NIKOLAI GOGOL'S ATTITUDE TO HIS WOMEN CHARACTERS

by

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N. Gogol's Attitude to his Women Characters

Nikolai Gogol has been an enigma that many scholars have attempted to understand. No one disputes his artistic genius, yet no one can satisfactorily define it. Both in his artistic works and in his life, Gogol was original, or rather, he was true to himself, a feat that set him apart from Russian society during Nikolai I's reign. Gogol did not have any love affairs nor did he marry. This fact has led many critics to formulate the opinion that Gogol feared women. Theories of an Oedipal or homo-erotic complex, or regression have been set forth as explanations for this fear. Yet did Gogol fear women and do his works reflect this fear? The Oedipal and regressive theories are justified by selecting examples from Gogol's literary works. However, these attempts, to date, have been usually based on one or two works, while the rest of Gogol's works are disregarded. It is the purpose of this study to give a comprehensive analysis of Gogol's life and works before any conclusions are arrived at. The intent is to be objective rather than subjective. To do this, I have had to rely heavily on actual quotations from the author, his works, and opinions voiced by critics.

The study has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with Gogol's biography. His early life, his mother's influence, his aspirations and friendships will be surveyed. The second chapter consists of four summaries of recent critiques of
Gogol. These four have been chosen on the basis that they reflect a diversity of present-day opinions of Gogol. Setchkarev analyses Gogol's work from an artistic point of view. Erlich regards Gogol as a great grotesque writer whose works reflect existential problems. Driessen and McLean illustrate what can be done when a psychoanalytical approach is used. The third chapter is an examination of Gogol's method of presenting his women characters. As Gogol developed philosophically and artistically, his attitude to women changed. Therefore I have divided the chapter into four parts, each reflecting a different attitude to the subject, women. The parts are called modes and consist of the lyrical, subjective, caricature and idealized mode. The milieu of the women characters, their physical appearance, actions and functions in the stories will be looked at. The last chapter presents my conclusion.

On the basis of a textual analysis of Gogol's works, I have arrived at the conclusion that Gogol had a high regard for women. Women are a completely separate entity from men and should be appreciated for what they are. Gogol finds fault with men for expecting too much from women; rather, men should seek contentment within themselves. However, women as objects to behold are an everlasting pleasure to Gogol.
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CHAPTER I

GOGOL'S BIOGRAPHY

Nikolai Gogol's life has been chronicled, analysed and studied in detail by many scholars, an endeavour which this paper will avoid repeating. However, for a meaningful study of Gogol's portrayal of women, a look at his personal life is unavoidable, in order to be able to discern to what extent his personal experiences were expressed in his prose. It must be noted at the start that Gogol had very little personal contact with women until his later years, by which time most of his literary works had been conceived. Therefore, we find ourselves having to examine events and people in his early life in a negative way; to point out how the lack of female companionship determined the character of the man, and left its imprint on the women characters that he was to create.

Although Gogol had little contact with women in his early life, we cannot dismiss the influence that his mother, Maria Ivanovna, exerted on his life. Her rule was of a short duration, yet of a high intensity. Nikolai left the home haven for school at the age of nine, by which time his pattern of behaviour and moral constitution were formed. It is precisely in the formation of Nikolai's character that his mother had exerted a great
influence. A look at this woman seems necessary.

Maria Ivanovna was from the petty landed gentry class. At the early age of fourteen she married her neighbour, Vasily Gogol Yanovsky, aged twenty-eight. At the time of the marriage she was a pretty, raven-haired, dark-eyed and pale-skinned girl. But she was still only a girl— a fact attested to by her autobiographical note—that at the time of the marriage she could not decide whom she loved more "... him or her favourite old aunty." There is a story attached to the marriage which suggests that it was due to a divine decree. The details of the story are unimportant; however, the fact that Maria accepted Vasily's visions as fact reveals to us her credulous and religious nature. With the consummation of her marriage, her intellectual development ceased, and she remained a provincial girl of fifteen to the end of her days: "credulous, superstitiously pious, and inclined to see God's hand in everything that happened to her and hers." Physically, she continued to develop, till finally at the age of eighteen she was able to bear Nikolai. Regardless of her intellectual limitations, she became a loving mother, completely devoted to her child.

Nikolai at birth was not a pleasant sight; "a frail and nervous child, with a rather sickly face and pus oozing from his ears." Maria, young and inexperienced, could not but be very anxious and protective towards this sickly baby. Moreover, she
over-reacted. Her concern for Nikolai's health carried on into his childhood with the result that Nikolai grew up thinking of himself as having a poor constitution. Maria's concern also projected itself in her spoiling of the child. Some biographers see this as a reason for Nikolai's developing into an egotist. Gogol himself substantiates this in a letter written on October 2, 1833, to Maria Ivanovna:

To this day I often imagine my childhood before me .... I remember I didn't feel anything strongly, I viewed everything as things which were created to please me. I didn't especially love anyone - except only you, and that only because nature itself instilled this feeling. I viewed everything with dispassionate eyes; I went to church only because I was ordered or I was taken; but standing in it I didn't see anything except the priest's robes, the priest, and the repulsive howling of the sextons. I crossed myself because I saw that everyone was crossing himself ...

However, we should not surmise that Gogol's egotistic tendencies were completely the result of Maria's attitude to him. Gogol's ability to separate himself emotionally from his physical body and analyse the situation and the character are disclosed in the above letter. It is this talent which he used successfully in the development of his character portrayals. However, this talent, coupled with Maria Ivanovna's over-indulgence could not but produce an egotistical nature.

An egotistical nature does not have to be a detrimental character trait. A creative person has to be an egotist -
so that he can detach himself from mundane reality. However, egotism can be destructive, if it creates a limitation to one's knowledge or if the person has a limited or arrested development. Nikolai seems to have fallen prey to the latter. Maria Ivanovna, unaware of the consequences, passed on to Nikolai all her superstitions and naive religious notions. In the letter mentioned previously, Nikolai writes of the great impression her misproportioned interpretation of the bible had on him:

I asked you to tell me about the last judgement; and so well, so comprehensively, so touchingly did you tell me, a child, about the blessings which await people for a virtuous life - and so strikingly, so terrifyingly did you describe the eternal torments of the sinful - that this shook and awakened all sensitivity within me. That sparked and subsequently produced the most elevated thoughts in me ....

The concept that the virtuous will be rewarded and the sinful eternally tormented deeply rooted itself in Gogol's psyche and became the ballast of his life. But it is his peculiar interpretation of what is good and what is considered evil that set him apart as a man and as a writer. It is important for us to ascertain where on this scale of good and evil Gogol places women. This can only be deduced after a close analysis of the sum total of his women-portrayals.

Up to this point we have observed only Maria Ivanovna's influence on Nikolai. But what of his reaction? As seen from his letter quoted above, he loved his mother. He accepted her
concern for his health and her spoiling as inherent rights. He was a dutiful son, writing often to his mother. However, he seems to have outgrown her very quickly. This is evident in the letter he wrote her on the death of his father. Gogol was fifteen at the time:

Don't worry, dearest mama! I have borne this blow with the firmness of a true Christian.

True, at first I was terribly stricken by this news; however, I didn't let anyone notice that I was saddened. But when I was left alone, I gave myself up to all the power of mad desperation. I even wanted to make an attempt on my life. But God kept me from this - and toward evening I noticed in myself only a sadness, but no longer violent, which finally turned into a light, barely perceptible melancholy mixed with a feeling of reverence for the Most High.

I bless thee, holy faith! In thee only do I find a source of comfort and alleviation of my grief! So, dearest mama! - Now I am calm, although I cannot be happy having been deprived of the best father, the truest friend of all that is precious to my heart ......

... Oh, your grief troubles me more than anything else! Please, lessen it as much as possible, as I have lessened mine. Appeal, as I have appealed, to the Almighty .......

Several features of Gogol's character are discernible; his egotistic reaction to the news; his genuine love for his father; and his love and protectiveness towards his mother. From the tone of this and following letters we observe a changing attitude in Gogol's relation to his mother. Whereas before he was the
pampered child, now he treats his mother as one, and adopts a continual didactic tone which begins with "Appeal, as I have appealed to the Almighty ..." and later in life comes forth as pages of instructions on every conceivable aspect of life. It is not disrespect that is evident in Gogol's attitude to Maria Ivanovna, but a somewhat practical solution of dealing with an immature woman. It is known that in later years, Gogol did avoid seeing his mother, yet the circumstances were such that he thought he could function better without her presence. However, emotionally he was always close to her. The last surviving letter of Gogol is to his mother. The expressed tone remains one of affection and love.

From age nine, when he left home, to age twenty-seven, when he left Russia, Gogol lived in a predominantly masculine environment. His pubertal years were spent at the boys' High School of Advanced Studies at Nezhin. Only short intervals during holidays were spent at home. Gogol's adjustment to this new environment was gradual. At first he remained shy, withdrawn and secretive. However, his wit and observing qualities came to the fore halfway through his school life and he became popular for staging theatrical productions and excelled himself in comic portrayals of old women. At about age fifteen, from his letters, we discern a growing interest in literature, namely the classics; Petrarch and Aristophanes, the Romantics; Schiller, Tieck and Pushkin.
and the playwrights Fonvizin, Knyazhnin, Kotzebue and Florian.

Gogol emerged from his schooling with a mediocre education yet with great ambitions. As early as 1827 Gogol wrote Maria Ivanovna: "I am testing my strength for beginning an important, noble task: for the good of the fatherland, for the happiness of its citizens, for the good of the life of my fellow men."10

There are also letters to his uncle, Pavel Kosiarovsky, in which Gogol stresses his desire for service. "Since years past, in the years of uncomprehending childhood, I have burned with an inextinguishable zeal to make my life essential to the welfare of the State ..."11 At the same time, there is a negative interpretation of this ambition, as noted by Erlich:

... a pervasive fear of anonymity, of obscurity, of plant-life passivity, which amid the placid stagnation of the early 19th Century Ukrainian backwater, seemed a clear and present danger.12

Gogol writes: "To be in the world, and not to make one's existence register, that would be terrible."13 Gogol's notion was that he had to serve the state and benefit humanity somehow. These are notions common to youth generally, but in Gogol's case they persisted throughout his life. It must be noted that in none of his letters relating to his future ambitions does Gogol mention women or any ambitions for a family of his own.

Following school, on December 15, 1828, Gogol with a school friend, Danilevsky, set off for St. Petersburg. Life in the capital
city was not easy for the two provincial youths. The climate was cold, everything was expensive and their connections did not materialize. Although in the next eight years Gogol established himself as a writer, it was always a hard struggle. He was able to obtain work first at the Imperial Chancery, then the ministry, followed by three years teaching history at the Patriotic Institute, a girls' boarding school, and finally eighteen months as lecturer in history at St. Petersburg University. His income was also supplemented through lecturing assignments at first and later by publishing his works. Most of Gogol's known works were written, published or conceived during these eight years, from 1830 to 1838.

His time, aside from working hours, was predominantly spent in the male company of his Ukrainian schoolmates or with new acquaintances such as Pushkin, Zhukovsky, Mikhail Pogodin, Sergey Aksakov, Mikhail Shchepkin and other writers, artists and critics. There is a noticeable lack of contact with females aside from his family and in the everyday encounters with his students and their families. However, during this period, he was placed in a situation where he could observe the education of young girls, in the home and at school. He was deeply concerned by the lackadaisical attitude of parents, and, in his letter to his mother mentioned earlier, he proposes his own method of educating girls. It is interesting to note that besides
religious training, he stresses purity and social grace as desired qualities. Later in life, Gogol suffered great anguish at the poor education his sisters had received from their Moscow boarding school. On his return to Moscow in 1841 to find suitable homes for them, he was met by two shy, timid and awkward girls. Everything outside the boarding school frightened them. Gogol, although perturbed by the situation, nevertheless, behaved very lovingly and protectively towards them.

As there is no record left of any love affairs, marriage or scandals in which Gogol was involved, it becomes difficult for us to ascertain his views on these topics. His contemporaries did not consider it important to comment on his personal attitudes to women as there seems to have been a definite lack of any. Our recourse is to look at Gogol's letters to see what his attitudes to love, marriage and women were.

One incident, Gogol's flight to Lübeck in 1829, gives us an insight into his emotional psyche. Among his reasons for fleeing St. Petersburg, he wrote his mother:

... But I saw her ... No, I will not give her name ... she is too exalted for anyone, not only for me. I would call her an angel, but this expression is low and does not suit her. An angel is a being which has neither virtues nor vices, which has no character (because it is not a human), whose thoughts live in heaven alone. But no, I am babbling trifles and cannot describe her. She is a divinity - but one to a certain extent invested with human passions. A face whose striking radiance engraves itself in the heart in one instant,
eyes quickly piercing the soul. But no man of the human race will survive their radiance, burning, piercing through everything ... No, this being whom He sent to deprive me of peace and quiet, to upset my shakily created world was not a woman. Were she a woman, not with all the powers of her enchantment could she have produced such terrible, inexpressible impressions. This was a divinity created by Him, a part of Himself. But for the sake of God, don't ask her name. She is too exalted, exalted.  

Biographers tend to dismiss this encounter as a fabrication of Gogol's mind. However, there seems to be just as much evidence that the encounter did occur as against it. Gogol was a secretive character and he does write: "True, I was able to conceal myself from everyone; but could I hide from myself ..." It is the second half of the sentence that is very important. Gogol is constantly concerned with the self. He meticulously examines his reactions:

Hellish anguish with all possible torments seethed in my breast. Oh, what a cruel state! I think that if hell is prepared for sinners it is not as tormenting. No, this was not love ... at least I have not heard of such a love. In a burst of madness and terrible mental torments, I thirsted, I seethed just to stare, I was greedy only for one look ... To glance at her one more time - that was my one single desire growing stronger and stronger with inexpressibly cutting yearning. With terror I looked around and discerned my terrible state; absolutely everything in the world was alien to me then, life and death were equally unbearable, and my soul could not give an account of its actions. I saw that I had to run away from myself if I wanted to preserve my life, to return even a shadow of peace into my tortured soul ...
To Gogol love, or infatuation, whatever the feeling described above is, brings torment instead of peace. This is true of egotists. To love someone else leaves one vulnerable, a state which Gogol chose not to endure.

Three years later he wrote his friend Danilevsky, who was also in a state of torment over a loved one:

I understand and feel the state of your soul very much, although thanks to fate I have not managed to experience it. I say "thanks" because that flame would turn me into ashes in one instant. I would not find pleasure for myself in the past, I would strive to turn it into the present and I myself would be the victim of its effort; and therefore, for my salvation, I have a firm will which has twice led me away from the desire to glance into the abyss.13

This letter substantiates the first one, that his "firm will" has "led him away" from the "flame" that would engulf him. It is important to note that Gogol is not afraid of the woman per se but is afraid of his own reactions, of his own self.

Although Gogol had reservations about his vulnerability in the matter of love, he nevertheless had a high regard for love and marriage. In the same letter where he tells Danilevsky that he has himself twice turned away from the abyss, he writes him: "You are a lucky fellow - it is your lot to taste the greatest good in life - love. And I ..."19 In a previous letter written in the same year, he writes:
Beautiful, fiery, exhausting and inexplicable is love before marriage; but he who has loved before marriage has displayed only one burst, one effort to love. This love is not complete; it is only a beginning, momentary, but it is a strong and fierce enthusiasm which shakes the organism of a man for a long time. But the second part, or better, the book itself - because the first is only the advance announcement of it - is calm, an entire sea of quiet pleasures which open up more and more each day; and you are amazed by them with all the more pleasure because they seemed absolutely insignificant and ordinary. This is the artist in love with the work of a great master ... Love before marriage is the poetry of Yazykov: it is effective, fiery; and already in the first moment it possesses all one's feelings. But love after marriage is the poetry of Pushkin: it does not grasp you suddenly, but the more you look into it, the more it opens up, unveils itself, and finally turns into a vast and majestic ocean. See how beautifully I tell a story! Oh, I would make a fine novelist if I started writing novels!20

It is ironic that Gogol is describing love and marriage, but at the same time he is talking of his own love - literature, and marriage - his novel. The reference to Yazykov and Pushkin here does not have any homosexual implications, but places love and marriage on the highest plateau.

