over a month with Tan'ja in Irkutsk, a fact that can be only partly excused by traumatization after his desertion. Many months later, exhausted by his solitary life, the qualms of his conscience, and by his and Nastena's inescapable dilemma, he thinks of Tan'ja and how he would like to escape back to her deaf-mute world. " . . . he would lose the ability to speak and in revenge, according to his whim, he would humiliate Tan'ja, take pity on her, and then humiliate her again" (p. 308). Nastena on the other hand sustains herself with an ideal vision of happiness which includes the responsibilities of a family life and motherhood. The contrast of her fidelity and devotion to Andrej during the war and his unfaithfulness and self-devotion contain a cruel irony: Nastena must pretend that she has become pregnant by another man.
As time passes and Andrej and Nastena's relationship becomes increasingly fraught with tension, Andrej's personality rapidly deteriorates. The disharmony and dissatisfaction that he feels with himself are reflected in the dissonant relationship between Andrej and his natural environment. He slaughters a calf with inexplicable and inexcusable cruelty and barely restrains himself from setting fire to the old mill close to Atamanovka. The sole comfort that Andrej takes in his surroundings are his meetings with the wolves, also solitary creatures, who teach him to howl like one of themselves.

Andrej's alienation from people and society is total, unlike Nastena's, but we sympathize less with Andrej both because of the unpleasant features of his character and because of the fact that he himself had made a decision which placed him outside of society and had compelled his wife to lead an impossible double existence. Essentially, Andrej's attitude toward his desertion is a schizophrenic one as he fluctuates between real remorse and guilt at what he has done to himself, Nastena and his parents and a frantic, cowardly desire to survive at any price.

(iii) Sons and Daughters

Rasputin is not concerned with a judgemental positive-negative delineation of characters in his work, and he does not want his reader to "search in a book for an example to copy." Just as his hero "is not the possessor of only positive qualities," so too his less sympathetic personages do not evoke aversion or hatred but rather pity and reflection. This is especially true of those characters who are the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the elderly village women. Generally they are depicted as being superficial, materialistic, and self-centred to varying degrees. In Poslednij srok, all of Anna's children except Mixail (with whom Anna continues to live in the village) appear
to have consciously forgotten valuable memories and lessons from their childhood and youth spent in the village, as well as those human values which may have protected them against some of the artificiality in modern life. This loss with its consequent lack of emotion and depth is examined by Rasputin as Anna's children deal with the concept and the reality of their mother's death. A good deal of the characterization of her children is based on how they regard her death. Each differs in response to their dying mother: Ljusja matter-of-factly denies it, Varvara sniffs and moans in trite sorrow, Mixail drinks, and a baffled Il'ja jokes that his mother will come to visit in the summertime and they will go together to see the circus. But none makes any real, meaningful contact with Anna to find out what her life has meant to her or how she views death. They have not acquired Anna's understanding of death as a natural culmination of a life which has been lived fully and in accord with nature. Rather her children fear death and avoid speaking about it. Ljusja and Il'ja, the two of Anna's children present who live farthest away from their native village, are portrayed less sympathetically than are the drunkard Mixail, or the country bumpkin Varvara. Ljusja and Mixail, the most opposite of Anna's children, are given the most extensive characterizations. Varvara and Il'ja are portrayed as indecisive, unsure of themselves, and bewildered by the scenes which they are witnessing in their family home between the strong personalities of their mother, Ljusja and Mixail. Ljusja is portrayed as a very proper, citified woman of middle-age who exudes no warmth and inspires fear even in her own mother. An entire chapter is devoted to her solitary walk through the woods in which we find out much about Ljusja's past and perhaps something of her real character emerges from beneath the years of veneer. In this chapter, the narration implies that Ljusja has consciously decided to reject her past. The woods react to her and she feels uncomfortable as if passing through hostile territory:
It seemed that life had turned back because she, Ljusja, had forgotten something here, had lost something very precious and necessary without which life could not go on. . . . She had forgotten. . . . Finally that which had been hidden in her almost from the very beginning, had today exhausted her with a silent, long-term guilt, for which she would have to answer. (pp. 479–480)

Ljusja decides to run from this responsibility and that night she announces her intention of catching the next ferry home. This chapter is centred thematically on memory and its role in supporting an individual and helping him to understand much about himself.

Mixail's characterization is more sympathetic than his sister's. His penchant for vodka is the main vehicle for his characterization, but what underlies his drinking is dissatisfaction with a life that has kept him in the village where he is no longer content. The many changes there have altered people's attitudes toward one another and toward their work. Much about Mixail's yearning to break loose from the wearing confines of his daily existence is revealed in a talk with Il'ja in the bath-house on the first day of Anna's reprieve from death when they begin to drink:

"This is how I see it: we drink because now a necessity for it has arisen. . . . Life is completely different, everything has changed, and these changes have added their demands to our lives. We become awfully tired, not so much from work, I must say, as from the devil knows what. I get through a week, somehow or other dragging my feet, and I've had it. Then I have something to drink . . . and it's as if a ton had been lifted from my shoulders. . . . There are so many ropes binding us at work and at home that you can't breathe, so many things that you should have done and didn't, it's all have to, have to, have to, and the further you go, the more you have to do things. . . . But when you take a drink, it's as if you're free, liberated, and you aren't obligated to do a damn thing, you've done everything you needed to. That which you did not do, didn't need to be done, and you were right in not doing it . . ." (p. 453).
All of Mixail’s frustrations and complaints vent themselves in the scene discussed earlier in which he offers his mother into the care of his siblings. Although it is a horrendous scene, it is not Mixail, but his brothers and sisters whom we regard critically for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness in regard to their mother. Our sympathy toward Mixail is reinforced when, just before Anna’s death, Mixail does ask his mother’s forgiveness in a simple scene which suggests very close but unarticulated bonds between mother and son.

The characterization *in absentia* of Anna’s beloved youngest child, Tat’jana, is a curious one for it is full of conflicting information about her. On the one hand, Anna remembers her Tan’čora as the most loving of her children, the only one who openly speaks to her mother of her love, much to Anna’s joy and embarrassment. Tan’čora’s letters to Anna, although infrequent, are also full of genuine affection, yet since she married an army officer Tan’čora has not once returned home to see Anna. One of the biggest unanswered questions in Rasputin’s *povesti* is why Tan’čora does not come to Anna’s deathbed, or indeed, even respond. The reader speculates together with Anna as to possible answers and the narrator passes no judgement on Tan’čora; despite her absence, about which her brothers and sisters critically comment, Tan’čora is recalled exclusively through Anna’s adoring eyes, and thus the reader sees Tan’čora as being the child to whom Anna feels closest.

Anna’s children are not able to communicate effectively with their mother but just as pathetic is their inability as brothers and sisters to make contact with and accept one another. Ljusja looks with disdain at Varvara, both sisters are indignant at their brothers’ drunken behaviour in the bath-house, and Mixail cannot tolerate Ljusja’s arrogance. They are totally alienated from each other by virtue of the paths each of their lives has taken and their discomfort with each other is at times extremely painful
In *Proščanie s Materoj*, Dar'ja's son Pavel represents the same generation as Anna's children, but his concerns are very different and more universalized than are the familial involvements in *Poslednij srok*. In a *povest* which deals frankly with the socio-economic problems inherent in technological progress, Pavel represents a generation intermediate between the fast-receding past and the not-too-distant future. He finds that he is caught in a growing isolation from both his mother and his son Andrej. Dar'ja can not understand why he will not act decisively and quickly to remove the graves of their ancestors to the new settlement, for these graves are symbolic of Dar'ja's and Matiera's entire past. Andrej surprises Pavel by the fact that, in his discussions with Dar'ja and Pavel, he suddenly appears before his father as the adult that he is. When Pavel asks Andrej why he doesn't stay in the village and work as a driver instead of going to work at the new hydro project, he does so to hear Andrej's reply:

... to hear what his son would answer and what he had become in these last years which were spent away from home, what he lived by and what principles guided his life. . . .

Pavel looked at his son attentively and in surprise as if only now he was realizing that before him was truly a mature and totally rational person, one who was not from his, but from another, the next generation. (pp. 99-100)

Pavel comprehends the positions of both his son and his mother, and his personal questioning about the course of events scheduled for Matiera reflects both of their stances. As he thinks of the new settlement where they will live, Dar'ja's and Andrej's voices blend into Pavel's own unique way of looking at their changing world:

And what about the changes? . . . If it had to be, then it had to be, but in this "had to" he understood only one half, that they had to move from
Matěra, but he didn't understand why they had to move to that settlement built lavishly and beautifully, but with one house upon another, line upon line, placed so absurdly, without keeping people in mind, that all one could do was throw up one's hands in wonder. (p. 77)

Through the juxtaposition of three generations in Proščanie s Matěroj, it is suggested that the quality of man's relationship with his immediate environment and the world around him differs according to generation: the young, represented by Andrej, are lured by the excitement of technological progress, they want to be "on the spot" when things happen. Andrej is just such an enthusiast in his burning desire to work at the hydroelectric site and in his unquestioning belief that all that is done is for the best. Even his speech is imbued with the idealism of youth which is particularly susceptible to the catch-phrases and clichés of official pronouncements extolling the scientific technological revolution. Andrej's generation believes that it has little invested in the past, while Dar'ja's generation sees only spiritual desolation as the result of such wanton destructiveness of nature and man's past including his cultural and spiritual treasures. It is to Pavel's wavering middle generation, the generation that is in charge of making decisions and controlling the rate of progress, that Rasputin appeals with his povest'.

Another representative of Pavel's generation is Katerina's son, Petruxa. Both Pavel and Andrej are respectable examples of their generations by the mere fact that they assume responsibility for themselves and their actions and are committed to a set of values in which they believe. Petruxa, on the other hand, exhibits only the worst human qualities: self-interest, greed, egotism, a lust for comfort and convenience, and a total lack of principles by which to live. These features of his character have actually earned him the nickname Petruxa, an appellation often found in the common lore for his type: "At birth he really had been named and registered as Nikita, but through his simple-mindedness, slovenliness, and uselessness, he had been re-christened Petruxa"
Thus, Petruxa is essentially characterized by his name, as well as by his lack of concern and feeling for his mother. Despite the fact that Petruxa has left Matera only on temporary jaunts, he nonetheless reveals some of the negative characteristics of personality that Dar'ja attributes solely to urban, technologically-oriented man. Where Andrej is presented to be listened to and understood as representative of the new man, Petruxa's characterization suggests that human foibles and shortcomings can be found in traditional as well as in modern society, in the village as well as the city.

(iv) Young Children

Rasputin's depiction of such character types as sons and daughters, bureaucrats and officials, is basically a vehicle for overt, candid, and often critical social commentary. His presentation of children serves the same purpose but in a less direct manner and often through inference. Children are present in all of Rasputin's povesti and their innocence and relative helplessness are juxtaposed to the adult world around them which is often cruel. Children are minor figures within the whole of Rasputin's prose, but some are developed to play small but significant roles. These are Anna's five-year-old granddaughter Ninka, Sima's four-year-old grandson Kol'ka, and Stepanida's teen-aged niece, Galja. They interact with the adults around them bringing out some facet of the adults' personalities, behaviour, or of the social circumstances. These children are meant precisely to be typical children, in their purity, goodness and dependence upon adults for kindness and support, and they are characterized by their own speech mannerisms and psychology.

Ninka has that special relationship with her grandmother that often occurs between the aged and the very young—she comforts Anna with her presence and provides her
the only true contact with anyone in her family. Anna describes one of their games together thus: "'I hide [candies] for her in my suitcase and then give them to her one at a time. It gives me pleasure and she likes it too. . . . I pretend I know nothing [about the game] and I play with her like a small child. She's my good little girl, she's always with her grandmother. I talk with her a while and I feel better. Young and old together, that's why!'" (p. 427).

Ninka's trust and faith in adults is portrayed in an extended and humorous scene in which she conspires with her drunken father and uncle in the bath-house. She agrees to bring bread secretly from the house for them in exchange for empty vodka bottles. After her mother catches her and accuses Ninka of stealing, the angry child returns to the men and innocently reveals the whereabouts of a case of vodka that has been hidden from them. Hurried out of the bath-house by her father and uncle who are eager to get to the cache of vodka, she switches her allegiance: she complains to her formerly "bad" mother that she has been sent away by her "bad" father. This scene underscores Mixail's ruminations on the growing need for drink in today's society and subjects a child's innocence to serve poor and harmful adult ends.

It is left to Ninka to articulate some emotion about what has transpired in Anna's home as her aunts and uncle hurriedly depart. She brings Anna a candy out of sympathy and, using her favourite expression, declares of her relatives: "'They're bad'.' This judgement evidently pleases Anna and perhaps it expresses what she feels herself for: "The old woman's lips moved either in a smile or in a grin" (p. 555).

Kol'ka, Sima's grandchild in Prošcanie s Matěroj is a quite different child from Ninka, but they represent a similar link between the very young and the very old. Grandmother and grandchild have only each other in the world. Kol'ka is extremely quiet, talks little and poorly and fearfully clings to his grandmother's skirts, but "he
watched them [the old women] with an understanding that was not childlike but bitter and meek" (p. 19). The fates of Kol’ka and Sima are identical for as Sima vows in reference to the impending and frightening departure from Matěra, "Kol’ka and I may have to crawl, but we will be tied to the same rope" (p. 23). David Gillespie attempts to define the essence of the child–grandmother link in Rasputin’s povesti and suggests that one factor might be their common need to adapt to change: the upset caused children by adults in their personal interactions is akin to the social disruption caused by material progress to the way of life of the elderly.30

Little Kol’ka is a silent observer of a life which has not given him the opportunity to be a child and he is a constant witness to old age and impending death. Kol’ka is the victim of social circumstances—the illegitimate child of a crazed, deaf-mute mother, childhood in the company of elderly women, and an uprooting which proves to be beyond his grandmother’s strength and capabilities. The upheaval which accompanies Matěra’s flooding is not tolerant of such social misfits and Kol’ka’s young life is nipped in the bud as he clings to his grandmother.

A parallel may be drawn between the function of children in Rasputin’s povesti and that of the deaf-mute. Kol’ka directly establishes such a link in Proščanie s Matěrou through his run-away deaf-mute mother and his own reticence and introversion although he is endowed with speech and hearing. The parallel can be extended to the character of Tan’ja in Živi i pomni. She is described as: "... a rarity of a woman, tender and caring. She didn’t suffer one bit from her muteness, and she was not bitter, nor did she avoid people; in all the time that Andrej lived there, he never noticed her to be gloomy or dissatisfied. Her face was not jolly, but it was calm and kind, ready to smile at any moment" (p. 220).
This is a child-like image in its gentleness and goodness and Andrej takes advantage of Tan’ja (in every sense) while he is coming to terms with his act of desertion. He leaves one night without telling Tan’ja, but several months later at the height of his internal conflict, Andrej feels an urgent longing to return to Tan’ja and the simplicity and ease of a situation in which he would not have to think or talk.

A curious similarity exists between Kol’ka and Tan’ja; they both give the impression of being wise beyond their age or capacity. Kol’ka has an "unchildlike understanding" of events taking place around him and Andrej has a sense that Tan’ja knows all about him and is not who she pretends to be. Such impressions are the result of Kol’ka’s and Tan’ja’s perception of the world through their emotions and intuition. Gillespie writes that "Rasputin asserts that the spiritual, mystical aura of the child is accessible to the adult and offers an insight into another reality." Although Gillespie refers to the children that have had major roles in Rasputin’s stories since Proščanie s Materoj, the figure of Kol’ka (and by extension Tan’ja) represents a development of the theme of childhood and a link between his earlier and later child characters.

Stepanida’s seventeen-year-old niece Galja is clearly the most outspoken of Rasputin’s child characters and her actions intentionally point to the greed and selfishness of her aunt with whom she must endure living. Galja’s characterization is not complimentary; she is portrayed as a mini-skirted young girl who has a quick tongue and a penchant for vodka but she ultimately is revealed as a person whose intentions are good but whose methods lead her astray. Galja’s hatred for her aunt prompts her to try to embarrass Stepanida before Kuz’ma and Vasilij with the underlying motive being a donation of money to help Maria. But Galja’s plan backfires simply because her behaviour is so disagreeable. Stepanida is able to manoeuvre out of lending money
by using Galja as a distraction to the earnest conversation that Vasilij and Kuz'ma try to initiate. Kuz'ma is well aware of the dynamics of that explosive relationship:

They drank. Galja winked at Kuz'ma and indicated Stepanida with her eyes. Kuz'ma gave an imperceptible shake of his head. Galja couldn’t wait to see how they would get the money out of her aunt. What a snake! She was trying to help, but with her juvenile intelligence, her arrogance would ruin everything. (p. 611)

Thus, Galja’s characterization uncovers Stepanida’s hypocrisy, cruelty, and greed but at the same time, on its own merits, reveals some of the problems of adolescence and youth faced in the modern Soviet village.

(v) Bureaucrats and Officials

If there are any real negative characters in Rasputin’s povest’i, they are the administrators, bureaucrats, Party officials, and specialists who make up the ranks of the official bureaucracy. In some circumstances, Rasputin suggests that it is not the bureaucrats themselves that are difficult to deal with, but the impersonal system which they represent. For example, in Den’gi dlja Marii, the government inspector who carries out the inventory in the shop gives Maria five days in which she can gather together the missing sum. This is done out of the goodness of his own heart and rather secretly. It is obvious to him (as it would not be obvious to the bureaucratic processes which he represents) that Maria is innocent of the theft. The kol’xoz chairman, himself once the victim of an inflexible bureaucracy, coerces his specialists to donate one month’s wages to Maria’s cause and pledges to loan kol’xoz money once the year’s accounts are turned in. In this first povest’ it is the system which is portrayed as unbending and
unforgiving once a process is initiated rather than the individuals who administer the system. But in the later _povesti_, the depiction of the faceless system as the villain alters and specific individuals acquire the function of antagonist. In Živi i pomni, Nastena is followed by a search party (composed of the _kolxo_ chairman Maksim Vologžin, the substitute war-time chairman, Nestor, and the policeman from the district capital) which has been formed at the prompting of the villager Innokentij Ivanovič who suspects that Andrej has returned home and that Nastena knows of his whereabouts. This surveillance comes at a time when Nastena's nerves are shattered and provides the extenuating circumstances in which Nastena takes her own life.

In _Proščanie s Matěrøj_, Rasputin is outspoken in his criticisms of official decisions and his depictions of the officials who implement them. One, for example, has the uncomplimentary surname Žuk 'Beetle'. These bureaucrats brought in from outside the region speak in intimidating official phrases and know very little about the people whom they are moving or about the culture that they are helping to destroy. Voroncov, the chairman of the Matěra village soviet and now the new settlement soviet, is interested only in the carrying through of orders. He attempts to assert his authority on every possible occasion and one of his favourite vehicles is the use of imposing bureaucratic jargon.

Pavel Pinigin is extremely critical of the way in which the new settlement has been constructed. He wonders how a decision was ever made on such a poor location, five miles from the river, and concludes that: "The explanation is simple: they had not built it for themselves, and had considered only the easiest way to build it and were least concerned with whether it would be good to live in" (p. 44). The _sovxo_ chairman who was supposed to be representing the interests of Matěra's villagers simply signed the agreement and disappeared and the construction manager, upset and incredulous
at the village he was to build on that site, admitted that if it were up to him, he
would not build it there: "... but the deed was done, the money allotted, and quite
a bit of money, and to make any changes was impossible" (p. 77).

Rasputin is critical of irresponsible actions by other government agencies as well.
For example, the Academy of Sciences announces its intention to remove Katerina's
cottage to a museum where it would be representative of Matěra's architecture. But
much like Pavel's repeated promises to Dar'ja that he would move their family graves,
the cottage, as well as other similarly designated structures, are forgotten. As a result of
this neglect Petruxa out of desperation decides that he will burn down the cottage to
ensure that he will collect the government money allotted for such aid in clearing
Matěra. Thus, a valuable historic treasure is lost and it is suggested that these losses
occur time and time again.

In Den'gi dlja Marii, Kuz'\,ma's travelling companions in his first-class coupe all
represent some bureaucracy in Soviet society. One of the men, Gennadij Ivanovič, is the
chairman of the regional committee for radio and television, and the most condescending
to and contemptuous of Kuz'\,ma. The others, an army colonel and "a man in a white
vest" regard Gennadij Ivanovič and his pompous mannerisms with the good-natured
humour of equals. Even they, however, take offence at his attacks on Kuz'\,ma and at
his opinions about problems in agricultural production and they finally put an end to his
one-sided quarrelling with the suggestion that they play a game of preference. Although
the other men make a reasonable effort to be friendly to Kuz'\,ma, Kuz'\,ma is totally
disconcerted by Gennadij Ivanovič's scornful glare: "It's obvious that he has been in
command for a long time, thought Kuz'\,ma, but as a person in his own right he is not
very kind. His voice is weak, he can't make his point with his voice so he taught
himself to use his eyes so that people would fear them" (p. 580).
In his characterizations of bureaucrats and authorities Rasputin does not depict all of the individuals who represent those agencies as negative; some are kind-hearted and sympathetic, while others are as cold and impersonal as the bureaucracies that they represent. Thus although the bureaucrats themselves are not always antagonists in Rasputin's povesti, the faceless bureaucracy and process always is.

(vi) The Peasantry

The Russian peasantry en masse is not idealized by Rasputin. He presents so many peasant types in his povesti, that he achieves a well-rounded characterization of this socio-economic group which contains positive and negative elements within itself. Although he presents some very humane qualities in the peasant, and particularly in the woman, such as compassion and a genuine desire to help, he also demonstrates that villagers are capable of many acts of baseness that are at least equivalent to that of their urban counterparts and their bureaucracy. For example, during his train ride Kuz'ma meets not only the disagreeable Gennadij Ivanović, but also the nameless young driver from the village who boasts about his infidelity, his drinking bouts, and his generally dissipated life. In Poslednij srok, Rasputin does not concentrate exclusively on the undesirable mannerisms and attitudes acquired by the citified Ljusja or Il'ja during their years away from the village, but we see in action an enraged, drunken Mixail who is a product of village life, as he threatens to beat his daughter and as he taunts his family to take Anna off his hands. Nastena recalls how Andrej, during their four years of married life, would drink and then beat her for the reason that she was apparently infertile. Thus, along with the positive traits and values which he portrays as part of the peasant character, Rasputin repeatedly reveals the greatest bane of the
countryside—alcoholism and familial violence.

Rasputin's village heroines represent the best in the Russian peasant, indeed they are almost saintly. However, the gallery of village women whom he presents as minor characters is also revealing. Andrej Gus'kov's mother, Semenovna, is the opposite of Anna and Dar'ja. She is lazy and willing to take full advantage of Nastena's industriousness. She refuses to accept Nastena fully into her family and she is always ready to gossip. Semenovna is absorbed in herself—in her crippled legs and in her past bitterness. Indeed, her son has probably inherited some of her self-interested traits. Semenovna's insensitivity to life around her inhibits even her feelings toward Andrej. Although she is Andrej's flesh and blood she, unlike Mixeič, does not intuit Andrej's proximity, nor in her act of banishing Nastena from her home does she sense that Nastena is carrying Andrej's child. This amazes Nastena for she had been unconsciously depending on such maternal intuition to save her:

> Up to the very last minute, Nastena had hoped that since she was not at all guilty, the truth would somehow show itself and save her from such treatment. . . . [She wanted] even a drop of sympathy from her mother-in-law, her silent and prophetic guess that the child whom she had been up in arms about was her kin. Surely her own blood must have told her something, didn't it surge through her heart with a questioning jolt? (pp. 376-377)

Nastena takes refuge with Nad'ja, a colourful, sharp-tongued young widow who avidly listens to Nastena's plight and then runs off to tell the village. Consequently Nastena notices that the village women who have had husbands at home during the war regard her and her illegitimate child with suspicion.

In *Den'gi dlja Marii* Rasputin includes as minor female characters the greedy Stepanida, the selfish agronomist's wife, and the spiteful Nad'ja Voroncova, who are far
removed from the character of Rasputin’s idealized heroine. In Proščanie s Matěroj, along with the kind and good old women on the island, Rasputin depicts Klavka Strigunova who chides and derides the old women.

Rasputin endows his heroines with all of the qualities which represent the best of the peasantry. Their concern for the preservation of traditions, memories, and spiritual values associated with the past is the quintessential concern of a great many people in Soviet society, and is a large part of the characterization of the heroine. But, as Rasputin’s other characters reveal, he does not ignore or conceal the socio-economic problems of the countryside, the crisis of morals and values occurring both in the country and the city, or some of the more traditional negative features of the Russian peasantry.

Rasputin’s portrayal of the peasantry is summed up well by Geoffrey Hosking when he writes that: "... villages are not only idyllic and harmonious societies which may be undermined by external forces: they carry within themselves some of the seeds of their own destruction.”

(vii) Folkloric Characters

Elements of folklore are salient features in Rasputin’s povesti. Animism and personification, common devices in Russian folklore, are frequently employed by Rasputin to bring nature’s phenomena to life and to create a sense of the interdependent bond between man and nature in his works. In his last povest', Proščanie s Matěroj, Rasputin develops two characters that might have come out of Russian folk culture and social history, Bogodul and the Xozjain. Bogodul, whose past is shrouded in uncertainty, is characterized by his name and his expressive use of the curse kurva. The explanation of how Bogodul got his name introduces him as a figure with strong mythic overtones:
In this story there is another name that has arisen from out of nowhere--Bogodul. . . . But it's possible to guess at how the nickname originated. The old man who claimed he was Polish loved Russian swear words, and apparently some visiting literate soul must have heard him and said in a temper "blasphemer" [Bogoxul], and the villagers either misunderstood or purposely twisted it, changing it to Bogodul. Whether it really happened in this way or not is impossible to say but the explanation suggests itself. (p. 16)

Although Bogodul speaks very little (Rasputin intimates that he doesn't know Russian well), he sees everything and knows everything. His rough appearance and his repeated use of the offensive curse suggest that his role in the povest' may perhaps be likened to the jurodivyj 'fool in God', a phenomenon in Russian social and cultural history.

The Xozjain is an omnipresent and omniscient character. This is the master of the island who watches over and protects Matëra like the domovej 'house-spirit' in Russian folk culture. He is given the form of a little cat that possesses a keen sensitivity to all life on Matëra: he knows about her future as well as her past, knows what every person will do, is present at every event which occurs on Matëra, and is aware of every non-human sound and movement on, within, or over the island.

Bogodul and the Xozjain are of fundamental importance to the structure and mythic form of Proščanie s Matëroj. As major characters, they complement Rasputin's use of such devices as dreams, visions, and omens in the characterization of his heroines. They add an element of the fantastic which makes the inner spiritual world of Matëra as real as the outside material world with its megaprojects and new settlements.
In the present chapter, some of the essential stylistic, structural, and thematic features which are common to Rasputin's four *povesti* have been examined. The overview nature of the format concentrated only on the most salient features in order to indicate the links which exist between the works and the overall unity in his prose. It is necessary now to focus on specific aspects of the language and style of Rasputin's works for they, and the rhythms and moods that they create, represent Rasputin's contribution to Russian literature. Rasputin's two most mature works, *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj*, are conclusive representatives of his prose. In the following chapters they will be analyzed at length in terms of language (dialect and other language styles), narration, interior speech forms, their figurative and imagistic systems, uses of folklore, and their respective forms of tragedy and myth all of which unify the stylistic and thematic, philosophical and rhetorical aspects, the considerable social commentary, pathos, and anxiety into *povesti* about quintessential moral, psychological and social processes and problems.
Notes

1 Rasputin, "Ljubov' k svoemu geroju," p. 8.

2 Dyrdin, p. 642. Dyrdin refers to Den'gi dija Marii as Kuz'ma's "search for truth" (xoždenie za pravdoj). Xoždenie is a genre with roots in old Russian literature and biblical subjects, but latterly it became "the name given any description of a journey. . . . [It is] a narrative written in the vernacular [with marked] authorial inquisitiveness, descriptions of nature, daily life, and social differences . . . which make these works valuable historical sources . . . as well as remarkable works of today's Russian culture." V. Kuz'mina, "Xoždenie," Slovar' literaturovedčeskix terminov, 1974 ed.

3 Rasputin, "Byt' samim soboj," p. 147.

4 V. Rasputin, "Den'gi dija Marii," in Povesti (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1976), p. 618. All further references to this work appear in the text. All translated passages in this dissertation are my own.

5 O. Salynskij suggests that the plots in all of Rasputin's povesti are founded on the common opposition of home and the outside world, with home not being a concrete physical or social entity, but rather a system of moral values which have been or are in the process of being disrupted. "Dom i dorogi," Voprosy literatury, No. 2 (1977), p. 9. Thus, conflicting morality and ethics exist not only between village and city folk (and sometimes the urbanite is more moral), but between people from the same environment.


7 V. Rasputin, "Poslednij srok," in Povesti (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1976), p. 399. All further references to this work appear in the text.

8 Salynskij, p. 15.

9 Hosking, Beyond Socialist Realism, p. 71


11 V. Rasputin, "Živi i pomni," in Povesti (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1976), p. 363. All further references to this work appear in the text.


13 V. Rasputin, "Proščanie s Mat'eroj," in Povesti, (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1976), p. 78. All further references to this work appear in the text.

This identification of narrator with protagonist facilitated some ideologically-based commentary in regard to Pročanje s Materoj. Rasputin was criticized for his conservatism and for his lack of sensitivity to the social and civilizing aspects of progress in the contemporary countryside.

It is interesting to note that at the Sixth Congress of Soviet Writers, the author F. Abramov encouraged his colleagues to reinstate the spiritual in their literary works: "... recently much has been said about the preservation of the natural environment and monuments of material culture. Isn't it time that we posed the question of preservation and protection of the eternal treasures of our spiritual culture, accumulated by human experience over the centuries with the same great energy and determination?" Šestoj s"ezd pisatelej SSSR: stenografčeskij otcet (Moscow, n.p., 1978), p. 575.

Guilt is intended by Rasputin to be interpreted largely in the ethical sense as the "moral relationship of a person to individuals and society as a whole. Since a person chooses his mode of life and assumes responsibility for his actions based on reason and will, he is guilty if he shuns his responsibility, scorns accepted moral values, or does not fulfil his ethical duty" (Slovar' po etike, 1983 ed., p. 43). The Russian definition of moral guilt does not differ essentially from a Western definition of the moral aspect of guilt: "a feeling of responsibility or remorse for some offence, crime, wrong, etc. whether real or imagined" (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, 1967 unabridged ed.).

In Živi i pomni, guilt acquires an additional religious aspect for "guilt is recognized as a characteristic of man since creation, the consequence of original sin. Thus atonement and redemption of guilt is dependent on divine grace" (Slovar' po etike, p. 43). Andrej sees Nastena's pregnancy as the redemption of his guilt, while Nastena understands that the sacrifice of her life is the sole means of reparation for her offences against herself, her child, Andrej, and her community.
A child is the hero in several of Rasputin’s stories and he is seen interacting with adults in a situation which involves the questioning of adult morals and values. Examples of his stories about children include "My s Dimkoj" (1967), "Rudol'fio" (1967), "Uroki francuzskogo" (1973), and "Vek živi–vek ljubi" (1982).