Dualism in his attitude to love (and marriage) can be perceived from the letters. On the one hand, he places love as "the highest good in life", and, on the other hand, he "chooses" not to give himself up to the passion of love. This dualistic attitude is not very strange if we look at the social, moral and
sexual history of Gogol's time. Russian society in the first half of the nineteenth century was repressed, highly structured:

Very few had the courage and individuality required to live in this dense fog. Nearly everyone was directly or indirectly an official and therefore at the mercy of his superiors, so that servility was the rule everywhere.  

For a young man like Gogol, one with very little means of support and no appreciable station in life, a marriage or a passionate involvement at this stage of his life would have likely been a disaster, or a lapse into the mediocrity which he abhorred. Gogol's plea to his mother "... But for the sake of God, don't ask her name. She is too exalted, exalted," could be a true statement of facts. On the other hand, Gogol had a passion for exaggerating, for hyperbolic statements, and his qualifying statement "... She is a divinity - but one to a certain extent invested with human passions," has led his mother and biographers to wonder if the divinity is not in reality a prostitute - a lowly woman of the streets. In either case, an emotional involvement would have been fruitless and would only have led to the torments that Gogol has described and rejected.

Gogol's rejection of emotional involvement in the early part of his life, does not necessarily mean that he had also rejected physical sex. There has been left no sexual history of the early nineteenth century (at least none that I have been able to find) but on a
comparative basis, we may compare the era to the early Victorian period in the West. A double standard was an accepted way of life. Society men loved, cherished and placed on pedestals their mothers, sisters and wives, while their more basic sexual needs were satisfied by prostitutes, mistresses and household staff. Accounts of the activities of gentlemen have been preserved in such books as My Secret Life or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure. There is no reason to doubt that a similar attitude did not prevail in Gogol's circle of friends and that Gogol was not blind to it. In several of his letters to friends he jokingly laughs at his friend's amorous involvements:

Krasnenkoy is clamouring (and not kidding) about marrying some actress who, it is said, has extraordinary talent, better than Bryansky (however, I haven't seen her); and he insists very strongly that it is essential for him to marry. However, it seems to me that this enthusiasm will grow cold for a while. The dragoon is here too ... His little brother, in order to show him all the curiosities of the city, took him to a bordello the other day; only the whole time that his little brother was sweating away behind the screen, he read a book with extreme coolness and went out, as if from a pastry shop, without having touched anything, without even having made a significant face at his brother ... 24

Whether or not Gogol himself had purely sexual experiences is a hotly debated question. In one of his instructional letters to his mother, written at the age of twenty-four, he writes:

Do me a favour, my priceless mama, don't bring up Olga as Liza was brought up. Keep her away
from the maid's room so that she never goes in there ... That alone will destroy the wilderness which children who stay in the maid's room get.... Because of the maid's rooms, because of the lack of common sense of mothers who only take their daughters under their care and get them away from the maids' rooms when they are already becoming of age, and they protect them when there is no longer anything to protect, when foolishness and prejudices have already put their roots too deep ...25

There is truth in Gogol's observation of environmental influence on the young child, but one wonders if there is not a second meaning to the passage in particular, what "wilderness" does one acquire in the maids' rooms? In an earlier letter, one following his explanation for leaving Russia in 1829 and as an answer to a frantic letter from his mother where she suspects that he has venereal disease, he answers:

But I am ready to answer in the presence of God if I have committed even one act of debauchery, and my morality has been incomparably purer here than during my life at school and at home ...26

The two letters do not preclude that Gogol did experience sex, yet they do not substantiate it either. However, an attitude of aversion to purely sexual activities for himself and his family is discernible:

With horror I read your letter ... How, mama? You could even think that I am the prey of vile debauchery, that I am on the lowest level of human degradation! Finally, you dared attribute to me a disease the thought of which always made even my very thoughts tremble.
It is the first time in my life, and I pray God that it be the last, I have received such a terrifying letter. It seemed to me that I was hearing a curse. How could you think that the son of such angel-parents could be a monster in which not one speck of virtue remained! ...27

An unsatisfactory, purely sexual encounter in his youth, could have thwarted his rather weak (if any) desire for physical sex. A sour experience combined with an egotistical nature and lack of money quite readily explain Gogol's decision to remain single.

In 1836, at the age of twenty-seven, Gogol once again went abroad. This time, except for two short visits, he stayed away from Russia for twelve years. His reasons for leaving Russia are many. However, one of the reasons is that there was a change of attitude towards his writing at this time. Following the turn-about reception his play "Inspector General" created, Gogol wrote his friend Pogodin:

... I am not going abroad because I could not bear these dissatisfactions. I want to improve my health, to divert and distract myself, and then, having chosen a more or less permanent residence, think my future works over thoroughly. It is high time for me to create with greater reflection ... 28

It was at this time that he began his laborious work on Dead Souls which consumed his energies till his death in 1852.

Gogol's stay abroad was characterized by inconsistency. He alternated between periods of creativity and sterility, which in turn led to either exalted, elated feelings or periods of
depression and despondency. He was also sporadically plagued by illness; gastritis and nervous attacks. He invented his own cure which consisted of extensive travel. A marked difference occurred in his friendships. Whereas before his friends were exclusively males, now Gogol acquires female friends. However, these new friendships were not purely a result of vanity or social necessity. Gogol accepted female friends on the same level as his male friends - as comrades, or in reference to women - as spiritual sisters. One of his first close friends was his former student Maria Balabin, whose family he met in Baden-Baden in 1836. His letters to her are amusing, moralistic, yet very genuine in feeling. It is interesting to note that it was in a letter to Maria Balabin that he expressed his grief over the impending death of his young friend Count Iosif Vielgorsky in 1839. Other female friends were Elisaveta Chertkova, with whom he had cared for the dying Vielgorsky; the rich Catholic convert Princess Zinaida Volkonskaya, whom he met in Rome in 1837-38; and Alexandra Smirnova, a famous beauty with whom he renewed and deepened his friendship while abroad.

Gogol's first years abroad were relatively happy ones. But the death of his friend Count Vielgorsky and his own nervous sickness in Vienna in 1840 once again led to a change in his attitude to his work. Progressively Gogol acquired a religious mysticism, and he began to envisage himself as a
'chosen one'. He envisaged himself not only as an artist, but also as a teacher and a prophet. This role was not a new one; as early as 1825 he had instructed his mother on how to lessen her grief over the loss of her husband, but the marked difference is that now he begins to use art, his writing, as a means of expressing his didactic ideas.

The didacticism reached its climax in his final published work, *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*. The merits of this work are highly debatable. However, in reference to women, his view of woman is solidified. Woman's attributes will be discussed in Chapter III.\(^{29}\) Although Gogol's tone is didactic, he nevertheless shows a high respect for the female sex. "I avow, women among us will regain consciousness before men ..."\(^{30}\) Gogol's consciousness was on a different level from that of the majority of people in his own life. The *Selected Passages* is an effort on his part to awaken people and to bring them around to his level of consciousness. Besides Pletnev and Professor Shevyrev it was his women friends who understood and appreciated his efforts.

It is ironic that the Vielgorsky family supported Gogol following the controversy that *Selected Passages* created, yet two years later, they are reported to have refused a proposal of marriage by Gogol to their daughter, Countess Anna Vielgorskaya. This shows how futile was Gogol's attempt to change the level of
conscience of his readers; agreeing with the concept is not
the same as making it a workable part of one's life. But it is
interesting that here, at age forty, Gogol was not averse to
marrying. Perhaps for the first time he found a woman who
possessed characteristics that he admired. In 1847 he wrote
Pletnev:

I particularly advise you to get acquainted
with Anna Mikhailovna Vielgorskaya. She
possesses something that I know of in no
other woman: not an analytical mind, but
the higher power to reason; but one does not
get to know her at once: she lives
completely within herself.31

In a letter to Anna, along with a page of instructions, he
comments:

... dances do not become you at all - your
figure is not that graceful and light. You
are not pretty ... you are pretty only when
some noble feeling appears in your face;
it's clear the features of your face are
arranged so as to express spiritual nobility;
as soon as you lose this expression you
become homely.32

With an analytical mind like this, it is not strange that Gogol
did not succeed in becoming a great lover. It was not Anna,
however, who refused Gogol, but her family who became indignat
at Gogol's presumption. In spite of Gogol's renown as a writer,
socially he was still encumbered.

Before concluding our discussion of Gogol's relationship
with his women friends, a look at his friendship with
Madame Smirnova will illuminate a further character trait of
Gogol. Gogol loved in women: "... Beauty; second, a spotless name, above scandal; third, the power of a pure soul." There were rumours of an affair between the two, yet it is highly unlikely. Madame Smirnova was married and in spite of her beauty and their close friendship, Gogol always kept their friendship on a spiritual rather than an emotional or physical plane. Gogol was a highly principled man; although his level of consciousness is not understandable to everyone, yet he himself lived by the ideals that he preached.
CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

Nikolai Gogol has been an enigma that many scholars have attempted to understand. Unfortunately, for the most part, Gogol has been a victim of destructive criticism. His contemporary critics, particularly Belinsky, were the fore-runners of the socio-political critics that predominated during the 19th and 20th century in Russia. To them, Gogol's works were valid only as criticisms of Russian society, while his positive attempts to enlighten society and show a new pattern of living were disregarded or ridiculed. Modern western critics are liable to be biased, judging Gogol's behaviour on the mores of their own times. It is not the intention of this paper to tear down Gogol's critics, only to show how their pre-conceived notions have led to erroneous conclusions about Gogol's life and, in particular, his attitude to women.

Gogol's contemporary critics and modern Soviet critics have been omitted from this study as they have contributed very little to the understanding of Gogol's women characters. In fact, the subject of Gogol's women portrayals has been left relatively untouched. On the other hand, four recent critical works that deal to some extent with Gogol's women portrayals will be looked at in some detail in this chapter. The four have been chosen on the basis that they reflect a diversity of present-day opinions of Gogol.
Setchkarev represents the traditional scholarly approach to the interpretation of Gogol's works. Erlich applies existential psychology, while the two, Driessen and McLean, use the psychoanalytical approach.

The summaries are presented so that we can see a step-by-step process in the formulation of critiques. Yet, at the same time, we must be aware of the bias present in the four critics. Gogol in his life, letters and artistic works professed a spirituality that the critics do not accept as a criterion for Gogol. The tragedy is that Gogol found himself in the transition between two sets of values, the spiritual and the materialistic. What were for Gogol ideal and eternal forms of a spiritual set of values are considered 'stereotyped epithets' by Setchkarev. Comparing the flamboyance of the living and loving mores of the Ukraine to the more restricted life of the provincial town, and later to the acquisitive, materialistic, modern trends of St. Petersburg could not but result in Gogol's statement "It's a dreary world, gentlemen". This statement is not, as McLean calls it, Gogol's retreat from personal love, but a sociological observation of his era.

Gogol's lack of sexual involvement has been the cause of the greatest misconception about his women characters. Erlich assumes that Gogol feared women, as an explanation for abstinence. Yet is this not a further example of bias? The modern trend is to say that man's lack of sexuality is due to psychologically unhealthy reasons. Yet this is to disregard the older concepts of spirituality.
spiritual set of values will postulate sexual restraint as healthy for the masses, and sexual control and conquest as strength of spirit for the leader or prophet. Gogol saw himself as a prophet. Erlich is entitled to question the universal psychological health of Gogol as seen in the light of the spiritual values, but not according to our own values, which he does, thus revealing his bias.

Driessen, and McLean to a lesser degree, emphasizes the importance of Gogol's attachment to his parents. Their conclusions are that it was a negative influence, resulting in an Oedipal complex which prevented him from seeking sexual fulfilment with other women. Their conclusions are based on the interpretation of a limited number of works, while the whole of his life and works are disregarded. Oedipal and homo-erotic affinity is a psycho-physical reality about any child that lives in a loving home. It is the degree and direction that decides the health or ill-health of them, particularly in creative minds. That Gogol could use these tendencies in creative work shows us his mastery and understanding of the Oedipal drive in him, not his subjugation to it. It is also easily possible that in his mother Gogol saw womanhood in its maternal fullness and maturity. Although Maria Ivanovna was not intellectual, yet she was a loving mother, a character trait that Gogol appreciated.

The following four critiques will reveal how inadequate has been the study of Gogol's women characters to date.

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Vsevolod Setchkarev's book Gogol: His Life and Works is a study of Gogol as an artist: "My purpose has been to examine Gogol primarily as an artist and to elucidate his formal peculiarities." The book mainly concerns itself with literary trends, genres, techniques and peculiarities employed by Gogol, and an evaluation of the success or failure of Gogol's style. Regarding Gogol's attitude to art, Setchkarev sees two trends. The first dating from 1829 to 1840 is art for art's sake. Following a spiritual crisis in Vienna in 1840, Gogol began to view art as a servant of religion. However, Setchkarev observes that Gogol from his early years had a strong desire to serve the state and the later religious convictions simply superimposed themselves on the old theory. In regard to Gogol's attitude to women, Setchkarev simply evaluates the characters according to the purpose they serve in Gogol's works.

Although Setchkarev gives us a very good biographical sketch, he does not connect the events of Gogol's life to his art, leaving this field to psychological critics. Setchkarev finds it 'striking' that Gogol appears to have had no relationship with women. He notes:
This circumstance has provided psychoanalysts with a great deal of material for strange hypotheses, but it would hardly pay to go into them. As always in such cases, a grain of truth is present, but the attempt to explain the whole body of Gogol's works, his religious upheaval, his illness on the basis of sexual inhibitions, is certainly far fetched.2

The further notion that excessive onanism during Gogol's school days led to severe psychic depressions is dismissed by Setchkarev as lacking plausibility. However, he does accept the fact that Gogol did not look at 'women as sexual objects'. The one event in Gogol's life - his letter of June 24, 1829 relating his encounter with the "deity, lightly clothed with human passion" - which has led to many suppositions by Gogol's critics, Setchkarev dismisses as fictitious. Both the passion and the woman are regarded as false, as simply a means of explaining his departure from Russia. Gogol's love for Anna Vielgorskaya is noted, yet no real emotional evaluation is given. Setchkarev notes that Gogol's religious convictions affected his art. To what extent Gogol's religious convictions evolved as a consequence of his relationship or lack of relationship with women is not discussed at all.

Setchkarev's main body of work consists of a study of Gogol's works. Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka, Mirgorod and Arabesque are all connected with a common theme: the intrusion of evil into everyday life. The theme is treated in various styles, comic or tragic, yet the outcome in all is that evil can get you.
Gogol's concept of the world is that it is full of completely useless petty philistines who only "get the sky sooty, while they think they are God knows how important." People live in complete egotism. Passion for earthy things is the snare of the devil. Woman as the devil's tool is an old theme of Russian ascetic literature, but to Gogol it took on a profound significance. In his earliest work, "Woman", Gogol reveals the power of beauty. "Beauty conceals danger, evil lurks behind the Godlike surface. If one takes his eyes off ideal beauty, passions rage and pull everything to destruction." Setchkarev notes that the theme of the destructive power of diabolical beauty which causes one to forget all other values is important; yet "it seems unjustified to make of it the cardinal point of Gogol's aesthetic system, as has been done in philosophical Gogol scholarship."

Besides looking at women as tools of the devil, Gogol portrays his women characters as prototypes of world literature. Setchkarev for the most part finds that Gogol's physical descriptions are 'stereotyped epithets'. Episodes where Gogol's heroines are nude are not seen as profound psychic expressions, but simply as a technique of good composition, as heightening effects to avert the danger of monotony. The scene of the deacon introducing his love declarations "... is so laden with sensuality and at the same time so comical that one would have to search a long time to find an equivalent in the history of literature." In Katerina's
dream scene, Gogol depicts, for the first time in Russian literature, the world of the subconscious. "Katerina does not know what her soul knows." Setchkarev points out that Gogol had attained the high point of his tragic art in the pathos of Katerina's lament and love speeches with Danilo.

Gogol did attempt to show cruelty and eroticism in his works. Mainly these traits are found in less known pieces which Gogol never developed into completed works. Setchkarev believes that Gogol did not pursue this course because he found the portrayal of realistic horror not suitable to him personally and chose rather to work on fantastic horror.