Gillespie, p. 394.

Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism*, p. 77.
The content, intent, and import of Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Materoj suggest that Rasputin possesses a basically tragic sense of the problems and resolutions which he presents in his povesti. The major difference in the tragic view of the two works is one of intensity and direction. Živi i pomni is a tragedy in the pure sense of literary form, while myth and myth-like construction are the pivotal forms in Proščanie s Materoj of which a tragic ending is but one element. As an initial step in the analysis of Rasputin's style, it is necessary to examine in some detail his use of tragedy and myth as the controlling literary forms which he has incorporated within the short fiction genre of povesti.

Courage and inevitable defeat are the two traditional and outstanding qualities in great literary tragedy. They are the requisite features which condition the presence of other elements of tragedy including the overpowering challenge, the great attempt, the close relationship between character and fate, the logical and inexorable march of events, the grandeur of the hero's conceptions. A tragedy exemplifies that sense of life in which

... humans are inevitably doomed, through their own failures or errors or even the action of their virtues, or through the nature of fate, destiny, or the human condition to suffer, fail, and die, and that the measure of a person's life is to be taken by how he or she faces that inevitable failure. In whatever form the tragic impulse takes its expression, it celebrates courage and dignity in the face of defeat and attempts to portray the grandeur of the human spirit.
The *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* suggests that modern literary tragedy still bears certain similarities with ancient Greek tragedy in terms of content and form.² *Živi i pomni,* as an example of modern tragedy, upholds this suggestion. The central character, Nastena, is involved in a difficult situation which isolates her from her community and results in her death. The personages interacting with Nastena respond to her plight in various ways. Andrej, her husband, who provides a catalyst for the situation with his desertion, is alternately critical, supportive, and even suspicious of Nastena. His own weak moral fibre, cowardice, and egocentrism condition this fluctuation while placing an extra burden on Nastena. Mixeič, Andrej's father, and Innokentij Ivanovič are both justly suspicious of Andrej's reported disappearance from the army and of Nastena's irregular behaviour. Through veiled and direct references to Andrej both men adopt a position vis à vis Nastena. In his approaches to Nastena, Mixeič suggests empathy and support for her and Andrej although he is critical of his son, while Innokentij Ivanovič is openly hostile and accusatory. Nastena's close women friends are supportive of her when they can offer her their pity: Liza Vologžina is sympathetic that Andrej has been lost without word, but is immediately suspicious of Nastena and her own husband when she learns of Nastena's pregnancy, and Nastena knows that Nad'ka will turn against her if she learns the true story. Thus the function of the characters that interact with the hero is "to place the hero's struggle in perspective—to afford us norms of vision or judgement by which we can appraise it."³ Nastena becomes increasingly isolated and lonely for she is convinced that, should the villagers learn of Andrej's deed and whereabouts, they would condemn both husband and wife for their actions.

As in the classical tragedy, the dilemma in *Živi i pomni* is a given element of the plot: Andrej's act of desertion catalyzes external and internal forces—the nature of
their environment, Nastena's value system and personality, and even the workings of an outside will—, which unite in setting before Nastena an overpowering challenge. With her decision to protect Andrej, Nastena defies the mores of her society, which in a period of war, have become extremely demanding of the individual's responsibility to the collective and intolerant of any violation. A central paradox in Živi i pomni lies in the fact that Nastena is able to make the decision to support Andrej because her ethical system fundamentally coincides with that of her society and her culture. The operative ethic is a woman's sense of responsibility and guilt for others and in particular for her husband and his fate in life. Nastena reflects upon this as she wonders why some men would return from the war and others not:

No, there was something here, something that depended on the woman too. Probably from the beginning of time, women struggled with this riddle, tried to discover the mystery, not relying on luck alone, and without result: from century to century each got by on her own instinct, with a blind, passionate, and unreliable spell, and, if that wasn't enough, she exhausted herself with the guilt. (p. 262)

Nastena responds to her challenge bravely but with a certain naivety. She hopes that her decision will be received in good faith by her community as she is upholding the accepted role of the Russian woman which is "to arrange her life only once and to accept everything that comes along" (p. 206). Even as Nastena's realization of the enormity of Andrej's act and her complicity in it grow, she continues to hope that they will be understood. Initially, she suggests to Andrej that, "'The war will end, maybe you'll be forgiven'" (p. 237). As her sense of guilt for Andrej grows, she turns to some of her mother's words of wisdom: "'My mother used to say that there is no guilt that can not be forgiven. They're people too, aren't they? The war will end and then we'll see . . .'" (p. 297). And again, near the conclusion of the povest', Nastena
tries to convince Andrej with her own faith in people: "Wouldn't it be better for Andrej to come out of hiding and admit to his crime? They believe that there is more joy in Heaven about one repentant sinner than about ten righteous men. People should also be able to understand that a man who has fallen into such sin could never sin again . . ." (p. 371). Nastena fails to understand that by hoping for forgiveness for herself and Andrej, she is juxtaposing religious and political ethics. Her belief that their sins will be understood with compassion (a belief which is upheld by the pity that the village women feel for Nastena as they bury her), can not be reconciled with the fact that in their war-time society, Andrej's desertion will be viewed politically as an unpardonable act.

Nastena's personal tragedy is developed very poignantly by Rasputin. She progresses through several stages before she can accept the relationship between her dreams and her fate, and her place in the universal order of things. Initially, Nastena can not reconcile what has become of her hopes of happiness—a married life with Andrej, a family after the war has ended—with the reality of her situation. She asks herself at every turn, "How will it be, what should I do next?" (p. 274); "What is going to happen to you, Nastena?" (p. 229). Her pregnancy brings her to a turning point for she realizes that, with this development, there is no exit and she must "... make her peace with what is and not struggle with her fate. What would be, would be" (p. 282). These final words represent a fundamental change in Nastena's attitude as they stand in contrast to her earlier questioning. She decides that now she need not do anything but "... let things go as they are. Somewhere, either close by or far away, her personal and rightful happiness must be waiting, suffering from their long separation" (p. 285). Her past and future lies, excuses and tales become a single entity for Nastena "... seven problems, one answer. Nastena had come too far, had too
much to fear, and thus it was better not to fear anything and to forge straight ahead"
(p. 282).

As time passes, the emotional strain on Nastena and the burden of justification placed on her system of morals and ethics becomes an unbearable weight of guilt, shame, and utter hopelessness which manifests itself in total exhaustion: "She was sick to death of lying. She was sick of everything. . . . That was it—everything had gone up in smoke and you can't thresh ashes. And what could she think up now? It was too late" (pp. 389–390).

The final turning point in Nastena's psychology occurs when she awakens from a light sleep refreshed and at peace with herself. Consciously, she has decided to warn Andrej of the search that is closing in around him, but subconsciously she knows that she will make the ultimate sacrifice of her life to save Andrej. She knows now that her happiness is, "Not to be afraid, not to be ashamed, not to wait in terror for the coming day, to become free forever and ever, remembering neither herself nor the others, not remembering the slightest thing of what she had suffered. Here it was, at last, the happiness she had desired and had earned by her torments—why hadn't she believed in it before? . . ." (p. 392).

In this, the final scene of Živi i pomni, Rasputin inserts an element which is directly reminiscent of the Chorus, an essential part of Greek tragedy, which commented on the action or provided a lyrical element. Nastena hears within herself the strains of an ancient song: "One choir stops, a second starts up . . . and a third one joins in . . . No, it was sweet to be alive; it was terrifying to be alive; it was shameful to be alive" (p. 391). Thus, the three phases of Nastena's life are described by the three choruses: the second and third choruses commenting on the horror and shame of life, combine their voices, while the first, which speaks of life's sweetness, falls silent.
If, in tragedy, the dilemma faced by the hero is a given of the plot, and if courage and inevitable defeat are essential elements of tragedy, then there is necessarily a close relationship between character and plot: "We speak of the 'inevitability' of a series of events in this form, and of the particular challenge confronting the hero and the end to which he comes as part of his 'fate'." In Živi i pomni, despite Nastena's exemplary determination and courage, we know that she is fated to defeat. Her action places her outside the mores of her society and there is no suggestion that she can either alter or change them in order to save herself. Her husband, Andrej, as the main antagonist, and all of the secondary characters in the povest join forces with the inevitability of the plot development to determine the nature of Nastena's heroism. Nastena seems to have some sense of the magnitude of moral strength and courage that will be required of her when she reflects upon the turn her life has taken: "Whether by fate or by something higher, it seemed to Nastena that she had been noticed, singled out from the rest—otherwise so much would not have befallen her at one time. For that, you have to be in full view. . . ." (p. 282).

While the plot and the hero of Živi i pomni reveal several characteristics of ancient Greek tragedy, the povest fundamentally conforms to the modern concept of tragedy. In contrast to the use in classical tragedy of heroes from the aristocracy or elite whose own 'tragic flaw' causes their downfall, Nastena's tragedy is that of an ordinary man, and the tragic plot of Živi i pomni is "to be taken as an expression and reflection of man's nature, and his vision of the universe and his role and position in it, in any society or period. . . ." We see the central dilemma in Živi i pomni largely through Nastena's eyes and thus the reader becomes involved with her fate. The author portrays Nastena's decision as true to her character and a condition of her nature that is inseparable from her system of values and her moral strength. Thus it is difficult to
make a simplistic moral judgement of Nastena, condemning her for a sin or a wrong choice because her decision to aid a deserter (which will not easily be forgiven in her society) causes her great mental and spiritual suffering. Rasputin, however, hints that Nastena deserves our forgiveness, that her happiness has been earned by her torments and her guilt:

But shame would vanish and shame would forget, it would free her. . . . Kneeling in the stern, she leaned lower and lower, staring intently into the depths with all the vision that had been given her for many years to come, and she saw . . . a match flare up at the very bottom. (pp. 392-393)

Nastena's courage in the face of her hopeless dilemma is presented by Rasputin as an example of tragic virtue. The emphasis in Živi i pomni is not on goodness or evil, poor judgement or punishment, but on the grand quality of Nastena's spirit, which bears the worst that man or fate can devise and which ultimately triumphs over them. True to tragic form, Nastena's triumph is accompanied by her death and the culmination of her life and history for tragedy is "human life as seen in an ultimate perspective."

I have earlier suggested that there is a tragic sense in Rasputin's portrayal of reality in Proščanie s Matěroj. It is engendered by the plot which accompanies the main hero Dar'a: with the impending flood of Matěra, her challenge lies in the attempt to retain and preserve as much as possible of Matěra's cultural and historical past. This attempt is epitomized by repeated requests of her son, Pavel, to remove the Pinigin ancestral graves to the new settlement. When Dar'a realizes that this request will never be fulfilled, she gradually and intuitively becomes aware that she too will never leave Matěra. In its quiet, yet strong way, her spirit triumphs over all the official orders and commands as she and her friends remain on Matěra and perish along with the island. Thus, as in Živi i pomni, there is a sense of victory in Dar'a's death, a victory of
spirit and nature over bureaucracy and technology.

The emphasis in Proščanie s Materoj is not tragic, however, but mythic. It speaks of the importance of maintaining a sense of history, culture, tradition, and human worth in the face of a rapidly advancing and depersonalized society. It emphasizes the universal, rather than national or local truth of these values. Myth incorporates all of these concerns and elements, including a tragic intonation, into its structure. As Bruno Bettelheim characterizes it:

[Myth embodies] . . . the cumulative experience of a society as men wished to recall past wisdom for themselves and transmit it to future generations. These tales are the purveyors of deep insights that have sustained mankind through the long vicissitudes of its existence, a heritage that is not revealed in any other form as simply and directly, or as accessibly. . . .

I suggest that Proščanie s Materoj is a modern myth and that Rasputin envisages and formulates his materials according to this mode of thought; in other words, myth is vital to the essence of the work. In order to understand Proščanie s Materoj as myth, let us proceed from the thesis that:

Myth may be defined as a story or a complex of story elements taken as expressing, and therefore as implicitly symbolizing, certain deep-lying aspects of human and transhuman existence. . . . Our proposed definition includes the idea of narrative as an essential part of the meaning of myth; but . . . it insists that the original sources of such storytelling lie somehow below or beyond the conscious inventions of individual poets, and that the stories themselves thus serve as partly unconscious vehicles for meanings that have something to do with the inner nature of the universe and of human life.

A variety of folkloric, mythic, psychic, religious, and pagan elements in Proščanie s Materoj suggest that Rasputin is drawing on a wealth of material formed by a mode of consciousness and a way of envisaging experience which is termed "mythopoeic." From
these and other related elements, Rasputin fashions a myth, selecting, regrouping, condensing, and elaborating them according to his own design. It is characteristic of myth that the teller should modify all of the old material according to his concerns of the moment and problems of the age.

What type of mythopoeic material does Rasputin draw upon to create his myth about Matëra? The two basic sources are ritual and a prelogical language that is fundamentally primitive but ultimately poetic for "the endowment of inanimate objects with life, will, and emotion is at once the natural tendency of primitive man and the most sublime task of poetry."9

Ritual tends to engender myth because it is celebrative and participative. In Prošanje s Matëroj, two important rituals are re-created at length by Rasputin: the summertime hay-making and the bi-annual white-washing of the home. Both are seasonal rituals that express the joy of the impending event and a feeling of participation in the rhythms of nature. In the depiction of the final hay-making on Matëra, in which most of its former inhabitants willingly participate, we sense the spirit and the importance of the ritual as they relive what was and what will never be again. "Half the village returned to Matëra and Matëra revived, if not with its former life . . . but all the same with a life that resembled it, as though it had returned to take a look and to remember how it had been" (p. 89). And indeed, the portrayal of the haymaking creates the impression that a literary time machine has taken us back in time. Pavel, who once was the brigade leader, is again appointed "as though nothing had changed" (p. 89); Ded Maksim is searched out to fix wheelbarrows, pitchforks, and rakes and he "turned out to be alive . . . although he had just been dying . . . [and] he began to wave his arms, shout, and order" (p. 89). Although the villagers know that they will eventually have to bring over the tractors that are already on the mainland,
they begin the mowing as they had in earlier days with scythes, horse-drawn hoes, and weave brooms for the hay-cocks. The mowers grow ten years younger as they work, raise a ruckus, play and frolic like children. Klavka Strigunova impudently strips to the waist, "there is no shame when you are in your own camp" (p. 90), and the entire picture is reminiscent of past centuries.

Song, an important component of ritual which expresses the sense of participation in the natural world, accompanies the work of the Matêra haymakers and, as they return from the fields with song, the children and elderly left in the village come out into the street to join in. The entry of the mowers into the village is ceremonious:

In front were the horses hitched to the carts, bobbing their heads in unison as if bowing at the entrance to the village, two or three people were in the carts, several riding on horseback around them, and the rest behind the carts, singing as they walked . . . (p. 91).

They sang many songs, mainly old, and one in particular that contained the words of a reminiscent farewell which "it happened that the people remembered and knew and which they had kept within themselves for this very occasion . . . ." (p. 91).

The concerns of the myth maker Rasputin surface in the thoughts of the old women as they watch the activity, and the mood of their questions is reflected in the mood of the entire depiction:

"What more did you need? What did you want, what did you complain about when we lived this way? Well? Oh, if only there was someone here to give you a good whipping."
And the people agreed, reflecting: "No, there is no one." (p. 90)
In such a way the narrative commentary weaves all the various elements of the ritual together objectively and lyrically, sometimes speaking through the villagers, to present a fresh conception of an old ritual which is but one story element in the integral myth of Matera.

The second ritual which comprises another complete story within the povest' is that of Dar'ja's whitewashing her house and preparing it for its inevitable end. This ritual traditionally precedes two holidays: after the autumn harvest before Intercession, and after the winter heating for Easter, and was regarded as a celebration. "After readying and renovating the cottage ... amidst cleanliness and order, and in anticipation of the patronal festival, it was so pleasant and comfortable that the bright Sunday feeling remained with you for a long time after" (p. 165). In Proščanie s Matěroj, Rasputin adapts this ritual to an entirely different occasion and it becomes Dar'ja's solitary and lonely act:

You don't put a person into his coffin without first washing him and dressing him in his best clothes—that was the custom. And how else could she see off her own home ... ? No, others could do as they liked, but she had some understanding. She would see it off properly ... (p. 165).

Dar'ja completes the ritual step by step fiercely refusing any help; she whitewashes the entire interior of the cottage, including the Russian stove and windowsills, hangs clean curtains on the windows and then begins work on the outside window shutters. She scrubs the floor and, according to tradition, spreads grass over it. Finally, her intuition tells her that to see her home off with honour she needs to hang fir branches in the front corners and over the windows. She searches them out and finds them. Dar'ja finds the strength and the energy to accomplish the entire ritual only through her belief that:
Someone, and obviously it was she, had to be here, cleaning up the cottage, and in a personal family way to see off Matera. . . . That was fine because it would be easier for others. There just had to be a beginning, and the continuation would follow, it would be. (pp. 168-170)

In Dar'ja, Rasputin creates an amalgam of both psychic and linguistic phenomena. Such amalgams have been emphasized by a number of anthropologists as very important factors in the genesis and growth of myth. Dar'ja is a creature of Matera's past and present—she cannot conceptualize between the literal and the figurative, the descriptive and the fanciful. She endows every object on Matera and the island itself with a soul and a rationality. Just within the story of how Dar'ja prepares her cottage, there are several descriptions of her animistic sensibilities. As she begins her task, Dar'ja notices how quickly the wash is drying on the ceiling, and immediately feels that it is the intentional work of the house: "'It's drying fast. It knows what's in store and it's hurrying. Oh, it knows, it knows, it must.' And it seemed to her that the wash went on dull and grieving . . ." (p. 166).

Dar'ja's identification with her house and Matera is so complete that she feels she is slowly disappearing as the house nears readiness: "She cleaned and felt all of her strength wearing out and dissipating,—and the less work there was left, the less there was of her also. It seemed that they would end at the same time and that was all Dar'ja wanted . . ." (p. 170).

Dar'ja is very receptive to psychic experiences that come to her either through her intuitive senses or on those occasions when she falls into a semi-conscious trance. She is convinced that she is being guided in all her actions while readying her cottage, and even as she collects the fir branches for the final step of the preparation, "The blessed mood that had its source in some secret place, had not left her, and she imagined that someone was constantly watching over her and directing her" (p. 171).
The story climaxes when Dar'ja, in a trance, leaves her cottage to its fate and wanders off aimlessly. In her distracted mental state, she becomes aware of the Xozjain of the island who accompanies her on her walk: "She remembered only that she walked and walked without pause to rest . . . and it seemed that a small animal that she had never seen before ran alongside her and kept trying to peer into her eyes" (p. 172).

Dar'ja is aware that on Matera a deeper reality exists which is intangible but perceivable by her acute emotional sensitivity to nature. This sensibility is released in Dar'ja during her frequent dream-like, visionary states. The human soul, like nature and its cycles, is eternal and timeless, and the past and present seem to come together in this dimension of reality. Ordinary humans do not realize that they have the capability to perceive this reality:

The old women dreamt dried up, anxious dreams, which came to them second-hand, but the old women didn't know about that. Only at night, having cast-off from the solid shore, do the living communicate with the dead. The dead come to them in the flesh and the word and ask them for the truth so that they could take it back to those whom the living still remembered. The living say much when they are unconscious and unhampered that they do not remember when they wake but search for casual answers to the final visions that they saw. (p. 57)

Dar'ja, however, possesses the ability to place herself deliberately into a dream-like state in order to communicate with her parents and obtain advice, consolation, and forgiveness from them. She remembers what she has experienced because she is aware of that deeper reality in which she exists:

She closed her eyes so that she would not see either the smoke or the ravaged graves and, rocking forward-backward, in a lulling motion, as if she was flying off from one state of consciousness toward another, gathering up the relief of non-existence, she quietly announced: "It's me, papa. It's me, mama." . . . (p. 155).
Thus, it is Dar'ja who provides the vital link between the living and the dead, the animate and the inanimate, and brings them to life, giving them emotion and sensitivity in her pantheistic concept of the universe. She is a mythical hero through whom themes are presented majestically and with spiritual force and her own morals and expectations lead her to place constant demands on lesser mortals. Within the myth, Rasputin presents Dar'ja as a culture hero to be emulated.

Another clearly mythic figure in *Proščanie s Matěraj* is Bogodul. Aside from his appearance, the remarkable feature about Bogodul is his speech which in many ways conforms to the pre-logical language of mythopoeic experience. In such a system of speech, semantic activity consists of "fusing certain raw elements of experience—qualities, relationships, capabilities, emotional colourings, and whatever else—into a unity of reference which some symbol is taken to represent." Rasputin reworks this phenomenon, and thus one word in Bogodul's language system, *kurva*, is designated to have various culturally significant meanings, depending on the environment in which it is used. The pre-logical quality of Bogodul's speech is emphasized by a description of the sounds he uses instead of words: he huffs (*fukaet*), growls (*ryčit*), caws like a crow (*krjakaet*), and mumbles (*burčit*). For Bogodul, the word *kurva* covers a very broad field of meaning, in fact, potentially, the whole of reality. In his language system it

... substituted a good thousand that no other person could have done without ... [Bogodul] rarely conversed in Russian, and then it really wasn't a conversation, but a guileless explanation of what was needed, spiced up many times over by that 'kurva' and its relations. ... [Kurva] contained Bogodul's entire thought, his precise opinion of the subject being discussed ... (p. 34).

Bogodul as a story-element within the larger myth of Matěra is definitively linked in an elemental and spiritual way with the heroine Dar'ja. Despite his mannerisms,
Dar'ja tolerates and accepts Bogodul and comprehends his speech. When her grandson Andrej complains that Bogodul is inhuman, Dar'ja articulates the bond which exists between them:

"Why isn't he human?" she replied with an unbearable spiritual despondency, weariness, and sorrow. "He's human."

"What do you mean human?! Just once take a good look at his face. It's frightening. And he can't even talk like people talk, he just growls and mumbles like an animal."

"Well, I can understand him without unnecessary words. And he understands me. These days, Andruška, I seek out people who are my equals. Am I any better? There is nobody left who would understand me." (p. 127)

Thus, Rasputin's use of ritual and pre-language is a self-conscious application of these primitive elements to express something which he himself feels deeply. Both in his narration and his discourse, he presents us with aspects of the cosmic view of his hero Dar'ja, he emphasizes her sense of participation in the rhythms of nature and her tendency to animate all objects around her. By doing so, he indicates the abnormal through a presentation of the normal and age-old:

All of this had happened many times, and many times Matera had been part of the changes occurring in nature, not lagging behind and not running ahead of each day. Thus, the gardens had been planted—but not all of them. . . . It was the same old Matera and yet it was not. . . . Everything was in its place and yet it was not . . . (p. 15)

Rasputin molds and glues together various elements which constitute his myth by extending the basic sensibilities of his hero and other main personages into his narration.

It is instructive to consider the mythic elements found in Proščanie s Matěřoj in terms of Carl Jung's thesis dealing with the collective unconscious which, he proposes,
underlies the formation of primary myth:

Jung postulates 'collective unconscious' which consists of 'primordial images' or 'archetypes'—i.e., trans-individual ideas with a strong feeling-tone and with a tendency to find expression in characteristic imagistic forms.

Indeed, several images in Proščanie s Matēroj may be viewed as archetypal ideas—persistently recurring themes in human thought. Such archetypes include: the earth mother, the destruction of the world, the world tree, the washing away of sin, and the god in disguise. The earth mother archetype is clearly present in Proščanie s Matēroj and in the relationship of the word Matēra to the root word mat' 'mother'. The relationship of the word materik 'mainland, continent' to Matēra and mat' suggests that it is possible to view the island as a microcosm. Such semantic and conceptual links appear to be confirmed in the following passage:

From end to end, from shore to shore, there was enough expanse and wealth on [Matēra], enough beauty and wilderness, and every kind of animal in pairs; separated from the mainland, it had enough of everything in good supply. Is this not why it was named with the proud name of Matēra? (p. 44)

Thus the archetypal destruction of the world is represented by the flooding of Matēra, the washing away of sin is seen in Dar'ja's whitewashing and cleaning of her cottage, and the god in disguise is represented by Bogodul who "really was like a god, having at last come down to the suffering earth and putting them all to the test with his sinful, Christ-like appearance" (p. 35). The King Larch is the archetypal world tree, for by popular folk belief on Matēra it "anchors the island to the riverbed, to one common earth, and as long as it is standing, there will be a Matēra" (p. 159).
Rasputin elaborates on this archetype with the story about the larch: he tells of the pagan and Christian offerings made to the tree, and about the village history and tragic deaths connected with it. The mythic quality of the larch is enhanced by the tale of how it withstood several onslaughts of modern technology in an attempt to fell it but remained standing and eternal. As one of the workmen comments in defeat and awe, sensing that there is an outside force at work here: "'If it were merely a tree..." (p. 164).

There is a direct link made between the larch and Bogodul when a workman comments that the tree and Bogodul resemble one another: "'What a beast! ... Looks like our host.' He had Bogodul in mind. 'Just as abnormal ...'" (p. 162). Thus, an associational bond is made between the larch, Bogodul, and Dar'ja which supports the theme of the infallible, undauntable, timeless, and even irrational qualities found in the combined forces of nature and the human spirit that Rasputin develops in Proščanie s Matėroj. In this blend of elements an emotional tone is discerned. It appeals to an aspect of our perception that is capable of counterposing the rational and intellectual way by which men in modern societies undergoing rapid change deal with their changing realities.

Together with the archetypes discussed above, there are in Proščanie s Matėroj several archetypal themes, situations, and characters. These include universal patterns associated with the individual and society, the tension between parents and children, the presence of such characters as the braggart, the buffoon (Petruxa is a combination of both), the rebel (Dar'ja has this quality), etc. In the use of such archetypes, Rasputin arranges elements so that general and universal attributes are emphasized. Archetypes allow Rasputin to speak on subjects and themes in a language that is "stronger than his own" and, in so doing, "he raises the idea... above the occasional and transitory into
the sphere of the everexisting. He transmutes personal destiny into the destiny of mankind."

Along with such universal and archetypal aspects of myth that are common to many cultures and many ages, Rasputin re-constructs in Proščanie s Matěroj, and to some extent in Živi i pomni, a mythology. What appear to be strong elements of folk culture underlying the world view of Rasputin's heroes are fundamental remnants of a Slav mythology (formed prior to the 10th century and the adoption of Christianity by Kiev Rus'), which, if not extensively developed, had become deeply rooted within the conscious and unconscious thought of the Russian people resulting in specific ethical, moral, religious, and cultural behaviour. Most important, this mythology is well established in Rasputin's consciousness as a result of a combination of factors—the songs, tales, and legends that he heard from his grandmother as a child (a grandmother who he admits was a prototype for Dar'ja), as well as the influence of reading deeply into the history of Russian folklore including A. N. Afanas'ev's authoritative three-volume collection of Russian folk tales. Thus, Rasputin weaves all of these elements and influences into a mythology that is present in all of his writing, an understanding of which is crucial to a fuller interpretation of the moral, religious, and cultural implications found at various levels in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj. Let us examine some of the basic concepts of Slav mythology and how they are reflected in the themes and motifs of these povesti.

In early Russian mythology, which was pagan in orientation, the tendency was not toward the belief in great gods, but toward the worship of nature and the concept of blood-kinship. According to G. Fedotov in his two-volume study, The Russian Religious Mind, a cult of Mother Earth existed which embodied sub-cults of trees, fire, and water, among others. The cult of blood kinship (rod) also had two distinct aspects—ancestor
worship and a faith in destiny. These conceptual and spiritual cornerstones of Russian mythology reveal a sense that there was a powerful bond between man and the eternal cycles of nature and the universe.

The Earth Mother was conceived in the narrow context of nurturing, life-giving soil. The link between the idea of the motherhood of the earth and the worship of ancestors is established through the belief that an individual comes into the world for a transient moment in the eternal life of the rod and returns at death to Mother Earth to be with his ancestors. If we accept Dar’ja’s obsession with moving her family graves to the new settlement as being deeply rooted in these concepts, then the reasons for her indignation, fear, and guilt that she can not take them with her or prevent the impending flood are understandable. Dar’ja voices her feelings to Bogodul in this way:

"I was here and it was up to me to keep my eyes open. And now that the water is coming, it is like my fault too. And that I’ll be buried alone. . . . They’re all together: father, mother, my brothers, my husband—I alone will be taken off to other soil. And I guess that I’ll be flooded too after a while, and my bones will float away, but not together with theirs. They’ll never catch up." (p. 37)

In Russian mythology the Earth Mother embodied kindness and mercy for she nourished man during life and gave him rest after death. However no human embodiment or shape was attributed to the Earth Mother, and she was perceived essentially in an impersonal way; she was the grandeur of nature and its cycles. Thus, in Rasputin’s prose nature is evoked not as a detail of setting, but as an integral player in the emotion or mood that is created, for the typically Russian sense of nature is one of belonging and being deeply rooted in it. But the Earth Mother was also a metaphor of motherhood with fertility and maternity rather than purity and virginity as its virtues. This concept of motherhood is a central motif in Živi i pomni. From childhood,
Nastena had been aware of the folk belief that "a barren, childless woman was not a whole woman, but only half a woman" (p. 205). Nastena was thus concerned and distressed that in four years of marriage, she had not conceived a child by Andrej. When Nastena suspects that she is pregnant and tells Andrej, his exclamation of *Bogorodica moja* is full of significance that is not only theological. The Christian appellation *Bogorodica* 'mother of God' replaced *Rožanicy* 'the Slav goddesses of birth', and thus, as well as carrying the Christian connotation, it was the embodiment of motherhood, the universal mother. It also has a moral implication in that *Bogorodica* is a protector, and so for Andrej the pregnant Nastena symbolizes a possibility for redemption at his final judgement: "'If you give birth to the child, I will justify myself, for me this is the last chance. . . . Save my soul'" (p. 277).

Elements of the sub-cults of water, fire, and trees are evident in *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Materoj*. These natural elements were not worshipped however because they were images associated with the Earth Mother. Water and forests were always regarded apprehensively and this is portrayed in the *povesti* as the fear of drowning and as the belief in the wood-demon (*leši*) or the changeling (*oboroten*). The idea that suicide, or death by violent, unnatural means leads to damnation is a pre-Christian idea, although Nastas’ja’s fear of drowning, for example, is voiced in already Christianized terms in *Proščanie s Materoj* : "'Oh, I don’t want to be drowned. . . . It’s a sin you know.’" (p. 24). But Dar’ja’s ritualistic preparation of her cottage for its end as well as the burial of Nastena by the women of Atamanovka indicate that these rites are remnants of pre-Christian times undertaken to ensure the well-being of the soul.

Despite the fear of the forest or the water as large bodies, the worship of individual trees and some other elements did occur. Sacrifice, bloody and unbloody, to these elements was not uncommon. In *Proščanie s Materoj*, the King Larch is conceived
as a mythological figure that has received many ritual offerings as well as accidental or intentional sacrifices of human life during the history of Matěra. The final sacrifice to the King Larch is symbolic and is depicted in the *povest* when the birch tree standing next to the unconquerable larch is cut down in its stead.

The image of fire that is offered in *Proščanie s Matěroj* is that "fire is nothing more than absorbed and saved sunshine that is forcefully torn out of the flesh" (p. 57). This is more than a metaphoric image. It directly relates to a pagan cult of fire that connects fire and the sun together as Russian deities: fire (Svarog) is the father of the sun (Svarožič). Katerina’s house burns as a symbolic sacrifice: people gather and are ashamed that they had done nothing to save the house. Because they know that the same fate awaits each one of them, they look and listen attentively and because they are so completely absorbed in the drama before them, the present loses its reality and everything seems as if it had happened long, long ago.

The cult of blood-kinship is dedicated to the veneration of the dead ancestral community which is every bit as vital and animated as elements in the living world. All of the dead were raised to the standing of minor gods who were powerful enough to help or hinder the living. The founder of each ancestral community is in fact embodied as the *domovoj*, a mythological and folkloric character who is the patron spirit in each household. In *Proščanie s Matěroj*, the figure of the Xozjain acquires special significance if we see him as the *domovoj* of Matěra, the progenitor of the Matěra kinship community which will soon cease to exist. The guidance that the ancestors provide comes to the living through visions and voices as we see illustrated in the scenes of Dar'ja’s psychic encounters with her father and mother. She has a clear mental image of how the ancestral hierarchy is organized as well as of how it will be arranged to meet her on the day she comes to join them:
She imagined that later, when she left here to join her kin, many, many people would gather in judgement—there would be her father and mother, her grandparents, and great-grandparents, everyone who had lived before her. It seemed that she could see them well, standing in an enormous shape, a spreading wedge to which there was no end; all of them had grim, stern, and inquiring faces. And at the tip of this multigenerational wedge, back a few steps so that she could be better seen, she stood alone facing it. . . . Lost, anxious, and scared she looks at her father and mother standing directly in front of her, thinking that they will help, will defend her before the others, but they are guiltily silent . . . And the voices get louder and louder, more impatient and angry. . . . They ask about hope, they say that she, Dar'ja, has left them without hope or a future. . . . (p. 157).

The same link between hope and the future is established in Živi i pomni. Andrej is the only hope of his parents just as Nastena's unborn child is his last hope that the generations-old Gus'kov rod will be continued with honour. Andrej tells Nastena that for everyone except her he is dead, he can never show himself in public again. He has realized that to survive he must go against the moral and social ethic of the rod and he tells this to Nastena when she speaks to him of the hope that his parents have in him: "'Hope, hope . . . [T]hey have no kind of hope. That's it. There is none. . . . We'll meet over there and have a talk. . . . But here for the weak and for the strong there is only one hope—-you yourself, and no one else'" (p. 240). But Andrej in his turn places the same hope in his unborn child: "'And I thought, I thought: it'll end with me, I'm the last one, I've killed off the line. But he'll live, he'll stretch the thread further . . . .'" (p. 273).

The notion of rod is connected with birth in another way: the tie with a person's ancestors determines his destiny to a great extent. Fedotov explains that while the belief in predestination is not peculiar to the Russian view of life, the close connection between birth and destiny is, in the sense that each individual has his own Rožanica which presides over his birth and his destiny. "The central idea was undoubtedly the mystery of birth, in which the tie with the ancestral clan determined the
destiny of the individual." In the chain of generations, the past is of greater importance than the future for the individual who feels himself to be a link in this unbroken chain which offers few chances of escape by decisions of free will. Andrej feels that it was his destiny (sud'ba) to return to Atamanovka before the war ended:

"Destiny. Maybe against my will, to bring us together before my death. . . . Why are you wiping out my last hope that I came back here for some purpose? That I didn't take this shame upon myself in vain? . . . [T]his is everything for me, my entire service and life. And let it be that people shouldn't know, but my blood will know that he is mine. It's only our blood that remembers us after." (pp. 276–277)

The orientation of the concept of rod is backward in time and the importance of both the concept and of the orientation are evident in the very titles of Rasputin's povesti containing as they do the words "farewell" and "remember." Fedotov suggests that the roots of Russian collectivism stem from this ancient belief in the determination of an individual's existence by the rod—by the parents, by the will of the living, and by the traditions of the departed. Andrej realizes that he had tried to take things into his own hands when he decided not to return to the front lines and he understands the reasons that he will be punished better than Nastena: "And why was he, Gus'kov, better than the rest? Why should they fight while he returned back here? . . . During a war, a man is not free to control his own fate and he had done so, and it was clear that he would not be given a pat on the head for it" (p. 219).

Thus, the significance of the many aspects of nature and ancestor worship, at least in their moral implications, should be considered as part of the comprehensive mythology that Rasputin constructs as the substructure of the attitude toward life and nature that is found within his povesti. As we shall see in the following discussion of style, Rasputin combines and blends this mythology with folk elements, some of which exhibit remnants
of their pagan origins, as well as with a system of figurative language that produces a fascinating mixture of mythic, mystical, tragic realism. The weltanschauung presented by Rasputin via these devices is deeply rooted in a sense of purpose and relationship with the universe.
Notes


3 PEPP, p. 860.

4 PEPP, p. 861.


6 PEPP, p. 860.


9 PEPP, p. 539.

10 PEPP, P. 539.

11 PEPP, p. 540.


13 N. Friedman, "Archetype," PEPP, p. 49.

14 Meeting with faculty and students of Moscow State University, December 19, 1976. During this meeting, Rasputin spoke at length of the importance of preserving old Russian folklore through oral and written documentation. He refers to reading and placing high value on the collection of Russian folktales by Afanas'ev which was republished in 1957 in relatively small numbers. Narodnye russkie skazki A. N. Afanas'eva, 3 vols. Ed. V. A. Propp (Moscow, Xudozestvennaja literatura, 1957). (1st ed. in 8 vols., 1855–1863).


16 Fedotov, p. 349.

17 Fedotov, p. 19.
CHAPTER IV: Language and Style in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Materoj.

Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Materoj, Rasputin’s last povesti to date, have both been acclaimed as examples of the work of a mature author. While critics differ in their opinion as to which is the better of the two works, they recognize in them a uniqueness of style which was created and refined over more than a decade. Rasputin’s style as a complete entity has not yet been analyzed and only a few studies on specific stylistic aspects have appeared. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a systematic analysis of Rasputin’s literary style, using Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Materoj as the models for discussion.

In a comparative reading of Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Materoj, elements of style which clearly unite the povesti are evident. These include such components as: (i) a consistent use of literary Russian combined with various regional and social styles of the Russian vernacular in both the speech of the characters and in the authorial text; (ii) an omniscient narrative point of view which is capable of a variety of positions ranging from extreme subjectivity to a balanced objective stance; (iii) an extensive use of internal speech forms which are often embedded in the narrative; (iv) a thorough command of the tools of "orchestration" particularly in landscape and mental imagery; (v) a system of figurative language consisting of various rhetorical figures and tropes; (vi) a wealth of folklore elements and genres of oral folklore; (vii) repeated use of dream symbolism, premonitions, omens, and visions; and (viii) a pervasive animist and pantheistic view of the world which is expressed through various descriptive, figurative, and folklore elements within the povesti.
While these elements are common to both works, they are the very elements that engender stylistic differences, since the emphasis upon or degree of use of any element depends upon the demands of the literary form chosen for each povest'. If we consider Živi i pomni as tragedy and Proščanije s Materoj as myth (as suggested in the previous chapter), some major and important differences can be detected in the lexical, narrative, and authorial aspects of the povesti. The greatly different compositional centres in the povesti condition the use and tone of the narration and its language. In Živi i pomni, the plot pivots and develops on Nastena's fateful and ultimately tragic choice to support her husband. In Proščanije s Materoj, the themes are presented on a grander scale as the forces of nature and time make constant demands on the mortal heroes to preserve the wisdom of the past and to transmit its truths to future generations. The meticulously reproduced dialectal speech of the elderly characters is one vehicle by which this is accomplished (cf. dialect, further in this chapter), and the narrative, which plays an extremely important role in myth, is another. In Proščanije s Materoj, the narration is written from an omniscient and thus sometimes subjective point of view and it incorporates elements of the vernacular into its literary lexicon. The narrator could well be a fellow villager; he is intimately familiar with the past and present of everyone and everything on Matera and he is capable of using the regional dialect flawlessly. These features are the prerogative of the myth-maker who expresses the topical concerns and problems of his era through myth thereby generalizing their significance. The same features are present, though far less frequent, in Živi i pomni. In this povest', Rasputin's concentration is on the presentation of Nastena's challenge, predicament, and inevitable failure. This is accomplished through a sustained narrative objectivity and a narration composed in conventional literary Russian with a more limited dialectal flavour to the discourse.
1. Language

Any examination of Rasputin's style should begin with the most tangible element—his language. Especially in Proščanie s Matěroj, the author writes in a Russian inundated with idioms and phrases that are found in his native Siberian region, between Irkutsk and Bratsk on the Angara River. This is the language which, in combination with conventional literary Russian, constitutes the rhythms, syntax, and lexicon of Rasputin's text. In Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj, Rasputin localizes the setting within his native region to a degree which he had not done in his earlier povesti. Common phonological, morphological, lexical, and semantic features are found in these two works.

Language is the one component in the process of literary composition that Rasputin carefully selects in advance, in a method which otherwise appears to be largely spontaneous. During what for him is a slow process of writing, Rasputin is exacting in his choice of language. His regard for the language which he employs in his prose is clear when he says:

In a literary work everything is important, nothing is trivial. It is even impossible to imagine a story written in poor language. . . . Above all else, language should be precise. Such precision in our literature is, unfortunately, often lacking. Approximation is a prevalent disease. When one achieves precision, then it is possible to think about other characteristics [i.e. the literary or vernacular nature] of the word.

(i) Dialect

It is Rasputin's use of dialectisms—Siberianisms—within his narration that is one of the most notable characteristics of his prose. Unlike the speech of many of his
characters, the author's speech is grammatically flawless, but it contains many striking lexical features, such as dialectisms and colloquialisms as well as folklore expressions. Sometimes the Siberian slowěcki are close in form and meaning to the standard Russian, but more often they "depend on the environment, the context, the atmosphere" of the work to support their meaning and resonance. Rasputin justifies the use of such complex vocabulary within the authorial text: "... for me it is the most exact word, any synonym distorts the concept which I have understood since childhood. ... I think in this language and naturally I write in it." In an introduction to Rasputin's povesti, Sergej Zalygin notes: . . . were it not for his language, there would be no Rasputin. His language is his own, absolutely original, while at the same time it is profoundly national and Russian. . . . This is the language of the entire life and world that the writer tells us about, it is the language of its essence.

The Narration

Rasputin's descriptions of the natural world—the Angara, the taiga, and various phenomena in nature—are rich in Siberian speech and colloquialisms. These are settings and occurrences which he knows well and his love for them is discerned in his sensitive descriptions. For example, in the following short passage, several Siberian dialect words (zasmwil'sja 'to frown, become gloomy', razornyj 'destroyed, ruined', and mjakotno 'mild, tepid') are interpolated into the lyrical text.

Ubrali xleb, i na tri dnja opjat' naprosilsja dožđ'. No byl on tixij i uslužlivij — unjat' pyl', pomjagcit' ustaliju zatverdevšuju zemlju, promyt' lesa, kotorye pod dolgim solnecem povjali i zasmurilis'. Sumel, prinikaja k zemle. ... (p. 146)
They harvested the wheat and the rain came again for another three days. But it was gentle and helpful - it helped to take away the dust, to soften the tired, hardened earth, to rinse the woods that during the long period of sun had wilted and become gloomy, to chase out the red mushrooms that were already late, and to put out the smouldering smoke and the bitter, acrid smells of the fires. . . . All three days were warm and mild, and the rain made no noise as it fell to the earth. . . .

The taiga in late winter is described vividly and with attention to subtle detail in Rasputin's narration which includes the Siberian slovečki: nagruzlyj 'heavy, weighted down', krasnopogod'e 'fine weather', korjavinka 'twig'; and mokreco 'moisture'.

(Tajga stojala v snegu - nagruzlonom, ležalom, zabrosannom igolkami i zapjatannom Slepkami s vetok. Sîl'nye po zime, slovno edinstvennyje, belaja i černaja kraski, kogda i el' i osina kažutsja odinakovo černymi, za nedel'noe krasnopogod'e razdviniulo, i rečče, jasnee, bliže oboznačilas' každaja korjavinka. . . . Po bokam otkrtyx kolodin uže sočilos' mokreco. (pp. 243-244)

(The taiga lay in the snow - heavy, long-lying snow that was spattered with pine needles and marked with globs of snow from the branches. The white and black colours that are so powerful in the winter that they seem to be one colour, when both pine and aspen appear equally black, had become separate from one another in the week of fine weather, and each twig and flaw was marked more sharply and distinctly. . . . Wetness oozed down the sides of the stumps of felled trees.)

Folk elements in the form of sayings and parallelisms also find a notable place in the narration. Rasputin uses folk elements, Siberian dialect words, and colloquialisms together in the following passage with a sense of balance and proportion that ensures the poetry of his language without obscuring meaning or causing confusion for the reader. This narrative passage describes the day when Nastas'ja and Ded Egor leave Matěra:

Den' napravljalsja na slavu; v dobryj den' vypalo starikam uezžat' s Matěry. Ni sorinki, ni xmurinki v ogromnom, jarko-suxom nebe; solnce zvonkoe, žarkoe. Dlja porjadka probežal verxovik i, ne uspev podnjat' volnu, zatix, smorennyj pokom. . . . Pyšno, bogato bylo na matěrinskoi zemle. . . . Žit'
by da žit' v ētu poru, popravljat', okrest glijadjući, dušu, prikidyvat' urožaj – xleba, ogorodnoj bol'šoj i maloj raznosti, jagod, gribov, vsjakoj dikoj prigodnoj vsjačiny. Ždat' senokosa, zatem uborki . . . podnimat' do stradovan'ja, ne nadsažas', podstupajuščju den' oto dnja rabotu – tak, vyxodit, i žili mnogie gody i ne znali, čito ēto za žizn'. (p. 61)

(The day was going to be glorious and on this good day the old folk had to leave Matëra. Not a speck or a mote in the vast clear–dry sky; the sun was sparkling and hot. The north–east wind did its duty and ran along, but not succeeding in raising any waves, it calmed down, depleted by the peace all around . . . . The lands of Matëra were sumptuous and rich. . . . One could live the good life and this time of year, you could soothe your soul by just looking around and you could estimate the harvest – wheat, all sorts of large and small garden crops, berries, mushrooms, and every kind of wild crop. To wait for the mowing and then the hay–making . . . rising to the arduous work of the day, day after day without straining – as it turned out that is the way they had lived for many years and they hadn't realized that that was the life.)

The Siberian dialect words in this passage (verxovik 'north–east wind', and stradovan'e 'harvesting, harvest') and colloquial lexical elements are set in a lyrical text of literary Russian that places the words in context.

Among the slovečki, jarko–suxoe (nebo) is a striking and innovative adjectival form found often in Rasputin’s prose (cf. parallelism, further in this chapter). Also the parallel construction ni sorinki, ni xmurinki is reminiscent of folklore, while nadsažat'sja, ogorodnaja raznost', smorenyj, and vsjačina are all colloquialisms.

The Dialogue

Siberian slovečki are most numerous and evident in the speech of Rasputin’s characters. The speech of his elderly protagonists is particularly rich in dialectisms. The passage below may illustrate the regional dialect spoken by Dar'ja and her elderly friends in Prošcanje s Matërjoj, a dialect which is similar to that spoken by Mixeič and Ded Matej in Živi i pomni. In this excerpt, Dar'ja converses with Sima and Nastas'ja at the beginning of the povešt':

The Siberian dialect words in this passage (verxovik 'north–east wind', and stradovan'e 'harvesting, harvest') and colloquial lexical elements are set in a lyrical text of literary Russian that places the words in context.
- Dovedis' do menja, vzajala by i nikudy ne tronulas'. Pušaj topjat, ežli nado.
- I potopjat - otozvalas' Sima.
- Pušaj. Odnova smert' - če išo bojat'sja?!
- Oj, da it' neoxota utoplennoj byt', - ispuganno osteregla Nastas'ja. - Grex, podi-ka, ...
I čtобы otvesti što rasgovor, eju že zavedennyj, Dar'ja wspominala:
- Če-to Bogodul sedni ne idet.
- Už, podi-ka, na podxode gde. Bogodul kogda propuskal.
- Š im grešno, i bez ego tosklivo. (p. 24)

("As for me, I rather stay here and not go anyplace. Let them drown me, if they have to."
"And they will," answered Sima.
"Let them. Death only comes once - what else is there to fear?!"
"Well I don't want to be drowned," said Nastas'ja in fright. "It's a sin, you know. . . ."
And in order to change the topic of conversation that she herself had begun, Dar'ja remembered:
"For some reason Bogodul isn't here today."
"He's probably somewhere on the way. When has Bogodul not come?"
"It's sinful with him, but lonely without him.")

The many dialectal elements in this dialogue include nikudy (instead of the standard nikuda), pušaj (puskaj), ežli (eželi), če (čto), išo (ešče), odnova (odna), sedni (segodnja); the interjection it' (ved'), gde (instead of gde-nibud'), kogda (kogda-nibud'); the dialectal s im (s nim) and bez ego (bez nego). Still other characteristic dialectal elements are the parenthetic podi-ka (verojatno, konečno),15 and the phrases dovedis' do menja (šučis' so mnoj),16 and na podxode (v puti).17 Furthermore, the colloquial words neoxota and tromut'sja (with the meaning uži, uexat'), are also found within the dialectal passage.

The angry speech of Ded Egor in the graveyard is also an illustration of the regional dialect:

- Otkuleva prišli, Judy i stupajte, - otprvljal on. - K kladbischu bole ne kasajtes'. A to ja berdangu voz'mu, ...
- A ty, Voroncov, na nas golos ne podymaj, - . . . - Ty sam tutaka bez
godu nedelja. Sam turist . . . rane morja tol'ko pričapal. . . Ja tutaka xozjain. I pokuleva ja tutaka, ty nado mnoj ne kryl'. (p. 31).

("Go back to where you came from!" he ordered. "And don't touch the cemetery again. Or I'll take my rifle to you." . . . "And you, Voroncov, don't you raise your voice to us!" . . . You've only just recently come here. You're a tourist yourself, you just came because of the 'sea'. . . . I'm the boss here. And as long as I'm here, don't you go flapping your wings at me.")

Dialectal lexical elements in this passage include otkuleva (otkuda), tudy (tuda), tutaka (tut, zdes'), pokuleva (poka), rane (radi), krylet' (maxat' kryljami), pričapat' (prijti, priexat')2 0; the comparative bole (instead of the standard bol'še); dialectal phrases kasat'sja [prikasat'sja] k and podymat' [podnimat'] golos; and the popular saying bez godu nedelja.

One more feature found mostly in the speech of Matēra's elderly inhabitants, is the distortion of foreign words either through mispronunciation or a lack of comprehension. For example, Nastas'ja employs radio as a declinable noun: radiu razvedet, radia u nas tam svoja (radio vključit, radio u nas tam svoe, p. 174). Also, she translates ètaž 'storey, floor' as podnebes'e 'place high up under the sky': u nas-to fatera na četvertom podnebes'i (ú nas kvartira na četvertom ètaže, p. 178), and uses telexon (telefon, p. 22), kran (krant, p. 22), fatera (kvartira, p. 103), and kuirovat'sja (ëvakuirovat'sja, p. 95). One example of folk etymology occurs when Dar'ja is unable to cope with the official acronym sanēpidstancija (sanitarno-èpidemiologièeskaja stancija, 'medical epidemiological station', p. 27). She hears the word as "sanaspidstansyi" and, deriving the word aspid 'grass snake' from it, she curses the workmen who have come to clear Matēra as "snakes".

While dialectal elements are most prominent in the speech of the elderly characters in Rasputin's povesti, the speech of their sons and daughters, just one
generation removed, is quite different. The younger generations do employ some of the major lexical and grammatical features of the dialect as well as colloquialisms, but their speech, from a lexical viewpoint is, for the most part, standard conventional Russian or, at least, very close to it. Pavel Pinigin in *Proščanie s Matěroj*, Andrej and Nastena Gus'kov in *Živi i pomni* and their contemporaries, are representative of this generation of speakers. The following is an excerpt from a conversation between Andrej and Nastena:

- Ja tebe ščas škažu, čto pervo-napervo ponadobitsja. Zavtra otdoxni, vyspis', a poslezavtra pereprav'-ka sjuda moju "tulku", poka menja zver' ne zagryz. Živaja ona?
- Živaja. . . A čto ja emu škažu pro ruž'e?
- Pogreššja, pomylššja, daže podfartilo s rodnoj baboj polastit'sja. Pora sobirat'sja. (pp. 210–211)

("I'll tell you what I need first and foremost. Tomorrow you rest, sleep, and the day after tomorrow get my shotgun over here before a wild animal gets me. Is it still working?"

"Yes. . . What shall I tell him [Mixeič] about the shotgun?"

"I don't know. Say whatever you want. You'll get out of it somehow. . . . But just remember: no one can as much as suspect anything about me. No one. I wasn't here and I'm not here now. You're the only one who knows . . . ."

. . . I've warmed myself up, washed, and even managed to be with my own wife. Now it's time to go.

Except for ščas (seščas), tulka (ruž'e), xoš' (xošeš'), Andrej's speech contains no Siberian dialectal slovečki. In place of dialectal če, regularly employed by the elderly villagers (see above in this chapter), he uses the standard čto and ešče rather than išo. Similarly, kak nibud', poka, sjuda, and zavtra are used instead of, respectively, kak nit', pokuleva, sjudy, and zavtri. Rather than dialectisms, Andrej's speech is characterized by colloquialisms and argot expressions, e.g., polastit'sja (polaskat'sja) and podfartilo (povezlo). His speech also contains a cliché expression, byt' v kurse.
Still another passage that may illustrate the speech of the younger generation of villagers refers to Klavka Strigunova in *Proščanie s Matěroj*. She is addressing Dar'ja and Dar'ja's grandson, Andrej:


- Govori, govori, ne otlynivaj, - nastaivala Klavka.

- Žalko, - skazal Andrej. . . . - Ja tut vosemnadcat' let prožil. Rodilsja tut . . .


("Auntie Dar'ja. . . . You've got one foot in the grave and you want others to live like you. You get what you deserve. But life is moving on - why can’t you see that? I’m sick of your stinking Matěra, the settlement on the far shore suits me fine, but for your Andrej who is younger than me, even the new settlement isn’t enough. Give him the city. Right. Andrej? Tell us if you're at all sorry about anything in this village.”

Andrej faltered.

"Say it. Say it, don't try to get out of it," insisted Klavka.

"I feel sorry," said Andrej. . . . "I lived here for eighteen years, I was born here. . . ."

"What a baby! What's your childhood to you now that you're out of it? You've grown out of it. Look how tall you are! And you've grown out of Matěra. Nobody could make you stay here - come on! You're saying that because you're afraid of your grandmother. You're sorry for your grandmother, not for Matěra.”

Some dialectal elements do remain in Klavka's speech, such as žist' instead of the standard žizn', niče (ničego), and nešto (nečto). However, she employs the standard Russian esli rather than the dialectal ežli and uses iz nego correctly (cf. dialectal iz ego). Her speech is strongly colloquial, however, and includes the colloquial expression otlynivat' 'to avoid, dodge', as well as substandard expressions, such as zanjuxannaja 'having a
She also uses the colloquial idiomatic phrases *na ladan dyšat'* 'to be on the verge of death' and *lob vymaxat'* 'to grow tall'. Furthermore, in this passage Klavka employs a proverb, *po Sen'ke šapka* with the meaning 'you get what you deserve'.

Rasputin individualizes the speech of some of his characters by patterns that are unique to their personalities. Particularly in *Proščanie s Matěroj* there are several speakers with distinct traits. For example, Nastas'ja's speech which is strongly dialectal, distinguishes itself from the speech of other villagers by a syntax of repetition and parallelism that is a characteristic of oral folklore. An example of the syntax of repetition is found in an excerpt from the story she relates about her husband Egor's death:

> - Ležit ves' takoj svetlenyj, svetlenyj, on-to, Egor-to. . . . Ja ubivajus' nad im, ubivajus' . . . a on leži-yt, ležit, molčit . . . Aksin'ja čerepanovskaja prišla obmyla. . . . Tam mašiny, so vsego belogo svetu mašiny — tak i furkajut mimo, tak i furkajut . . . (pp. 175–176)

("He just lay there so light, so light Egor was. . . . I wept over him, wept . . . and he just lay there, lay there and was so quiet, quiet . . . Aksin'ja from Čerepanovsk came and washed him. . . . There are cars there, lots of cars from all over, and they race past and race past again. . . .")

Certain of Nastas'ja's repetitive speech patterns are employed whenever she talks about her husband, Egor: *a Egor pla-a-čet, plačet*, (p. 20), and again, *a Egor pla-acet, plačet, ne xočet exat'*, (p. 63). When it becomes clear that the old couple will leave Matěra, Nastas'ja, on a number of occasions, tells Egor not to cry: *ty ne plač', Egor, ne plač' . . . poedem, Egor, nečego ždat', poedem*, (p. 63). She consoles herself with a similar phrase: *niče, niče . . . možet niče . . . (ničego, ničego, možet byť ničego*, p. 68).
The speech of Dar'ja, Nastas'ja, Egor, and Katerina is very similar as they are all natives of Matërja. However, Dar'ja's position among her fellow villagers is that of a person to whom others come for advice and protection. "Dar'ja had a temperament which over the years had not softened or weakened, and when the occasion arose, she could stand up for herself as well as for others" (p. 69). Through Dar'ja's speech, we perceive her moods and emotions such as her rage when she uses the colloquial poganec 'pagan, unclean' to address the workers who have come to level the graveyard: ne bylo u tebja, u poganca, otca s mater'ju, (p. 27). Also xolera 'plague, cholera' as a pejorative expression appears frequently in Dar'ja's speech, e.g., vam čto Matërja, čto xolera, (p. 108). However, the most characteristic of Dar'ja's expressions is a term of endearment, the dialectal word xristoven'kij 'blessed one, poor dear', which she applies not only to humans, but also to inanimate things and even animals. For example, when Katerina tries to justify Petruxa's act of burning down their home, Dar'ja admonishes her in a kindly way: vot xristoven'kaja, vot xristoven'kaja! 'what a blessed one, what a poor, dear!' (p. 85). As the mill burns, Dar'ja reminds Katerina: Skol' ona, xristoven'kaja, xlebuška peremolala! 'The poor dear ground so much grain for us!' (p. 135), and pitying a calf that is sold for slaughter, she thinks to herself poexal xristoven'kij 'off he went, bless him' (p. 136). In reply to Klavka Strigunova's comment about Matërja, Dar'ja says: ona, xristoven'kaja, na vred tut stojala 'it [Matërja] stood here for no good reason, the blessed one' (p. 98). The frequent use of this Siberian term of endearment reveals Dar'ja's essential kindliness and good nature.

The speech of Andref's mother, Semenovna, in Živi i pomni, is of special interest, because her pronunciation displays an influence of the indigenous Siberian languages on Russian. In Semenovna's speech, the sibilants /ʃ/ and /l/ occur instead of, respectively, /s/ and /L/, and /Č/ becomes /č/. e.g., lešu u naš mnogo, žimoj morož (lešu u nas
mnogo, zimoj moroz, p. 303) and krynocka s molokom na polocke (krynčka s moločkom na poloke, p. 303).² ⁴

(ii) Jargon

Rasputin differentiates the speech of the younger generation of characters in his povesti by individual patterns that are marked not so much by dialectal features as by jargon, clichés, and argot expressions. Although jargon is not used extensively, it characterizes typical representatives of social and professional groups that are part of the village community.

Andrej Pinigin, Dar'ja's grandson just out of the army, is intended to represent the idealism and energy of the young generation. His manner of speaking is meant to convey his commitment and confident attitude, and is characterized by his constant use of slogans and cliché phrases that, taken as a whole, compose his own jargon. Andrej employs the familiar idioms and tags used daily by the Soviet mass media which are intended to reinforce the contemporary social and technological goals of Soviet society:


("Today the times are such that it's impossible to mark time on one spot. . . . Today, the times are so alive . . . everything is in motion, as they say. . . . While I'm young and unmarried, I want to go out there, to the front lines as they say, so I won't miss out. All the young people are there. . . . Front lines or not -- I don't know what to call it. Where the hottest spot is, the most necessary construction.")
The elements that make up Andrej's "activist" jargon are clearly seen in the passage above: there are the standard clichés vremja v dvizhenii, nužnaja (važnaja) strojka, na odnom meste sidet' (topat'sja) and perednij kraj.

Rather blindly Andrej, and by implication, his contemporaries, greet the changes wrought by technological progress. His unquestioning attitude is reflected in his constant use of clichés and by the tag of his speech kak govoritsja 'as they say'.

Katerina's son Petruxa is a self-serving cynic. He is a clever but lazy man with a penchant for drink who has the ability to take advantage of all the system has to offer. Petruxa's characterization is enhanced by his obyvatel'skij jargon which is a horrendous mixture of village dialect, standard Russian, colloquialisms, contemporary clichés, and pretentious phrases.

"I need an apartment and not a cattle shed," he said with a swagger, considering his options, with the exuberant, silly impudence and boastful pretense that he always used. "I have a mother and I want to create a spiritual life for her. Of course she is too old for the komsomol, and you say there's one there. But if it's necessary, she might come in very handy indeed. She could tell about her old gloomy and dismal life, for example." Petruxa with great satisfaction pronounced the word "life" fully, stretching it out.

In this passage, Petruxa's speech contains elements of dialect: sgodit'sja (prigotit'sja) and stajka 'barn',25 which contrast with his pretentious phrases duševnaja žizn', želaju sozdat', and besprosvetnaja žizn'. The author's own use of the colloquialisms vykablučivat'sja 'to swagger', pricenivat'sja 'to bargain for something'.
s pridur'ju 'pretending to be dull-witted, silly', and fors 'swagger, boastfulness', help to describe Petruxa and his mannerisms with precision.

Petruxa’s tag-word is izvini-podvin'sja which helps to characterize Petruxa. It expresses both humbleness and impudence but may also be intended to intimidate with its somewhat defiant tone. It may be often translated as 'I am sorry' or 'excuse me for being here'. Petruxa had acquired this expression "somewhere on his latest wanderings, and he liked it so much, it seemed so perfect and appropriate to him that without it, Petruxa could not imagine a conversation' (p. 93). Petruxa inserts this phrase regularly into his speech and it often conveys a sense of affront or indignation. We feel its intended effect as Petruxa upbraids Katerina upon giving her a few roubles from the large sum that he has collected for burning down their family home:


("Excuse me for being here. And what am I supposed to exist on? I have to leave and arrange a permanent place of residence. Who's going to take me for nothing? ... I don't interfere in your personal life, and don't you interfere in mine. I'll arrange things. I'll send for you and we'll live together. But for the time being - I'm sorry, I can't help you.")