Gogol's short story, "The Nose", is looked at simply as a piece of literature written as art for art's sake. Setchkarev does not dispute that the nose has a double meaning of which Gogol was aware. However both the psychoanalysts and the metaphysicians completely miss Gogol's true intent, which Setchkarev sees as:

"The Nose" is to be understood as a game playing with the technical narrative devices and as a challenge to those who always look for a moral and for profit in art, who are too uncultured and narrow-minded to see that a real work of art can be created only for its own sake and that it is not at all a question of the what but of the how of the work.

During Gogol's later stage of writing, in such works as "Inspector General", "Marriage", "Coach", "Overcoat" and
and *Dead Souls*, Setchkarev sees the role of women as negative. Chertokutsky's wife and Agafya Tikhonovna are simple, ignorant "little geese". Gogol is concerned with revealing his dismal view of the world. Mediocrity was seen as evil by Gogol.

Gogol does not describe individual wickedness and its evil action on good people, but a solid collective being with morals, habits, and customs in common that hold each one captive and from whose net there is no escape.

The women characters form a part of the mass of collective nothingness. The love scenes of the "The Inspector General" are parodies, where simple nonsense is accepted as sense. Setchkarev notes that in the play, "Marriage", Gogol shows a gentle sadness for the world, yet no critic or audience saw this. The comedy is a break with the traditions of the love genre, in which, usually, two lovers encounter obstacles but somehow unite at the end. Gogol uses the same plot, but the ending differs. The reason for the change is that:

Everything in this world has long since changed. Nowadays, more dramatic tension is generated by attempts to attain an advantageous position, to distinguish oneself and to outshine another at any price, and to avenge oneself for neglect and for ridicule. Have not rank, capital, advantageous marriage now more electricity in them than love?

*Dead Souls* is a continuation of Gogol's theme of the intellectual and spiritual limitations of human life. The characters are "numerous possibilities for variations on stupidity and on
narrowness and their effects. Gogol uses gentle irony to present Korobochka and the triviality of her cares. In other instances Gogol treats the world of women with malicious irony, showing a world without even a hint of a positive trait. The love letter to Chichikov is very funny, "parodying as it does the whole romantic—sentimental epistolary style." Chichikov's falling in love with the governor's daughter had significance only as a subplot, for compositional purposes. The falling in love reveals the driving force behind Chichikov's actions, his desire for progeny. Otherwise Gogol's efforts to develop a love plot are unsuccessful. His descriptions of the girl are stereotyped except for comparing her face to a 'fresh egg'.

"The Overcoat" is a continuation of Gogol's former theme of the devil seducing man. This time the devil makes use of "little passions" to divert men from their striving toward God. Instead of a woman, an overcoat becomes the centre of passion for Akaky Akakievich. An erotic atmosphere is created around the overcoat.

Setchkarev's opinion of Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends is that it was an honest attempt by Gogol to present his concepts of the world of his experiences. Gogol expressed many apt formulations and pertinent ideas. The downfall of the work was Gogol's confident, didactic tone. The details of how the wife should ration money, Setchkarev feels, produced an
unpleasant effect on the readers. Setchkarev does not discuss Gogol's ideas of women as expressed in the two essays. The ideal women, Setchkarev feels, are presented as flat, empty descriptions of improbable characters.

According to Setchkarev's evaluation, Gogol was a good writer. He enriched the world of literature by creating a style where little details became interesting. More significantly, he was able to show the inner wealth of human life.
CHAPTER II

Part II

_Gogol_ by Victor Erlich

Erlich's work is an attempt at incorporating Gogol's personal life and his works into a meaningful study. It is a very fair study of the various psychoanalytical, psychological, religious and critical views of Gogol that have been voiced. Erlich's approach is from an existential point of view. To understand Gogol, Erlich adopts the following method:

... the unintelligible strangeness of Gogol's spirit, we may get more assistance from existential psychology than from straightforward psychiatry or orthodox psychoanalysis in its familiar aspects. The view of the human psyche that lays special stress on such dichotomies as the real self versus the false, unauthentic self, and pays special attention to the devices of concealment and impersonation employed by a peculiarly frail ego as protection against the encroachments of feared reality ...

Erlich follows this view both into Gogol's personal life and into his works. He observes that Gogol was unspontaneous, unable to express sincere, emotional feeling in his early letters, while he was in exile from home and even in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*. In his artistic endeavours, he concealed himself through the motif of the mask as seen through his varied use of the skaz technique. The constant shifting of
points of view and narrative tone lends itself to the grotesque manner of writing and the grotesque attitude that Erlich saw as the main feature of Gogol's art. That Gogol indeed was hiding behind a mask is a bold postulation that the main body of Erlich's work does not quite substantiate. Yet his study of the nature of Gogol's imagination and the texture of his universe as examples of the grotesque imagination are excellent.

Erlich accepts that Gogol's sexuality was either warped or stunted. He agrees with the bulk of Gogol's biographers who note that through "all or most of his life he shunned physical contact with women."2 Erlich avoids speculation as to the reasons, observing only that Gogol's reaction to passion was to flee rather than to consummate. No particular incident or influence is shown as forming this attitude. Gogol's mother, Erlich feels, did not influence his life to any great extent. She was partially responsible for "conveying to her son fear and distrust of the outside world, especially of that glittering den of iniquity, the city."3 However, it is too much of an exaggeration to blame Maria alone for Gogol's religiously motivated fear of the Evil One. Although Erlich admits that Vasily Gippius's reasons for believing in Gogol's encounter with the "dazzling exalted creature" have some validity, he nevertheless dismisses it as false. His reasons are that none of Gogol's friends know about the incident, or that Gogol's 'goddess' sounds more like:
... the first in a series of unbearably dazzling women who inhabit Gogol's fiction, or, for that matter, like a slightly personalized counterpart of Alcinoe, the epitome of triumphant female beauty eulogized in his turgidly romantic essay, "A Woman".  

Further, the whole incident - Gogol's unexpressed disappointment at the failure of his first work - led him to hide behind a mask, to invent an easier-to-convey reason for fleeing.

Characters, plots and situations are secondary in Erlich's analysis of Gogol's style. Rather he pursues the study of obsessive themes and leitmotifs. The Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka and Mirgorod are characterised by the following themes: lust as a tool of the fiend, the path to perdition and self-destruction as seen in "St. John's Eve"; the consumed-by-love theme as seen in "St. John's Eve" and "Viy"; crime and punishment in "St. John's Eve" and "Terrible Revenge"; and 'things are not what they seem' in "Viy" and later developed in "Nevsky Prospect". The last of these themes, 'things are not what they seem', was first applied to nature scenes, and only later was it used in reference to women. As seen from the themes, Gogol is not interested in particular character analysis, but is interested in a study of the cosmic relationships of man to the self and to the rest of the world. In the same way, to interpret Shponka in terms only of sex symbols is to miss seeing him as a forerunner of Gogol's later genre - "the comedy of inanity, the enactment of pathetic stupidity through verbal incoherence and incongruity."  

In "The Old-World Landowners", ...
Erlich deems sexuality, or the lack of it, an important aspect of Gogol's attitude. The relationship between Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulcheria Ivanovna has regressed to an infantile level, where oral gratification is paramount. The idealization of this curiously unromantic vindication of "habit" at the expense of "passion" makes Erlich conclude that the work is another example of Gogol's fear of sexuality. Erlich compares Gogol's preference for emotional routine over emotional impulse to Tolstoy's preference for the solid, biological reality of marriage and child rearing over the romantic concept of love. However, whereas Tolstoy's target was romantic illusion, Gogol's was lust and the erotic. Yet, within the context of the story, the regressive tendency is only a further example of one of Gogol's major themes -

the tension between gemütlichkeit and wanderlust, or, to put it more negatively, between the fear of life and the fear of death-in-life.\textsuperscript{7}

Important as the sexual symbolism is, there are other themes present in this story which lend it an existential level of significance. It is the later themes that Erlich feels are more important in the interpretation of Gogol's art.

"Viy" is a most striking example of the fantastic-grotesque strain in Gogol. However, it is also one of the earliest explorations of sado-masochistic feelings. Khoma's reactions to riding the witch, "the unpleasant and at the same
voluptuous feelings", Erlich sees as a "quiver of debilitating, masochistic erotism."\textsuperscript{8} The whole scene with the witch is one of sado-masochism; "the burning sense of shame produces an urge to redeem one's manliness by inflicting humiliation rather than savouring it."\textsuperscript{9} Thus it is that Khoma kills the witch and pays for his sado-masochism with his life. However, Khoma did not ask for any trouble; it seems that the story is only a further example of the theme of evil intruding on man. Curiosity or excessive fear are not Khoma's chief vices - but complacency:

Khoma Brut is Everyman, a bumbling, careless, insensitive homme moyen sensuel, who was fated to stumble into the devil's trap, to look into the abyss.\textsuperscript{10}

"Nevsky Prospect" is an extension of the theme of 'there is no place to hide', but set in an urban society. The motif of the beautiful prostitute and of the idealistic artist are not new to Gogol, but derive from "the forgotten exponents of so-called littérature frénétique, Jules Janin and Eugène Sue."\textsuperscript{11} Piskarev's dilemma is not so much the girl, as his inability to reconcile "the unbearable discrepancy between their dreams and 'revolting' actuality."\textsuperscript{12} The finale, in which Gogol warns his readers not to trust Nevsky Prospect, Erlich sees as a frenzy of moral panic on the narrator's part.

The Evil One is as resourceful as he is ubiquitous. The trouble with him, as Gogol was to tell himself and his contemporaries time and again, is that he gets at man not only through taking advantage of his lowly
impulses, his base passions, but also, and more insidiously, by distorting, twisting, and capitalizing upon his loftier aspirations such as the yearning for beauty which brought down the tragically deluded dreamer, Piskarev.13

Poprishkin's unhinged sexual fantasies in "Diary of a Madman" unite the woman with the devil, for "woman is in love with the devil". It is surprising that Erlich, here, accepts the anti-female demonology of Poprishkin as "a pathological travesty of Gogol's own fear of sexuality".14

Erlich does not dismiss critics who insist on analysing "The Nose" on psychological grounds. The story does seem to have phallic undertones and can be interpreted as an expression of castration anxiety. However, Kovalëv is not so much concerned with losing his manliness as he is at losing his chance of an "important position". To Kovalëv, marriage is primarily a stepping-stone in his career. In Gogol's emerging view of man, the loss of the nose enables him to have "a grotesque laugh at the absurd importance of appearances in a world of appearances. In the universe of "The Nose", status looms larger than sex."15

As Erlich puts it, "on Nevsky Prospect status is highly libidinized; in fact it seems to be the chief focus of a libidinal involvement".16 The displacement of the libido is further seen in "The Overcoat". The cloak is presented as an erotic love object which absorbs all of Akak'í Akakievich's attention. It is Gogol's sad commentary on man who needs substitutes:
a lowly ambition in lieu of a grand passion, a mundane fixation rather than a meaningful emotional involvement, or to put it differently, an overinvestment in trivia, such is the lot of the typical Gogolian homunculus.17

Gogol's later years are characterised by the theme of the homunculus. Erlich does not separate the women characters from the men in this world; we presume that both are made of the same stuff. Gogol's epistles in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* are seen as 'dismal reading'. Erlich evaluates Gogol for his existential presentation of man, not for any psychological or didactic bearing that Gogol had on literature.
CHAPTER II

Part III

"Gogol's Retreat from Love: Toward an Interpretation of Mirgorod" by Hugh McLean (American Contributions to 4th International Congress of Slavists)

The thesis of Hugh McLean's paper is that a regressive movement can be traced through Gogol's works. The first sentence of Mirgorod, "I love you" ("ya ochen' lyublyu"), and the last, "it is dreary on this earth, gentlemen" ("skuchno na etom svete, gospoda"), are the two extremes of attitude expressed by Gogol. The symbolic transition from love to non-love, McLean sees as a "main tendency of development extending throughout Gogol's whole literary career." However, McLean limits his study to the four stories found in Mirgorod. He does not deny that Gogol did have genuine outpourings of positive emotions which were present for the most part in his earlier stories of Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka. The mature Gogol, following Mirgorod, found the world an absurdly dreary place, peopled by automata. Thus it is that McLean has selected Mirgorod as a crucial transition in the author's libidinal development. The regression advances along a "diachronic axis; the earlier works depict more mature forms of libidinal expression than the later

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McLean feels that this affected the artistic development of Gogol:

... the psychological regression almost exactly reverses the pattern of Gogol's artistic growth, not only in a chronological sense, but also in a qualitative one; in other words, the more primitive the form of libidinal expression depicted in a given work, the more mature and better his art.

McLean does not analyse the stories according to their order in the book. He groups "Taras Bulba" and "Viy" as efforts at achieving a 'genital' choice of libidinal aims. "Old-World Land-owners" and "The Tale of how Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich" reveal regressions to 'pre-genital' libidinal outlets. "Taras Bulba" is "the nearest approach to genuine heterosexual romance as the major form of libidinal expression." However, the theme of love is only a minor part in the epic depicting the heroic actions of the Cossacks. The whole story appears more as an artistic realization of normal, pre-pubertal boys' fantasy. Andrey's love is visualized, yet the sexual act is not quite attained. Pathological tendencies are present in this very first story, which serve as warning signs of impending disaster. The hero envisages the woman as a superior being. He encounters her under circumstances where he suffers a humiliating loss of dignity. As McLean notes: "a love affair based on an idealized and unrealistic image of the woman is not likely to lead to any earthly kind of happiness." Gogol's description of the
kiss between Andrey and the panochka has connotations that sexual fulfilment and death are closely associated. Andrey experiences sexual ecstasy from the kiss which can be felt only once in a lifetime. The price for this ecstasy is execution by his father. Thus an 'Oedipal' situation has been enacted. In the normal development of a boy, the taboo is placed only against the mother, while other women are available for pursuit. But, McLean notes, in Gogol's pathological case the taboo is extended to women in general. It is based on the belief that any attempt of the individual to assert his mature sexual desires will be punished by death. Not wanting death, only one choice remains; retreat from love, regression.

In "Viy" the connection between sexual fulfilment and death is direct. Khoma not only kills his sex partner, but is made to pay for the death himself. However, the onus of responsibility is placed on the woman as well. The witch lures the hero to his doom so she must bear some of the guilt and be punished too. The story also offers an excellent exploration of sado-masochistic feelings. "Aggressive, sadistic impulses, the desire to hurt or injure the object have not only become sexualized, but have become the main expression of sexual feelings." But the love object has the same aggressive feelings. A man can control his own aggressive feelings, but not someone else's.
He inevitably fears, therefore, that this aggression, however pleasurable it may seem within bounds, may get out of control and lead to injury and even death. Consequently, sadomasochistic gratification is inevitably tinged with fear; and if this fear becomes strong enough, the individual will probably decide that the satisfaction is not worth the risk and will set out along the regressive road once more.7

A regressive step, from the worries of the 'Oedipal' turmoils and aggressive women, is to return to one's childhood, to pre-sexual love. Oral gratification becomes a displacement of libidinal outlet from the genital to the oral zone. Such is the case found in "Old-World Land-Owners". Not only does the narrator find a haven for himself, but the old couple also live a desexualized existence, a fact McLean sees as Gogol's act of vengeance against his parents carried out in fantasy. However, this regressive solution is never really satisfactory.

The narrator vacillates between two feelings:

... satisfaction at having attained a haven of safety ... and at the same time regret at the terrible price paid for this safety and an accompanying resentment directed at the parental figures who are believed to have exacted it.8

The passing of time makes this stage of regression also tentative. Parents die, and where shall the child look for love? A solution found in "The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich" is to find male friendships. However, male friendships, not based on any biological foundation, are unstable
and inadequate as substitutes for love. The final possibility explored in Mirgorod, is to find love in love-objects. Although objects are not threats to the human ego, yet they are poor substitutes for the libido. Not shown in Mirgorod, or for that matter in any of his work, but only in his life, is the regression "to complete self-love, the individual has arrived back at the starting-point of his journey, the stage of primary narcissism of earliest infancy." It is a bleak world that unfolds for Gogol, once he has abandoned his search for love. And it is thus that McLean sees Gogol, "alone in a world without love".

Interestingly enough, McLean stresses the point that his study is based on the literary product and not on biographic material. He hypothesizes: "Gogol's works do constitute a retrospective reenactment of the pathological emotional development of his early life." The works chosen by him do seem to express the regressive tendency. However, his last supposition - that Gogol completely retreated from love - is based on biographical data and not on literary examples. We cannot disclaim the value of McLean's study; he has evinced a deeper psychological and aesthetic understanding of Gogol's works, yet we cannot accept the steps in the regressive process as necessarily implying the author's personal dilemma.
An attempt at a formal analysis of Gogol's works led Driessen to observe that in many instances the construction of the story did not lead to any logical or aesthetic relevance to the whole. Wishing to reach definite conclusions concerning the interpretation of the stories, he has applied Freudian psychoanalysis to bridge the gap between what is presented and what is left "unformed". The unifying element found in Gogol's work was anxiety. Driessen believes it is the author's own anxiety which he consciously and unconsciously projects in his works. The strongest anxiety expressed is a feeling of guilt due to an Oedipal complex. However, Driessen finds evidence that Gogol also had homo-erotic feelings towards his father. The sum of these guilt feelings results in Gogol's narcissism. Not only does he dwell on his feelings, but he inflicts self-punishment in a masochistic-sadistic fashion. Gogol's physical illnesses are regarded by Driessen as results of Gogol's anxiety or self-punishment.

Driessen presents us with ample evidence to substantiate his theory of Gogol's Oedipal complex. Maria Ivanovna was very beautiful, with pale skin, dark eyes and raven coloured hair.
Gogol's descriptions of the beautiful maidens are simply the same image. Perhaps this is the reason that, however hard Gogol attempted to describe a beautiful woman, the result was always flat, a collection of helpless hyperboles. The image of the mother obscured that of all other women. Driessen agrees with Gogol's first biographer, Kulish, that "... Gogol's sole passion applied to his mother."\(^1\) This explains why Gogol had no love affairs in his life or why, in his works, woman is always devalued sexually. There are also two aspects to Gogol's concept of love: a passionate desire which is forbidden; a longing for a spiritual home of the soul. Both aspects are directed to the mother. A question that Driessen does not answer is: did Gogol as a last resort flee from the mother in an effort to sever the bonds?

Gogol's homo-erotic tendencies are not so much deduced from his personal life as from his work, "Viy". Driessen does note, however, that Gogol did express tender emotions to his male friend, Pogodin, and in his notes "Nights at a (Roman) Villa". Also in his first work, "Woman", Gogol writes that "one loves the feminine in men." Driessen specifies that he does not think Gogol was homosexual, only that the power of the homo-erotic element which exists in everyone was fairly strong in Gogol. Instead of having purely aggressive feelings to the father as a result of the Oedipal complex, Gogol is attracted to the father image. The
combination of the feelings towards the mother and father, could not but develop anxiety.

"A Terrible Revenge" and "Viy" are interpreted in such a way as to substantiate Driessen's theory of Gogol's incestuous desires. The construction of "A Terrible Revenge" reveals that the story has two levels. The first deals with the wizard's atrocities which are motivated by his incestuous desire. On the second level, we see that the wizard is fated to commit the worst evil, as the last of his race. The incest is not committed for two reasons: Firstly Petro's punishment consists in the fact that he cannot find satisfaction but will continue gnawing at the bones eternally; Secondly, Katerina is innocent of incestuous desire toward her father. Driessen is adamant about her innocence. Katerina, as the mother image, has to be innocent. It is Gogol, objectified as the wizard, who has the incestuous feelings. The father-daughter relation is a reversal of the son-mother relationship. Although "... the guilt of Katerina's father is a result of a craving for which he bears no responsibility ..." yet the desire is nevertheless punishable. Not God, but man, presumably Gogol, inflicts punishment.

"Viy" is a veiled and distorted expression of Gogol's anxiety to expose himself. Leitmotifs running through the story are: the howling of the wolves as foreshadowing disaster; the 'evil eye', the demonic look - a fear of being seen; and Khoma's realization
of his loneliness - his fate. The element of erotic desire is both terrifying and sweet. As the image of the old woman and the 'rusalka' merge, so do Khoma's feelings of ecstasy and destruction, obsession and temptation, bliss and terror of death. Khoma's partner, the old woman, witch - beauty and corpse, is an embodiment of demonism. A closer examination of the witch reveals that she is "... a concentration of the beauty of all the beautiful girls in Gogol's Ukrainian tales." If we remember that the beauties are images of Gogol's mother, then the demonic element is understood. A sexual act committed with the mother could not be anything else but caused by demonic powers. Khoma is a representation of Gogol's anxiety. He has two attitudes to sexual desire. One is the purely animal desire; the satisfaction is like eating when hungry. The second is the demonic desire, rooted in the mysterious depths of human personality. However, Driessen notes that Gogol's unconscious desire is not only for his mother. Viy is a father image that comes to avenge the son's incest. Khoma fears the punishment, yet at the same time is drawn to look at the avenger. Because Viy is blind and covered by earth, Driessen suggests this was Gogol's symbolic way of showing earthy passions for his father. This explains for Driessen Gogol's fear of exposure. He is afraid of exposing both his Oedipal and homo-erotic tendencies. The figure Viy is in reality a 'terrible revenge' for Gogol's unconscious guilt.
The rest of the six stories analysed by Driessen are psychologically less developed. "The Fair at Sorochintsy" and "St. John's Eve" are on the same theme: the devil in the service of love, the devil's property carrying disaster. The love-plots are secondary to the demonic element. "Ivan Fadorovich Shponka and his Aunt" is a grotesque, an open play with anxiety. Shponka is afraid of being together with a woman, an anxiety that is more characteristic of women than men. In "Old-World Land-Owners", Gogol presents his only completely lovable woman in the character of Pulheria Ivanovna. The reason for her being lovable is that she is too old for any passionate feelings. In Gogol's works, passion was always depicted as a: "... product of the evil spirit which moves the world." In this story he chooses habit, as a preferable emotion to passion. In Driessen's last story to be analysed, "The Overcoat", he reaches an interesting conclusion. "The Overcoat" is not an apotheosis of anxiety, rather it shows resistance to that force. Akaki Akakiievich, with the acquisition of the overcoat, discovers himself, interest in women and interest in the world around him. The loss of the overcoat produces an aggressive action on his part, once awakened he wants to maintain his grip on the world. Driessen feels that if Gogol had pursued the typifying of this kind of character, he would have been successful in creating positive characters for his second part of Dead Souls.
CHAPTER III

GOGOL'S METHODS OF CHARACTERIZING THE WOMEN CHARACTERS

INTRODUCTION

Gogol's women characters cannot be lumped into one homogeneous mass; rather, like his own personal development, the women at different stages of his writing exhibit different qualities. Gogol's early stage of writing from 1828 to 1833 is marked by Romanticism and lyricism, consequently the women characters are fantastic beauties, comic peasant women and witches. Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka and Mirgorod are full of these fantastic women characters. From 1833 on, beginning with Mirgorod and continuing in Arabesques and his plays, Gogol began a more serious examination of the world around him, with the result that some of the characters become objects of subjective explorations while others become objects of caricature. As Gogol's literary career progressed, especially following 1836, he used women characters less and less and in some works, namely "The Overcoat" and "The Gambler", women characters are absent; in such instances, women are supplanted by objects. This trait is carried into his last major literary work, Dead Souls, where Chichikov's little box takes on more character than do the women characters of the novel. However, the unobtainable beauty always remains in Gogol's work and is present in Dead Souls, alongside of a mass of caricatures. The later women caricatures tend to

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depict moral faults that Gogol was concerned with in society. In Gogol's last published work dated 1847, like his first dated 1831, he apotheosizes women. Whereas in "Woman" beauty is women's most redeeming asset, in Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends, along with beauty, purity of soul and moral upright behaviour are demanded of women.

In order to simplify our analysis of Gogol's method of characterizing women, I propose to divide the characters according to different modes. Four attitudes to women can be distinguished in the development of Gogol's career. Accordingly an analysis will be provided of the lyrical, subjective, caricature and idealized modes. These four modes closely parallel the chronological order of Gogol's works. Exceptions are the stories "Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and his Aunt" from Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka and "Old-World Landowners" from Mirgorod, which chronologically should fall under the lyrical mode, yet Gogol's portrayal of their women characters is more characteristic of the later caricature mode; therefore, they have been included with the later group. The two works "Woman" and Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends have been grouped together into the Idealized mode. The two works are separated by sixteen years and represent the starting and finishing points in the full circle circumscribed by Gogol.

Gogol began and finished with a panegyric to women. Each of these modes will be further divided into four sections. First, the
external and internal milieu of each character will be looked at. Secondly, the character will be studied: the significance of the name, the physical appearance and the language used by the character. Thirdly, the character's actions in the story will be looked at to see what function the character performs. Here opinions of others, the author's comments and especially the male protagonist's relation to and opinion of the female character will be examined. Fourthly and finally, the consequences of the woman character's actions will be looked at to see what effect she exerts on man and what effect she has on the story. Not all of these categories can be applied to each character, as the author's stress varies. No attempt will be made at this time to assess the women characters; only the opinions of them held by characters in the stories and the narrator's comments will be surveyed.
CHAPTER III

Part I

THE LYRICAL MODE

Gogol's first women characters are seen in a Ukrainian setting. It is not the Ukraine of the 1830's, but an era that has already passed, an era that abounded in spirit, laughter, adventure and mystery. The devil and witches are as much a part of life as are "dumplings" ("galushki"). The creation of a mood and description of the era is as important as the story told, i.e. the story is only a vehicle for exposing the panorama. The milieu here makes the character stand out, but actually the character sets up the milieu.

The immediate surroundings of the woman characters are very sparsely sketched. They are found in "warm cottage" ("teplaya khata") "thatched roof" ("razmalevannaya khata") or "cottage surrounded by cherry trees" ("khata ustavlennoy nevysokimi vishnevymi derev'ami"). In the Cossack stories, "Taras Bulba", "A Terrible Revenge" and "Viy", the description is extended somewhat to include the interior of the houses. The following is a description of Katerina's house in "A Terrible Revenge":

... there were oak shelves running around the walls at the top. Bowls and cooking pots were piled upon them. Among them were silver goblets and drinking cups mounted in gold, gifts of booty brought from wars. Lower down hung costly
sabres, muskets, arquebuses, spears; ... at the bottom of the wall were smooth-planed oak benches; beside them, in front of the stove-couch the cradle hung on cords from a ring fixed in the ceiling. 1

There is nothing feminine in the house, reflecting how little influence women had on the Cossack way of life. However, the houses do reflect the social status of the girls. Parashka, Pidorka, Hanna and Oksana are peasant girls living in 'khatas'. Katerina, Taras Bulba's wife and the Cossack's daughter in "Viy" all live in rich Cossack homes. The epitome of a grandiose setting for a grandiose character is reached in Grandad's description of the Tsarina's palace in the story, "The Lost Letter":

... they brought him to the palace, and it was so high, that if you were to set ten huts one on top of another they would hardly be high enough; how he glanced into one room and she was not there, into another, a third and even a fourth, and still she was not there; but in the fifth there she was sitting in her gold crown ... 3

Not being able to exert too much of an impression on their surrounding, the women tend to adorn themselves. The young girls dress up gaily, yet in good taste:

See how gracefully I step; my blouse is embroidered with red silk. And the ribbons on my head! You will never see richer braid. My father bought me all this for the finest young man in the world to marry me." 4

The girls delight in red and blue ribbons, red necklaces and red boots ('krasnye sapogi') which the Tsarina wore. The rich
Cossack Katerina even possesses petticoats of blue silk and boots with silver heels. The older women of these stories find just as much delight in their appearances. To compensate for the natural beauty that has left them, they make up with additional adornment. Parashka's stepmother is seen all dressed up for the fair:

... dressed in a smart green woollen jacket adorned with little tails, to imitate ermine, though they were red in colour, a gorgeous skirt checked like a chess-board and a flowered chintz cap ...

Solokha is just as imposing in her church attire:

... dressed in bright-checked skirts with a cotton apron, and above it a dark blue overskirt on the back of which gold flourishes were embroidered ...

The colour schemes of the young girls are red, light blue and silver, while the older women prefer red, dark blue or navy, green and gold. A. Bely* points out that white, which we will see is strongly emphasized in the physical description of the young girls, blue and red is a descending order of the colour spectrum from heaven to earth, while yellow, green, red, brown are earth colours, again in a descending order. From this we could deduce that the girls are shown as more celestial whereas the women are more terrestrial. However the colour-scheme in both descriptions is bright and vivid, in contrast to Gogol's later stage of writing where the importance of bright colours is lost.

Gogol is a master at utilizing names for setting and character development. Pidorka, Parashka, Hanna, Katerina and Oksana are all

*See Footnotes
typical Ukrainian names, often found in songs or colloquial expressions. They are used in diminutive or hypocoristic forms, such as Parashka from Parakseviya or Galya from Hanna. The older women's names are used in a comical or satirical derogatory way. Khivrya is short for Khavronya Nikiforovna. A common Ukrainian insult is to say 'ty khavronya rastryapannaya' meaning 'you're a dirty son of a gun'. Solokha could be a shortening of the Biblical name Solomiya. Both Solokha and Salome have power over the males, but Solokha is a very ridiculous image of the latter.

Gogol's omission of names is an interesting aspect of his women portraits. The beautiful girls all have names. Some common older women have names, but in other instances are simply referred to as 'baba', 'supruga' or 'ved'ma'. In stories such as "The Lost Letter" or "A Place Bewitched" women have insignificant roles, so that omission of names is not strange. Taras Bulba's wife is also not named, but the omission here underlines her subservient position in the Cossack masculine world. Other women characters not given names are: the witch in "St. John's Eve", the drowned maiden and her stepmother in "A May Night" and the Cossack's daughter - witch in "Viy". Three of the women are witches, one a suicide. All are 'unclean' spirits which Gogol chose not to name since by giving them proper names, he would make them terrestrial.

The physical description of the girls is very impressionistic. Gogol combines other people's opinions, a few stark features and
their similes or metaphors and ends up in every story with a beauty
the likes of which the world hasn't seen. Pidorka in "St. John's
Eve" is described thus:

My grandfather's aunt used to say — and women, you know, would rather kiss the
devil, saving your presence, than call any
girl a beauty — that the girl's plum
cheeks were as fresh and bright as a poppy
of the most delicate shade of pink when it
glowed, washed by God's dew, unfolds its
leaves and preens itself in the rising sun;
that her eyebrows, like black strings such
as our girls buy nowadays from travelling
Muscovite pedlars to hang crosses or coins
on, were evenly arched and seemed to gaze
into her clear eyes; that her little mouth,
at which the young men stared greedily,
looked as though it had been created to utter
the notes of a nightingale; that her hair,
black as the raven's wings, soft as young
flax, fell in rich curls on her gold
embroidered jacket (in those days our girls did
not do their hair in plaits and twine them with
bright coloured ribbons). 7

If we choose to isolate the physical features of these
beautiful girls, we end up with a rather sketchy portrait; a
round, fair face, black eyebrows, eyes that vary in colour
from pale blue, brown to black, plum cheeks, turned up nose,
flushed rosy lips and mouth, and black hair. Katerina's soul
is described, but again with allusions rather than details.
Oksana is seen sleeping "in bewitching nakedness, which the
darkness concealed even from herself." 8 Little else of their
anatomy is mentioned.

The image of these beauties is created by Gogol's use of
similes and metaphors. The eyebrows are compared to German velvet or black strings, the eyes to stars, cheeks to poppies, lips to sky-dawn or nightingales and hair to raven’s wings. The maids are repeatedly called “white maids”, and their whiteness is compared to snow, sheets and moonlight. All the similes in reference to Parashka, Pidorka, Hanna, Oksana and Katerina have a poetic (lyrical, heightening) effect. In most of these there is some kind of positive value judgement.  

The description of the older women follows a similar pattern as for the young girls, except that where the former are extolled, the latter are derided.

Oh, that tiresome woman! But we are forgetting that she, too, was sitting on the top of the load dressed ... and a flowered chintz cap that gave a particularly majestic air to her red round face, which betrayed so unpleasant and savage a nature that everyone hastened to turn from it to the lively face of the daughter.  

The face is shown as red compared to the white faces of the maids. The body takes on more form. Khavronya is called a “buxom beauty”. The sacristan is very much interested in Solokha's “plump bare arm”, “neck” and, we assume, her bosom.