This excerpt is an apt example of the mixture of speech styles that Petruxa employs, for it contains the dialectisms dolžon (dolžen), zadarom (darom), and pokudova (poka), a pretentious phrase ličnaja žizn', and the officialese clichés vypisat' and postojanno mestožitel'stvo.

Petruxa’s brand of jargon to some degree reflects the pathos of a generation caught between life in the village as it was and the modernizing influences of the city
and towns of the "urban type." It occupies an intermediate position between the literary language and dialect. It aspires to impress with the use of educated speech but proves that often the speaker has not understood either meaning, connotation, or nuance and the effect it produces is often ironic.

The use of jargon also characterizes the speech of the typical Soviet official in Proščanie s Matěroj. This jargon—officialese—is used in official pronouncements. It is usually high-flown and emotionally neutral, for it dehumanizes decisions and orders and the consequent effect that they have on people's lives. In Proščanie s Matěroj, for example, the officialese term for the island is zona zatoplenija 'flood zone', the land is territorija 'territory', the river is lože vodoxranišča 'reservoir basin', while the people of Matěra are graždane zatopljaemye 'citizens to be flooded' (p. 30).

Žuk and Voroncov are the two officials who are most strikingly characterized by their speech style. Žuk is introduced by Voroncov as an official from "the department in charge of the flood zone," located, evidently, in the city. He is described by the narrator as "a man with a gypsy face in a straw hat who had the look of an office about him" (p. 29). Žuk speaks to the enraged villagers in the cemetery "unhurriedly, confidently, and even with a note of condescension in his voice":

- Tovarišči! Tut s vašej storony neponimanie. Est' special'noe postanovlenie, - znal Žuk silu takix slov, kak "rešenie, postanovlenie, ustanovka", xot' i proiznesennyx laskovo, - est' special'noe postanovlenie o sanitarnoj očistke vsego loža vodoxranišča. A takix kladbišč . . . Prežde čem puskat' vodu, sleduet navesti v zone zatoplenija porjadok, podgotovit' territoriju . . . (p. 30)

("Comrades! There has been a misunderstanding on your part. There is a special resolution"—Žuk knew the power of such words as 'decision, resolution, directions', even when they were pronounced tenderly—"there is a special resolution regarding the sanitary cleanup of the entire reservoir basin. And of such cemeteries . . . Before we can release the water, we have to put the flood zone into some kind of order, we have to prepare the territory . . .")
This entire passage is in officialese. The phrases are impersonal and their effect is to make Žuk's speech verbose and even intimidating. In addition to the officialese clichés zona zatoplenija and lože vodoxranilisča (mentioned above), his speech abounds in officialese terms such as navesti porjadok as well as sanitarnaja očistka, podgotovit' territoriju, special'noe postanovlenie, neponimanie, and sledujet. The crowd in the graveyard is infuriated by Žuk's manner of speaking and attitude, and his explanation is cut short by Ded Egor who, in marked contrast to Žuk's formal and cold officialese, uses the colloquial saying ne tjanut' kota za xvosti 'don't drag the cat by the tail', i.e., 'speak clearly and get to the point'.

Voroncov, the chairman of the village-cum-settlement soviet, a local official, speaks in short, clipped sentences. His jargon may be illustrated by his attempt to explain the presence of the wreckers in the village cemetery:

"Are we going to listen or are we going to continue this disorganized haggling and yelling? Are we going to understand the situation or what? They," - Voroncov nodded toward the men - "were carrying out a sanitary cleanup of the cemetery. This must be done everywhere. Is that clear? Everywhere. It's required. Here is Comrade Žuk and he is from the department on the flood zone. He is looking after this and he will explain things to you. Comrade Žuk is an official person."

Voroncov's speech, like that of Žuk, is full of officialese clichés: ponimat' položenie, provodit' sanitarnuju uborku, položeno, and lico oficial'noe. The colloquial bazarit' 'to haggle noisily and in a disorganized way' is also part of Voroncov's jargon. A feature of Voroncov's speech, which combines well with his use of official jargon, is
his condescending habit of asking a rhetorical question in the first person plural, e.g. *budem bazarî ili čto budem?*

Rasputin employs jargon sparingly but to good effect in his *povesti*. The characters who speak in jargon have a limited amount of dialogue, but within it their stilted and pretentious manner of speaking is apparent, while Rasputin's use of jargon may be viewed as a tool of unobtrusive satire.

(iii) Folklore Elements

Both *Proščanie s Matëroj* and *Živi i pomni* are deeply rooted in the folklore of the Siberian Russians and the language, syntax, and rhythms of oral lore are found in the authorial text as well as in the dialogue of Rasputin's *povesti*. Rasputin includes both generic and structural elements from oral folklore in his prose in order to capture and express mood and meaning.

The principal device of oral folklore employed by Rasputin in his *povesti* is parallelism, a traditional syntactic formula in oral lore. One type of parallelism that he uses are words often found in folklore, e.g., *žit'ë-byt'ë* (p. 290), *ljubo-dorogo* (p. 79), *odna-odineSen'ka* (p. 388), and *devica-molodica* (p. 44).

Innovative combinations are a second type of parallelism found in Rasputin's *povesti*. They are devised by the author to describe in a distinctive way the mood, setting, and characterization in *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matëroj*. Examples of such parallelisms are numerous, e.g., *molodež'-xolostež'* (p. 314), *pod"edat'-'podpivat'* (p. 34), *nebyvaloe-neživaloe* (p. 69), *cvetočki-lepeščki* (p. 80), *jarkoe-suxoe* (nebo, p. 61), *laskovo-berežno* (*smejat'sja*, p. 290), and *utaënnoe-rodnoe* (*zabytoe*, p. 388).
Rasputin furthermore makes use of idiomatic phrases and sayings that display parallelism, e.g., *ni sluču, ni dušu* (p. 23), *pocarjuet, da zagorjuet* (p. 109), *korovu pod topor, a zabotu pod zabor* (p. 123), and *poljanka ne poljanka, posidelki ne posidelki* (p. 92).

While parallel constructions are most frequently found in Rasputin’s authorial text, other oral folklore genres such as proverbs, sayings, and rhymes are found in the speech of his characters. Rhymes, for example, are used by Rasputin to add a touch of lightness, as when Nastena playfully chants the school-girl rhyme: *otskoč* [otskoči], *ne moroč*, *ja tebja ne znaju* (p. 234). In *Prosčanie s Materoj*, a lull in the conversation at a gathering of villagers is broken by the rhyme: *fu ty, nu ty, lapti gnuty* (p. 109). The narrator comments on the last days that are rapidly passing by in Matera with the rhyme: *den’ da noč’ - sutki proč’* (p. 133).

The narrator usually introduces folk sayings by the phrases *kak izvestno* or *govorjat*, e.g., *slovo, kak izvestno, ne vorobej, vyletit - ne pojmeš* (p. 223), *pravdu govorjat: kol’ povezet, to povezet do konca* (p. 229), and *govorjat: takoj privat - takoj otvet* (p. 86).

Proverbs with their succinct commentary are employed by Rasputin to capture the mood or essence of a situation. For example, in *Živi i pomni*, when Andrej Gus’kov is at his retreat in the mountains away from the river, his thoughts begin to wander and repentance flares up within him. In frustration, he remembers the proverb *blizko [blizok] lokot’, da ne ukusiš* (p. 247). In *Prosčanie s Materoj*, the narrator tells us about the poor soil in the new settlement: *s paršivoj ovcy xot’ šersti klok* (p. 78). Dar’ja, with a saying, cautions her grandson Andrej not to embrace so enthusiastically the idea of all-powerful man: *nakładvjaj na voz stol’, skol’ kobyła uvezet, a to ne na čem vozit’ budet* (p. 96), and, in response to another of his notions, she says: *mat’ ežli [ežel] ona*
The use of proverbs and sayings by Rasputin's heroes enables them to make moral observations and to comment on a situation or human condition in a concise manner.

Genres and constructions typical of oral folklore pervade Rasputin's povesti, yet they are unobtrusive. He strives for a balanced and purposeful use of folklore elements that may be assimilated into the heterogenous blend of dialect, colloquialisms, jargon, and standard Russian that constitutes the language of his prose.

2 Style

(i) Narrative Technique

Rasputin's narrative technique is characterized by the all-knowing, seeing, and telling potentials of an omniscient third person narrator: that is, it shifts between the external and interior world of a number of main characters in the work. This technique lends psychological verity to the work, for it provides the opportunity to understand the motivations, rationale, and emotions of the main personages. It also enables Rasputin as the author to comment on actions and theme whenever and however he desires. For example, in Živi i pomni, the narrator presents with a detailed sensitivity, the points of view of Nastena and Andrej Gus'kov just as, in Proščanie s Matěroj, he presents those of the three generations in the Pinigin family. These points of view are often divergent, sometimes diametrically opposed to one another, yet they are seen as equally viable given the psychology of each character. Rasputin's narrator re-creates the psychological and
moral make-up of the characters effectively yet laconically for he conveys their emotions and thoughts directly to us. Upon occasion this is accomplished through interior monologue, but most often it comes via impersonal and free direct speech forms which are embedded within the narration and reproduce internal speech. These forms are in large part responsible for the overall tone of reflection that pervades Rasputin's *povesti*.

Within the basic narrative technique of omniscient point of view that enhances the psychological characterization of the major characters, Rasputin's narrator is capable of two contrastive extremes: distance from and identification with the hero. At times, a lyrical and distanced narrator conveys natural and psychological landscapes in the style of 19th century Russian literature. At other times, the identification of the narrator with a character, and particularly the hero seems so complete that it is difficult to differentiate the speech and thoughts of one from the other. Thus, a wide scope in third person narrator point of view, the use of internal speech forms frequently embedded in the narration, and a lyricism in descriptions of nature and human emotion are the fundamental elements of Rasputin's narrative style, which, in *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj*, form an integrated stylistic approach.

A narrative blend of literary Russian with some elements of native dialect and elements from oral folklore and daily life (*byť*) is, as we have seen, another characteristic of Rasputin's narration. Although this style has been employed in several other of his works, nowhere is it more developed than in *Proščanie s Matěroj* where the narrative tone is basically familiar. Rasputin has been severely criticized by some Soviet critics for this narrative tone, for they claim that Rasputin does not maintain the necessary distance from his characters. Given the plot and themes of *Proščanie s Matěroj*, this criticism is probably as much ideological as it is stylistic.
Let us examine Rasputin's narrative position in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj in greater detail. Three voices of the third person narrator, all speaking from an omniscient point of view, may be identified and I will refer to them as the familiar, the conventional, and the omnipotent voices. The narrator employs all three distinct voices within each povest1 for the narrative tone ranges from the intimate and familiar to the lyrical, to factual description. As a generalization, however, it may be said that the dominant narrative voice in Živi i pomni is the conventional voice, while the familiar narrative voice is characteristic of Proščanie s Matěroj. The omnipotent voice is used infrequently but appears in both works.

The familiar narrative voice demonstrates the ease that the narrator feels with his physical surroundings as well as in his relationships with the people that he is portraying. As he shifts his attention between the main characters, we come to know what they see, hear, think, and feel, in a way in which they would themselves relate their perceptions. In both Proščanie s Matěroj and Živi i pomni, there is a sense that the narrator is a native of the area both by his ease of description and by the language he employs. In Proščanie s Matěroj, this quality of familiarity is emphasized by the incidence of dialectal lexicon and idioms, phraseology as well as elements from oral folklore such as proverbs and epithets in the narrator's language.

A brief excerpt from a description of Petruxa in Proščanie s Matěroj will illustrate the combination of styles typical of the familiar narrative voice and the intimate tone that is produced:

Pod sorok čelovek, a vse produrit'ja ne xočet, vse kak mal'čiška: ni sem'j (dva raza kakim-to čudom privozil iz-za reki bab, no ta i drugaja na pervom že mesjacem letem uletyljali ot nego čerez Angaru), ni ruk, sposobnyx k rabote, ni golovy, sposobnoj k žizni. Vse tryn-trava ... Vot i posudite teper', kakovo byt' mater'ju takogo čeloveka. (p. 84)
(The man was almost forty years old and he still did not want to smarten up, he still acted like a child: he had no family (twice by some miracle, he had brought women over with him from across the river, but both the first and the second had fled back across the Angara in the very first month), no hands capable of working, no head that was capable of life. He didn't give a hoot about anything. . . . Now just judge for yourself what it's like to be the mother of such a man.)

The narrator speaking in the familiar voice, stands extremely close to the information he is relating and the character he is speaking about. The elements of the regional vernacular in his language support the impression that he is a fellow-villager and lend his stories credibility. They also give the narrator a semblance of independent individuality. This narrator addresses the reader as an outsider, for he often interrupts the flow of his commentary to give us information that we could not know without him: "V každom našem poselen'ë vsegda byli i est' ešče odna, to i dve staruxi s xarakterom . . ." (p. 69), and "Xot' i redko, no slučalos' vse-taki, čto Bogodul razgovarivalisja so staruxami . . . ĝto byl svjaznyj, ponjatnyj rasskaz, kotorij možno bylo slušat' i postoronnemu čeloveku" (p. 34). Under such narrative circumstances which occur frequently in Proščanie s Matěroj, where a story is told within a story, the voice of the familiar narrator approaches that of the skazitel' 'storyteller' in the skaz genre:

The young people of the village had always favoured this meadow for their games. More than one compact had been made here, more than one young maiden had earned some glory on this grass, leaving here in what she had come but not in the same completely intact condition. (p. 44)

However, unlike skaz, in Rasputin's work there is no tension between author and narrator with the latter addressing the folk listener and the former the intellectual reader. In Rasputin's narration, elements of folk (dialect) and intellect (literary Russian) complement each other within a unified text and with a single narrator providing the
most complete presentation of themes and ideas.

A second type of narrative voice found in Rasputin’s work is one in which information is presented by the narrator in more traditional Russian literary style. This conventional narrative voice possesses a lyrical tendency particularly in narrative descriptions of landscape or in the portrayal of scenes which carry strong emotional or psychological impact. It is within this narration written in a conventional mode, that Rasputin’s systems of figurative language and orchestration are found.

The conventional narrative voice is pervasive in Živi i pomni and this quality is conditioned by the tragic nature of the plot. There is much less dialogue in this povest’ than in Proščanie s Matěroj, for Andrej and eventually Nastena shun contact with others for fear of revealing their common secret. Thus, there are only a few scenes which contain any appreciable amount of discourse, and prolonged dialogue is reserved for meetings between husband and wife. There is a greater emphasis in this povest’ on narrative description which, when psychologically or emotionally motivated easily transfers into internal speech forms that are embedded in the narration.

Typical of the narrator’s conventional voice in Živi i pomni are the following excerpts which reveal an emphasis on the interior processes occurring within the characters:

Nastena vo sne našla rukoj ego golovu, provela po volosam, i ot ětogo prikosnovenija emu vdrug stalo legče. On zakryl glaza i, ěuvstvuja na pleče spasitel’nju ruku Nasteny i predstavlja, kak on, medienno kružas’, vвораčivaetsja v kakuju-to mjagkuju i prostornuju pustotu . . . skoro zabylsja. (p. 236)

(In her sleep, Nastena found his [Andrej’s] head with her hand, caressed his hair, and from this touch, he suddenly felt easier. He closed his eyes and, feeling Nastena’s saving hand on his shoulder, and imagining how, slowly twirling, he was burrowing into a soft and spacious void . . . he quickly fell asleep.)
A descriptive lyricism is another important element in the portrayal of emotional and psychological states that the conventional voice conveys in Živi i pomni:

Liza sijala - sijalo ee lico, obyčno blednoe, unyloe, sijali, zaxlebyvajas' ot radosti, glaza, sijala pod golubenkoj koftočkoj prognuvšajasja grud' - sijalo vse, sijala vsja, sijala vojsju. (p. 254)

(Liza was glowing - her usually pale, despondent face glowed, her eyes brimming with joy glowed, her bosom under her blue blouse glowed - everything glowed, all of her glowed, she glowed completely.)

In Proščanie s Matěroj, Rasputin’s narrator adopts a third voice, which I have termed omnipotent because by the tone of its commentary one feels that the narrator knows and perceives all things. The language used by this voice is pure and clear, tending toward an elevated style. This voice is used sparingly, but it does appear at significant moments in the works in order to provide rhetorical comment, "Katerina, Katerina . . . Kto skafet, počemu u putnyx ljudej rodjatsja besputnye deti? Odna utexa, čto gody tvoi na isxode" (p. 56), or to prophesy, "Pomjaneš', ox, pomjaneš' Matěru . . ." (p. 53). In this povest', the presence of the omnipotent voice heightens the sense that someone or thing is watching over and guiding the island of Matěra and the figure of Dar'ja to their related and inevitable fates and harmonizes with such mythical and mystical elements as Bogodul, the King Larch, and Xozjain. This voice is, in actuality, the voice of the author which inserts itself into the narration at those moments when he can no longer refrain from comment:

I neprivyčno žutko bylo predstavljet', čto dal'še dni pojдут uže bez Matěry-derevnii . . . Pozodjat, pozodjat osennie dni nad Matěroj-ostrovom, prigljadjavajas', čto słučilos', otčego ne neset s ostrova dymom i ne zvučat golosa, poka v svoj čas oden iz dnej, na kakoj čto padet, ne smozet otyskat' na svoem izvečnom meste i ostrova.

I dal'še dni pojдут bez zapinki mimo, vse mimo i mimo. (p. 115)
(And it was unusually terrifying to imagine that in the future the days would pass without the village Matera. . . . The autumn days would pass over and over Matera island, peering down to see what had happened, why smoke was not rising from the island, why no voices were heard, until in time, one day, on whichever one it would fall, they would not be able to find the island in its age-old place. And then the days would pass without pause, they would go past and past.)

The absence of the omnipotent narrative voice in Živi i pomni is an important indicator of the greater distinction that is made in this work between the internal speech of the heroes and authorial narrative. In Živi i pomni, Rasputin presents an objective development of his heroes which is far less dependent on authorial comment than in Proščanje s Materoj.

Thus, through the combined potential of the narrator's three voices, there emerges an integrated omniscient narration conveying physical setting, human psychology and emotion in a reality which is presented directly and objectively. Objectivity and immediacy are achieved by Rasputin's use of specific literary tools and by his development of creative language and image systems from which he constructs his narrative. Some of the most essential stylistic devices within the narrative, which have been referred to above, should now be discussed in greater detail. These may be broadly grouped into two stylistic areas: internal speech forms including interior monologue that are embedded in the narration, and imagistic devices including mental imagery, landscape, and systems of orchestration and figurative language from which the narrative is fashioned.
(ii) Internal Speech

Deming Brown has commented that although Rasputin's *povesti* are "rich in physical and psychological detail, contain many descriptions of settings, and include abundant dialogue and monologue, they give an overall impression of narrative economy, discipline, and control."²⁸ I suggest that it is Rasputin's mastery of internal speech forms that glues all of these qualities together thereby creating the impression of a tightly constructed narrative that occupies a paramount position within his prose style. The forms of internal speech that Rasputin uses most widely,—interior monologue, impersonal direct speech, and free direct speech,—are all set within the narrative and extend and develop the illusion of the spoken word, for although the remarks are not uttered, they resemble spoken remarks in significant ways.

A number of factors condition the potential for and effect of internal speech forms in *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matërjo*. These include the grouping of the heroes around an extraordinary event that occurs before the *povest'* begins which allows attitudes toward it to be formed in the course of the work. Often these attitudes are revealed through a form of internal speech. Another factor is that in the *povesti* a limited number of characters actively participates in the action. A third consideration is that the heroes are often alone with themselves and Rasputin can authentically portray their thoughts and their psychological state from within. This is an especially important condition in *Živi i pomni*, in which virtually the only sustained dialogue recreated in the *povest'* is between Andrej and Nastena when they meet. Given the emphasis that these three circumstances place on psychological characterization, the reproduction of their thoughts and emotions places an added burden on the narrative and makes it the centre of dramatic tension in the works.
Before proceeding to an examination of the internal speech forms most prevalent in Rasputin's work, it is important to understand that they are not merely formal devices producing a high degree of psychologism, but elements that are integral to the formulation and development of major themes and characterizations. Let us use Andrej and Nastena Gus'kov as examples of their function. Andrej's experiences at the front are depicted by several fragmented reproductions of internal speech that convey a good deal about his attitude toward himself, the war, and death. As Andrej leaves Atamanovka by river boat for the front, it seems to him that the banks of the river and the familiar landscapes have already become indifferent to him: "This offended him: why so soon? He hadn't even left, hadn't torn himself away, and already all that he had been and planned to become was forgotten and buried. . . . Surely he wasn't finished just like that?" (p. 214). He is gravely wounded and taken unconscious to a hospital. "When he gained consciousness and made sure that he was going to live, he calmed down: that was it, he had done his fighting. Let others fight now. He had had enough, he had given his full share. He would not soon be better, and then . . . they ought to release him" (p. 216). When Andrej learns that he must return directly to the front, he is dumbfounded. "Surely they weren't sending him back? It was so close, so close. He should spit on everything and go. Take for himself what others had taken away. . . . He wasn't made of steel: more than three years of war--how much could he stand!" (pp. 217-218). In contrast to the amount of internal speech conveyed prior to his desertion, none is conveyed during his lingering, unplanned stay with Tanja the deaf-mute woman. This period is described within the narrative for Andrej exists in a semi-conscious state, afraid to express even to himself what he is thinking and feeling.
The absence of internal speech in Andrej's case is indicative of his self-imposed physical and emotional isolation from others. Andrej's self-justification is not complex, and the variations on one thought become his *modus vivendi*: "I am, no matter what happens tomorrow, today I exist" (p. 331). Absence of internal speech coincides with Andrej's deterioration, for when he cold-bloodedly murders the bull calf before its mother's eyes, only narrative description conveys the scene. From this point to the conclusion of the *povest*, Andrej's internal thoughts are no longer communicated, as if to emphasize his regression into an animal state.

By way of contrast, as the plot develops in *Živ i pomni*, the tone of Nastena's internal speech becomes increasingly hopeless, weary, and despairing. In the final scene, moments before her suicide, the chaos and despair that rage within Nastena are distinctly conveyed in a combination of internal speech with narrative description of her actions and psychological state. Nastena's total exhaustion, physical, mental, moral, and spiritual, becomes almost tangible through the expression of her thoughts in internal speech forms:

She had to get there, she had to warn her husband. She had to say good-bye. Forever, or until another time, she did not know. She was ashamed . . . Why was she so completely ashamed before Andrej, before others, and before herself? . . . She was tired. If only they knew how tired she was and how much she wanted to rest! . . . She was ashamed. . . . But the shame would disappear too, it would forget, and it would free her . . . (pp. 391–392)

Thus, internal speech supports in a consistent way the characterization of Rasputin's heroes.

Of the three forms of internal speech found in Rasputin's prose, interior monologue is the most easily recognized, but least employed form. Unlike the other forms, it is marked off from the narrative by quotation marks and the speaker addresses
himself in the first person singular. Interior monologue in these povesti is indirect for Rasputin selects their content and guides their presentation, a position consistent with his omniscient narrative stance. The indirect nature of the interior monologue accounts for the active rationalization and reflection that occurs within the povesti; ellipsis and incomplete thought are not characteristic of the interior monologue that Rasputin creates. In Živi i pomni, the most sustained examples of interior monologue belong to Andrej when he leaves his hiding place to go to Atamanovka with the hope of catching a glimpse of his father and to learn definitely if Nastena is pregnant. The justifications and rationalizations which he has made to himself regarding his actions past, present, and future, all become unconvincing and his dilemma is embodied in one poignant thought: "'A bird . . . ,' an unexpected thought occurred to him. 'I lived here just like a bird of paradise. What else did I need? What?'" (p. 311). In the thought immediately following, however, the tone of remorse is dispelled as Andrej looks for something to blame for the turn his life has taken. The interior monologue which begins in the subjunctive mood, "If there had been no war . . . ," reiterates the unreality of his situation and the impossibility of a return to normal life. The tone with which the monologue concludes is triumphant and defiant and Andrej's egocentric character is reflected in the attitude toward his deed:

"I'm not a Vlasovite who acted against his own men. I retreated from death. Doesn't that count for anything? I retreated from death," he repeated, liking the play on words, and suddenly he said in delight: "A war like that and I got away! You have to know what you're doing, damn it!" (p. 312)

In Prošcanie s Materoj, Dar'ja's interior monologues express the same feelings and thoughts that she voices in her spoken dialogues and monologues. It is her son Pavel's
interior monologues that are of interest for they reveal some of the questions that torment him. He is bothered by the fact that, unlike his mother or his son, he does not possess a conviction, a vision of the way life should be:

"Mother is living out one certitude, the young another, but there is no certainty at all for me. Neither here nor there, I'm betwixt and between. . . . Mother has lived her life, but you still have to live and work some more. . . . I understand that without technology, without the most advanced technology, you couldn't accomplish a thing, wouldn't get anywhere. Everyone understands that, but how are we to understand and accept what has been created in the new settlement? . . . I really don't have to think about all of this, I can live life as it comes, go with the flow, but that's how I am: I have to know why and what for and get to the truth myself. I'm only human." (p. 79)

Often, as in the above example, interior monologue is an intellectualized version of the speaker's deep and complex thoughts. This speaker may be reticent to articulate his thoughts verbally or he may think in simpler terms and thus speak in a like manner. While the former quality characterizes Pavel, the latter is especially relevant to Andrej Gus'kov. For example, in one interior monologue, Andrej senses the presence of his friend, Vitja Berezkin, in the fields and woods around Atamanovka even though Vitka was killed in the war. Andrej wonders whether his own presence can be felt or, because of his crime, whether it is already obliterated from the common memory. Here interior monologue is, in fact, the author's translation of Andrej's thoughts and emotions into a form which will be the most effective, appropriate, and authentic from the point of view of theme and character. It is a direct and clear reflection of the speaker's conscious thoughts irrespective of education, occupation, or social position.

It is the two other forms of internal speech, impersonal and free direct speech, which offer a wide range of possibilities for the portrayal of psychological and emotional states. Both forms involve reproduction of the actual speech and individual style of the
speaker in combination with the barely perceptible speech of the narrator. The hero's speech is thus told by the author and the difference between the two forms is in how this is accomplished. Impersonal direct speech partially or fully retains the lexical, phraseological, and syntactical peculiarities of the speaker but it can not be separated syntactically from authorial speech. A defining feature of impersonal direct speech and often the only evidence of authorial presence is the use of the third person verbal and pronominal forms. In contrast, free direct speech displays an absolute morphological correspondence of lexical material to that of direct speech employing first or second person verbal and pronominal forms.

Nastena’s soul-searching questioning of what the future holds for Andrej and herself serves as a concise example of the two related yet distinct internal speech forms. Impersonal direct speech is an integral part of the narration:

"Tomorrow she would go to Karda. She still had to inform Mixeič of this news, but better in the morning, today the two thousand roubles [she had pledged] was enough for him. God, what had her life become?! What would become of them?!! (p. 224)"

Free direct speech is always introduced, followed, or interrupted by an introductory component, but the speech of the hero is clearly separated and distinct from that of the narrator:

"She rode and thought to herself: so Nastena, you’ve learned to lie and you’ve learned to steal. And this is only the beginning—what’s going to happen to you in the future, Nastena? (p. 229)"

Impersonal direct speech is the internal speech form for which Rasputin shows preference, for while free direct speech retains the authenticity of direct speech and
extends the spoken word into the narrative, impersonal direct speech extends the overall omniscient point of view of the narrative and, by association, the freedom of the author into areas of intense psychological and emotional activity.

Often in internal speech, the points of view of the character and the narrator correspond and such correspondence is certainly evident in Proščanie s Matěroj and Živi i pomni. It is mandatory to determine whether it is the hero that is speaking, the author, or perhaps both simultaneously in order to avoid the supposition that the author is responsible for the actions or the thought of the hero when in reality he answers only for their motivations. Rasputin's narrative proximity to the spirit, temperament, and experience of his heroes in Proščanie s Matěroj has facilitated the criticism that he is too involved with his characters. When there is little or no correspondence of authorial and character point of view, internal speech still functions to convey the thoughts of the characters. For example, through impersonal direct speech, Petruxa's inflated ego is depicted when the Academy of Sciences selects his home to be an architectural monument:

They told Petruxa that his house would be taken to a museum, and at first, he was very proud: they didn't take just anyone's, they noticed and selected Petruxa's house and people would pay money to look at the kind of house it was. . . . For the time being, there was a temporary sign, but in the museum, there would be a different one: ''The house of a peasant from Matěra, Petruxa Zotov . . .,'' or no: '' . . . a peasant from Matěra, Nikita Alekseevič Zotov.'' Everyone would read it and envy Petruxa, that is, Nikita Alekseič Zotov. It was true that at birth he was really named and registered Nikita . . . (p. 52)

Narration encases the impersonal direct speech and the tongue-in-cheek intent of the author is realized.
Two poles of presentation of internal speech are evident within Rasputin's work: one is the maximal expression of the hero's words and point of view that has been illustrated by all of the examples above and is dominant in both povesti. The other is the barely perceptible voice of the hero so that, essentially, authorial speech is presented through the hero's consciousness. This extremity of presentation is much less frequent in Rasputin's work, but it occurs at crucial moments and sounds very much like the omnipotent voice of the narrator that was discussed above in relation to Prorčanie s Matěroj.

In Živi i pomni there are several examples of this type of internal speech in which the identity of the speaker, (author or hero), is ambiguous. These are usually short exclamatory sentences of exhortation, encouragement, or desire. In these examples of internal speech, the point of view of hero and author is emotional and identical, and for a moment Rasputin's voice gains the upper register. For example, when Andrej is hospitalized and under the impression that he will go home, there is a two-word exhortation to Nastena: "'They'll give you a ten-day leave, no less,' they had told Gus'kov. Just wait. Wait, Nastena! Now he could not believe that he had once hurt her over trifles . . ." (p. 216). As Nastena races to Andrej on horseback for one of their early rendezvous, a similar exclamatory voice appears in the narrative:

Her heart was beating mightily and, submitting to it, Nastena jumped and squirmed on the box, flapping the reigns and yelling horrible, unintelligible words. Faster, faster . . .
Faster everything that is now and everything that will be! (p. 229)

Again, this voice occurs, urging Nastena on, encouraging her to support Andrej: " . . . forward, Nastena! Don't be afraid, Nastena. Forward! Your joy should now be a special joy, your grief hidden from everybody. Don't be cowardly: run, jump, don't
look around you" (p. 227).

In Proščanie s Matēraj, as Andrej departs without taking proper final leave of Matēra, Dar'ja's hurt and offence is the prism through which the author's voice speaks: "Farewell to you too, Andrej. Farewell. God forbid that your life should seem simple to you" (p. 127).

Internal speech in Rasputin's work, appearing as it does in three main forms, and with many nuances in tone and point of view, is exceptionally important because it is a primary mode of direct speech used. Its emotional and intimate strength is enormous, larger even than spoken direct speech. It can portray life vibrant with complexity and diversity flowing from the recesses of the human mind, heart, and soul, and thereby combining psychologism with emotion and spirit.

(iii) Imagistic Devices and Figurative Language

The landscape (pejaž) is an important transmitter of mood in Rasputin's povesti and by way of mental imagery he develops two kinds of landscape—the physical and the psychological. Rasputin's physical landscape is literal and is painted in strong and severe colours. It involves our basic senses of sight, sound, smell, and touch. The psychological landscape is created by involving the more subtle senses and it often incorporates a figurative component. Thus Rasputin uses mental imagery to portray vivid physical landscape or setting as well as lyrical mood or psychological setting. Its creation is dependent on language which the author consciously manipulates but the effect of scenes in Rasputin's povesti that employ mental imagery has been described as "uncontrived and natural":


Rasputin tells about everything minutely: each branch, or tree, or cottage, and every corner of the cottage to the most concealed place; he tells of each person to the farthest forgotten recess of his soul. . . . The same with the sun, the forest, the river . . . he holds them in his hand and writes about them according to touch, not sight, by sense of smell and taste, not with the intellect.  

Rasputin's way of thinking about and approach to the natural world underlie the tone which pervades his landscapes, a tone of admiration and acceptance of the bond which exists between nature and man. A significant illustration of this bond is achieved by linking his characters' moods and emotions with one of nature's phenomena. Thus, specific moods—joy, melancholy and reflection, anticipation—are evoked by descriptions of the breaking ice on the Angara, the activities of late summer haymaking, and the sight and sound of the pouring rain. These are extremely lyrical scenes which present insight into some aspects of the hero's psychology, and strengthen the recurrent theme of man's inseparability from and participation in the natural cycles and occurrences of life around him.

In general, mental imagery is a narrative means by which Rasputin presents his characters from within. Although there are many such scenes in Živi i pomni and Prošcanie s Matěroj, three excerpts will illustrate how such descriptions clarify the psychology and mood of Rasputin's heroes. The first excerpt describes the effect which the rain has on the three generations of Pinigins who have disagreed fundamentally on the issue of Matěra's fate:

They looked at the rain—how it beat on the ground . . . and immediately they felt how much easier to breathe and fresher it had become. . . . And they believed that they had sat too long at the table conversing, and that the conversation only pulled them apart, they who were related by the closest kinship, and that this momentary, empty looking at the rain had again drawn them together . . . (pp. 101–102)
It is the awareness of the rain and the participation in its sounds and smells that have the power of creating an unspoken understanding and bond between members of a family that are otherwise divided philosophically and idealistically. It is precisely the elemental (the looking at the rain), and not the logical and intellectual (the conversation), that is able to reestablish the familial bond after it has been severed.

This is also the rain awaited by Ded Egor in his apartment in the new settlement. It is only after the rain had begun to fall that he dies. The peace that the Pinigins feel as they listen to the rain is also the peace that Ded Egor needed in order to die: "... they listened to the uneven, pattering gurgle which was reflected as a pleasant and true peace in the soul . . ." (p. 102).

Similarly, Nastena’s essential mood in Živi i pomni is captured in the description of her attempt to reach Andrej in the midst of a raging storm:

In the end, she lost the road and couldn’t find it—everything underfoot blended into one moving muddle. Then, Nastena decided to head more against the wind so that whenever it was that she came up against the shore, she would know for certain that the river was more to the right. And the fact that she had lost the road offended Nastena; without fear but merely out of exhaustion, she sobbed and for some reason, crying out, she called Andrej’s name. It would have been foolish to hope that someone would hear her—her voice was immediately crumpled up and flung to the ground. (p. 266)

This excerpt does not merely recount Nastena’s physical floundering but reflects the immense confusion she is experiencing about her changed circumstances. The reference to losing the road with everything an indistinguishable mess underfoot, clearly externalizes Nastena’s situation and the thoughts and emotions that occur to her: she is alone, not afraid of what is happening, but harbouring conflicting feelings of offence against and pity for Andrej. The wind, silencing her voice as she calls to Andrej,
directly presages the way that Andrej psychologically disregards and drowns out her voice as she appeals to him for advice and moral support.

The final excerpt describes Andrej's awareness of and reaction to processes in nature occurring around him: the sounds of the ice breaking on the river and the proximity and anticipation of summer:

Soon, very soon, in the next few days, the ice would break and drag itself down—this imminent and ringing moment could be sensed in everything around him. And everything was impatient anticipating this moment: it seemed that the Angara would begin to flow and immediately, without delay, summer would burst forth, all at once it would let loose and with its heat and its dust and there would be no stopping it, no holding it back with any afterthoughts. And then a new turning point in his fate would burst forth as well. Gus'kov suddenly also sensed impatience in himself: he had to do something, rush off somewhere, busy himself. (p. 333)

Thus, Andrej's impatience finds an outlet in the anticipation of summer that is all around him. He is waiting for the beginning of a crucial course of events which once started, like summer, can not be stopped or delayed. Andrej's sense that a new and crucial fate is awaiting him once the ice breaks on the river, is a direct reference to Nastena's death by drowning (the ice would . . . drag itself down).

By evoking senses of sound, sight, touch and smell in his lyrical descriptions of natural phenomena, and linking these descriptions directly to the plot and main themes of the povesti, Rasputin does a masterful job of enriching and deepening his characterizations through many such passages which incorporate mental imagery.

Let us now examine a related aspect of Rasputin's lyrical narration—the formal devices forming his systems of orchestration and figurative language that make possible the communication of mood, tone and psychology in Rasputin's work. Two excerpts from one of his richest lyrical scenes will illustrate the sensitive combination of
orchestrative and figurative devices in his prose. In this scene from *Proščanie s Matěrοjj*, the Xozjain is making a nocturnal inspection of Matěra:

Bylo tixo, no v ětov sonnoj i živoj, tekuščej, kak reka, tišine legko različalis' i žurčanie vody na verxnem, bližnem mysu, i gluxoj i neverynj, kak ot vetra v derev'jax, šum perekata daleko na levom čužom beregu, i redkie mgnovennee vspleski zapozdalo igrajuščej ryby. Ėto byli verxnie, podatlivye sluxu zvuki, zvuki Angary, uslyšav, raspoznav kotorye, možno bylo uslyšat' i zvuki ostrova: tjažkij, natažnij skrip staroj listvennicy na poskotine i tam že gluxoe toptanie pasuščixsja korov, sočnuju, slivajuščujusja vo odno zven' žvački, a v derevne — neprestannoe ševelenie vsego, čto živet na ulice, — kuric, sobak, skotiny. No i ěti zvuki byli dija Xozjaina gromkimi i grubymi, s osobennym udovol'stviem i osobennym čuť' em prislǔžalsja on k tomu, čto proisxodit v zemle i vozle zemli: šoroxu myşi, vybírajuščej ja na oxotu, pritaznoj vozne pićugi, sidjaščej v gnezde na jajcax, slabym zamirajuščim ixam kačnuvšiesja vetki, kotoraja pokazalas' nočnoj ptice neudobnoj, dyxaniu vzrastajuščej travy. . . . (p. 54)

(It was quiet, but in this drowsy yet vital quiet that flowed like the river, you could easily distinguish the murmur of water on the near upper cape, and its rush on the shoals, vague and unsteady like the wind in the trees, far away on the far, unfamiliar left shore, and the infrequent, momentary splashes of a fish playing late. These were the surface, accessible sounds, the sounds of the Angara, after which it was possible to hear the sounds of the island: the heavy strained creak of the old larch in the pasture and there also, the dull tramping of the cows, their cud-chewing blending into one ringing sound, and in the village, the incessant movement of everything that lived outdoors—chickens, dogs, livestock. But these sounds too were loud and crude for the Xozjain and he listened with particular pleasure and with particular sensitivity to that which was occurring in the ground and close to it: the rustle of a mouse moving out to hunt, the muted bustle of a bird sitting on the eggs in her nest, the faint and brief squeak of a quivering branch that had seemed uncomfortable to a night bird, the breathing of the growing grass. . . .)

Running through the passage as through the *povest'*, is Rasputin's animistic perception of life, for Matěra itself and everything on and around it, is alive. Thus, his use of orchestrative and figurative devices recalls and enhances major themes and ideas within his works. The passage begins with a simile in which the quiet is likened to the flow of the river and a metaphor for time is suggested, a metaphoric association
which recurs throughout Rasputin's *povesti*. At the aural level, the onomatopoeic *šuršanie vody* and *šum perekata* reproduce the sounds of the Angara waters, while the voiced and voiceless /Z/ and /S/ and the voiceless /Ž/, used in alliteration reproduce the flowing quiet (*sonnaja i živaja, tekušaja kak reka, tišina*). Personification of the growing grass (*dyxanie vzrastajuščej travy*) concludes the excerpt.

The description of the blending of the sounds in the pasture is acoustically accomplished through alliteration using a combination of related sounds: the voiced /Z/ and the voiceless /Ž/ and /Š/ alternate with the voiced and voiceless /S/ and /Z/, e.g. *toptanie pasuščijaja korov*, *sočnaja*, *slivajuščajaja vo odno zven' žvački*, and *tjažkij*, *natužnij skrip staroj listvennicy*. The reproduction of the most subtle group of sounds that are heard near the earth is achieved with a combination of voiceless sibilant and velar consonants which create a muted and muffled effect: *vybiražuščijaja na oxotu šorox myši; dyxanie vzrastajuščej travy*, and *slabye zamirajuščie ixi*.

In his acoustic reproduction of the different levels of sound that the Xozjain is able to perceive, Rasputin exploits sound combinations and associations that involve one or more senses and that produce a sound symbolism.

A second excerpt from this lyrical scene is more imagistic and dependent upon figures of speech to create either visual or aural effect.

The day's warmth cooled and the earth emitted chilly, slightly bitter smells.
From somewhere, a weak and laboured gust of wind broke away, sighed and settled like a wave sucked into the sand. But the old larch creaked longer and more anxiously and, for no reason, a cow half-asleep, mooed and it sounded like a meow. Deep in the undergrowth of the shoreline, a gooseberry bush which had been forced down by another bush finally freed itself and, swaying, it stood up to its full height. The water slurped—either a bubble that had been floating since evening had burst or a fish had shuddered, dying; an unfamiliar ripple raced across the grass in a narrow strip and disappeared and only now did the last leaf of last year fall from the birch that stood beside the larch in the pasture.

Here are found two examples of simile that rely on sound symbolism to support the image that is suggested: *dyx vetra, oznul i sel — kak volna,* and *[korova]* *myknula,* *kak mjauknula.* Sound symbolism also occurs when a suggestive aural image created by a physical process (a bubble bursting or a dying fish shuddering), produces a sound in the water (*xlipnula voda*). The excerpt includes as well the personification of a gooseberry bush (*osvobodilsja . . . i vstal v rost*) and a synecdochical image of the wind moving across the grass (*probežala i ubežala uzkoj poloskoj neznakomaja rjab*).

Rasputin employs onomatopoeia freely throughout his *povesti* and especially in his evocations of the sound of the Angara river: *šuršanie* (*Angary,* p. 58), *šorox* (*tečenija,* p. 832), *šipenie* (*reki,* p. 191). A house is described onomatopoetically by its creaking: "Po brevnam . . . potekli tukauščie toki. 'Tok, tok, tok,' — stonala izba" (p. 56); a pair of boots is described by the sound of their squeak (*vzizg,* p. 161), an old tree by its creak (*skrip,* p. 55), and the branches by their sighs (*ixi,* p. 55). Very often, however, such devices as alliteration and onomatopoeia do not stand alone in Rasputin's narrative, but rather are incorporated into a more complex mental image involving precise sensory description. For example, the representation of the song of newly-arrived sparrows employs both alliteration and onomatopoeia but unites them into a larger sound symbolism that evokes a bittersweet image of better days:
No poverx vsego òtogo bestolkovogo šuma i gama paril, zvenja, i perelivajas'. ešče kakoj-îo otdel'nyj, osobyj zvuk - sladkij, stekljanno-čistyj i likujuScij, xorošo znakomyj Nastene, no kak by pozabytyj ili poterjannyj. (p. 343)

(But above all of this confused noise and din there soared, ringing and trilling, yet another separate, special sound - sweet, crystal-pure, and exultant - that Nastena knew well but that she had forgotten or lost.)

In a similar way, the description of a cool summer glade evokes all of the reader's senses:

Šumela pred ostrovom voda; pod nizkim bokovym solncem blestela v derevjax rannjaja pautina. Ot nalivajuščejsia zeleni plyl i tumanisja zelenoj že povolokoj vzgljad, dyxanie xolodilo vlažnymi tjagučimi zapaxami. Sverxu na poljanku oborvalas' babočka i dolgo ne mogla vyletet', tyčas' v plotnyj kustarnik. (p. 363)

(The water rustled by the island: an early spider's web glistened in the trees in the low, side-long sun. The luxuriant greenery made their gaze swim and grow misty with a green languor, and their breath was cooled by damp, viscous odours. A butterfly flew down into the meadow, and for a long time it poked in the dense bushes but could not find its way out.)

Thus, with his lyrical imagery and linguistic orchestration of sounds, Rasputin appeals to all of our conscious and unconscious senses. In this respect, it is possible to identify recurrent aural, visual, and tactile motifs in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj, some of which are associated with two natural elements that are important in Rasputin's work—the sky and the river.

Aural imagery which reproduces the sounds of or on the Angara river effectively conveys the mood in a narrative passage just as it does the emotional and psychological state of a personage, for whom the river may be an ally or an enemy at that given moment. For example, the sounds of the Angara's peaceful flow as perceived by the Xozjain in Proščanie s Matěroj are musical and evoke eternity:
. . . стеклянно взвлекккала и стеклянно же позвапивала на нижнем пекате вода. Со струнным, протяженным шуршанием катилая" Ангара; посреди острова шуршание расходило" на две струны, которые подвесили" над водою, пока она опят' не смыкало' в одно. Хозяин любил прислушиватьться к этому нутряному, струйному звуку текущей реки, которое днем за посторонними шумами пригашало, а но'чу, становило" чище и яснее. Оно возносило его к вечности, к раз и навсегда заботенному порядку'. . . (p. 58)

(. . . the water on the lower shoal sparkled like glass, and like glass the water tinkled. The Angara rolled on with a stringlike, extended thrum: in the middle of the island, the hum separated into two strings which hung above the water, until the river once again flowed together. The Xozjain loved to listen to this soulful, stringlike sound of the flowing river which, during the day, was extinguished by the many outside noises, but which at night became more pure and clear. It raised him up to eternity, to the order that had been established once and for all time. . . .)

In Živi i pomni, a similar description is slightly altered by a tension which reflects Nastena's ambivalence toward the river: she is fearful yet she needs to rely on the river for assistance:

Nastena otyskala glazami ogonek baneka . . . i otogo, cto on zdes', ne ischez, ne pogas, ne sginul, ej stalo nemnozko legche. Sum vody na perekate no'cu predstavitelsja glushe, spokojnej, no zato uprugij, protjaistyi, s legkim podstvistom Sorox techenija slyshalsja sejcas sovsem xoroSo. (p. 382)

(Nastena's eyes sought and found the light of the buoy . . . and because it was here, it had not disappeared, gone out, or vanished under the water, she felt a little easier. The murmur of the water on the shoal at night seemed more vague and peaceful, but the resilient, lightly whistling and drawn out rustle of the current could be heard very well now.)

In Nastena's heightened sensitivity to and perception of sound, the flow of the water is likened to the sound of tinkling, drowning bells: mjagkoe, medoličnoe, so zvonom kroščenyx gibnuščix kolokol'čikov (p. 357). This image repeats in the conclusion of the povest' with the crescendo of a thousand bells beckoning the distraught Nastena from the depths of the river:
(A splashing sound welled up in her ears - pure, tender, and encouraging and in it rang dozens, hundreds, and thousands of small bells. . . . And those bells were ringing for a grand occasion. It seemed to Nastena that sleep was overcoming her.)

In the conclusion of Proščanie s Matěroj, a similar aural spell is woven over Pavel as his boat drifts helplessly in the fog:

(The motor was barely audible somewhere deep inside, it could have even been under the water. He could hear well the hiss of the tearing fog and the tearing water, and to this soft and monotone hiss Pavel, anxiously and quietly lost himself in reverie.)

Impenetrable darkness and fog in both Proščanie s Matěroj and Živi i pomni provide the almost tangible image of oppressive nearness which is protecting and shielding the heroine. The physical sensations of being unable to see or hear anything under such conditions are described in crucial scenes in both povesti. The night on which Nastena tries to warn Andrej about the narrowing circle of suspicion is described thus:

The buildings in the pitch darkness were almost invisible, she had to peer ahead intently, strain her eyes in order to make out with difficulty the nearest homes, and then, not even make out, but guess by habit, where they were located. . . . The night was the best kind for concealment. . . . Tonight she feared everything: the darkness, which in reality served her purpose, quiet, thick and delicate as never before, transmitting even the slightest sound . . . (p. 381)
Nastena feels the oppressiveness of such darkness:

It was dark... And it pressed and pressed down on her with a weight from the skies, and there were no shores—only water which at any moment might, without stopping, open up and again close in around her... At night on the water there was a lifeless feeling—the feeling of an old, eroding cemetery... (p. 385)

The same tangible, physical nearness is felt by Pavel as he sits in the fogged-in cutter that has gone out to fetch Dar'ja and her friends from Matěra:

...Pavel did not remember ever having been in such a fog, that was so thick and solid, that with difficulty, as if from a deep and dark well, the dim glimmer of the water broke through. His eyes bumped into the dense grey mass and involuntarily blinked, and closed due to the nearness. (p. 191)

A visual motif which occurs in both povesti is the image of a flickering light from the depths of the river. Nastena catches a glimpse of it flaring up just before she tumbles from the bow of the boat into the water in a scene which in the movements of the heroines and in the imagery associated with their final moments is reminiscent of Anna’s suicide in Tolstoj’s Anna Karenina. As a representation of the promise of eternity, Pavel in his imagination, sees himself searching in the river’s depths for a brilliant marker to show him where Matěra used to be:

It was amazing that Pavel imagined this simply and clearly, as if he had lived it more than once,—there was the rowboat on the huge expanse of raised water, and himself in the boat, trying to determine by the far-away shores where Matěra used to be, intently peering into the dark, frozen mass of water: would there be some sign from there, from the sunny depths, would a flame flicker there somewhere? No, neither a sign nor a flame. (p. 182)
The blending and merging of the sky with the river either in the river's depths or on the horizon, is a visual motif related to the sky which suggests the possibility of eternity: "The Angara blazed up playing, in fiery, sparkling strips of light. . . . There where the flow was clear, the high, bright sky went deep underwater, and the Angara, ringing, seemed to fly up into the air" (p. 67).

Where in Proščanie s Matěroj the mood of such an image is lyrical and light, in Živi i pomni the motif of the sky blending with the river achieves a tragic tone with Nastena’s final observation: "Far, far within the water there was a sparkle, as if in a terrible and beautiful fairytale—in it the sky streamed and trembled. How many people had decided to go there and how many yet were to decide!" (p. 392).

In Živi i pomni, some of the most sensuous imagery describes Nastena’s fervent wish for and long-awaited discovery of her pregnancy. This is extremely tactile imagery: "Nastena, even before the war without any apparent reason . . . had learned to hug her tummy, and she had prayed for [a child] and caressed it into being" (p. 273). Once she suspects that she has indeed conceived, Nastena, in an extremely moving scene, mentally and intuitively looks inward and touches the life within her:

She lay down, but lay down on top of the blanket, and having dropped her arms beside her, having closed her eyes and held her breath, so that not the smallest thing could interfere, she listened attentively, focusing her attention on one point, hidden somewhere deep within her, and reaching it, she separated it from everything surrounding it, touched it, and in answer, weakly and barely audible, it responded: I am. (p. 273)

Such examples of lyrical, beautiful, and sensuous imagery and motifs, while characteristic of Rasputin's prose, do not suggest the complete parameters of Rasputin's system of imagery and figurative language. While including the sensual, the latter systems predominantly appeal to the conscious intellect and even, as the previous
discussion of myth suggests, to the collective unconscious.

Let us now examine in some detail the rich system of figurative speech that Rasputin has developed in his *povesti*. To facilitate our analysis, this system will be separated into two subgenera: rhetorical figures and tropes. Let us first determine the presence of such rhetorical figures as epithet, personification, metonymy, synecdoche and irony in Rasputin’s prose and then discuss how they are used to construct recurrent motifs, to evoke images of the physical world and to articulate Rasputin’s fundamentally animistic perception of the natural world. Following the examination of rhetorical figures in Rasputin’s *povesti* I will discuss the system of tropes made up of symbol, simile, and metaphor that are the basic units of his psychological and intellectual imagery.

Epithet, synecdoche, and metonymy are used with varying frequency in Rasputin’s system of figurative language. The figurative epithet is the most common of these three rhetorical figures in Rasputin’s prose, some examples being: *manna nebesnaja* (p. 94), *v gorjačečnoj muke* (p. 27), *spasatel’naja ruka Nasteny* (p. 236), and *zvonkoe solnce* (p. 61). He occasionally makes use of metonymic and synecdochical images. Metonymy, for example, is used in reference to one of the workers assigned to clean up the graveyard in *Proščanie s Matěrøy*. The image begins with a simile likening the man to a bear (*medved‘*) which as the scene develops, transforms into a metonymic image:

Zdorovennyj, kak medved’, mužik . . . nes v oxapke vextzie derevjannyje
nadgrobija, kogda Dar’ja . . . ožgla ego sboku po ruke podobranoj
palkoj. . . .
Na šum iz kustov vyšel vtoroj mužik. . . .
. . . Ne pomnja sebja, Dar’ja brosilas’ opjat’ s palkoj na medvedja. . . .
Bogodul zavladel toporam . . . i, tyča v grud‘ medvedju ostrym sukovatym
batožkom, drugoj rukoj . . . pokačival topor. (pp. 26–28)

(A man as husky and strong as a bear . . . was carrying an armful of old
and dilapidated wooden gravemarkers when Dar’ja . . . hit the side of his
arm with the stick she had picked up.  
. . . At the noise, a second man emerged from the bush. . . . "Look," the bear was glad to see him.  
"They jumped me, you know. They were waving sticks around." . . . forgetting herself, Dar'ja attacked the bear with her stick . . . Bogodul seized an axe . . . and, poking the bear in the chest with his sharp staff . . . he waved the axe with the other hand.)

Another of the workers on Matěra, one who tries to destroy the King Larch, is the object of a synecdochical image which centres on the hip boots which are the most notable feature about him:

On byl v vysokih bolotnych sapogax, kotorye pri xod'be neprijatno, s rezinovym vizgom, šorkali. . . . Bolotnye sapogi opravili na bereg k bočke s benzinom. (pp. 161–163)

(He was wearing high swamp boots that shuffled unpleasantly and with a rubbery squeak when he walked. . . . Swamp Boots was sent to the shore for the barrel of gasoline.)

A concise synecdochical image which rapidly follows a simile is created to characterize Mila, a friend of Pavel's wife who is constantly laughing, evoking the image of a pealing bell: "Mila zakatilas' i, pokuda Sonja provazała ee na bereg, pokuda slyšno bylo, smejalas' ne perestavaja, budto kto-to neuemnyj dergal za verevočku - i zven'kal, zaxodjas', kolokol'čik" (p. 150).

Verbal irony is an important rhetorical figure of speech which runs throughout Proščanie s Matěroj. Its presence is marked by a narrative detachment and coolness of expression when, in fact, Rasputin has strong opinions about the subjects under discussion. For example, through irony we learn how the poor decision to locate the new settlement was made within the controlling bureaucracy:
It was like in the old fairytales where they shot at random and wherever the wind carried the arrow, that is where they went. . . . When the new settlement was being discussed, they had thought that there was one of their own people on the commission, someone who would defend the interests of the inhabitants, the director of the state farm. But "their own" man had come from somewhere outside and vanished back to the same place, barely managing to sign his consent for the plan. (p. 77)

Often, a kind of grim humour marks the presence of Rasputin's ironic intent. Andrej Pinigin's idealistic jargon and unquestioning enthusiasm for the norms of contemporary society are the object of a tongue-in-cheek rejoinder by Dar'ja. When Dar'ja tells him that she and her elderly friends will die quickly in the new settlement, he asks:

"Who, I'd like to know, is going to let you die?"
"For that, we are not going to wait for a command. We'll manage ourselves somehow. . . . Nobody's thought yet of appointing a commissioner to give that order. People go and die helter-skelter, because there is no precise order for them to follow." (p. 95)

In both Proščanie s Materoj and Živi i pomni, ironic intent accompanies almost every reference to or description of local and regional officials. Rasputin's use of irony is effective because it creates the impression of great restraint. Voroncov and Pesennyj, the two local officials in charge of the preparation of the island for the flooding, are thus described at a meeting:

Voroncov spoke first about how it was necessary to complete the hay-making as soon as possible, and the people, without interrupting, looked at him as if he had come from the moon: what was he talking about? It's raining out there . . . [B]ut Voroncov . . . saw nothing and heard nothing, and carried on with his own thing. . . . The regional representative with the family name Pesennyj . . . began his talk almost from the first day of creation . . . . (p. 114)
In *Proščanie s Matěroj*, irony applies not only to statement, but to situation as well. Petruxa had waited for two years for the Academy of Sciences to remove his cottage from Matěra for that body had officially claimed it as a "relic of wooden architecture." Only upon its removal would he be paid the money that Matěra's other inhabitants received for the destruction of their homes as part of the clean-up campaign. "This was how the situation was: the cottage was Petruxa's, but it was not his property. Just try to figure out who the owner was. They were neither giving him his money nor taking their property" (p. 53). When Petruxa decides to take the matter into his own hands and burns the cottage, he earns Voroncov's praise as an example to other residents. Thus, characteristic of irony, this situation culminates with a statement of praise that implies blame.

In *Živi i pomni*, irony is used less often than in *Proščanie s Matěroj* largely because of the nature of the tragedy that is recounted. The lightness and tongue-in-cheek qualities inherent in irony are largely absent in *Živi i pomni*, except when used in reference to local bureaucrats and officials. Nastena, for example, plays on the fact that the representative from the regional centre Karda, who took her pledge for two thousand roubles, is a clumsy womanizer. She obtains permission to go to Karda on the pretence of escorting him back when in fact she is desperate to go there to buy some supplies for Andrej. The irony of the situation is heightened by the man's two unsuccessful attempts at seducing Nastena on the way to Karda, and concludes thus:

[Nastena] had to rein him in as was fitting. He began to blink his eyes and settled down, and after half an hour, as if turned inside out, he was boasting about his wife and his children. Nastena calmed down—it should have been like this all along. (p. 228)
Irony is an essential figure of speech in Rasputin's prose, for it is a device which, to a certain degree, establishes a highly restrained means to disapprove of or criticize events or people.

Personification is the remaining rhetorical figure of speech which will be discussed with regard to Rasputin's prose. It is an important device introducing the animistic perception of the world that pervades Rasputin's works to the reader and formally establishing it within the text. An animistic spirit penetrates into many elements in Rasputin's system of figurative language and it is central to many of the images that he creates. Animism is deeply rooted in the pre-Christian beliefs of peoples for whom the natural environment is crucial to their survival. Thus, there is an attribution of conscious life to the earth, rocks, trees, homes and other natural objects. This belief has been preserved as an important component in the folk mentality and it surfaces many times in Rasputin's prose: "The island continued to live its usual and habitual life. . . . The island planned to live for a long time" (p. 58). Since Rasputin's perception of the world is basically animistic, the possibilities for the effective development of such literary figures of speech as simile, personification and metaphor are broad. When he writes that "The night . . . made a blind, cautious circle over Matéra" (p. 58), he is personifying the night as a hawk or an eagle; and he describes the glow of the vital energy being emitted by dreams by the simile "like far away, distant flashes of lightning" (p. 57). Even fate is personified as having eyes "which remember at partings if a person has someone to whom he can return" (p. 217).

In Živi i pomni, the memory of both Andrej and Nastena is personified and endowed with human characteristics and sensibilities, producing an effective image. Memory as Rasputin personifies it, has the power to hold the person's concentration until everything contained within the memory has been fully remembered. Nastena's memory,
with its happy reminiscences of her earlier life with Andrej, begs her and pulls at her to remember:

The memory was still standing before her eyes in all its full, living strength, joyfully and anxiously, begging her not to abandon it, to continue further. The point at which Nastena had stopped was floating very close by, as if trying to grab her, fill her up and push her forward. (p. 291)

Andrej's memory is amnesiac and schizoid: the recent part which contains memories of the war is stronger, meaner and more demanding than that of the younger Gus'kov and Andrej does not even recognize those memories from the distant past as coming from himself:

It [his memory of the distant past] was alive and searching, but it could not bring him anything but pain: it couldn't get along with his own memory. They refused to understand one another; in the same body, they had contrived to occupy completely different places, not mixing, and not stepping over the established boundary. But his own memory was more cruel, stronger and whenever it wanted to, it took the upper hand. (p. 294)

Thus, memory in the above pair of excerpts is personified as an extension of the personality, psychology, and emotions of its keepers, Nastena and Andrej, and thus is a powerful supplement to the psychological characterizations of the couple. The essence of the concept of memory in živi i pomni is contained in the maxim: as you live so you shall be remembered. It is not only people that have the capacity to remember, but the place in which you live, the lands that you work, in other words, nature. Thus, Andrej turns in despair to the memories that the fields around Atamanovka hold of him:

He had the right to walk about here at will, he had worked no less than anybody else on these fields. . . . Here he was not a stranger, no. Here
at this moment word hung in the air that he had turned up and was passing by—the fields stretched and froze, recognizing him, and that was the only memory that he trusted now. . . . [P]eople should be remembered by the land they live on. And the land could not know what he had done, to it, he was pure. (p. 309)

An image of utter pathos is created when Andrej's memory is personified and endowed with a conscience, the most humanizing of qualities. As he contemplates the memory that he has of his old friend Vitja Berezkin who was killed in the war, Andrej wonders how he will be remembered:

But nobody knows what happened to you. People are already trying not to think of you, you have no dock from which memories can come, you've been wiped away and have melted for them like last year's snow. And later: the memory of a person that goes out to others certainly knows its own worth, and so the memory about you will eternally be ashamed of itself and hide, just as you are hiding now. (p. 301)

In Proščanie s Materoj, personification at the stylistic level functions as a bridge between the two sub-genera of rhetorical figures and tropes in Rasputin's system of figurative language. What this means at the conceptual level is that beginning with personification there is a multi-staged process whereby Rasputin arrives at three extended metaphorical images of the Xozjain, the King Larch, and of Matěra that are crucial to the concept as well as the myth-structure of the povest'.