Gogol uses similes very slightly for these women; instead, others simply refer to them as “bags” or “witches”, or he shows their metamorphoses. There is no designated boundary between womanhood and witch- hood. Solokha in “Christmas Eve” is seen one minute in the sky; “... she slid through the air, as though down an ice-slope, and straight into her chimney,” where she
resumes womanhood:

The witch stealthily moved back the oven door to see whether her son, Vakula, had invited visitors to the cottage; but seeing that there was no one, except the sacks that lay on the floor, she crept out of the oven, flung off her warm coat, set herself to rights, and no one could have told that she had been riding on a broom the minute before.12

The more sinister a witch is, the more she is able to transform into another state. The stepmother in "A May Night" can change into a cat, and later disguises herself as a water nymph. The witch in "St. John's Eve" undergoes a change from witch to dog, to cat, to old woman. She is also physically the ugliest of the witches:

... Where the cat had stood there now was an old woman, wrinkled like a baked apple and bent double, her nose and chin meeting like nutcrackers.13

The transformations and the similes are all downwards, giving a negative value.

A synthesis of the beautiful girl and the ugly witch is developed in "Viy". The Cossack's daughter is a beauty similar to the other young girls. She has fair skin, a lovely forehead, even brows, long eyelashes, ruby red lips, luxuriant tresses and a bare white arm. The similes remain poetic-lyrical in nature but their association becomes razor-sharp. Her forehead is "fair as snow, as silver", the brows are "dark as night in the midst of sunshine", lips are "rubies" but the rubies "looked like
blood surging from her mouth", and twice we hear that her eyelashes are as long "as arrows". An ominous effect is created not by description of features, but by associations and by Gogol's use of qualifying adjectives. The girl's beauty is described as "striking", "terrible" and "poignant". These adjectives do not appear to aid the reader in identifying the girl as the witch, because the transformation of old woman to young girl to witch is stated matter of fact by Gogol. As a witch she appears "blue" and her eyes "glow like coals". During the three nights the scary effect is created not so much by her terrifying appearance as by her actions, or the association of the adjectives used. In many instances, the girl is referred to as 'corpse', who even "turned livid all over like one who has been dead for several days". She "opens her dead eyes", has a "quivering face", "menacing finger", "grinds" or "clacks" her teeth, and her "lips twitched convulsively". The colour red is associated with the girl several times. Foma last sees the corpse in a room where the "whole floor was covered with red cotton stuff." Her lips are ruby red, but the redness is like blood. The tear that Foma sees oozing from her eyelid is "a drop of blood". Other colours included are "dark blue velvet adorned with gold fringe and tassles", and her eyes are seen as "dead green eyes".

The language of the women of the lyrical stage varies from one extreme to another. The young girl's speech is usually gentle,
sometimes poetic and even in rhyme. Pidorka tells her brother;

I was my darling, run fast as an arrow  
from my bow, my golden little one, to  
Petro, tell him everything.16

Katerina's speech is of an epic nature, long and full of archaic terms and an indirect tone.

No, I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it!  
Perhaps the crimson blood is already  
flowing out of the white body; maybe  
by now my dear one is helpless and  
I am lying here!17

From the height of poetic speech, the descent to common speech is gradual. Oksana's speech is still gentle, but there is mockery and conceit in it.

... Oh, yes, I am pretty. Ah, how pretty!  
It is marvellous. What a joy I shall be  
to the man who marries me! How my  
husband will admire me! He'll be wild  
with joy. He will kiss me to death.18

Although the tone is gentle, and the words are polite, the message conveyed is one of disdain and arrogance.

Anything else you want? When there's honey he must have a spoonful! Go away, your hands are harder than iron, and you smell of smoke. I believe you have smeared me all over with your soot.19

Where the young girls use polite language, the peasant women show no such restraint.
'So it's you, you bitch!' said the sacristan's wife, stepping up to the weaver's wife. 'So it's you, is it, witch, who cast a spell over him and gave him a foul potion to make him come to you!'20

They are not averse to using swear words, colloquial expressions and bringing down choice curses.

'A hundred?' the elderly charmer countered, 'You heathen! Go and wash your face, you worthless scamp! I've never seen your mother, but I know she's dirt. And your father is dirt. And your aunt is dirt! A hundred, indeed! The snotty-nosed pig!'21

In fact the language aids in setting up the mood and gives us an audial impression of the scene.

A characteristic of the witches is that their speech is terse and to the point. The witch tells Petro, "No, you will never see the gold till you have shed human blood!"22 The boldness of the demand gives dramatic effect rather than any language peculiarities that a witch might use. Indeed, in "Viy", we do not hear what the girl is saying, but we are told, "she began pronouncing terrible words with her dead lips; they gurgled hoarsely like the bubbling of boiling pitch."23 Later we hear that her "incantations" come forth in "wild shrieks." Abandonment of restraints is the most noted feature of their language.

In their actions Gogol reveals the full range of possibilities open to humans. The pendulum swings from the flighty young girls to motherhood and womanliness epitomized, to wayward wives and
women, to shrews and finally to cruel inhuman acts, perpetrated by witches. The beautiful young girls are modest in some instances, as Parashka, or conceited like Oksana. They love trinkets, ribbons and almost on the same level - men, or precisely - one man in each case. They all know that they are physically attractive and use their charms wisely. Not that they would do an immodest act, but they know how to get around men. Hanna in "A May Night" uses her feminine charm to get a story out of Levko.

'Tell me, tell me, my dear black-browed boy!' she said, pressing her face against his cheek and putting her arm around him.24

Their reason for loving the men is simple as expressed by Hanna:

I love you, my black-browed Cossack! I love you because you have brown eyes, and when you look at me it seems as though there were laughter in my heart, and it is gay and happy; because you twitch your black moustache so delightfully; because you walk along the streets singing and playing the bandura, and it's sweet to listen to you.25

They are quick to fall in love; even the wilful Oksana cannot escape the 'fever' of love. Once in love, they stay constant to their chosen ones: Pidorka is ready to die rather than marry another. Little is mentioned of any spiritual feelings, other than pointing out the superstitious nature of the girls. Pidorka, in an effort to help her Petro, resorts to the aid of quacks and even a witch. Only when he is dead, does she turn to prayer, or
so we are led to believe. The one desire of each girl is to marry, "I want to try on a married woman's cap, even if it has to be my stepmother's, and see how it suits me." Consequently they show consideration and affection to the men.

We are led to believe that, once married, they would remain loving wives and mothers as Oksana is seen after marriage - a 'beautiful woman'. Yet juxtaposed to all these beauties in each story is an older woman, a stepmother, a peasant or a witch whose every action negates the former's. Where Parashka is modest and shy, Khivraya is bold, not afraid of man or devil. Solokha is so avaricious that she would spoil her son's marriage plans to gratify her own wants. The wives have such a tight rein on their husbands, that they can make them turn away from their own daughters, or make them cringe in expectation of physical abuse.

Here Cherevik realized that he had said too much and instantly put his hands over his head, doubtless expecting that his wrathful spouse would seize his hair in her wifely claws.  

Panas' wife in "Christmas Eve" is an example of the complete disintegration of the wifely state; she never stays home or cleans it, hides food from her husband or steals what he might have, blacks his eyes and even attacks him with a poker. Panas' wife is old, and the husband-wife relationship ends up in one of avoiding each other as much as possible. The middle-aged women, although sharp-tongued and avaricious, are still attractive to men. Khivraya is
unfaithful to her husband with the priest's son, and Solokha has a whole crowd of admirers. Physical attraction is indicated in both cases, the women using their bodies to attract the men. The greed, vanity, promiscuity, superficial virtuousness, and hypocrisy of the peasant women are all revealed through their actions.

Badly as the peasant women behave, their actions are within the normal scope of human behaviour. The witches on the other hand are able to transgress the norm. A simple feat is to fly through the air. Their ability to transform from one state of being to another causes men a great deal of confusion. Changing to a dog or a cat or a pig are generally comic actions, while the ability to change appearances from an old woman to a beautiful girl can create perilous situations. "The witches were as many as the snowflakes that fall sometimes at Christmas. They were all dressed up and painted like fine ladies at the fair." The boundary between the natural and supernatural is not constant as the witches can penetrate it, and man is left a constant prey. It is precisely on man's weaknesses that the witches act. They do not have the power to force men into actions they are opposed to, but they can trick them. The witch cannot make Petro kill the boy, but she does place the temptation before his eyes, to which he succumbs. All of the Cossack girl-witch's actions do not break down Khoma's circle, yet she does call on a higher power before which Khoma weakens. Although the witch cannot make a man kill against
his will, she can make him perform unnatural acts:

The philosopher tried to push her back with his hands, but to his surprise found that his arms would not rise, his legs would not move, and he perceived with horror that even his voice would not obey him; words hovered on his lips without a sound. He heard nothing but the beating of his heart. He saw the old woman approaching him. She folded his arms, bent his head down, leapt with the swiftness of a cat upon his back, and struck him with a broom on the side; and he, prancing like a horse, carried her on his shoulders.29

The witch in a similar manner bewitches Mikola to allow her to ride on his back. There is a definite sexual connotation in both these cases. Solokha also sexually attracts the men, while the drowned maiden's father marries a witch. The sexual act seems to be one act that man can be easily tempted to, but which can lead him to misfortune. To conclude, the witches have no scruples, they will cheat, trick or coerce men, and themselves will stop at no act, even killing and drinking the blood of innocent children. However, Gogol does leave the road to redemption open to them.

Solokha attends church and the Cossack girl-witch asks her father to fetch the seminarist, Khoma; "Let him pray three nights for my soul. He knows ... "30 Whether this is a sincere plea for help, or a further trick is left to the reader to interpret.

As an antidote to the grotesque actions of the peasant women and witches, and the flighty young girls, Gogol presents Katerina
in the story, "A Terrible Revenge". She would be an ideal successor to the young girls, yet we see her in a separate story, in a different milieu and time. Katerina is an ideal wife. Besides having beauty, she is gentle, loving, obedient and respectful to her husband. Not only is she gentle with her child, but she is concerned for his future and speaks up for his rights. Katerina is the only woman character whose soul is described. It is not a depiction of the spiritual qualities of the soul, but a description of its physical manifestation:

But what was she made of? Of air, surely? Why did she stand without touching the floor, not leaning on anything ... and how she moved her transparent head; a soft light shone in her pale blue eyes; her hair curled and fell over her shoulders like a pale gray mist ...

Yet the strength of character of the soul and the body are united in that they can oppose the father's incestuous demands. Katerina's only weakness is that she is too gentle. She shows compassion to her father, yet in the fight against evil her interfering acts become treacheries to her own family. Katerina endures the death of her husband, but with the murder of her child she goes mad. Her speech becomes incoherent, her "insane eyes are rolling", yet she is still charming and Gogol retains the poetic simile:

Her black tresses floated loose about her white neck. Like a bird she flew round without resting, weaving her hands and nodding her head, and it seemed as though she must either fall helpless to the ground or soar away to the next world.
She resists her father's incestuous intentions till the very end, and dies in an attempt to kill the evil in him. Constancy and purity of soul are revealed in her speech:

... It is true that by your foul spells you have power to call up and torture her soul; but only God can make her do what He wills. No, never shall Katerina, so long as I am living in her body, bring herself to so ungodly a deed ... Even if you were not my father, you would never make me false to my faithful and beloved husband. Even if my husband were not true and dear to me, I would not betray him, for God loves not souls that are faithless and false to their vows.33

Regardless of age, the men are all drawn by the magnetism exuded by women. Both old and young men are captured by the physical beauty of the young girls. The men are quick to fall in love. Yet love does not bring instantaneous peace and happiness, rather it begins a string of consequences which he has to follow. Gritsko in "The Fair at Sorochintsi" and Levko in "The Lost Letter" do not suffer unnecessarily as they are quick to act upon and solve the entanglements set before them. In "St. John's Eve" Petro's infatuation makes him act impetuously, disregarding caution, which results in his expulsion from Korzh's house. Not being able to have his love, he sees death as the only future for him. Vakula in "Christmas Eve" similarly thinks death is better than suffering the pangs of love. Gogol is more explicit in describing the effect of love on Vakula. The strong blacksmith is made a weakling by his
love. Oksana rejects and taunts him and yet he can't forget her:

'I laugh at myself! I can't understand what's become of my senses! ... I must end this, really. It's time I gave up making a fool of myself!' But at the very time when the blacksmith was making up his mind to be firm, some evil spirit set floating before him the laughing image of Oksana as she said mockingly, 'Get me the Tsarina's slippers, blacksmith, and I will marry you!' Everything within him was stirred, and he could think of nothing but Oksana.

In action and words Vakula is unaware of things and sounds around him: "This foolish love has turned me quite silly." In spite of their intention to kill themselves, both Petro and Vakula turn to drink and to the devil for assistance.

Khoma in "Viy" reacts rather strangely to the sex act. During the act, Khoma experiences "an exhausting, unpleasant, and at the same time, voluptuous sensation assailing his heart." As the act proceeds, he is aware of a "fiendishly voluptuous feeling, he felt a stabbing, exhaustingly terrible delight." On completion, he "trembled like a leaf on a tree; he was overcome by pity and a strange emotion and timidity, feelings he could not himself explain." His reaction is to set off "running, full speed". Khoma seems to have found the act unpleasant, yet on other occasions with the baker's wife or the widow he is not averse to sex. It seems that a purely sexual encounter as occurs with the witch is unpleasant, while an affair based on more than the physical act are enjoyed by Khoma. Mikita also falls prey to the witch's charms, particularly her "plump bare leg" which sends him
crazily galloping. The result of his love and sex act is that he

withered up like a chip of wood; and one
day when they went into the stable,
instead of him they found a heap of ashes
lying there and an empty pail; he had
burnt up of himself.39

Other men do not 'burn up' but all seem to suffer in one way or
another. The young men suffer the pangs of love, while the older
men suffer the pangs of abuse from their spouses or women friends.
Regardless of age, the men still lust for women, consequently they
are 'led by the nose' or easily fooled by the women. Each of
Solokha's suitors thinks he is the only one availing himself of her
charms. Generally as the men age, their opinion of women
deteriorates. Grandad in "The Lost Letter" on leaving to do an
important errand "kissed his wife and his two sucking-pigs.40 An
old Cossack expresses the general attitude of the men: "When a
woman's old, she's a witch."41 Where the women physically abuse the
men, the men retaliate by rude, disrespectful speech which creates
a humorous effect: "... He just plastered your ugly face with
dung, that's all," is Cherevik's retort in the family argument. He
follows the remark with the lament: "... Merciful God, why didst
Thou send such a plague on us poor sinners? With so many nasty
things in the world, Thou must needs go and create women!"42

In spite of all the remarks about the old women, the men still
are attracted to the young girls, seeing them as different entities
having no affinity to the old hags. Only the reader can see that a
transition from one state to the next is inevitable. We assume that
the narrator is also aware of the possibility. Yet this knowledge is never stated outright. The narrator will juxtapose characters such as Parashka and Khivraja in a story. Parashka before marriage tries on her step-mother's cap, an act linking her future state to the step-mother. Oksana's beauty is described in a hyperbole, in a gentle mocking tone. In the same story, the narrator uses a similar gentle mocking tone to describe Pana's' wife, a shrew. The link between old women and witches is perpetuated by the narrator, usually through the speech of the old men, or by the narrator's indifferent use of the terms 'woman' and 'witch'.

A peculiar interjection by the author is found in "A Terrible Revenge". Among the dangers in the forest are:

Maidens who have lost their souls /and/ rise up one after the other from the depths of the Dnieper; their green tresses stream over their shoulders, the water drips sonorously to the ground from their long hair; and a maiden shines through the water as through a veil of crystal; her lips smile mysteriously, her cheeks glow, her eyes bewitch the soul, as though she might burn with love, as though she might kiss one to death. Flee, Christian! Her lips are ice, her bed - cold water; she will tickle you to death and drag you into the river.\(^{43}\)

The maidens are unrelated to the story, only the inexplicable power that they have links them to the women characters.