Underlying Rasputin's entire figurative system and providing the conceptual foundation for the work is his all-encompassing animistic belief that animals and inanimate objects possess souls and may be invested with human characteristics. But because in Proščanie s Materoj Rasputin attributes the features of a living being to abstract concepts, these ideas and abstractions must first be made tangible. Thus, Rasputin personifies the indestructable and irrational power of nature as the King Larch
and the cycle of generational continuity (that is eternity) as the island and village of Matera. An additional anthropomorphic element is evident in Rasputin's endowment of these physical entities with human characteristics and emotions—in the former, those of a regal ruler, in the latter, those of a nurturing mother. The personification of the spirit of Matera as the feline-like Xozjain extends into the realm of the fantastic for such a character exists in Russian folk belief as the domovoi. These personified images are further developed and expanded by Rasputin into weighty metaphors: the King Larch is a metaphor for the absolute rule of nature over man, a direct contradiction of Andrej's claim that "Man is the ruler of nature" (p. 109); Matera, as a microcosm, becomes a metaphor for the whole world; and the Xozjain serves as a metaphor for the elemental link which exists between nature and man. These metaphors are crucial in determining the myth form within the povest', for all major themes and story elements, all major symbols and images work in conjunction with and relate to these three large metaphors. Even the heroes Dar'ja and Bogodul are closely related to, and perhaps may be considered extensions of, these metaphors. Throughout Proščanie s Matěroj Rasputin draws several clear analogies between Dar'ja and the Xozjain and Bogodul and the King Larch suggesting that they are the human counterparts of the personified metaphors. Let us examine how this analogy is achieved.

Often Dar'ja's notions and mannerisms resemble those of the Xozjain, in that both characters utilize all of their senses to inform themselves of a situation. For example: "He [Xozjain] listened attentively, and having heard, pressed himself even more closely to the warm wood, calming down" (p. 56). Similarly, Dar'ja: "... stood for a moment in the garden, with pity listening attentively to something and looking around . . ." (p. 63). Both the Xozjain and Dar'ja have the capacity for providing comfort and strength to all living things, animate, inanimate, human. As Katerina's house burns,
Xozjain rushes to it to bid a final farewell and offer reassurance and then retreats into the darkness to watch it burn. Out of the darkness emerges Dar’ja, the only person who can give Katerina any comfort as she watches her house burn: "Dar’ja emerged from the darkness and stood beside Katerina; everyone else became calmer because Dar’ja was there with them . . ." (p.71). Similarly, Dar’ja runs to the burning mill to be with it because it is surrounded by strangers with no one to remember it and the work it had done.

The single meeting between Dar’ja and Xozjain occurs when Dar’ja, in a daze, wanders over Matërëa having left her cottage to be destroyed and the Xozjain attempts to comfort her:

Where she had been all day, she didn’t remember. She remembered only that she had walked and walked, not stopping to rest—-from where had the strength come?—-and all the time, off to the side, ran some small beast that she had never seen before, that tried to look into her eyes. (p. 172)

In such scenes, the mutual compatibility and understanding that exists between man and nature is alluded to by the actions of the Xozjain and Dar’ja. Both Dar’ja and the Xozjain share a common belief that all things exist to serve a purpose but that all service must end. This is a fundamental rule in the natural as well as the human world: "Someone had to start the final truth, it had to begin with someone. Everything that lives on the earth has but one meaning—-to serve. And every service comes to an end" (p. 56). Dar’ja echoes this statement as she thinks about her own function late in life: " . . . the whole truth is that everything that you arrived upon the earth to do, you’ve done long ago, and all that your present service consists of is to get in the way of others" (p. 45).
It is the bond that Dar'ja feels with nature and its promise of truth and meaning that nourishes her spirit and gives her the strength to continue from day to day: She lulls herself to sleep after a disturbing day by thinking of the sun that will continue to shine: "'Oh, sleep, sleep ... The sun will come tomorrow, it'll have a lot to tell you. For the sake of the sun, when it seems there is nothing else, life is worth living'" (p. 145).

Bogodul is the stoic, virtually inarticulate human counterpart of the King Larch which represents nature's ultimate power over man. The description of his appearance is the initial analogy made between the two figures for it evokes the clear image of an ancient, strong tree:

For many years they had known Bogodul as an ancient old man and for many years he had not changed ... as if God had made up his mind to let at least one man live through several generations. He was still on his feet, stepping slowly and broadly, ... bending his back and throwing back his big, dishevelled head in which sparrows could have easily nested. From out of the dense thickets on his face emerged only the tip of his fleshy, bumpy nose. ... [H]is feet, blackened and flattened, had lost all semblance of skin on them and they had become so hard that they seemed to have become petrified. ... (p. 33)

As we have already seen in a previous discussion, another basic analogy between Bogodul and the King Larch is drawn by the men who try to fell the tree. In their exasperation, they liken the strength and resistance of the tree to Bogodul, whom they perceive as being abnormal. Their final comment on the tree, uttered in awe, "If it were only just a tree ...," is also a comment on the enigma of Bogodul's existence.

All four figures, Dar'ja, Bogodul, the King Larch, and the Xozjain are linked together by association at various points in the povest'. Dar'ja likens herself to Bogodul and speaks of the understanding between them and it is under the King Larch that
Pavel finds Dar'ja on the day that her cottage is destroyed. Thus, the unity which exists between man and nature and the ultimate power of nature over human caprice are basic themes in Proščanie s Matěroj that, through the literary devices of personification and metaphor are articulated by the figures of the King Larch and the Xozjain and their human counterparts, Bogodul and Dar'ja, creating a complex of characters and images that are inter-related at various levels including symbolic, metaphoric, and conceptual.

As an illustration of how other images and symbols work in relation to the three main metaphors in Proščanie s Matěroj, let us consider the use of two universally recognized symbols—the river, symbolizing the flow of time, and the land, symbolizing eternity. In this instance, 'the land' is Matěra, and so immediately we are dealing with a multi-leveled image—symbolic, metaphoric, and archetypal. The two elements, river and land, are often linked descriptively by Rasputin:

And so, barely managing, the village lived, holding on to its place on the bluff by the left bank, welcoming and seeing off the years, like the water.

. . . And just as the flowing water seemed to have no end or limit, the village too seemed to be ageless. . . . (p. 17)

The river and the land also acquire a causative symbolic link which is specific to this povest' for the river, by implication, symbolizes the progress and technology that is physically going to flood the land and, with it, its history, tradition, and culture, that are its links with eternity.

Thus, the image of Matěra created by Rasputin has at least three other levels of meaning in addition to the metaphor of Matěra as microcosm. These include the archetypal level (the earth mother), the symbolic (eternity), and the folk. The latter level identifies Matěra as the specific cultural symbol for the fundamental national concepts of
home (*dom*) and homeland (*rodina*): "... a person having had his own home and homeland, is tied to them, oh how he is tied to them!" (p. 88). Because the various levels are integrated conceptually throughout the work, Matera is a powerful image which appeals simultaneously to the archetypal, universal, and national levels of the reader's unconscious, evoking strong response to the *povest*.

The King Larch is a similarly complex image that also appeals to different levels of the conscious and unconscious: the archetypal (the world tree), the symbolic (Matera and the irrational and indestructible in nature), the metaphoric (nature as the absolute ruler of man), and the folk (the popular belief that the larch anchors Matera to the river bed).

The relationship between the King Larch and the solitary and lowly birch tree that stands beside it is described in metaphoric and symbolic terms:

Not far away, about twenty metres closer to the Angara, a birch tree stood, which still turned green and put out leaves, but was already old and dying. It was the only tree that ever tried to grow alongside the threatening "King Larch." And he took mercy on it, didn't kill it off. Perhaps their roots came together underground and knew harmony, but here, where all was visible, it seemed that the larch tolerated the birch only because of his magnanimous and capricious mercy. (p. 160)

The metaphor identifies the larch with the ruler and the birch with the common man. The birch is thus also a symbol of the ordinary individual life which must abide by the decisions of forces, human or in the world of nature, that direct and ultimately decide its fate. The birch is eventually destroyed in place of the larch at the frustrated whim of the brigade leader: "And the birch, guilty only by the fact that it stood close to the mighty and obstinate 'King Larch' that refused to submit to man, fell. The 'King Larch' didn't even rustle in response" (p. 164). The conclusion of the story
about the King Larch, another story element within Rasputin's "myth-povest', completely upholds the metaphor created and, more importantly, supports a main theme in Rasputin's prose—the eternal, indestructible, ultimate power of nature: "The unsubmitting 'King Larch', the sole survivor, continued to rule over everything around him. But around him was emptiness" (p. 165). Thus, despite the specific and tragic demise of Matéra, the essential spirit of the island and of nature can not be destroyed and continues to exist and rule.

Tropes comprise the other subgenus in Rasputin's system of figurative language and these figures of speech—the image, the simile, the metaphor and the symbol—are as crucial to individual images and image patterns that emerge in Rasputin's two povesti as they are to the thematic imagery and imagery of myth that have been examined above.

In general, Rasputin's imagery, whether achieved by fundamental image or by simile, is often symbolic or metaphoric in nature, and reinforces the statement made by the work, its plot and its action by communicating them with a rich and emotional complexity. Thus every trope that Rasputin utilizes to create an image is not an embellishment, but a part of the meaning of the work as a whole. For example, in both Živi i pomni and Prošcanie s Matēroj there is a pattern of imagery which runs throughout each work. In the former povest' there is a pervasive pattern of animal imagery and in the latter a system of images which is biblical and sometimes apocalyptic. Both patterns are composed mainly of figurative but tied images.

In Živi i pomni the animal imagery supports the physical, mental, and emotional characterization of Andrej Gus'kov, and largely through these images do we see Andrej's deterioration into a primitive state in which survival is the sole concern, for as he becomes increasingly isolated the images are progressively those of a wild beast. The
first animal image is an unobtrusive one. Suspecting that Andrej has returned from the war and is somewhere in the vicinity, Nastena goes to the bath-house and, sniffing the air, tries to sense his presence: "Nastena sat down on the bench near the window and, in an animal-like manner, began to keenly sniff the bath-house air, trying to find some new and unfamiliar smells that she had known at one time long ago" (p. 200). Two days later, when she goes to the bath-house again to wait for Andrej, "... she felt like a small, unhappy animal ... She wanted to think about something, to remember anything at all but she couldn't; that which was simple to do amongst people turned out to be impossible to do here" (p. 202).

After the couple's first rendezvous in the bath-house, the animal image transfers to Andrej when in response to Nastena's concern about where he will go to hide, he answers: "'To my blood brother, to the grey wolf'" (p. 211). Rasputin suggests that the animal-like facet of Andrej's personality that emerges in his seclusion is an integral, if formerly repressed, aspect of his personality and not simply a phenomenon which occurs because of his circumstances. His entire conduct and approach toward Nastena, as her husband, is crude, rough, and demanding in the bath-house, and through the narrator we learn that before his departure for the war Andrej had beaten Nastena out of anger for the fact that she had not yet borne him a child.

Again through narrative comment, we learn that during active duty in the war, Andrej had suffered a concussion and temporary deafness. In this condition, Andrej's animal instinct reveals itself in an insatiable appetite and an uncomprehending perception of his surroundings:

Not hearing himself, he thought that others could not hear him and that gave him away when he stole into the kitchen to procure some food, and when he tried to convince them to give him an extra portion at mealtime, they answered whatever they wanted and had a good laugh about it, for he
Andrej's insatiable appetite recurs in the wilderness where he is alone and isolated: "He constantly wanted to eat, and everything around him seemed to be like him, hungry and greedy. . . ." (p. 332). As Andrej adjusts to living by himself in the woods, his actions and mode of thinking become increasingly animal-like. For example, while hunting on Kamennyj Island, Andrej finds a secluded cave in which he feels completely safe. Again the image of a wild animal is evoked as he falls asleep in his lair (ležen'). Soon, an old grey wolf begins to visit Andrej in the winter cabin, and Andrej, out of fear, loneliness, and frustration, begins to howl. He demonstrates his new survival skill for Nastena:

... not all at once, beginning with a sob, as if working up to the necessary voice, and reaching it, sharpening it, he emitted a thin, long groan that was plaintive, devastating, and cut to the quick. . . . "Does it sound real?" he asked and he answered himself, "It does. . . ." (p. 276)

The image of a wild animal continues to be associated with Andrej: as he circles his native village he freezes at the slightest sound or breath, living on instinct alone (p. 331), he sniffs the air as he walks, looks, listens, and plays games with himself to pass the time (p. 332), at other times, out of sheer boredom and loneliness, he has an overwhelming urge to whine like a dog (p. 312). Andrej's adaptation to the animal world is revealed thus: "For a long time now he had not been afraid of the animals but he did not want to leave trace of himself for man. In the morning, making his way to the cabin, he first made a large loop through the mountain and thus went around the village" (p. 334).
Through her relationship with Andrej, Nastena feels in a tangible way his decline into the animal world and at times she also becomes associated with that world. She shudders as she thinks of their meetings in the bath-house because of its relation in her mind with an animal den:

It was especially unpleasant to lie on the cold and slippery upper bench which smelled of musty and rancid leaves and upon which it was necessary to climb on all fours; it seemed to Nastena that up there she would at once be covered in repulsive animal fur and that, if she wanted to, she could howl like an animal. (p. 270).

In this system of animal imagery Andrej is identified with a wild animal, first with a wolf, and after the killing of the calf, with a bear. Nastena's association with an animal goes beyond figurative imagery, for the mare is used as a symbolic image for Nastena. The initial connection is made when Nastena, on what turns out to be the day of her conception, likens her love to a mare: "'My love lived for so long without nourishment, like a hungry and thin mare. Don't strain it, don't force it'" (p. 234).

On the day that Nastena and Andrej have agreed will confirm or deny Nastena's pregnancy, Andrej sees his father walking a mare in foal and the animal completely fascinates him:

The mare was in foal and in her final days, for her sides were swollen, her stomach hung, and she walked cautiously and with difficulty. Andrej's attention for some reason was attracted to the mare; she, more than anything else, amazed him. He could not have explained why: either it had been a long time since he had seen a mare in foal and had forgotten how they looked or even that they could exist, or he gladly seized on the fortunate possibility of not having to look immediately at his father . . . (p. 305)
The mare symbolizes Nastena and the child she has conceived. It is at this point that Andrej realizes how he has regressed, and he accepts the situation with a tired indifference: "You can't really feel that you are a wild animal until you see that domestic animals exist . . ." (p. 308). A key scene in the povest' and the climax of Andrej's physical, psychological, and moral transformation into a wild beast, is his savage killing of the bull-calf. The animal imagery culminates in this scene with a reversal of personification: rather than an animal being endowed with human features, Andrej has in every sense become an animal. That night, Andrej awakens to the sound of the ice breaking on the river—this was the event which he had earlier anticipated as being a turning-point in his life. The turning point had indeed come, but now all of his human aspirations and emotions were dead:

... that which lay in the sack seemed to be squeezing out and muting all of his feelings. Even now he didn't know if it was only for the sake of the meat that he had killed the calf or to satisfy something else, that from that moment had lodged within him solidly and authoritatively. (p. 339)

In Prošcanie s Matěroj, an extensive biblical system of images exists which reinforces the structure of myth in the povest' by evoking and re-arranging universal and Christian myths.

It was difficult to believe that it would really be that way, that the end of the world, which was used to frighten the unenlightened, was now very near for the village. . . . Now only the final summer remained: the waters would rise in the fall. (pp. 17–18)

The apocalyptic reference to "the end of the world" for Matěra village and island is the archetypal idea of the destruction of the world, while "the waters that would rise
in the fall" is an allusion to the Biblical world flood. These images do not, I think, extend to the whole of Russia. They refer specifically to Matëra as a metaphor for a microcosm within the larger society, but they sound a warning about the consequences of Matëra's demise that will reverberate through the rest of society.

In the initial description of the King Larch which stands in the pasture, a simile likens it to a shepherd watching his flock of sheep that has spread over the grazing lands. "It really did resemble a shepherd carrying out his ancient watchman's service" (p. 159). Symbolically, the simile refers to Christ as the eternal shepherd and the implication is strengthened by the attribution of masculine gender to the tree (although in Russian, larch, listvennica, is of the feminine gender), and by the elevated adjectives that describe the larch, attesting to the essential nature of its existence: "It towered over and commanded everything" and "... it stood so eternal, mighty, and imperious there on the knoll half a verst from the village, visible from almost everywhere and known to all" (p. 159).

The symbol continues with the reference to a decision made on high (v nebesax) to reduce the larch in size and stature because it had grown so high and strong: "Then that famous storm had raged" (p. 159), in which the top of the larch was struck by lightning and thrown to the earth. But without its top the larch looked even more formidable and invincible.

The metaphorical image of the King Larch as an absolute ruler is strengthened by such symbolic allusions to Christ. The symbolism further binds the King Larch and Bogodul together for, as we have discussed already, Bogodul too is described as a Christ-like figure. An additional image of Bogodul also links him to this group of images; he is, according to Nastas'ja: "... like a bird of God, only one that swears" (p. 24).
An association of Dar'ja's adjective of endearment xristoven'kij, with this set of biblical images is possible for it clearly has as its root, Xristos (Christ). An implication of being long-suffering underlies the various possible meanings of the endearment such as 'dear one', 'darling', 'poor dear one', etc. The description of the burning of the island's mill is evocative of an orgy in hell and is thus related, as an antithesis, to the imagery of Christ and the heavens discussed above. It is strangers who have come to help clear Matéra and prepare it for the flooding that engage in the orgy and celebrate the destruction of the mill:

It was as if they had gone out of their minds: they jumped, shouted, and threw themselves toward the heat... A little dog, also crazed by the madness all around, barked... On the birch tree, the leaves curled up... and in the bright blaze all of it seemed colourless, transparent, incorporeal as well... as they celebrated their noisy, satanic pleasure. (p. 135)

Several critics have correctly identified elements of religious imagery, symbolism, behaviour, and language which are found throughout Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěrjo. G. Mikkelson has suggested that certain devices used by Rasputin serve "as evidence of the survival in Soviet times of these remnants of Russia's Christian culture in the language if not in the ritual observances of the [novels'] characters and [their] narrators." There is no doubt that at one level Rasputin's use of religious imagery, of vocabulary with religious connotation, and his portrayal of Nastena and Dar'ja as embodying the Christian values of guilt, pity, forgiveness, and mercy indicate some sympathy to the Christian ethic that may provide guidance, relief, and comfort in a time of social and cultural upheaval. However, at a deeper level, underlying the relative historical novelty of Christian belief and ritual is the pantheism typical of both the Russian religious and secular world view which is most evident in the sense of a cosmic
life and a feeling of the primary bond which exists between man and nature. Further, such a perception of the world holds that all matter is animated (hylozoism). This concept is epitomized by the narrative comment in *Proščanie s Materoj*: "That was it: Matēra took off and flew away—may she rest in peace!" (p. 173), where conceptualization of Matēra as a living being even in death is quite natural.

A second consideration connected to the pantheist world view as well as to the Christian language and ritual in which it is sometimes set, is the extremely close relationship between this world view and folklore. G. Fedotov in his work, *The Russian Religious Mind*, states that in all civilizations "there are survivals of the prehistoric ages, now degraded to the rank of superstitions or 'folklore'." This assertion seems especially credible in relation to Rasputin's prose. An example from *Živi i pomni* will illustrate the response which is a result of the combination of deeply engrained superstition and Christian ritual. Nastena crosses herself and offers a prayer in an attempt to dispel the thought that he, who she thought was her husband, might be a forest spirit—a figure which is a holdover from ancient Russian mythology that now occupies a place in folklore. Folk belief and religious belief again merge as Andrej feels increasing guilt over his actions. As we have just seen in the discussion of animal imagery, he becomes increasingly animal-like and so approaches the half-man half-animal folk image of the *lešij* or the *aboroten*. Simultaneously, Andrej is possessed by demons which is a Christian religious image; in the eyes of a dying goat that he has shot, his image is reflected as a hairy demon. Andrej for the first time in his life offers a prayer, a spontaneous, impromptu prayer, that Nastena should be pregnant adding that, if he is granted this wish, it would not matter what became of him. Andrej completes the prayer by making a cross as much to ward off the "unclean spirit" that has occupied him as to complete the prayer the fulfillment of which would offer him some small
redemption.

The fact that in both povesti Rasputin frequently identifies times of the year with their proximity to holidays in the Christian calendar is not surprising for this seems to be widely practised within the contemporary secular vernacular, urban and rural alike. He mentions the Trinity (Troica), Easter (Pasxa), St. Il'ja's Day (Il'in den'), the Epiphany frosts (kreščenskie morozy), and Intercession (Pokrov). Some of these holidays, especially Easter and Trinity, also have significance in the Russian collective unconscious because they coincide with the cycles of nature and therefore were marked as holidays even in pre-Christian history.

In Živi i pomni, the story of Nastena and Andrej may be viewed on one level as a Christian parable about sin, pity, repentance, and forgiveness. Elements of character and theme that would support such an interpretation have already been discussed, but certain stylistic devices also provide such support. For example, the presence of such epithets as "Nastena’s saving hand" (spasatel'naja ruka Nasteny, p. 236), and her "lost soul" (zabludšaja duša, p. 329), the popular belief recalled by Nastena that "there is more joy in Heaven about one repentant sinner than about ten righteous men" (p. 371), and the accompanying hope that people might realize that, having committed such a sin, Andrej could never sin again all attest to a general attitude on the part of Rasputin that appeals to Christian qualities of tolerance, forgiveness, and understanding of human failure.

The unborn child of Nastena and Andrej, which is conceived after so many long years, is viewed as a miracle by both parents. Andrej's initial reaction of calling Nastena "my own Mother of God" (Bogorodica moja, p. 273), indicates this attitude as do Nastena's feelings when she suspects her pregnancy:

Could it be that God had taken pity on her and had given her this happiness? Was it possible that after all these years of married life, after
so many vain hopes, attempts, and prayers, now, when any kind of hope seemed to have been lost, she had by some miracle got better and conceived a child? (p. 273)

For Andrej, the child soon comes to symbolize the possibility of his redemption as well as the hope for the salvation of himself and Nastena: "'The child is our salvation... The child will save you from cruelty. Could there be in this wide world such guilt, that our child can not cover it? There isn't such guilt, Nastena..." (p. 364). But the symbolic image of the cross as Nastena stands beside a moonlit window examining her naked body for any visible changes that might indicate her pregnancy, presages the conclusion of the povest': "... and noticing on her breast the shadow from the window frame that looked like a huge, dark cross, Nastena became frightened and moved away" (p. 273). This image, representing the Crucifixion, ultimately symbolizes the sacrifice of Nastena's life and that of her child out of love for Andrej. The symbol is later augmented by a metaphoric reference to the "road to Calvary" during the scene in which Semenovna detects Nastena's pregnancy. Resignedly, Nastena urges herself on: "Here it is, the threshold of her road to Calvary. Step across, Nastena..." (p. 375).

The Christian images and symbolism and even mode of thought that are crucial to the interpretation of Živi i pomni at the level of parable make the human tragedy that is unfolded in the povest' even more profound. The universal significance of the tale about Nastena and Andrej is discerned by G. Mikkelson, when he writes that: "The characters, even as they interact on a realistic plane in plausible social surroundings, are also players in a cosmic drama involving as antagonists the forces of good and evil, prayer and blasphemy, condemnation and forgiveness, life and death."34

The mixture of folk superstitions and folklore with elements of Christianity found throughout Proščanie s Matěroj make it a prime example of the spiritual and religious
attitude of the Russian peasantry. Thus, the psychic communication that Dar'ja experiences with her dead parents and the ritual preparation of her cottage according to time-honoured tradition are followed by a fervent, fearful prayer that continues throughout the night. Similarly, Dar'ja and Katerina cross themselves before the icon corner in Nastasia's home having only just finished a discussion regarding the folk superstition that holds that a samovar should never be wrapped up before it leaves the house for it must be able to see where it is to return. While their prayers are according to the language of Christian ritual: ne daj gospod' (p. 127), gospod' s toboj (p. 177), prosti, gospod' miloslivyj (p. 120), carstvie ej nebesnoe (p. 177), there is also preserved in the memory of the elderly remnants of an ancient curse-prayer: na more-okeane, na ostrove Bujane (p. 46).

It is significant that Dar'ja's fervent wish to finish her life on earth and join her ancestors is expressed once as a Christian prayer and again as an address to her father and mother in secular language:

"Forgive us, Lord, for being weak and bankrupt in memory and spirit," she thought. "You don't question why a rock is a rock, but you question a man. Or are you tired of asking? . . . I feel bad. And you won't let me leave. I don't walk the earth and I'm not in the sky, it's as if I'm suspended between heaven and earth. . . . Come for me, Lord, I beg you. I'm a stranger to everyone here. Take me to my family . . . to those to whom I am closer." (p. 131)

The content of both entreaties is almost identical; Dar'ja speaks of answering before those who have left her with responsibility and she articulates a sense of no longer belonging. Speaking to her mother and father in a vision, she begs:

"Don't be angry with me. I'm not guilty. If I'm guilty, I'm guilty. I am guilty because it's me, this fell upon me. And I, fool that I am,
didn't know what to do. . . . Papa! Mama! What am I guilty of? . . . I'm yours, yours. I need to be with you. . . . I'm not with the living any more. I'm not needed there, I belong to your times. I need to be with you . . . ." (p. 156)

In order that the curious mixture of folklore belief and religion should not be interpreted as merely the idiosyncrasy of an elderly population, Rasputin occasionally unites these same elements within his narrative commentary. An example is the lyrical digression commenting on the passing of Matera which begins when the rain comes, idling all of the former inhabitants who have returned to help with the final harvest. "The rain was timely: they could sit and talk without having to rush off. They hadn't dared to take a break of their own accord, so God himself sent one along for them" (p. 94). The entire scene is reminiscent of a funeral service, a collective remembering and final understanding of what Matera was. And there is also an allusion to the revelation, enlightenment, and hope that is often gained from the depths of despair when one realizes that life is eternal:

... the songs after work when it seemed that it wasn't them singing, not people but their very souls uniting into one . . . that sweet and troubling awe in the evening before the beauty and horror of the coming night, when you no longer remember where you are and what you are, when it seems that you're gliding silently and smoothly above the earth . . . that quiet profound ache . . . that comes when you realize that you didn't even know yourself until this very minute, didn't know that you are more than what you carry within you, that you are also what surrounds you that is not always noticeable and to lose this is at times more terrible than losing a hand or a foot—-all this would be remembered . . . and remain in their souls as an unsettling light and joy. (p. 105)

Rasputin clearly links the ethic of blood kinship with Christian values as he suggests that both should be passed from generation to generation, for in combination they offer man the ethical, spiritual, cultural, and historical support he needs to
understand the meaning of both life and death:

Perhaps this was the only thing that was eternal, the only thing that could be passed like the Holy Ghost, from person to person, from father to children, from children to grandchildren, exciting and protecting them, guiding and purifying them, eventually bringing them to the reason for which generations of humans had lived. So why shouldn't they fall into prayer at the end of the life that had existed on Matera. . . . Death seems terrible, but it sows the most kind and useful harvest in the souls of the living and from the seed of mystery and decay develops the seed of life and understanding. (p. 105)

Thus, the animal imagery in Živi i pomni and the biblical and allegorical imagery in Proščanie s Materoj form the most extensive pattern of images in the respective works. But Rasputin's prose is also rich in smaller image groupings that are often related to a major idea in the work.

For example, in Proščanie s Materoj, a cluster of images that relates to birds makes a statement about Dar'ja and her group of friends. First, there is Pavel's image of the new settlement across the river as an apiary: " . . . more than anything else, the settlement resembled an apiary. In even, correct row upon row stood identical houses with identical low and solid fences which turned at right angles in two directions—to the left and toward the Angara" (p. 181). This image is related to two others: Dar'ja sees herself as the scarecrow that she has constructed for her garden: " . . . yes, of course she was like that. It was her, her . . . ." (p. 126), and Sima is likened to a free bird that has no place to perch because all the places have been taken. Thus taken together as a cluster, these images reinforce the idea that Dar'ja and her friends will never find a place for themselves in the new settlement; a scarecrow and a free bird have no place in an apiary just as Dar'ja and Sima do not belong in the new settlement.
Another cluster of images in the same *povest* employs metaphor to suggest that the brigades of shock-workers and children who come to help with the clean-up of Matera are like hordes of invaders, foreigners, and occupiers. The first group to come, made up of some thirty raucous young people, is described as a "horde from the city" which "captured Matera" and "bases itself" in an office. Such vocabulary as well as the terrified reaction of the villagers suggests that the brigade is unwelcome and uninvited: "It had taken only one day to frighten Matera to death. . . . And when two young men knocked at Dar'ja's door, she was ready to fall on her knees: have pity, don't kill a Christian soul" (p. 132). The metaphor is a complete one, for even when the brigade leaves the image is one of retreating occupiers: they had a farewell party that "kept the village trembling all night" and upon leaving, "as a burning reminder, they set fire to the office where they had stayed" (p. 146).

It is the men who come to raze the forests and fields of Matera who are the most ominous in terms of the imagery of foreigners and invaders, for they perform their duties with cold determination. They were:

[M]en, not of the model of the previous horde, middle-aged, dignified, and quiet. . . . They walked without speaking, not talking with anyone, not paying attention to anything, but with assurance, in the middle of the road, with the self-confidence of owners, and by their appearance alone, by their very presence, people were made to rush: faster, faster, while they still haven't set fire to us. (p. 148)

The schoolchildren who are brought to Matera to dig up the potatoes belonging to the state farm are described in gentler terms, but the image suggested is still that of a "noisy, restless tribe" (p. 147). Thus, through this cluster of metaphoric images, the archetypal idea of the destruction of the earth which exists in the collective unconscious, is reworked by Rasputin into a progression of events—-invasion, destruction, obliteration,
culminating in the burning of the old mill—that is both real and imagistic.

Individual images created by simile, metaphor, and symbolism abound in Rasputin’s prose. As may be expected, some individual images are purely descriptive and lyrical: potatoes are like piglets in the sand (p. 149), Nastena’s laugh “like a small, precise wheel that had passed by on the water and moved away” (p. 293), and when Bogodul scratches his hardened feet the sound is “like the scraping of stone on stone” (p. 35).

Many other single images are closely related to a major idea or thematic concern in the work. Let us examine only a few of the most striking examples of such imagery in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Materej. In the latter work, we, along with Matereja’s inhabitants, become very conscious of the passage of time and its movement toward the day of flooding. A metaphor conveys the idea of passing days by identifying the process with an abacus: “. . . thus time passed, and thus, unnoticed, the long summer days slid from one side to the other” (p. 88).

In Živi i pomni, an ominous image is achieved through an extended simile of the hospital administration which had dealt with Andrej’s case: “[Andrej] thought of the hospital administration as some sort of uninvolved, cruel will which could not be changed by human strength, just as it was impossible, say, to fend off a storm or to stop the rain” (p. 217). With this image Rasputin refers to the idea of an outside force which controls and determines the actions of men, a force which is one of several at work in the determination of the inevitable course of events that is present in tragedy.

A combination of metaphor and simile is effectively used to convey Nastena’s growing anticipation of the day that her pregnancy is discovered so that, after so much torment, a new life may begin for her. The image created is one of the birth process:

More and more often, Nastena imagined that she was being pulled strongly into some narrow passage, and she would be squeezed and pushed as long
as she could breathe and then, squashed, gasping for breath, half-alive, she would be pulled out at the last moment. But she was not able to see into this new life, for her it was as dark and concealed as the peace that lies beyond the grave. (p 352)

The metaphoric image of the birth process is strengthened by the simile found in the final sentence and the effect of the combined image is to make birth analogous to death. The physical and sensory imagery of this passage recalls the impressions of the dying Ivan Il'ič, in Tolstoj's story, "The Death of Ivan Il'ič."

Andrej's isolation from human contact and his growing bond-of-survival with nature underlies the simple simile which likens him to a tree stump as he watches the lights in the windows of his father's house: "Gus'kov turned away from the lights and closed his eyes—in the encroaching darkness he resembled a tree stump. Later ... he rose decisively, and with sharp movements of the head, not moving his hands, he crossed himself . . ." (p. 316).

(iv) Folklore Devices

The importance of Russian folklore to Rasputin's prose is indisputable and specific basic elements from Siberian folk culture are related to and blended with the system of figurative language that he has developed. In Russian literature, as in most developed literatures, there exists a system of image-symbols—words that bear traditional symbolic content. This content is closely tied to some concept or understanding in the national consciousness and, as may be expected, such symbols are found in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj. The birch tree, the river, and the cuckoo all bear a significant national symbolic content which is directly related to other, more universal symbols or archetypes.
The birch tree traditionally symbolizes the homeland, suggesting that the birch which stands next to the King Larch represents in a physical sense the destruction of Matera. The birch also has an association with the beauty and purity of a young girl. In the mutual dream of Nastena and Andrej, Nastena emerges from a grove of birch trees, a detail which represents Nastena's innocence and fidelity to Andrej as well as her journey to him through time and space from his homeland.

The river in Živi i pomni is a traditional image-symbol. While in Prošanje s Materoj the Angara is evoked as the universal symbol for the flow of time, in Živi i pomni it is associated with notions about love and the Gus'kovs' love relationship. It separates them physically yet it binds them emotionally, for in crossing it each time in order to meet, the barrier it imposes becomes a test of their love. The connection between Nastena, the river, and Andrej is established with the narrative remark that "Nastena threw herself into marriage as into water—without any unnecessary thought" (p. 204). The association is reconfirmed at the climax of the povest' when Nastena fails to cross over successfully to warn Andrej of the impending search party: "She had only made things worse, she had given away the Angara" (p.386).

The cuckoo, symbol of a lonely and grieving woman, is evoked in Živi i pomni at a point when Nastena realizes that her situation is hopeless. Nastena is directly linked with the cuckoo when, having reached Andrej's side of the river, she hears its call asking for a prediction about the future: "Nastena while still on the river had longed to make a guess at her fortune, but she had been afraid . . ." (p.362). As she silently regards Andrej, she feels some disbelief that this is the man for whom she had risked and given so much: "And her heart sadly, inconsolably contracted: a person doesn't know a thing about himself. He doesn't believe himself and he fears himself" (p 363) These thoughts come to Nastena as the cuckoo "... not changing its voice.
went on with its cuckoo, talking—to whom was it saying so much?—to the trees, the river, the rocks” (p. 363).

Other elements from Russian folklore also generate symbols, images, and metaphors within Rasputin’s *povesti*. Folk images, omens and superstitions, dreams and visions work in conjunction with the conventional literary tropes and images discussed above. For example, in *Živi i pomni* accompanying the animal imagery which describes Andrej Gus’kov are three images extracted directly from Russian folklore: the changeling (*oboroten’*) and wood–demon (*lešč*), used interchangeably, and the devil. As Andrej progressively degenerates into the animal world, the folkloric representation of him becomes increasingly ominous and evil. Initially, the image of Andrej as a werewolf or wood–demon, expresses Nastena’s confusion over the situation she is faced with and her conscious, if unarticulated thought, that it would be better if indeed this were not really Andrej who had returned:

"... was it her husband? Maybe it had been a changeling with her. After all, can you make out anything in the dark? It’s said that they can disguise themselves so well, that even in broad daylight you can’t tell one apart from a real person. ... She froze from a traitorous thought: perhaps it would be better if it really had been only a changeling. (p. 211)"

The description of the days preceding the first rendezvous between Nastena and Andrej incorporates fairy–tale like vocabulary that prepares the way for Nastena’s impression of Andrej: Nastena lives as if under a spell (kak zavorožennaja, p. 200) after she deduces that it is Andrej who has taken Mixeič’s axe and skis from the bath house; she leaves some bread in the bath house as a test and closes the door behind with a secret, incantatory sigh (*s tajnym, zaklinajuščim vzdoxom*, p. 200); and she knows that the hour of their meeting has been appointed (*zagadannyj čas*, p. 202).
Nastena eventually tells Andrej that she had thought he might be a wood-demon, an unholy spirit (*nečistaja sila*). Andrej's self-identification with this folk image begins when he decides that he will not shave off his beard: "'So that I won't look like myself. Perhaps it's better to look like a wood-demon'" (p. 232).

The fact that Nastena consistently feels that there is something about Andrej that is foreign (čužoj) to her, suggests that the folklore image is symbolic of the intangible but very real changes that have occurred to Andrej's personality. Thus the folkloric image of the devil (čert) which symbolizes the negative and even evil qualities of Andrej's personality emerges in the scene in which Andrej slaughters a goat and watches, fascinated by its agony, as it dies: "Just before the end, he raised it [the goat's head] and looked into its eyes—in response they widened and in their watery depths he saw two shaggy and horrible-looking behorned little devils that looked like him" (p. 246). Thus, through the simultaneous use of animal imagery and personified images from folklore (wood-demon and devil), Andrej's physical and spiritual conditions are depicted as suffering a parallel degeneration into isolation from human contact which is accompanied by a burgeoning animal instinct for survival.

Other images from Russian folklore and culture are evoked in Živi i pomni by an emblematic appellation of various village characters. Vasilisa Rogova is known by all as "Vasilisa Premudraja" 'Vasilisa the Wise', a name which is a play on "Vasilisa Prekrasnaja," the heroine of many Russian folktales. Vasilisa Premudraja is known and respected in Atamanovka for her wisdom, good judgement, quiet strength and self-assurance. "Miška-batrak" 'Miška-the-hired-hand', the best hired worker in the area, pulls out drowned bodies from the river and buries them in a special graveyard. This nickname is also a well-known appellation in Russian folk culture, as there are many tales told about the hired hand. Innokentij Ivanovič is known amongst the
villagers as "Innokentij Karmanović" 'Innokentij Pockets' an appellation that displays the popular predilection for associating and naming a person by their most outstanding feature. Here, the reference to pockets alludes to Innokentij Ivanović's wealth and stinginess.

Omens and superstitions are powerful genres in the Russian oral folk tradition and belief system. They are used effectively by Rasputin as emblematic symbols which add to the general sense of foreboding that pervades both Proščanie s Matěroj and Živi i pomni. Beneath these verbally or mentally articulated forms is an infrastructure of premonition and presentiment which moves, supports, and elaborates the plot action toward the inevitable conclusion in each work.

In Živi i pomni, four events are clearly interpreted as bad omens and they all function to presage events which come to pass within the plot of the povest'. The first occurs in the past when Andrej and Nastena are first married and sleep in a little shed that is pitch dark and smells of wood shavings. In reminiscing about their early good days together, Nastena reminds Andrej of a rooster that had crowed and had frightened her badly. Andrej remembers this event as well and he knows that Nastena has not mentioned the most important thing: "... that the rooster which had startled her seemed to her to be a bad omen, one from which she did not free herself for a long time. 'It's bad, really bad,' she would repeat, and he, Andrej, tried to calm her: 'Go ahead and listen to the roosters, believe them some more. They crow here every minute' (p. 300). The setting of a dark shed and a pervasive aroma are repeated several years later upon Andrej's unexpected return from the war, but now the experience is unpleasant and frightening. The bath house smells of must, Andrej's beard smells of sheep-skin, and instead of the former concern that Nastena should be afraid, Andrej himself threatens her with physical violence if she should reveal his presence.
A natural phenomenon which Nastena interprets as a bad omen is the meeting of the sun and the moon in the same sky. The two bodies meet at the end of the day during which Mixeič unexpectedly questions Nastena about Andrej. Lying to him, she feels pity for him and guilt for herself and then she is faced with the ominous union of the sun and the moon:

The day was already ending, getting low: the sun and moon came together from opposite sides in one sky: the thin and sharp crescent twinkled in front of the pale sun with an angry energy. Each time Nastena saw them together, she feared something and could not understand why they couldn't separate as they were supposed to. And this time too she felt uneasy. Without blinking, she looked at the sun with wide open eyes and it seemed that she felt the prickly icy rays of the moon reach her. (p. 323)

It seemed particularly disconcerting and unnatural to Nastena that the moonlight and the penetrating power of its cold rays should be stronger than those of the sun. The sun and moon representing light and darkness are also symbolic of good and evil, life and death. By extension and through Nastena's interpretation of the phenomenon as a bad omen, the meeting of the sun and the moon may represent the triumph of darkness, evil, and death over light, goodness, and life.

The eyes of the cow whose calf Andrej drags away and slaughters seem to Andrej to be a bad omen of what is to come: "Bowing her head, she looked at him with the same intent immobility, and in her eyes he saw a threat--a sort of detached, unbovine threat that could happen" (p. 329). The threat that Andrej perceives in the animal's eyes does come about, for it augurs the death of his own child, a death for which he is also responsible.

Nastena endures a terrifying experience, which to her seems to be a horrible omen when in the fog she literally stumbles into the graveyard for the drowned. She is
extremely shaken for she knows that the graveyard exists and in the day time she avoids it, refusing even to look in its direction:

She had fallen right into a grave—what could it mean?! Moaning and trembling with fear and disgust, she was afraid for herself: she was slipping. And later, she washed and washed her hands that had grasped at the clay-like, sticky earth from the grave, but still it seemed that they smelled of something like yeast. (p. 387)

Superstition in Živi i pomni also plays a role in supporting the sense of inevitable tragedy and the tenor of hopelessness. For example, there is an old superstition associated with foods stored away in anticipation of a person’s return—ždanki: if you sample the ždanki, the awaited meeting will never take place. Nastena finds a piece of pork fat that Semenovena has put aside for Andrej’s return and justifies giving it to Andrej because he is the person for whom it is intended. The superstition rings true, however, for no real return ever took place nor would it in the future.

Underlying omen and superstition in Živi i pomni is a network of presentiment and premonition that creates a tone of foreboding and heightens the dramatic tension. Andrej’s impressions, feelings, and presentiments are characteristically selfish and ego-centric. When he finds the secluded cave on Kamennyj Island, Andrej is certain that it will be useful to him although he isn’t yet sure why or for what. This is the place to which we assume Andrej runs to hide from the search party after Nastena has sacrificed her life to protect him.

Throughout the poved’ Nastena’s presentiments do not augur well. Andrej’s sense that his life has been turned inside out is echoed by a feeling that Nastena has as she stumbles in a blizzard across the Angara to Andrej:
... another person might have rejoiced at how well things were working out, but to her, for some reason, it seemed that everything was going opposite, inside out, not the way that it might. Her mood from the beginning had been ruined not only by her fatigue, but by something else; she was afraid to think that the "something else" was a bad and certain premonition. (p. 267).

Nastena's sense of forboding deepens when Mixeic insists that the bed-ridden Semenovna get up and walk around on her crippled legs. She feels that Mixeič has understood and decided something: "Was he not preparing her [Semenovna] for the day close at hand when they would have to manage without Nastena? But why? Why?" (p. 328). The accumulation of premonition and presentiment, coupled with Nastena's disastrous fall into the graveyard, ultimately confirms what Nastena had subconsciously known all along—that all of this would culminate in her death. In one discussion with Andrej, Nastena imagines the relief that death would bring her: "'Things would be even better for me without me. To know nothing, to see nothing, not to hear, not to feel, not to suffer—oh, how wonderful, how peaceful!'" (p. 287). This image foreshadows the dream of relief and rest that Nastena has immediately before she drowns herself.

Omen, superstition, and premonition in Rasputin's work function to support the overall tense, doomed and tragic mood. A brief respite is provided by Nastena's intuitive sense that she has conceived Andrej's child for these passages are written with a warm and sympathetic sensitivity: "... Nastena moved carefully, as if afraid of hurting something within herself, and she smiled more tenderly and warmly, again as if protecting a private secret that concerned only herself and for which the time had not yet come" (p. 264)

In Proščanie s Matěraj, a sustained tension achieved in part through the use of presentiment and premonition is extremely important due to the ambiguous ending of the povest'. We may regard these occurrences as clues by which to confirm or refute the
conclusion that Dar'ja and her friends disappear along with their homeland, Matēra, under the waters of the Angara. Dar'ja's challenge at the beginning of the work: "'As for me, I'd rather stay here and not go anyplace. Let them drown me, if they have to'" (p. 24), initiates a series of premonitions and presentiments in both the narrative and the speech of the characters indicating that the plot is moving in that very direction. When Dar'ja remembers her mother's terror of the river, she is stunned by the revelation that her mother's fear has proved to be justified. Not only will the water catch up with Dar'ja's mother and irreparably disrupt the ancestral link through time, but it will destroy all the history, tradition, and culture that over three hundred years has been developed on Matēra and is now part of a communal kinship community.

The Xozjain knows as a fact that with the rise of the flood waters, he will cease to exist along with Matēra. As he makes his nightly rounds, he hears Bogodul's loud snoring, and he senses that Bogodul too will never leave the island: "... listening to it [the snoring], the Xozjain sensed that which he had sensed on more than one occasion: it was here on Matēra that Bogodul would finally meet his death and that he, like Xozjain, was living his final summer" (p. 56). Thus another link is established between the forces of nature and those people on Matēra who are inextricably and integrally bound within nature.

The special relationship shared by Dar'ja and the group of elderly friends that gather around her is early on described in terms that foreshadow the scene which concludes the povest'. The narrator observes that: "It's well known that company in distress makes trouble less and if you were to offer them death at the same time, beside one another, not one of them would even think twice—they would agree with great joy" (p. 69). They are, in fact, given the opportunity to end their lives together by Pavel when he agrees that they may spend a final night on the abandoned island.
As they sit in the darkness of Bogodul's barracks, the little group feels that their lives are over:

Matěra had been cleaned up. The last people who had a life to live had left, the light had also gone, and it seemed that it was all over—nobody else would come and the light would not return, and they, bound to Matěra, would be carried off in the darkness somewhere, until the final hour struck for all of them at the same time. (p. 177).

Dar'ja's threat that she will not leave Matěra if the family graves are not saved, heightens a gnawing and growing feeling in Pavel that his mother will never leave Matěra. This feeling is combined in his mind with the guilty admission that Dar'ja should not have to move and that she will not survive in the new environment. The death of Ded Egor in the new settlement confirms Pavel's feeling that: "... his mother would not get accustomed to things here. Not by a long shot... They would bring her and she would hide herself in a corner until she had dried up completely..." (p. 81). Ded Egor did not die of ill health, but out of a longing for Matěra and his sensitivity to and affinity with the cycles of nature on Matěra are as acute as are Dar'ja's.

Dar'ja's internal monologues and visionary conversations with her dead father and mother indicate that her psychology is no longer directed toward living, but toward joining them in the kinship community. As she visits the demolished graveyard she senses "... only the end. ... The end and that was all" (p. 154). She feels the earth pulling at her, beckoning her and she begs her parents to accept her: "I'm yours, yours. I need to be with you, surely I don't belong with the living? I'm useless here, I'm from your time... I'll see off the house and then join you..." (p. 156).
Although the fate of Dar'ja and her friends is not definitively stated in the ambiguous conclusion, there are several indications as to what the ending might be. Pavel feels a desperate sense of anxiety and premonition as he returns home to his new apartment after having left Dar'ja on Matěra, but he accepts that:

... that's the way it should be. But what should be, what the far, far away anxiety was about, he could not figure out ... Something had nagged him and slashed at him constantly since the time he had left them, but he had thought that it was something else bothering him. ...

And once again, he did not believe that she [Dar'ja] would ever walk through that gate. ... (p. 185)

The final conversation between the old people on Matěra could indicate that they have passed from life into death or it could indicate their complete disorientation due to the darkness, the fog, and their solitary human presence on Matěra. They hear the farewell wail of the Xozjain outside the door of the barracks, but they also hear the sound of the motorboat as it passes by the island, lost in the fog. While I suggest that, among other devices in the povest', the presentiments and premonitions suggested above indicate that Dar'ja and her friends cease to exist along with Matěra, there is still room for speculation about their physical demise. However, the ethical and spiritual way of life that they embody will symbolically perish with Matěra. The framework of omen, premonition, and superstition which supports the tension and the inexorable movement of the plot toward an inevitable conclusion, reflects in a very natural way the real significance of such phenomena in the cultural life of the Russian countryside. Rasputin draws upon his knowledge of such beliefs and re-creates them to motivate his characters psychologically.

The belief in dreams and visions as being of psychological, emotional, and spiritual significance extends deep into the Russian psyche and is prevalent in Russian
folklore. Rasputin employs these two phenomena very effectively in Živi i pomni and Prošanje s Materoj. In the former work, the mutual dream shared by Nastena and Andrej acquires a symbolic significance that is central to the povest', while Dar'ja's psychic perceptions and visions in Prošanje s Materoj presage the direction of the plot. Whereas folk belief considers visions and psychic experiences to be spiritually motivated since only a few people possess the ability to receive prophecy or revelation, dreams are a shared human experience. In Russian folk culture, as in popular psychology, significance is attached to dreams as mirrors of our unconscious. Thus, in Rasputin's povesti, dreams are symbolic but not mysterious. The major characters themselves, as a matter of course, suggest interpretations of their dreams, thereby enhancing their psychological characterization.

In Rasputin's prose, dreams are personified phenomena having an energy and life that is their own and beyond human control. His characters understand and accept this quality and bear it in mind when interpreting their dreams. Andrej Gus'kov's growing guilt and remorse is represented by a series of short, confused dreams that are largely connected with people and places in his recent, wartime past. All of them involve him in a predicament which is resolved by his ceasing to exist either through execution or through identity change:

He woke up, but sat for a long time without moving, depressed and poisoned by these wandering, malicious dreams. There was no truth in them, nobody had ever suspected him of anything bad. But just look how your last step influences your whole life: even his dreams had changed, even they, arising within him, had turned against him. What could he expect from others? (p. 314)

The mutual dream shared by Nastena and Andrej alludes to the relationship between them which is pivotal to the plot in Živi i pomni. Nastena attaches great
importance to the fact that she and Andrej have shared the same dream: "A mutual
dream—she had never had one in all her life. A mutual dream—it had to be very
important, weighty. You don't have to interpret it, everything is in plain sight"
(p. 280). In this dream, Nastena first as a young girl, then as a mature woman
repeatedly comes to Andrej on the battlefield to beg his help with her children. Andrej
sends her away each time, refusing to listen to her pleas. Nastena explains to Andrej
that in her version of the dream, she had been given an ultimatum—to go to him and
if he accepted the children, then that was the way her life would be. If he rejected
and refused to recognize them, she would be left to fend for herself.

The dream is symbolic of the Gus'kovs' actual relationship in the povest'.
Nastena's approaches to and pleading with Andrej in the dream reflect her real life
visits to Andrej in the secluded cabin and her suggestions, wishes and finally pleas that
he reveal himself for the sake of their future and their unborn child.

The ending of the dream is forgotten by both Andrej and Nastena for neither
can remember how Andrej responded the final time that Nastena came to him, or if she
had had a baby in her arms. Nastena reproaches Andrej with his stubborn refusal of
her in the dream:

"You could have taken pity on her and not argued," she answered in a
voice that was instantly dull and empty.
"Why?"
"Just because. She asked so many times." (p. 280)

In their actual predicament, Andrej repeats these refusals by refusing to consider
Nastena's increasingly urgent pleas; instead he threatens her, threatens to kill himself, and
sends her away. The ultimatum that Nastena faces in the dream is also one which she
is forced to make in her real life dilemma. Andrej's repeated refusal to help Nastena
forces her to feel totally isolated and abandoned. She takes matters into her own hands and commits suicide as much to save Andrej as to spare her unborn child his shame.

With the representation of the mutual dream in Živi i pomni Rasputin introduces an important idea in the folk belief that dreams have an energy, soul, and an independent will that transcend the boundaries imposed by time and space. Nastena speaks of this potential to Andrej: "'See what kind of dream this is. It has two sides. In one night we both dreamed it. Maybe my soul went out to see you. That's why everything coincides'" (p. 281).

Nastena's belief that her soul travelled to Andrej and prompted their mutual dream is restated when she tells him of the vision which she experienced daily in which she would see Andrej and would ensure herself of his safety. Her total commitment to Andrej and her obsessive need to know that he was unharmed are psychological factors which facilitate her visionary state:

Not once did I lie down to sleep without talking to you, and in the mornings, I got up only after I had reached you and found out how you were. It really seemed that I saw you, at first no one was there, only a noise like the wind's whistle, and then it became quieter and quieter—that meant you weren't far off, and then, there you were. You were always alone for some reason. You sat or stood in your uniform, so sad, sad, and nobody was around you. I took a quick look and then came back: it was impossible to linger or talk there. (p. 297)

There is a sense of freedom and release (osvobožđenost') found in the dreams and visions that Rasputin re-creates that is also present in other psychological states. In Živi i pomni the two dream sequences discussed above are the only actual dreams, but throughout both protagonists feel as though they are living in a dream. This altered state is characterized by a sense of detachment from what is, so that they feel that they are observing themselves but have no control over what they are doing. Psychologically
this is an escape mechanism by which the harsh reality of the predicament that the
heroes face can be made less harsh. For example, the preparation for and the
occurrence of the first rendezvous between Nastena and Andrej is, for Nastena,
experienced in a dream-state. The fact that she intuitively knows how to prepare for
the meeting is attributed to a forgotten dream: it was as if she was in a dream, moving
almost by touch and feeling neither tension nor exhaustion after the day’s end, but
doing everything exactly as she had planned. Once she is face to face with Andrej, it
is with great effort that Nastena is able to maintain a sense of herself for all senses
and emotions are numbed by the shocking reality of the situation:

> Everything that she said now, everything that she saw and heard, was
> happening in a sort of deep numbness, when all senses become mute and
> still and when a person exists not in his own life but as though in an
> emergency life that has been attached to it. (p. 209)

As she sits regarding Andrej, she does not respond with joy that he has returned
but with the hope that it is all a bad dream that will disappear with the first rays of
light.

> Just as the povest' begins with Nastena’s clear comprehension of what she must
do, so it ends with the same sense of direction; these are the only instances in which
Nastena is certain of her actions. On the eve of her death, Nastena awakens from a
light sleep with a plan of action in her mind:

> Exactly at some predetermined moment, as if someone had nudged her,
she awoke. She felt rested and strong, and her thoughts were at
peace. . . . She dressed without hiding and in the same way left the house.

> She had to get there, to warn her husband. She had to bid him
farewell. Forever or perhaps until another time, she didn’t know.
(pp. 390–391)
Another factor which makes it difficult for Nastena to maintain a firm grip on reality is the psychological and emotional confusion which results from having to live two separate realities—her own daily and routine life that is without Andrej and her clandestine, secret life with her husband about which no one must know. On one occasion, when she is with Andrej in the secluded hut in the woods, Nastena momentarily does not understand what she is doing there and she must make a concerted effort to remember:

Only then did everything stand in its place as it really was, but it was unstable, teetering and it was necessary for her to be constantly aware of this state so that it would not swim away again and get lost somewhere. That is the extent to which everything seemed to be unreal, either imagined or dreamed. (p. 235)

However, in the same scene, after just a few hours, Andrej comes to be Nastena's only reality and the outside world does not exist: "Everything that she could remember from some other kind of life appeared behind her indistinctly as unordered pieces of lost dreams" (p. 235).

Reality for Andrej also becomes confused at times. The psychological and emotional strain on Andrej begins to show as, unobserved, he watches his father at work in the village stables. This one-sided meeting has a profound effect on Andrej and, as he watches, his perception of reality becomes increasingly distorted. He feels that he is in a

... sort of floating, indefinable and confused state in which he suffered memory lapses: first he couldn't understand why he was hiding in the wood. ... Then recalling suddenly that under no circumstances could he come out, he couldn't grasp where this place, familiar through a formerly lived-in but forgotten life, had come from if he, Andrej, had already belonged to another world for a long time now. (p. 305)
Walking away from the village, Andrej looks over the fields that he used to work, and imagines how his life would have been had the war not interfered, and his fantasy becomes poignantly real to him:

"I would have come here now on some kind of business or other . . . I would have come and sat down just like this and had a smoke, then I would have attended to my business and returned to the village . . . " This possibility seemed so close-at-hand and real to him that, in confusion he looked to see if this was not the way things really were. . . . No . . . This was no awakening from a sweet dream, but one of the many, many daily confirmations of what had happened to him . . . (p. 311)

Unconsciousness is another psychological state into which Rasputin allows his heroes to escape for temporary relief from the crude realities which confront them. Blackouts occur to Andrej in Živi i pomni and to both Pavel and Dar'ja in Prošcanie s Matěraj. They are characterized by loss of time perception, memory lapses, and disorientation and, in this state, the characters feel that they have lost their minds. The sense of having experienced such an unstable state remains with the characters long after they have regained consciousness: their perception of the world and of their specific dilemma is affected for they possess new insights into and a sense of truth about their situation. The enigmatic quality of the experience and the heightened awareness that results suggest that these periods of unconsciousness are a type of psychic phenomenon.

Pavel Pinigin knows that he experiences long periods of unconsciousness which he attributes to the psychological effect of World War II. His description of these black-outs confirms that they may also function as a period of release for those people who are under tremendous psychological, emotional, or spiritual strain:

Pavel knew that he often had blackouts, when he lost himself, and was released into a kind of freedom, sometimes for a long time; and where he
had been, where he'd flown off to, what he did—he didn't remember. Then suddenly coming to, he would hold his memory tighter... and so, two or three weeks would pass... and again a fall, again he was drawn into this crazy and alienated state, like a lunatic, when he would move because he had to, without using his mind, only by inertia. (p. 183)

In Živi i pomni, Andrej's secret observation of his father is the catalyst which finally pushes him into a state of temporary oblivion. He wanders around in the woods and fields for the rest of the day, but is unable to recall what he did for a full two or three hours: "Trying to remember later where he had been and what he had done, he couldn't give any answer, from the state of unconsciousness only the song of the village roosters... and the ringing of the water remained" (p. 315)

I have already discussed Dar'ja's marked psychic potential, her sensitivity to and perception of the voices and visions coming from another reality existing in another dimension of time and space. Dar'ja's psychic experiences are of key importance in Proščanie s Matėroj for they contain elements of revelation or prophecy that are related to the fate being prepared for Matėra. They move Dar'ja to respond and she does so by taking direct action, or in dialogue or internal reflection. Thus, largely through Dar'ja's keen sense of herself within nature and within history, is there created a mood of reflection and introspection that facilitates the questions that are of both personal and social concern and importance.

The various facets of village culture that are present in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matėroj and that have been discussed as stylistic components in Rasputin's prose—folk belief, world view, customs, traditions, and oral expression—play a vital role in authenticating the povesti. They also make the problems that the povesti address immediate: in Proščanie s Matėroj through the portrayal of the culture that has been nurtured on Matėra over the centuries, we understand that the issue is more than the
disappearance of a rich piece of land, it is the extinction of the culture and history that are an integral part of the land. Both *povesti* make a plea that the moral and cultural values of the Russian countryside be recalled, assessed, and remembered before they disappear forever.

The foregoing stylistic analysis of Rasputin's two finest *povesti*, *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj*, has attempted to identify and illustrate concretely those devices and features that create the high degree of integration and balance within the works. The identification and separation of the major features and elements does not result in a hierarchical list of prominent features for each feature is contingent on all others for its clarity, relevance, and consequence. The elements that make up Rasputin's prose are like the links in fine mesh-work—each must be perfect and complete in its own right yet firmly fastened to the pieces around it to produce an effective whole.

The social and thematic relevance of *Živi i pomni* and *Proščanie s Matěroj* is not limited to the Soviet Union and its society. The situations and characters are specific to Siberia, but the moral issues addressed are common issues. The tragedy of Nastena and Andrej is as timeless and universal as it is localized in time and place at the end of World War II in Siberia. In *Proščanie s Matěroj*, the protest over the twin issues of man's interference with and destruction of the natural environment and concern over the disappearance of Russian rural culture, is replicated the world over in our age of dwindling resources and growing demand. The themes and issues in *Proščanie s Matěroj* are amazingly relevant to the ongoing claims and concerns of Canada's native Haida people that their land is being destroyed by large forestry companies and their traditions, culture, and history destroyed: "If this continues, there will be nothing left for my children and my grandchildren to come. I feel the people governing us should give us a chance to manage the land, the way we did. . . . [For other cultures] [i]t's take and
take from the earth." The could very well be Dar'ja speaking in a Canadian social, cultural, and political context.

Proščanie s Matěroj is unique within Rasputin’s oeuvre as it is the single major work that openly approaches social issues and themes with a tone of protest. His emphasis both before and after this povest' (except for the blueprint sketch Vniz i vverx po tečeniju and the 1985 story “Požar”) has been rather on the psychological, and on the unpredictable and hidden facets of human nature. An element that has been present in many of Rasputin’s works up to and including Proščanie s Matěroj has come to the fore in his short prose of the 1980s. This is a distinctive attempt to comprehend the frontiers of consciousness which border on areas generally considered to be unattainable and incomprehensible. It is to this distinctive psychic element, that is refined in Rasputin’s stories of the early 1980s, and that must be viewed as a continuation of his earlier work, that I now turn my attention briefly within the first part of my conclusion.
Notes

1 For works dealing specifically with stylistic aspects of Rasputin's prose, see Miroslav Drozda, "Čtyre povesti Valentina Rasputina," Wiener slavistisches Jahrbuch, 26, (1980), 134–149; and V. K. Sigov, "Vnutrennjaja reč' v povesti V. Rasputina 'Zivi i pomni'," Žanrovo-stilevye problemy sovetskoj literatury, (Kalinin, 1982), pp. 115–127.


3 For a list of phonetic and morphological features of the Angara dialect, see Appendix, pp. 274–275.

4 In an interview, Rasputin has stated that he purposefully collects and organizes the dialectal and colloquial language that appears in his prose: "Each year I try to spend some time in the village in order to listen to the language and memorize it. . . . I am interested in the living language and I am constantly jotting down words that are noteworthy. In this way, I have composed a vocabulary of the language which is spoken in the Siberian countryside today." See "Byt' samim soboj," p. 148.