The plot in each of the stories of the Lyrical stage is linked to women. The men smitten by love are forced into service for women. All have to contend with the evil power to retain their
being. Gritsko uses his wits in dealing with the devil and is no worse for his contact. Levko is able to detect the evil power to identify the witch and is rewarded. The old grandfather in dealing with the witches makes the sign of the cross to win at cards. Vakula also subjugates the devil by making the sign of the cross. Khoma is able to ward off the evil powers by prayer and the sign of the cross, yet he is not strong enough to resist his own devil, the curiosity which leads him to his doom. Petro is the only one who makes no effort at Christian redemption; he does try to kill the evil power, but perishes himself and the only thing left is "a heap of ashes from which smoke was still rising." Danilo, like the rest of the men, is caught up in a series of circumstances which leads to his death. He loves his wife and stays with her to the end, but had he known that his love would have linked him with anti-Christ, he would "not have married."
CHAPTER III

Part II

THE SUBJECTIVE MODE

The heroines from the stories "Taras Bulba" and "Nevsky Prospect" will be examined under the heading of Subjective Examination. The two stories are unrelated in reference to genre, tone or content. However the substance of both stories is the detailed examination of a protagonist's infatuation, capture and complete dedication of life to a woman. The subjective examination does not consist of a deeper probe into the psyche of women, rather, it is a personal groping of the author in examining the compulsions of a man in love. The two male characters are attracted by different attributes, one is attracted by the sensuousness of the girl's beauty, while the latter is attracted by the aesthetic quality of the girl's beauty.

To emphasize the features that the men find attractive, Gogol's method of characterising the women is somewhat changed. Concrete physical features are less emphasized, rather the girls are described in abstract terms. For the most part we see them as the men see them, through their eyes and emotions. The few glimpses that are direct descriptions of the girls are placed as contrasts to the men's ideal with the result that they do not aid the reader in understanding the women characters.

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The milieu of the Polish girl and the prostitute are inessential in the development of character analysis, yet they are important in the plots of the story. The settings of the girls are contrasted to those of the males; the Polish girl is of a different nationality and faith from Andrey; while the prostitute is in a different moral environment from Piskarev. The girls in their respective settings act according to their station; they do not try to change their environment in physical acts (e.g. the prostitute does not try to hang up curtains in the drab flat). Nor do they try to change the people around them morally; the Polish girl does not beg Andrey to leave his Cossack way of life, instead she laments at destiny's placing her in such a situation. The girls simply exist and adapt themselves to their surroundings. As the girls are generally seen through the eyes of the males, the emphasis on clothes is lessened. Andrey only sees the "costly ear-ring", "silk handkerchief", and "transparent muslin chemisette with ruffles embroidered in gold." The articles simply add to the description of her station in life. The prostitute is seen in various outfits, yet each is an extension of her social position at the time. As a prostitute, she wears an 80-ruble brightly coloured cloak; as seen in the first dream, a society belle, she wears creations made in Paris, "woven of air"; and in the dream as a country maiden her dress is completely described in abstract terms; "... her dress was the simplicity in which the poet's thought is clothed."
An important aspect of describing the two women is that Gogol does not give them names. The result of this omission is that, first, it allies them to the other unnamed women characters—the unclean spirits, and secondly, it makes them less human, less tangible. To alienate them further, Gogol changes his method of presentation. The women are shown only as seen through the one man's vision. The girls are physically the same type of beauties as encountered during the lyrical stage, but different aspects of their beauty are stressed. The Polish girl has the black eyes and white skin of previous beauties, but Andrey sees much more than that:

... this was not she, not the lady he had known before; nothing in her was the same, but now she was twice as beautiful and marvellous as before; then there had been something unfinished, incomplete in her, now she was the perfect picture to which the artist has given the finishing touch. That had been a charming, frivolous girl; this was a lovely woman in all the perfection of her beauty. Every depth of feeling was expressed in her lifted eyes, not traces, not hints of feeling, but its fullest intensity. The tears, not yet dry upon them, veiled them with a brilliant mist which pierced the heart; her bosom, neck and shoulders had the lovely lines of perfectly developed beauty; her hair, which had floated before in light curls about her face, was now a thick luxuriant mass, part of which was done up and part hung loose over the full length of her arm, and in delicate, long, beautifully curling tresses fell over her bosom.3

"Gleaming bosom", "bare arm", "white hand" are parts of the body mentioned instead of the whole. Andrey's physical reactions to
the touch of her hand - "the touch of it sent thrills of fire racing through his veins"4 only emphasizes the sensuousness and voluptuousness that he perceives in her beauty. The prostitute is just as beautiful and just as sensuous as the Polish girl;

Good God, what divine features! The dazzling whiteness of the exquisite brow was crowned by hair lovely as an agate. They curled, those marvellous tresses, and some of them strayed below the hat and caressed the cheek, flushed by the chill of evening with a delicate fresh colour. A swarm of exquisite visions hovered about her lips. All the memories of childhood, all the visions that rise from dreaming and quiet inspiration in the lamplight - all seemed to be blended, mingled, and reflected on her delightful lips.5

Piskarev, although attracted by her beauty, is blind to its sensuous qualities and instead dwells on its aesthetic qualities. Words used in reference to her reveal this attitude: "divine being", "flower from heaven", "ona" or "mysterious divinity".

Gogol retains the use of positive value similes in the description of the girls. The similes are less in number than are found during the Lyrical stage. They also tend to change in character, references are now stylistically more elevated: "Bianca of Perugino", "petrified statue" or "divinity". White colour is used throughout the descriptions. We constantly read "skin, white as snow", "snow-white arms" or "the whiteness of face or brow". Other colours referred to are: black (of hair and eyes), flushed cheeks and a lilac dress. The prostitute's cloak is a contrast to the rest, being "pyostryy" (motley). However, the whiteness is not
a neutral colour here, as its qualifying adjectives are "dazzling white" or "gleaming whiteness", expressing intensity. The qualifying adjectives in reference to the girls are all strong: "gleaming bosom", "powerful limbs", "dazzling beauty", "proud body", "dazzling whiteness of exquisite brow", "ravishing eyes" etc. As mentioned previously, they are mostly abstract in nature. A few connotative words are also scattered; "piercingly bright eyes", "enchanting brow" or "bewitching" beauty. Both girls also have lashes "long as arrows". The culminative effect is that the girls are as beautiful as the young girls of the Lyrical stage, yet their beauty is more abstract and there is a connotation of power in it.

The girls appear much more human in their actions than in their physical description. However, the action is described externally; the motivating forces are not delved into. The Polish girl's behaviour is viewed through its various developing stages. As a girl she can laugh, tease and amuse herself at someone's expense. Later, as a woman, she is shown as capable of suffering, heroism and passion. Her actions are true to nature as she reacts to the situation at hand, but nowhere does Gogol try to give us a glimpse of the inner world of her being. The prostitute's actions, although not as noble as the former's, are nevertheless true to the character of a woman of her position. She is at all times friendly to Piskarev in spite of his strange behaviour. Relying on her beauty, she entices the men with a glance. Her wonder and scorn at Piskarev's
offer of redemption are not surprising if we remember she is only
17 and only beginning in her trade. Age and bitter experience
might teach her, but at the present her actions simply reveal her
lack of education and low moral standards. Only in Piskarev's
dreams are her actions not true to nature. Piskarev sees her as a
bored, languid society-belle; a modest repentant country mistress;
or as a hard-working faithful artist's wife. In this case, Piskarev
is struggling with the moral implications of the girl's actions,
and is trying to justify her actions. We must note here that the
author only sketches the exterior actions which appear realistic,
while a character of the story tries to bring in moral justification.
The result of Piskarev's conjectures is that his envisaged damsel
can only exist in a dream.

The language used by the girls further delineates their social
positions. The Polish girl's speech is long, flowered, at times
indirect - features characteristic of the epic. The prostitute's,
on the other hand, are short, direct and vulgar. The length of the
former's speeches connotes emotional and spiritual depth of
character. She expresses her suffering. The prostitute, by her
terse replies, shows a lack of any emotional depth.

The girls' attitudes to the men show the same diversity. Both
girls know that they have the power to attract and tease men, but
here the similarity ends. The Polish girl sees love for a male as
an integral part of her life, and she easily allows herself to be
taken care of by the male. The prostitute will use men, but she spurns Piskarev's offer of protection. She retains her individuality. Her actions substantiate Piskarev's view of prostitutes:

... Where woman, the beauty of the world, the crown of creation, is transformed into a strange, equivocal creature, where she loses with her purity of heart all that is womanly, revoltingly adapts the swagger and impudence of men, and ceases to be the delicate, the lovely creature so different from us.  

As mentioned previously, both these stories subjectively delve into the man's reaction to the woman. As this is not an examination of men characters, we shall not delve into the character development of men, but will concentrate on the reaction of the men to the women. Both men are overcome by the beauty of the women. They are "overwhelmed", "disconcerted" and show timidity and reverence to the beauty. The beauty captures "his eyes, his thoughts, and his feelings" (i.e. of Piskarev). Both men feel that they are below the women, unworthy of their attention. They are inspired by valour.

He was conscious of no earthy thought; he was not aflame with earthy passion. No, at the moment he was pure and chaste as a virginal youth burning with the vague spiritual craving for love. And what would have awakened base thoughts in a dissolute man, in him made them still holier. This confidence, shown him by a weak and lovely creature, laid upon him the sacred duty of chivalrous austerity, the sacred duty to carry out all her commands. All that he desired was that those commands should be as difficult, as hard to carry out as possible, so that more effort be required to overcome all obstacles ... he felt in himself enough strength and resolution for anything.
It is interesting to note, that in both cases there is a reference to the virginity of a man's feelings. In their deeds, they perform the act of valour; Andrey goes over to the Poles and Piskarev will marry a prostitute. Even death has no fear for the men.

**Love fulfills a man's soul. Andrey renounces everything;**

And what are father, comrades, and country to me? ... If that is it, then let me tell you I have no one! No one, no one! ... Who says that my country is the Ukraine? Who gave it to me for my country? Our country is what our soul seeks, what is most precious of all things to it. My country is you! Here is my country! And I shall bear it in my heart, I shall bear it in my heart to the day of my death, and we shall see, let any Cossack tear it from me! And I will give you everything in the world, renounce all, and perish for this country!9

At the same time as love fulfills a man's soul, it destroys a part of him, namely his male instincts of survival. Andrey is just as brave in combat, yet his thoughts are on the "gift tied around his arm"10 and his former instincts are dimmed. He is easily led to ambush and killed. Andrey stands before his father as a "schoolboy". He dies:

*Like a stalk of wheat cut by a sickle, like a young lamb with the deadly steel at its heart* ...11

Piskarev loses touch with reality, as Andrey loses his grip on the world. A look from the prostitute makes Piskarev forget everything.

The dreams, where he is with her, become more real to him than reality:

At last, dreaming became his life and from that time his life was strangely turned upside down; he might be said to sleep when he was awake and to come to life when he
was asleep. Anyone seeing him sitting dumbly before his empty table or walking along the street would certainly have taken him for a lunatic or a man deranged by drink; his eyes had a perfectly vacant look, his natural absent-mindedness increased and drove every sign of feeling and emotion out of his face.12

He turns to opium to enable him to dream more, but at the same time he is ruining his life:

The opium inflamed his thoughts more than ever, and if there ever was a man passionately, terribly, and ruinously in love to the utmost pitch of madness, he was that luckless man.13

Finally, unable to reconcile the dream and the real world, he commits suicide. This act of suicide not only brings an end to the real world but it damns his soul for the next world.

The narrator of the stories seems to be objective. His tone is dispassionate in telling us of Piskarev's death:

So perished the victim of a frantic passion. Poor Piskarev, the gentle, timid, modest, childishly simple-hearted artist whose spark of talent might with time have glowed into the full bright flame of genius.14

However, the intention of the passage is that Piskarev would have been better off had he not succumbed to the passion of his love. In much the same way, the narrator laments Andrey's commitment to his love:

And ruined is the Cossack! He is lost for all the chivalry of the Cossacks! He will see the camp no more; nor his father's farms, nor the Church of God. The Ukraine will see no more of the bravest of the sons who undertook to defend her. Old Taras will tear the gray hair from his head and curse the day and hour when he begot such a son to shame him.15

Interestingly enough, the author does not express the same sentiment for the women. He expresses pity for the situation, but not for the individual woman.
Nothing, indeed, moves us to such pity as the sight of a beauty touched by the putrid breath of vice. Ugliness may go with it, but beauty, tender beauty ... In our thoughts it blends with nothing but purity and innocence.  

She should have been the "priceless pearl" of a devoted husband, a "star" of some family circle or a "divinity" of a crowded ballroom, but instead she is a prostitute:  

... but alas! by some terrible machination of the fiendish spirit, eager to destroy the harmony of life, she had been flung with satanic laughter into this horrible swamp.  

The women characters play an important part in the stories, yet have little action on the world around them. Andrey falls in love with the girl, he is killed and nothing is mentioned of the fate of the girl. The Cossacks keep on fighting the Poles in the same way, as though the Polish girl and Andrey had not existed. In much the same way, Piskarev's death and the prostitute's life have little effect on the life of Petersburg.  

No-one wept for him; no one was seen beside his dead body except the police inspector and the indifferent face of the town doctor. His coffin was taken to Okhta quickly, without even religious rites; only a soldier who followed it wept, and that only because he had had a glass too many of vodka. Even Lieutenant Pirogov did not come ... but my annoyance is mingled with sadness when I see a cart dragging the red uncovered coffin of some poor fellow and only some old beggar woman who has met it at the crossways follows it weeping because she has nothing else to do.  

The aloneness of man is evident. Love briefly fulfills Andrey's life, but because of it he has an early death. Piskarev cannot control his passions and is also a victim. Once again, as in the lyrical stories, the men because of women have to contend with an unknown power. The unknown power here, is something inherent in their character which they try to fulfill, but which destroys them as men.
Following Gogol's attempt at understanding man's infatuation with women, he turned to a more practical look at his women characters. He still retains the ideal image of a woman which is briefly encountered, but for the most part he concentrates on presenting the women as they must have appeared in the Russian society of his time. Gogol saw many faults in their upbringing, education, appearance and decorum. Gentle humour, satire and the use of grotesque caricatures are all employed in the exposition of these foibles.

It must be noted that women take on a much less significant role in the development of the stories. Consequently the milieu, name, physical appearance and dress of the women characters are of minor importance. The milieu is only important in that it establishes the location to be exposed. The aristocratic lady from "The Portrait", Schiller's wife in "Nevsky Prospect" or Agafia Tikhonovna in "Marriage" by... their actions reveal the life pattern of the city; Anna Andreyevna and her daughter in "The Inspector General" and the ladies of Dead Souls show the boorishness of provincial life; while Pulheria Ivanovna in "Old-world Landowners", Vasilisa Kashporovna in "Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and his Aunt" and
Nastasya Petrovna Korobochka in *Dead Souls* display the vegetation life of the country. The milieu of the last group of these ladies, the country mistresses is more described. The ladies are all old, and to emphasize the oppressiveness of their years, all their belongings are mentioned as part of them:

Chichikov cast a couple of glances around him: ... the room was hung with rather old stripped wallpaper; pictures of some kind of birds; between the windows were small old-fashioned looking-glasses in dark frames in the shape of curled leaves; behind each looking-glass was stuffed either a letter or an old pack of cards or a stocking; there was a clock on the wall with flowers painted on its face - Chichikov was too tired to notice anything else.¹

Pulheria Ivanovna is also surrounded by chests, boxes, sacks of flowers, vegetables, melon seeds, etc. However, her bedroom displays another aspect - hotness and stuffiness:

The room in which Afanasy Ivanovich and Pulheria Ivanovna slept was so hot that not many people could have stayed in it for several hours: but Afanasy Ivanovich in order to be even hotter used to sleep on the platform of the stove, though the intense heat made him get up several times in the night and walk about the room.²

Gogol continued to use names as a tool of expressing character.

The sound of Pulheria Ivanovna Tolstogubina suggests 'pukh' - feather, and 'tolsto - gub' - fat lips, and connotes someone pleasantly fat and of peasant social class, all characteristic of Pulheria Ivanovna. In other instances he uses contrasting names for humour, e.g. Vasilisa Kashparovna. Vasilisa is a name
associated with fairy tale princesses, while Kashparovna suggests 'kasha' - porridge. Gogol also uses simple women's names such as Anna Andreyevna, Sophia or Agafia Tikhonovna. However in Agafia Tikhonovna's surname Gogol again reverts to social casting by use of name - Kuperdiagina - from 'kupets' - merchant. Where women are not important to the development of the story, they are simply referred to as 'the locksmith's wife', 'Luka Lukich's wife' or 'the aristocratic lady'.

Gogol in his later works became a great master of the use of synecdoche for his male and female characters. The people on "Nevsky Prospect" are shown in this manner:

Thousands of varieties of hats, dresses, and kerchiefs, flimsy and bright-coloured, for which their owners feel sometimes an adoration that lasts two whole days, dazzle everyone on Nevsky Prospect. A whole sea of butterflies seem to have flown up from their flower stalks and to be floating in a glittering cloud above the beetles of the male sex. Here you meet waists a slim delicacy beyond dreams of elegance, no thicker than the neck of a bottle, and respectfully step aside for fear of a careless nudge with a discourteous elbow; your heart beats with apprehension lest an incautious breath snaps in two the exquisite products of art and nature. And the ladies' sleeves that you meet on Nevsky Prospect. Ah how exquisite! They are like two balloons and the lady might suddenly float up into the air, were she not held down by the gentleman accompanying her; for it would be as easy and agreeable for a lady to be lifted into the air as for a glass of champagne to be lifted to the lips.³

The tone is one of gentle satire, yet the metaphors and similes for the ladies remain of positive value. Sophia, in "Diary of a
"Madman", although shown from Poprishkin's view of her, retains the gleaming eyes and eyebrows, the sugary lips, the white skin and dress of 'ethereal gossamer' of former beauties. Contrasted to this ideal vision of her by Poprishkin, is the view of her by her dog. The dog does not contradict the beauty of the girl, but reveals the hidden aspects, the anger at getting dressed, the paleness and exhaustion caused by balls and not eating. In the "Portrait" we see two views of the 18-year-old daughter of the aristocratic lady. The author first presents to us the actuality and then tells us how the artist sees the same:

If he had been an authority on human nature he might at once have seen in it the first traces of a childish passion for balls, the dawning of unhappiness and misery during the long waiting periods before and after dinner, of a desire to promenade new clothes, the heavy traces of uninspired application to various arts which her mother insisted upon so that her soul and her sensitivity could be uplifted.

But the only thing the artist saw was this tender face, so alluring a subject for his brush; a body of porcelain transparency, a charming barely visible languor, a delicate white neck and an aristocratically slender figure.

The mode of description does not change but Gogol imparts an additional dimension of social comment. With the importance of social criticism ascending, the physical description diminishes in importance. Synecdoche or grotesque caricatures are a quicker method of presenting the author's message.
Gogol retains the use of colour and images in his descriptions. The ideal ladies as Sophia in "Diary of a Madman" or Madame Chertokutkskaia in "The Coach" or the slim lady from "The Nose" that Kovalev encounters in church are all seen in 'white' clothes. Again they are compared to 'swans', 'sunshine', 'springflower' etc. Next to the ideal ladies, are the young girls. Both the city and the provincial maidens are barely mentioned. This is all we hear of the urban girls:

The widows of government clerks, in receipt of a pension, are the most substantial inhabitants of the quarter. They behave with great propriety, keep their rooms fairly clean, and talk to their female neighbours and friends of the high price of beef and cabbage. They not infrequently have a young daughter, a silent creature who has nothing to say for herself, though sometimes rather nice-looking; they have also a disgusting little dog and an old-fashioned clock with a dismally ticking pendulum.5

The rural girl Mashenka from "Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and his Aunt" has 'little freckles' all over her face, while Maria Antonovna (also Mashenka) from "The Inspector General" chooses a rainbow coloured dress over a blue one. This is the extent of their appearance that we are given. Their mothers are somewhat more colourful. Anna Andreyevna from "The Inspector General" is seen in four different outfits. She adamantly chooses a primrose dress to show off her dark loveliness, in spite of the daughter's suggestion that she is more like the Queen of Hearts. Fekla in "Marriage" describes Agafia Tikhonovna as "like sugar candy, pink
and white like milk and roses." However, Kochkarev, peeking into her room can't distinguish what he sees: "...And there's no making out what that white thing is - a woman or a pillow."7

As the women get older, Gogol uses an increasing number of comic images. Mashenka's mother in "Ivan Fëdorovich Shponka and his Aunt" is shown as: "At the same time a short old lady, a regular coffee-pot in a cap ..."8, while her neighbour, Vasilisa Kashparovna, is seen in the following terms:

... She was of almost gigantic stature and her corpulence and strength were fully in proportion. It seemed as though nature had made an unpardonable mistake in condemning her to wear a dark brown gown with little flounces on week-days and a red cashmere shawl on Easter Sunday and on her name-day though a dragoon's moustaches and top-boots would have suited her better than anything.9

The old women wear dark clothes, brown, gray or non-descript with only spatters of colour for special occasions. To show drabness of life, Gogol often refers to old women as beggars or dregs of society:

Old women who say their prayers, old women who get drunk, old women who both get drunk and say their prayers; old women who live from hand to mouth by means that pass all understanding, who like ants drag old rags and linen from Kalinkin Bridge to the flea market, to sell them for fifteen kopeks - in fact all the pitiful and luckless dregs of humanity whose lot not even a benevolent economist could improve.10

Whereas the physical descriptions of the women characters diminish in importance, their actions become the centre of
interest. Women are placed in situations where they demonstrate their social graces and express their ideas. However, Gogol saw little that he admired, consequently the situations become satirical, with the women revealing the lack of social graces and the lack of any ideas of their own. Interlaced with this exposition are the author's constant comments blankly pointing out their faults.

The aristocratic lady in "The Portrait" possesses many traits that Gogol admired. She is well educated with a knowledge of art and the world. She has good taste and can recognize and admire a good painting. She also has the ability to charm Chertkov, to make him feel important as a human being:

The aristocratic lady had totally charmed him. Before this time he had conceived of such people as being completely unapproachable, as people who were born only to ride in wondrous carriages with footmen dressed in livery and stylish coachmen, and to be uninterested in the poor man with the cheap coat, trudging along on foot, and now, suddenly, one of these beings had been in his room, he was painting her portrait, he had received an invitation to dine in an aristocratic house.11

By wanting Chertkov to paint Lise very simply, we are led to understand that she realizes the shams of her world and is searching for truth. However the narrator immediately inserts his own observation:

Alas it could be clearly seen from the faces of the mother and daughter that they had so exerted themselves dancing at balls that they were now like wax figures.12
We are further disillusioned in the aristocratic lady's character when we observe her interference in the artistic process. The aristocratic lady has every possibility of being a genuine, sincere person, yet her actions reveal that she has only a superficial acquired knowledge. Basically she is egotistical, self-centred and a limited woman. The rest of the society women are just as ignorant of the finer aspirations of mankind, instead they are only conscious of themselves, or rather of how they appear to others:

The ladies insisted that mind and character should be the chief qualities represented in their portraits, and that nothing else was important; that all angles should be rounded and that everything uneven should be smoothed away and, if possible, even completely removed. In a word, they demanded that their face should cause viewers to stare and should provoke admiration, indeed, if not cause them to fall in love with it immediately.13

To aid the artist in capturing their essence, they assume a number of grotesque poses. Besides love for themselves, the ladies of Petersburg love shopping, going to balls and gossiping. Their range of conversation is very limited as Gogol describes satirically in "Nevsky Prospect":

A couple of pale daughters, as colourless as Petersburg, some of them already gone to seed, the tea table, the piano, the impromptu dance, are all inseparable from the gay epaulet which gleams in the lamplight between the virtuous young lady and the black coat of her brother or of some old friend of the family. It is extremely difficult to arouse and divert these phlegmatic misses. To do so requires a great
deal of skill, or rather perhaps the absence of all skill. One has to say what is not too clever or too amusing and to talk of the trivialities that women love ... Exclamations, smothered in laughter, of "Oh, do stop! Aren't you ashamed to be so absurd!" are often their highest reward.14

In "The Diary of a Madman" Sophia's range of topics are limited to who did what at the ball; what they wore; and ridicule of other peoples' vanities.

The ladies of Petersburg are seen as occupied with frivolities, while the rest of the city is immersed in human misery and drudgery. We have already seen the actions of the prostitute, who chooses easy money over work. The barber's wife in "The Nose" displays avarice and wrathfulness in her dealings with her husband. The more common the woman is seen, the more her actions appear grotesque.

Agafia Tikhonovna, not a lady, nor a shrew, exposes the social aspirations of women of the middle class in the play "Marriage". Although she belongs to the merchant class, she will marry only a 'gentleman' no matter what he looks like. She is not motivated by any feelings of love, but rather by the convention of marriage and a desire to improve her social standing. She has the desire to be married, but has no knowledge of how to get a man. Even when the men are brought to her, she is incapable of making up her mind as to which one she should choose. She is easily persuaded to choose Podkolesyn. Her first 'love chat' with Podkolesyn
reveals to us her narrow-mindedness and the dullness of her existence. They jump from one subject to another with long pauses in between. This is Gogol’s favourite device for showing the intellectual limitations that the characters possess, especially the women, "to give comprehensible expression to their incipient ideas or their feelings ... The power of speech is given to Agafia Tikhonovna and other heroines only to demonstrate their complete lack of ideas." Agafia’s statement after their dull talk, "What an excellent man! Only now I’ve come to know him thoroughly", further reveals her utter incapability of realizing the difference between their meaningless conversation and the possible higher instincts of mankind.

The provincial women are shown as poorly educated yet pretentious characters who are ignorant of the necessity to cultivate the higher elements of their nature. Gogol describes women’s education in *Dead Souls*:

> And, as we all know, a good education is to be obtained in young ladies' boarding schools, and, as we all know, in young ladies' boarding schools three principal subjects constitute the foundation of all human virtues; the French language, indispensable for the happiness of family life, the pianoforte to provide agreeable moments for husbands, and, finally, domestic science proper, such as the knitting of purses and other surprises.

Thus it is that Mrs. Manilov is very amiable, pronounces her r's a little in the Parisian fashion, plans surprises and exchanges prolonged kisses with her husband. However, the narrator
immediately points out that she is a poor housekeeper, incapable of keeping the serfs in check or having decent food prepared.

The other provincial lady, Anna Andreyevna from "The Inspector General" is a more lively person. However, her liveliness is not a virtue; it consists of being too talkative, too curious, too excitable and too much of a bossy person. She shows no maternal love for her daughter and in fact considers her more of a rival. Mother and daughter argue over petty matters with the mother putting down the daughter. Their day is filled with changing clothes, playing cards and gossiping. Anna Andreyevna is a great coquette yet she feels inferior to the Petersburg ladies. She admires 'society' and 'culture' above all. However she is ignorant of both as shown in her acceptance of Khlestakov as a man of society and her display of ignorance of literature. Her boorishness is displayed in her easy rejection of friends.

It must be noticed, that in spite of the character faults that the women display, they are still very feminine.

Mrs. Manilov is very loving to her husband. Chertokutsky's wife loves her husband and desires him physically:

The jolt made by her husband falling upon the bed awakened her. Stretching, lifting her eyelashes, and three times rapidly blinking her eyes, she opened them with a half-angry smile, but seeing that he absolutely declined on this occasion to show any interest in her, she turned over on the other side in vexation, and laying her fresh little cheek on her arm, soon afterward fell asleep.17
Anna Andreyevna, although she hen-pecks her husband, is still conscious of her attractiveness to men. The young girls, the daughters, do not possess this charisma. Gogol shows them more as buds which haven't bloomed.

The rural ladies differ from the provincial matrons. They have little aspiration for higher society, instead concentrating all their energies on the management of their estates. Shponka on meeting Grigory Grigorievich's mother observes:

... She was good-natured simplicity itself, though she looked as though she would like to ask Ivan Fedorovich: "How many cucumbers has your aunt pickled for the winter?"\(^1\)

Food, pickling, making vodka and rugs are the rural women's sole interest. However, they are not all satisfied with what they have and, like Korobochka, are always on the look out for means of increasing their estates. Their relationships with men are interesting. Vasilisa Kashporovna, herself a virgin, is adamant in her desire for Shponka to marry. Pulheria Ivanovna in "Old-World Landowners" smothers her husband with food. Instead of sex she offers him food. The relationship appears more as one of mother and child, than husband and wife. In Dead Souls Korobochka, a widow, is too cheap to feed Chichikov, yet is very anxious to rub his back or tickle his feet as she used to do to her husband. Though the actions are all grotesque, the feeling conveyed is that even the older women have sexual drives.

The men characters react in a number of ways. Like Piskarev in
"Nevsky Prospect", Poprishkin in "Diary of a Madman" is enamoured by the ideal beauty. Not being able to attain her, he goes mad. However Gogol does not illustrate here a personal struggle but shows the injustice of social categories. Poprishkin desires:

... to become a general myself, not in order to receive her hand and all the rest of it; no, I should like to be a general only to see how they would wriggle and display all their court manners and équivoques and then to say to them: "I spit on you both".  

By showing Poprishkin as gone mad, Gogol can put in his speech all the negative thoughts about women.

Oh woman is a treacherous creature! I have discovered now what women are. So far no one has found out with whom Woman is in love; I have been the first to discover it. Woman is in love with the devil. Yes, joking apart. Scientific men write nonsense, saying that she is this or that - she cares for nothing but the devil. ... and she will marry him, she will marry him.

Poprishkin's thoughts whittle to nonsense, yet he has expressed the loathing of women that is in him. Mad as he is, Poprishkin calls out for help from his mother.

Is it my mother sitting before the window? Mother, save your poor son! Drop a tear on his sick head! See how they torment him! Press your poor orphan to your bosom! There is nowhere in the world for him! He is persecuted! Mother, have pity on your sick child.

This is a poignant call, not only in reference to Poprishkin, but is a call of mankind, for help or deliverance. It is interesting that the call is addressed to mother, not God or father. By showing
Poprishkin as mad, Gogol can reveal the extremes of feeling of a man for a woman, namely: love, hate and need.

Though the rest of the men characters of the caricature stage reveal some aspects of the above mentioned feelings, yet for the most part they are used to illustrate social and moral attitudes of Gogol's contemporary life. Pirogov, Kovalev, Chartkov, and Khlestakov are self-satisfied, smug gentlemen who are always on the lookout for conquests of females. Pirogov in "Nevsky Prospect" is confident that no beauty can resist him, and to satisfy himself does not care what sacred bonds of marriage or fidelity he destroys. Chartkov in "The Portrait" illustrates the vanities of men to please women:

... he ... changed his costume several times a day, allowed his hair to be waved, concerned himself greatly with improving his manners.22

All these things are done to win the attention of the women. Khlestakov in "The Inspector General" does not even care which woman he conquers, the mother or the daughter, but he is wise enough to presume that the mother is an easier target. To other men, marriage is the target, as explored in the play "Marriage". However, marriage is not regarded as a sacred bond uniting two people who love each other. Rather, marriage is a means of satisfying the man's innate desires. Some like Baltazar Baltazarovich Zhevakin like to marry to satisfy their sensual desires, others like Ivan Pavlovich Yaichitsa marry for money and
property, while still others as Nikanor Ivanovich Anuchkin like a wife to be well educated and to speak French so that she can add to their social prestige. Chichikov in *Dead Souls* is concerned with his progeny.

Once married, the men are confronted with the women. For the most part, the woman is stronger in character and it is the men who have to learn to adjust themselves to the situation. Kochkarev in the play "Marriage" curses Fekla for finding him a wife, saying he could have "done well without her." However he is very eager to land his friend in a similar situation. The Mayor in "The Inspector General" expresses the futility of reasoning with a woman - "What's the use of talking to them!" His admonition of his wife for flirting is useless. In general, he simply follows his wife's wishes, causing as little confrontation as possible. The barber in "The Nose" in a similar way dares only ask his wife for either bread or coffee, knowing that if he asked for both he would bring on the wrath of Praskovia Osipovna. Schiller in "Nevsky Prospect" does not cower before his wife, but he does employ self discipline in his relationship.

His exactitude was such that he made it his rule to kiss his wife twice in twenty-four hours but no more, and that he might not exceed the number he never put more than one small teaspoonful of pepper in his soup.

Only when drunk does he relax his discipline. Afanasy Ivanovich in "Old-World Landowners" appears to be the master of his estate.
He even has the power to frighten Pulheria with tales of adventure. Yet on the death of Pulheria Ivanovna we are shown what a devastating effect his years of marriage and Pulheria Ivanovna's attention to him has produced. He can not manage the estate, can not dress himself or even feed himself. Any sexual desires that he had had were channelled into other areas, namely food, and with Pulheria's death even this ceased. Apathy, grief, dull vacant eyes are all that are left. Afanasy Ivanovich allowed his wife to treat and pamper him as a child. With the years, his manhood regressed with the result that on the death of Pulheria, he was no longer a man but a child, and could not readjust to a new way of life.