8 Zalygin, Introd., p. 12.

9 Cf. V. Dal', Tolkovyi slovar' živogo velikorusskogo jazyka, v. 1 (St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1903), p. 1589.


11 Eliasov, p. 218.

12 See Dal', v. 2, p. 409.

13 Eliasov, p. 75.

14 See Dal', v. 4, p. 562.

15 Dal', v. 3, p. 447.

16 Eliasov, p. 102.

17 Dal', v. 3, p. 551.
Here "sea" (more) refers to the reservoir that will result from the flooding of Matera. Cf. vy znaete, na etom meste razol'etsja more, pojut bol'she paraxody, poedut ljudi 'you know that a "sea" will fill this spot, there will be large ships and lots of people', (p. 30).

See Dal', v. 2, p. 526.

See Dal', v. 4, p. 1285.

See Dal', v. 1, p. 1523.


Cf. P. Ja. Černyx, Russkij jazyk v Sibiri (Irkutsk, 1937; rpt: Leipzig, 1978), p. 64. According to Černyx, different indigenous languages of Siberia (Tungus, Nenec, and Ostjak) at various times exerted their influence on Siberian Russian to achieve the fusion of sibilant consonants /c/ and /ɛ/, /s/ and /ʃ/, and /z/ and /ɬ/ found in some Russian dialects of Northern and Eastern Siberia.

The narrator in Živi i pomni describes Semenovna's speech in the following way:

She was from the lower Angara just below Bratsk where people pronounce c and ʃ [instead of č and š]. . . . On the Angara there were only a few villages with such pronunciation. . . . Above and below these villages on the river people spoke normally, but there, for some reason, they could not, it was as if their tongues were attached in a special way. (p. 303).

Èliasov, p. 393.


Impersonal direct speech is one of the most complex forms of speech reproduced in literature, and this is reflected in the variety of terms that have attempted to convey its essence, including impersonal authorial (nesobstvennaja avtorskaia), indirect speech of the author (neprjamaja reč' avtora), impersonal speech of the hero (nesobstvennaja reč' geroja), semi-direct (poluprjamaja), communicated, conveyed (soobščennaja, peredannaja). See Čumakov, pp. 41–42.
Lesij is a remnant of Russian Slav mythology and a recurrent character in Russian folklore. These are half-human male rulers of the forest who are ugly and malicious, but not fundamentally evil.

CONCLUSION

The five-year period between the publication of Proščanie s Matěrjoj and the 1981 publication of the story "Čto peredat' vorone?" was one of literary silence for Valentin Rasputin, ostensibly due to poor health. Since 1981 several other stories and essays by Rasputin have appeared which, while not approaching the scope, length, or socio-psychological orientation of theme in his major works, possess an intensity that results from a concentration on intangible yet real sensations and feelings that the protagonists experience, consciously and during periods of unconsciousness. The emphasis in these stories is on conveying the total range of awareness and the emotive and mental responses of the protagonists. Rasputin accomplishes this by portraying states of mind that are beyond consciousness; dreams or dream-like states are accompanied by a sense of "non-being in oneself" (nebyvanie v sebe) or of "losing oneself" (poterjanie sebja). The portrayal of these states of mind and the sensations associated with them is found within a realistic plot framework: thereby Rasputin links the real, external, and rational world with the equally real internal and emotional world. Rasputin does not attempt to analyse or interpret this internal world in his new stories, but rather portrays and describes it and its various manifestations retaining the full emotional colour and tone of the experience. The concentration on emotive-mental subject matter and the technique by which it is presented in the stories does not function merely to add depth to the depiction of the protagonist, but is in itself almost the exclusive subject of the whole story.

Several features in Rasputin's new series of stories unite them with the povesti which precede them: the occurrence of altered states of consciousness and of unconsciousness (discussed earlier with reference to similar occurrences in Živi i pomni
and *Proščanie s Matėroj*, the state of communion between man and nature, the central and recurrent motifs of guilt and responsibility and the preservation of values that are threatened with extinction, and the contrast between the innocent and pure world of children and the corrupted world of adults. However in these stories Rasputin places a greater emphasis than in previous works on the individual, an emphasis which comes from two distinct perspectives: from the hero's interior mental and emotive processes as described above and from the hero's sense of moral responsibility and honesty toward himself which extend to his society. "Ne mogu-u . . ." (1982) and "Požar" (1985) are close in spirit to the social pathos of *Den'gi dlja Marii* and *Proščanie s Matėroj*. The former story is set on a train and is centred on the efforts of the narrator and his travelling companion Oleg to help a dishevelled, drunken and thoroughly pathetic man who is sobbing and crying out the hopeless phrase "I can'n't." Although the man offers very little information about himself, the pieces which make up the story of his downfall fit into place by fact, suggestion, and innuendo. Rasputin's compassionate presentation of the tragedy of one human being contrasts with the impatient and insensitive reactions to him of the other passengers. The story is extremely laconic but brutally real.

The note of social protest that is present in *Proščanie s Matėroj* is greatly intensified in Rasputin's latest work "Požar": the village of Sosnovka, a timber-collective, burns to the ground because of the discord amongst the leadership and amongst the villagers themselves with the consequence that there is no one who commands the respect and authority to organize the villagers into a united force against the fire. The hero, Ivan Petrovič, the driver of a log transporter, watches horrified as the confusion grows, people begin to drink to gather courage, and pilfering begins. Initially, Ivan feels guilt and responsibility for what has happened (these feelings unite him with Nastena and
Dar'ja); perhaps by some past action or negligence he had inadvertently contributed to the chaos that was created by the fire. However the events which occur during the crisis force Ivan to acknowledge that the problems are deep—the village administration is corrupt, the villagers are degenerate and totally lack the qualities of kindness, truth, honesty, and conscience that Rasputin's heroines and elderly villagers had previously exemplified. Ivan Petrović identifies the operative ethics in Sosnovka when he asks himself why "that which formerly had been proscribed and unacceptable was now possible and acceptable, that which had been prohibited was now permissible, and that which had been considered disgraceful and a major sin was now admired for its adroitness and virtue." ¹

Rasputin also examines Ivan Petrović's internal world and portrays him as a spiritually troubled man who realizes that what is occurring within him is of at least as much consequence as that occurring around him. "It is one thing when disorder is all around you, but quite another matter when the disorder is within you."² Ivan Petrović feels orphaned and physically and spiritually homeless. He does not feel comfortable within himself in his "own internal domain" (sobstvennoe vnutrennee xozejstvo), nor does he feel that Sosnovka is his home. It should be noted that Sosnovka had been built two decades earlier to accommodate people whose native villages had been designated as flood-zones for hydro-electric stations.³ "Požar" ends with Ivan's departure from Sosnovka; he takes small comfort in his belief that people somewhere live, behave, and treat one another better than they did in Sosnovka.

In an interview published in 1982, Rasputin stated his view concerning the responsibility of each person to develop and maintain an integral and steadfast set of values by which he can live: "We place entirely too much on the shoulders of society and in doing so, we free the individual from the necessity of being responsible for
himself." In "Požar," this opinion is re-stated almost as a plea: contemporary life must regain a strong and stable foundation of ethics and values. Rasputin appears to be placing his hope for renewal, whether ethical, spiritual, or both, squarely upon the individual, who can in turn manifest these values and mores on the collective and in society.

In the stories "Čto peredat' vorone?", "Nataša" (1982), and "Vek živi–vek ljubi" (1982), Rasputin tries to find answers to his own obvious moral and spiritual pain by concentrating on an examination of the internal world of the individual. These stories all reveal an increased emphasis on the emotional perception of reality which involves conscious acceptance of another dimension of reality originating in the soul. These stories all begin with an unremarkable occurrence from daily life (unlike the extraordinary events upon which the plots in his povesti are centred) which acquires significance for the protagonist because it touches some emotion or moral sense within his unconscious. Thus, the real and rather unimportant event or occurrence provides the reason for a concentrated description of unusual sensations, feelings, or altered states.

"Nataša" and "Čto peredat' vorone?" are the best examples of Rasputin's almost complete absorption in internal, emotive subject matter. They are both written from a first-person point of view and although there are not direct autobiographical references, one has a sense that Rasputin is attempting to convey feelings that he knows well.

"Nataša" is set in a hospital in a city which seems large and strange to the protagonist, who is awaiting an operation. It begins with his frustrated attempts to remember how it is that he knows one of the nurses, Nataša, and, when he can not, he is tormented by the sense that they have met. He does not say anything about his feeling to her because of his uncertainty and his unwillingness to offend her with what might be a fantasy, but he is disconcerted to find her looking at him with a look that
is "sometimes questioning and penetrating causing uneasiness, sometimes vacant with a thought that has been lost, and sometimes glancing and cautiously cunning."\(^5\) In the days preceding his operation, Nataša is on duty more often and it happens that she accompanies him to the operating theatre and remains at the door, watching, as he is prepared. When he emerges from his oblivion, he sees Nataša standing beside his bed and suddenly remembers everything: "'Nataša, I remember now, I remember. . . . We were flying'" (p. 120). She is a girl from a dream in which she accompanies the protagonist in a flight over the Angara River and Lake Bajkal. Rasputin depicts the protagonist's initial ecstasy as they leave the earth as well as how he becomes very calm and receptive to the sounds and the images of life around him:

The sky cooled down and I distinctly saw shadow-marked paths in it with thawed and sagging pathways leading off in different directions. They were empty but by the light imprints on them it was obvious that they had been used. . . .

The sun sank lower and lower and the mighty and solemn music of sunset achieved such harmony that it was completely quiet. And, in this silence, the loud and heavy rustle of the air brushing against the glassy surface of the water was heard. And over there . . . I heard a dissonant voice which was not in keeping with the overall music. . . . I saw and heard everything and felt capable of understanding the main all-encompassing and definitive mystery which held life in its grip from beginning to end. . . . Now I was going to be enlightened and in bitter and profound comprehension, I would step onto the closest path. (pp. 123–124)

When he is abruptly called back by Nataša, he protests that he wants to go further to find out the little bit that was left. Turning to go, she promises that she will come again and as the protagonist watches her walk away from him, he feels greatly disturbed by the . . . mysterious process of selection that had united them, [a feeling] which extended to everything, and I felt sad and depressed because only now,
having flown and seen the earth from on high, had I finally learned the true measure of anxiety, sadness, and pain. (p. 124)

Although the story revolves around the recollection of a dream, we are aware that it is not simply a dream that Rasputin is describing. Rather, he is dealing with the two separate but connected realities of conscious and unconscious mental and emotional activity. The hero intuits that he is close to death and Nataša is his own Guardian Angel personified. She cares for him immediately before and after his operation and as his recovery progresses she disappears: "... Nataša had been discharged and had left the city. It turned out that she had worked for a very short time in the hospital" (p. 125).

In "Nataša" an important motif found in both Poslednij srok and Proščanie s Matéroj recurs. The protagonist, like the elderly heroines of those works, is not afraid of death because he understands its place within the entire natural order, as his wonder and acute sensitivity to nature in the dream demonstrates. Like Dar'ja before him, he is on the verge of finding out the secret of life when he is called back to consciousness and reality as we understand it. In this sense, the dream in the story may be seen as in praise of death which reveals life and Nataša, as the personification of death that is not to be feared but rather welcomed, bears a similarity to St. Francis' "Sister Death."

Rasputin's intention is, without rationalizing or justifying, to depict and increase our awareness of other realities that dwell within us. He indicates this in an introductory paragraph of "Nataša" when he states that it is neither possible nor necessary to solve every mystery in life:

... the solution soon becomes unnecessary and dies, and thus many of the most remarkable things in our world have perished. Not having gained any enrichment from them [the solutions] we are attracted once again by
presentiments and the like with the ease and spontaneity of children.
(p. 115)

In the story "Čto peredat' vorone?," through his small daughter and a
make-believe game about a crow who sees, hears, and tells everything about her to him
when he is away from home, the protagonist's everyday reality once again evokes an
emotional and moral response in his unconscious. After a brief visit home to see his
family, the writer-protagonist insists on leaving his daughter to return to his secluded
creative world. His own selfishness and a senseless inflexibility prompt him to leave
despite the child's pleas that he stay the night. The return journey is drawn-out due
to delays along the way which the protagonist interprets as happening in order to teach
him a lesson for being so concerned with himself at the expense of his child. A vague
anxiety and a sense of increasing guilt overcome the protagonist the next morning
immediately upon waking. He is unable to sit down to the work to which he has
rushed home and, in order to calm himself, he wanders along the shores of Lake Bajkal.

Unlike the protagonist in "Nataša," this character is well aware that he
experiences unusual conscious sensations that often lead to periods of unconscious activity.
He describes two of the strange perceptions that he has of himself:

... I do not have a sense of myself as a complete, indivisible and integral
whole ... either my head aches ... or I find myself thinking or feeling
things which have no place in me, or I wake in the morning rested and
well, without the slightest desire to live. . . .

He attributes this feeling to a conviction that he has been born in the place of
another and "he is tormented by involuntary guilt and lack of correspondence with his
place in the world that had been designated for another" (p. 87). A second
"abnormality" (nenormal' nost') is his ability to enter another dimension of consciousness and lose himself:

This non-being in myself . . . occurs quite often and I involuntarily watch myself, guard that I remain here, but the trouble is that I don't know which side of "here" to choose, or where the real "I" is—on the side that is patiently and hopefully waiting for itself, or on the side that has unsuccessfully attempted to run from itself. (p. 87)

This passage is reminiscent of Pavel Pinigin's description of his periods of blackout in Proščanie s Matěroj. They are also rooted in a pervasive dissatisfaction with himself and his inability to come to terms with his mixed emotions and opinions concerning Matěra's fate.

As the protagonist in "Čto peredat' vorone?" gazes at Lake Bajkal from atop a steep hill, he sees that "the sky had become taut and had come to a standstill over Bajkal precisely repeating both its colour and its shape" (p. 93). Similar images occur as we have seen in Živi i pomni and Proščanie s Matěroj as do aural images evoking the sound of bells which in "Čto peredat' vorone?" is described as "a drone, arising from the depths [of Lake Bajkal] as if from an overturned bell which was pointing at the sky" (p. 93). The protagonist understands nothing and barely remembers who he is, where he is or why he is there. Soon all of his senses fade and, leaving him, become a part of one "all-embracing emotion." He becomes sensitive to voices passing by him on an invisible road; before they reach him, the voices are happy and harmonious, but after they pass him they are discordant. In his state of unconsciousness, he feels himself relaxing and, correspondent with the easing of his spirit, the voices around him also become quieter.
During the course of his wandering, the protagonist loses and regains consciousness three times, and each time he finds himself in a spot far away from the previous one. What differentiates the protagonist in this story from other of Rasputin's characters that experience the same phenomenon is the fact that he is both conscious of living in a double reality and is able to stand outside of himself and observe as the two parts that compose his whole come together and merge:

... I suddenly saw how I got up from my former place by the birch trees and climbed the mountain. I continued to stand where I had discovered myself ... and at the same time I was walking, step by step, glance by glance. ... I sensed each of my movements and heard each breath that I took. Finally, I drew near the place where I stood ... and merged with myself. ... And then, having become totally united within myself, I remembered about home. (p. 96)

During the night, the protagonist hears the cawing of a crow in his dream and in the morning a real crow's caw that awakens him. He interprets this as a sign of communication from his daughter because it seems directly related to the game which they have invented between themselves. Upon phoning home, he learns that on the previous evening his daughter had taken ill and now lay in bed with a high temperature.

In Proščanie s Matěroy Rasputin also suggests that a bird might be a messenger from another reality in the scene where Dar'ja senses that a little bird is guiding her search for fir boughs to decorate her house: "She was aware of the yellow-breasted bird that was flying slightly ahead and to the side of her, which now perched, now flew ahead as if indicating where to go as on a distant and prophetic mission" (p. 171). The crow in "Čto peredat' vorone?" is more concretely conceptualized as such a messenger in the feeling of the protagonist that "I don't know and can't explain why, but for a long time now I have been convinced that if a link exists between this world
and the other world, then it is only the crow that can fly from one to the other . . ."
(p. 79).

"Čto peredat' vorone?" forwards clearly and concisely Rasputin's new emphasis on emotional and mental processes with his depiction of another reality that exists beyond our conscious perception. He demonstrates that emotion and intuition in man are of primary importance to an understanding of psychological and ethical motivation for thought and action by placing the occurrences and relationships in our daily lives in close association with sensations and feelings originating in the other reality existing within us.

"Vek živi-vek ljubi" is closer in tone and orientation to Rasputin's *povesti* than are the other stories already discussed. Concerns about the preservation of the natural environment and of basic human values such as truth, kindness, concern for others provide familiar motifs to Rasputin's new orientation toward the inner, emotional world. The link between social and ecological concerns and this inner world is established when Rasputin discusses the importance of a person's attitude toward his natural surrounding; he should approach nature with kindness and trust and these qualities will then also be reflected in our relationships with other people:

The carelessness with nature that we have sanctioned is obvious in more than the state of the environment. . . . We often speak of our lack of kindness and attention to one another as well as our lack of conscience as if we are amazed and want to find out how we became deficient in these areas. . . . We are very demanding of nature . . . concerned [only] with extraction. Or we fuss about so much when we go to the woods or the taiga, that we take no joy from the mushrooms or the berries, for we are not even happy with ourselves and we can not understand that the problem is . . . in the greed, the indifference, the calculation with which we set out. And certainly nature always gives us an opportunity to reflect about ourselves . . .
"Vek živi-vek ljubi" is written from the point of view of an adolescent and it recounts the first outing of fifteen-year-old Sanja into the taiga as well as into independent life. The boy is accompanied by one of his father's friends, Mitjaj (who has spent time in jail), as well as by Mitjaj's friend, Djadja Volodja. Sanja is ecstatic about the beauty and expanse of the natural surroundings and, as he picks the blueberries for which they have come, his contentment and joy are bittersweet for he feels sorry for the berries that will be made into jam:

"Don't take offence that I'm picking you," he urged, "I'm picking you so that you won't be wasted... And if I don't pick you, if you don't manage to fall to the ground and rot, you'll be picked and eaten by a bird or a wild animal... I will collect you up."--Sanja didn't want to admit that he would boil or crush the berries for that seemed like barbarism--"and during the winter, a little girl whose name is Katja and who is sickly... well, she just loves blueberries, she loves you, you help this little girl very much."8

The magic of the day and night in the taiga is completely dashed the next morning when Djadja Volodja informs Sanja that his zinc-coated pail will have poisoned the berries. Djadja Volodja had seen the boy's happiness and out of malice did not tell him about the pail until it was full of wasted berries. Mitjaj, the ex-convict, is morally outraged and sends Volodja away. Sanja's second night in the taiga is a fitful one for in his sleep he hears voices:

And all of them came from him and were part of his worked-up fibre and being, all of them repeated what in confusion, in alarm, or in wrath he might say. He also recognized what he might say many years later. And only one voice articulated such dirty and coarse words in such a habitual and confident tone that it could not now or ever be in him. He awoke in terror: What was it? Who was it? From where in him did it come? (p. 41)
The unanswered (and unanswerable) questions with which "Vek živi–vek ljubi" ends are typical of Rasputin's style. His use of the abrupt and ambiguous ending is well-suited to the diagnostic quality of his prose. D. Gillespie suggests that in Rasputin's new stories:

The author/narrator discovers the irrational, intangible element of man's soul that unites him with the natural world. The unity of man and natural harmony, while threatened by the encroachment of industrial civilization, is an assertion of a pre-industrial, paganistic relationship of man and the world about him, a relationship which determines the individual's child-like innocence and purity of spirit.9

Rasputin's stories with their focus on the emotional, intuitive, not always logical and sometimes mystical world of the individual move into an area of psychology or being that few Soviet prose writers have dealt with and that perhaps only poets in the Russian literary tradition have investigated.

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This dissertation constitutes one of the first critical attempts at a comprehensive stylistic analysis of Valentin Rasputin's prose. Rasputin is still writing and publishing and his works span only two decades; thus interest in his prose has been primarily concentrated on questions of theme, plot, and character. It is only recently that a small number of studies have appeared on specific features of style. A thorough analysis and investigation of Rasputin's prose style during his prolific ten–year period between 1967 and 1976 seems now to be appropriate given the decade that has elapsed since the completion of Proščanje s Materoj and given the new direction that his prose appears to be taking in his stories of the first half of the 1980s.
At the outset, it was suggested that a clear interrelationship exists between Rasputin's four major povesti. Through a discussion of theme, plot, structure, and character development an understanding of this inter-povesti unity has been established. As a result of an examination of Rasputin's two most accomplished works, Živi i pomni and Prošcanie s Materoj, in terms of their composite stylistic elements, certain constants among all of Rasputin's povesti have emerged.

Rasputin's prose has been examined at length in isolation from that of his contemporaries. It is appropriate now to mention his place in the Soviet Russian literary process particularly in relation to the "village prose" which reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s and which includes the work of some of the best writers published in the Soviet Union.

Valentin Rasputin has been considered as a writer who is close to the "village theme" and to "village prose" in general, but his works differ in fundamental respects from those of the best-known derevenščiki such as V. Belov, F. Abramov, V. Astaf'ev. The criteria which unite Rasputin with these writers are largely superficial and include such common features as predominance of the Siberian village setting, heroes and protagonists who are villagers and peasants deeply rooted in the culture, values, and agrarian way of life of the Russian countryside, the description of daily life and routine (bytopisanie), and the use of such stylistic devices as regional dialect and folklore elements which emphasize the theme of continuity between past, present, and future and enhance the depiction of rural life as an environment which has preserved custom and tradition, and moral and cultural values. There is a common concern amongst the derevenščiki that this environment is being threatened by urbanization, technology, and industrialization. Rasputin also shares with them an interest in ecology and a sense of alarm over the destruction of the natural environment.
Although Rasputin has admitted that in a general way his prose shares some elements of style and theme with "village prose," his works raise a level of ethical question and present a scope of life that are broader in their import than are the more localized concerns of his colleagues. The Siberian village provides the setting for such questions only because this is the environment that Rasputin knows best:

I am a native Siberian—I was born and grew up there. I live there and am far from indifferent to the fate of my village and that of other villages which were founded three and four hundred years ago by the discoverers and settlers of Siberia. . . . I don't trust authors who, in search of plots and heroes, head off into far-flung reaches. . . . If one is unable to understand the life that is around him, then he will not understand life elsewhere. In each of us there is no less complexity, no fewer problems than in the largest state.10

Even his use of dialect, a common feature in the works of "village prose," stands out as innovative. By using dialectal elements in the speech of his narrator as well as his characters, Rasputin is able to present in an intimate way the points of view of his protagonists whose values and way of life are being threatened.

Rasputin's emphasis on broad problems of our psychological, ethical, and emotional existence helps him to avoid some of the extreme positions found in "village prose." For example, his descriptions of the village neither extol the positive aspects nor dwell on the difficulties of country life, but present all aspects in measure and with a certain degree of acceptance. His characterizations include portrayals of ugly and even cruel behaviour, but he tempers such conduct with his own sense of compassion for human foibles and mistakes in judgement and his understanding of their underlying social causes. A deep sense of tragedy and pity, qualities which may be called Christian pathos, pervade Rasputin's prose to a degree not found in the prose of other Soviet writers. If Rasputin idealizes his village heroines, it is not out of nostalgia for past patriarchal ways
of life, but out of admiration for their moral and spiritual strength which emanates from a complete set of values and beliefs. Rasputin believes that these integral systems must be restored and adapted in order for people to renew themselves and survive in a new modern age.

During the past two decades, there has been a considerable amount of Soviet critical literature which speaks of the imperativeness of morals and ethics (nравственность) in contemporary Russian literature. In this regard, F. Kuznecov states: "In our prose of recent years . . . the question of the importance of ethical and spiritual values and the dangers of a spiritual vacuum for man and society has been raised in new and original ways." Rasputin's povesti suggest that a set of ethical values which would help to avoid a "spiritual vacuum" already exists. He identifies these moral values with his heroines who become broad symbols by which he investigates whether a proximity to the fundamentals of human life is still possible. However, in his latest work "Požar," written, figuratively speaking, after the deaths of Anna, Nastena, and Dar'ja, Rasputin articulates his concern that a "spiritual vacuum" has already become a reality in present-day Soviet society (or at least in the contemporary countryside), and that there is a lack of people like his heroines and the humanistic qualities that they represent.

The analysis of Rasputin's style in this dissertation established a number of characteristic features of his prose which taken as an integral entity determine Rasputin's critical and popular acclaim as well as his significance within the Russian literary tradition. His prose is a blend of lyrical narrative composed in standard literary Russian with direct speech forms written in various styles of speech and jargon including the regional dialect. His sense of tragedy and his treatment of myth in his later povesti suggest that Rasputin is well-grounded in the classical literary tradition. The Russian folk heritage is emphasized through use of folk tales, legends, and tradition.
Along with the description of daily life so characteristic of "village prose," Rasputin mixes real occurrences with elements of the fantastic, with dreams and visions. Reality and imagination and latterly the acceptance of an internal, emotional reality are all regarded as equal by Rasputin and the dual quality of elements in Rasputin's work is foreign to the works of other authors writing about the village. His sensitivity to and portrayal of the natural world as animated and existing in close relationship with man's world is a characteristic feature of Rasputin's prose.

The emphasis on the individual in Rasputin's prose and his sensitivity toward aspects of human nature, psychology, the cause and effect of relationships, and human emotions reveal Rasputin as somewhat of a psychologist in his ability to understand and describe complex situations convincingly. At one level these situations and the characters they involve are specific to contemporary Soviet (rural) society. Through a strong emphasis on questions of morals and ethics in a modernizing society—concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, truth, beauty—Rasputin's prose acquires a wider relevance.

His prose is diagnostic; it does not make projections about the future of the Russian countryside, much to the chagrin of some Soviet critics. Rasputin's refusal to deliver an overt prognosis, but instead to present things as they are is a feature that he shares with V. Šukšin and Ju. Trifonov, two very important names in Soviet Russian prose of the 1960s and 1970s.

Rasputin's prose is difficult prose. True to the venerable tradition of the best classic Russian literature of the nineteenth century, that of Dostoevskij and Tolstoj, Rasputin's povesti require introspection and constant vigilance on the part of the reader for they demand a moral response. Their intense nature stems from the psychological, moral, and emotional activity that is concentrated over a short time period and is shared between only a small group of characters. These factors evoke in the reader a sense of
immediacy, participation, and compassion. Rasputin’s attempts to comprehend and present the psychological and moral worlds of each of his heroes and protagonists is neither self-sufficient nor affected; he is genuinely fascinated by the sharp turns which occur in a person’s life that evoke responses revealing much about the inner man. Furthermore, he is convinced that nothing in life occurs by chance and thus for all of Rasputin’s psychologism it is the awareness of an enigmatic and intangible directing force (sometimes expressed in Christian terms) that proves to be the determining factor in the attitudes and actions of his heroes, a perception which unites his works with both Russian folklore and with many works of nineteenth and twentieth century Russian literature.

My analysis of Rasputin’s prose, although concentrated on style, language, and genre also incorporates such aspects as theme, plot, and characterization in an attempt to provide a full assessment of the prose, for, as has been shown, themes, motifs, and characterizations are often virtually inseparable from stylistic considerations of language, imagery, narration, etc. Rasputin is a major Russian author whose contribution to modern Russian literature has been considerable even though for almost a decade he has not produced a major work. Due to this hiatus, it seems appropriate to assess Rasputin’s best prose to date, his povesti, in a systematic and comprehensive way particularly in terms of writing technique and style. His works address themes about the direction of modern industrialized and technological society and man’s place within it that are of general concern and interest. Rasputin presents these themes in the classical literary forms of tragedy and myth, and through theme, form, and such stylistic devices as multi-levelled symbols and images, his own acute moral sensibilities and simple humanist perspective are revealed. The milieu in Rasputin’s povesti is typically Soviet and Siberian, and such localizing features as Siberian dialect and Russian folklore are basic components in his works. However, in its portrayal of psychology and emotions, in its
representation of the dynamics of social and personal relationships, and in its emphasis on
the ethical dilemmas of a modernizing society—the prose of Valentin Rasputin is
accessible to the general non-Russian reader.
Notes


2 "Pozar", p. 20.

3 In a recent article, N. Potapov suggests that in "Pozar", Rasputin is investigating what has happened to the people who were moved to make way for technological change, how they are managing in their new environment. See, "Esli ty xozjain . . .," Pravda, 13 Nov. 1985, p. 3.

4 Afanas'ev, p. 4.

5 V. Rasputin, "Nataša," in Vek živi-vek ljubi (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1982), p. 118. All further references to this story appear in the text.

6 V. Rasputin, "Čto peredat' vorone?" in Vek živi-vek ljubi (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1982), p. 86. All further references to this story appear in the text.

7 Priroda i čelovek, No. 4 (1982), p. 64.

8 V. Rasputin, "Vek živi-vek ljubi," in Vek živi-vek ljubi (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1982), p. 28. All further references to this story appear in the text.

9 Gillespie, p. 394.

10 Rasputin, "Ne išcu geroev na storone," p. 4.

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**General Reference Works**


Appendix

Phonetic and Morphological Features of the Angara Dialect

Like many Siberian dialects, the Angara dialect displays certain North Russian features, including:

1. *jokanie*, e.g. /l'otát'/ instead of /l'itát'/ *letat'*, and /v'ôčor/ *večer* (p. 93);
2. plosive /g/; South Russian dialects are characterized, instead, by the voiced velar spirant;
3. non-palatized /t/ in verbs, e.g. /im'ejut/ *imejut* (p. 35).

Phonetic features include:

(a) stressed /i/ > /e/ following sonorants /n'/ and /r'/: /odn'e/ *odni* (p. 63), /govor'ela/ *govorila* (p. 22);
(b) prothetic /d/ before /r/: /nravit'sja/ *nravit'sja* (p. 151), /zdr'ja/ *zrja* (p. 39).

Morphological features:

(a) pronominal and adjectival feminine accusative /ujó/ in /samujó/ *samu* (p. 95) and /odnujó/ *odnu* (p. 31);
(b) pronominal instrumental /im'a/ *imi* (p. 28);
(c) postpositive particles *-to* and *-ka*, e.g. /mužik-to/ *mužik-to* (p. 232), /počemu-ka/ *počemu-ka* (p. 354);
(d) elision of epenthetic /n/ in pronouns, e.g. /ot ix/ *ot nix*, /na jom/ *na nём* (p. 95), /s im'a/ *s nimi* (p. 28);
(e) elision in /kuda-n'it'/ kuda-nibud' and /čto-n'it'/ čto-nibud' (p. 35); (f) elision in the pronouns /t'e/ tebe and /t'a/ tebja (p. 73).

A noteworthy feature of the Angara dialect is the presence of some Buriat loanwords, e.g. tarasun 'fermented beverage' (p. 291) and itigi 'type of leather footwear' (p. 309).

2 Cf. Černyx, p. 60.
3 Cf. Černyx, p. 63.
4 Cf. Černyx, p. 60.
6 Ėliasov, p. 143.
PUBLICATIONS