Gogol does not show us a happy marriage. Chertokutsky is about as happily married as any man, yet Gogol points out that he "lived like a gentleman, as the expression goes in the provinces." Therefore, it is not strange that Gogol shows us men who avoided marriage. Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and Ivan Kuzmich Podkolesyn are not afraid of women yet they are frightened by the state of marriage. Shponka likes Maria Grigorevna. Podkolesyn even shows passion, kissing and fondling Agafia's hand. However when faced with marriage they panic. Shponka is faced with the situation that he doesn't know what to do with a wife. He also has a fear of loss of individuality. His dreams reveal his fears: first he is caught; secondly he is physically outnumbered seven to one; thirdly he loses
identity by being emotionally subjugated; and finally he is thrust into society and its social consciousness. Shponka's dilemma is left unsolved while Podkolesyn takes action by jumping out the window. Prior to jumping he surveys his life; he finds that it has been very routine and that with marriage he will:

... taste bliss such as is only to be found in fairy tales, which there's no expressing, nor finding words to express.27

Yet the thought of reality, of being bound for life to one person, of not being able to get away, so frightens Podkolesyn that he forgets propriety and flees.

It has already been pointed out to what extent Gogol interjects his own opinions in the later stories. He is quick to point out the difference between what is and what the characters envisage. He will show beauty, but also will not hide its other aspects. We have already had the narrator's own reaction to seeing beauty and vice combined in the being of the prostitute. Whereas beauty and vice are incompatible to Gogol, beauty and stupidity are gently mocked at, yet accepted.

Stupidity, however, adds a special charm to a pretty wife. I have known several husbands, anyway, who were enraptured by the stupidity of their wives and saw in it evidence of child-like innocence. Beauty works perfect miracles. All spiritual defects in a beauty, far from exciting revulsion, become somehow wonderfully attractive; even vice adds an aura of charm to the beautiful; but when beauty disappears, a woman needs to be twenty times as intelligent as a man merely to inspire respect, to say nothing of love.28
Gogol is also quick at illustrating the difference between real beauty and vanity. We have already had examples of Gogol's use of synecdoche and of behaviour to illustrate the women characters' vanities. A different technique is used in Dead Souls. The narrator at first pleads shyness, then highly praises the ladies' appearance and decorum, and follows with examples of dress and actions which completely undermine his praises. He follows the same pattern in describing their morals and use of language. The result is that the ladies of N are shown as having little manners or compassion, no moral standards and are not able to express themselves in the Russian language. Gogol stresses the inability of ladies to reason logically; however, men are also shown as guilty of this. Having exposed all the sordid little actions of the ladies, Gogol concludes with:

If we were to look a little more deeply many other things would of course be discovered; but it is highly dangerous to look too deeply into the hearts of ladies.29

In "Nevsky Prospect" he expresses his own attitude to women as seen superficially on the streets:

... Everything is a cheat, everything is a dream, everything is other than it seems!
... You imagine those ladies ... but ladies are least of all to be trusted. Do not look into the shop windows; the trifles exhibited in them are delightful but they have an odour of money about them. But God save you from peeping under the ladies' hats! However attractively in the evening a fair lady's cloak may flutter in the distance, nothing would induce me to follow her and try to get a closer view.30
Gogol's later stories show the struggle of man's adjustment to the world. Man is striving for or looking for some niche of his own or some meaning. Women are the object of the search at times. Yet the capture of a woman does not bring the satisfaction that one had looked forward to. The women of the caricature stage are shown as shallow, vain beings that do not add to the joy of life. They are caught up in meaningless social rituals and petty passions. Once man gets tangled up with women, he cannot but be drawn into the same net of social and emotional upheavals that the women are in. Any creative pursuits or peace of mind that the man possessed are lost.
Gogol's first work, "Woman", published in 1831, and his last, Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends, published in 1847, will be grouped under the above heading. These two works are similar in that they both reveal Gogol's positive attitude to women; in fact, they extol woman. However, a definite progression is evident. "Woman" reveals Gogol's youthful enthusiasm and fascination with female beauty. Alcinoe is the epitome of triumphant beauty. The work is an attempt at immortalizing woman's natural beauty. From the first vision of the ideal woman, Gogol pursued the examination of many types of women characters as we have seen in the lyrical, subjective and caricature modes. Although woman's behaviour is severely criticized and ridiculed, Gogol's last work is also in praise of woman. Gogol sees woman's behaviour as being amendable. It is with this in mind that Gogol prescribes a course of action for women to follow. The mature author, Gogol, still admires woman's natural beauty. As a mature man, as a teacher and a prophet, Gogol asks the woman to draw on her natural beauty to give her strength and self-contentedness which will lead to maturity. A woman by becoming happy with herself, can make her domestic setting more pleasurable, and can even exert a positive influence on society.
These two works are brought together to illustrate Gogol's progression from the youth's dreams to his later maturity. Woman is seen as a natural force which, once shown how to control her behaviour, can be a great inspiration to man.
CHAPTER III

Part IV

THE IDEALIZED MODE

Basically "Woman" is a tri-perspective view of an object. Three men - a young man called Telekles, Plato and the narrator express their views of women. Telekles reveals man's emotional reaction to women, Plato tries to interpret these emotions, to give meaning and depth to them. The narrator presents the actuality, Alcinoe, as she appears. However, the narrator's description has little actual information. The use of abstract terms, allusions and metaphors is so strong that the narrator's presentation becomes only a further view of a woman.

Physically, Alcinoe is shown more completely than any of Gogol's other women characters. Her hair, eyes, brow, hand, foot and high chest are all mentioned. The passage describing her is one of Gogol's richest descriptive passages. The image presented is complete, yet the parts of the body singled out have erotic implications. Great detail is involved in describing the enticing foot:

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... well-proportioned, with scarlet ribbons intertwining around the calf, the leg, naked, with a blinding brilliance, having thrown off the possessive shoe, stepped forward and it seemed did not touch the contemptible earth ... ¹

Pushkin and other writers pursued foot fetishism which was the vogue during this time in Russian history. The narrator is even more enamoured with Alcinoe's bosom and whole being:

... the elevated, divine bosom palpitated with the sighs of alarm and half-covering two transparent clouds of breast, the dress quivered and cascaded in luxurious picturesque lines onto the platform. It seemed, a light transparent ether, the kind that those who live in heaven bathe in, along which races a pink and blue flame, flowing and over-flowing in uncounted rays, which do not even have a name on earth, in which quivers an aromatic sea of inexplicable music - it seemed, this ether assumed the appearance in the being and stood before them, having consecrated and idolized the beautiful form of man.²

In both quotations we should note Gogol's method of using words. Bindings ("ponozhiya"), breast ("persi") or brow ("chelo") are archaisms suggesting dignity and nobility. Alcinoe's foot does not seem to touch the ground, her chest is divine ("bozhenstvennyy"), while her whole being is as ether ("efir") which exists among the gods. Her hand is like marble ("mramor") with heavenly ambrosia ("nebesnaya ambroziya") flowing in the veins instead of blood. The method employed elevates Alcinoe into a divinity. She is even more beautiful than the Queen of Love ("Tsaritsa Lyubvi"). Some dehumanization occurs through elevating Alcinoe from a human
to a divinity. Alcinoe appears more as a statue than a real woman. However, Gogol makes discreet use of words of colour, sound and motion which impart a sensuousness to her which is far greater than any mortal possesses. Blue ("goluboy"), scarlet ("alyy") or pink ("rozovoe") are definite colours, while others are indefinite blinding brilliance ("oslepitel'nyy blesk"), transparent cloud ("prozragche oblako"), lily-white brow ("lileynoe chelo") or brilliant shoulders ("blistatel'nye plecha"). Words of sound and motion are combined to form poetic cascades: "ether ... flowing and overflowing in uncountable ways" ("efir ... razlivayas' i perelivayas' v bezchislennych luchakh") or "the dress quivered and cascaded in luxurious picturesque lines onto the floor" ("odezhda trepetala i padala roskoshnymi, zhivopisnymi lineyami na pomost'") or "the breast trembled with the sighs of alarm" ("grud' kolebalas' vstrevozhennymi vzudokhami"). Alcinoe, as presented by the narrator is a beautiful sensuous woman of high nobility whose beauty raises her to the level of gods above mortals.

Telekles, deceived by Alcinoe, sees women as poison, Zeus' curse on man. Zeus became envious of man's simple happiness and rather than see man eternally happy he created woman. However, it is not the woman's but man's insidious demands of the heart that cause man to suffer. Telekles does not see this, but Plato points this out to him:
I know you want to speak of Alcinoe's betrayal. Your eyes were themselves witnesses ... but did they witness your own passionate movements, occurring at that time in the depths of your soul? Have you observed yourself first?

Telekles is totally smitten by love. He is not a happy man, but a man in whom passion rages to a devastating point:

... when in my veins seethes not blood, but a fierce flame, when all my feelings, all thoughts are transformed into sounds; when these sounds burn and the soul resounds with the one love, when my words are a storm, my breath - fire ...

He is unable to control his emotions and asks Plato to show him who has been able to control these emotions.

Plato dismisses the pain felt by Telekles at the moment, instead, he reminds him of what he has gained by knowing Alcinoe.

What were you formerly and what have you become now, since the time that you have read eternity in Alcinoe's divine features; how many new secrets, how many new revelations has your eternal soul perceived and unravelled, and how much closer have you moved up to the supreme good!

Man only grows and perfects himself when he fully understands women. Plato does not see woman as a physical being. Rather she is an abstract idea, a part of man that he himself does not know, a part that once he discovers it will reveal his affinity to God and to the rest of mankind. Woman is the language of Gods ("yazyk bogov"), poetry ("poeziya"), thought ("mysl"). To Plato, love is not passionate rage, rather it is peace, it is man's retreat into the past, into his innocent childhood, his native land. Love unites
... And when the soul sinks into the ethereal bosom of a feminine soul, when it finds in it its father - the eternal God, its brothers - feelings and visions so far inexpressible for the earth - what happens to it then? It then repeats previous sounds in itself, a previous life in paradise at God's bosom, and develops it into infinity.6

Plato's words affect both Telekles and Alcinoe. Telekles, although still in a passionate state, nevertheless does turn to Alcinoe with reverence. At least he has learned to respect women. Alcinoe silently listens to Plato's words. Only her breathing reveals the emotion she is undergoing. At the end, a burning tear ("zharkaya sleza") falls onto the youth's cheek. Whether the tear is for repentance, self-pity or renewed passion is left unanswered.

The Last Cycle

Gogol's last published work, Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends, is a collection of convictions he wished to share. Jesse Zeldin in his introduction to Selected Passages carefully weighs the diverse opinions regarding the work. His opinion, with which I agree, is that Gogol expressed a sincere desire to help man.
Gogol saw man as surrounded by trivialities, dishonesty and vulgarity, yet with an innate desire to become better. Gogol's work is meant as a practical book of conduct to aid man in his quest for the good. Zeldin observes: "Gogol was giving his advice, however, not so that things might remain as they were, but so that they might be made different" 7 The change had to be total, involving a change of activity, and a change of morality.

He thought of the moral activity as the practical result of realizing love for one's fellow man within oneself, on the one hand, and as conducive to the arousal of such love in those to whom the love was displayed, on the other. The moral activity is both born in the spirit and leads back to it.8

Gogol assigned a major role to women in the moral transfiguration of man. Gogol explicitly states:

... women among us will regain consciousness before men, nobly will they chastise us, nobly lash and drive us with the lash of shame and conscience, like a stupid flock of sheep, before any of us has time to look at himself and feel that he should long ago have broken into a run instead of waiting for the lash.9

Gogol even states: "Women are much better than us men." 10 Women are more generous, and have more courage for everything noble. He proceeded to sketch out the lofty career that the world expects of woman:
... her Heavenly career to be the source which propels us to everything that is right, noble, and honest, to summon man to noble aspirations, that some woman whom he esteems frivolous will suddenly blaze up, will look at herself, at the abandoned duties, will advance to everything honest, will push her husband to the honest fulfilment of his duty and, tossing her rags aside, will convert everyone to action.  

Gogol saw that most people have a desire to do good; people dream of being in a situation where they can unselfishly sacrifice themselves in helping others. Yet the situations are always far removed from the dreamer. This is the moral slump, a fatigue that the Russians were caught up in during Gogol's time. Gogol saw that one did not have to search far to find situations where one could be useful. Men were taking bribes at work and provoking injustices. Superficiality in dress, manners and language had overshadowed any true feelings. The whirlpool of social conventions had caught man in such a way that he had lost touch with his real self. Man was no longer master of himself with the result that he had lost his unique character and strength of will. Having lost control of his self, man could not communicate with God either.  

To Gogol, women had the power to aid man out of this moral slump. Women were already caught up in a situation in which they could help their husbands, brothers, neighbours in every kind of way. Gogol saw three innate characteristics in women that made them natural talismans. They had "... beauty; second, a spotless
name above scandal; third, the power of a pure soul."¹² To Gogol, beauty was a gift of God to man:

Not for nothing did God decree that some women be beautiful; not for nothing was it determined that beauty should startle us all equally - even those who are insensitive to everything and incapable of anything.¹³

This is an impersonal view of an inborn characteristic of women which few women are aware of. Gogol is speaking of natural beauty that men find such satisfaction in observing, not the superficial beauty of social dress or style. Secondly, women possess the sublime beauty of innocence. Men can carouse and use vulgar language, yet a woman by her grace and presence can command respect from men. By respecting the innocence of women, by not using coarse language in her presence, man takes a first step to becoming better. Finally, Gogol sees women as having the "power of a pure soul." Women have an insatiable thirst for doing good, a "celestial unease" that won't let them enjoy their own happiness as long as there are people suffering in the world.

Although women possess the innate ability to be man's preserving talisman, yet women have lost or not made use of their female characteristics. Gogol chastises them for the abandonment of their duties. Gogol's metaphor is that the world is like a hospital, and women's role is not to diagnose the sicknesses but to give confidence, inspiration and emotional security to the sufferers. Women can do this simply with a smile and a soft voice.
Gogol's instructions of conduct to the women are tendentious: women's aim is to help man to save his soul. The course of action is service. Rather than dwelling on her own feelings of trouble, anger, disillusionment, vanity or pride, she has to disentangle herself from these inner feelings and observe what is beside and around her. Women can shape "the beauty of the Russian land and bring it eternal good ..." However, this service must be done silently.

But there is one who is far above all others, one whom I do not know by sight, and about whom only vague accounts have reached me. I did not think that a like perfection could exist on earth. To realize it as she knew how to do; to do it so as to divert any suspicion of her part in it and to attribute all the merit to others, in such a way that these were their own, in the complete conviction that they did it. So intelligently to consider how to escape renown, since the thing itself of necessity must cry out and reveal her! To succeed in that and remain unknown! No, I have never yet met a like wisdom in our brothers of the masculine sex.

Pride, renown, fame or glitter are not the marks of success to Gogol, rather to succeed and remain unknown is the greatest good.

Gogol gives specific advice to women in two of the essays. In the essay "What a Wife Can do for Her Husband in Simple Domestic Matters, as Things Now are in Russia", Gogol stresses the fact that women have to be the first to gain inner self-control. The means to gain this self-control for women is by strictly following Gogol's advice. Gogol proposes a financial guideline which is to
be strictly adhered to for one year. Money is to be divided beforehand into seven categories: for quarters, food, transportation, clothes, pocket money, extraordinary expenses and money for God and the poor. Regardless of emergencies, money is not to be diverted from one category to another, rather other means of dealing with the emergencies will have to be found. Gogol foresees many beneficial results if this advice is followed. The women are really buying a firm character. They won’t buy unnecessary things on impulse. They will learn to distribute their time wisely. Women are to take the responsibility of the care of the house and property while their husbands are to be sent off to work for the State. At dinner, they will be able to share their experiences, to bring new ideas and accomplishments forth. If a wife is interested in her husband’s job, she can help him. Her main duty is to listen to him. Only with experience gained by performing her own duties will she eventually be able to give him counsel. But she should always encourage him if he encounters unpleasantness. Her acquired strength will be an aid in compelling him to endure spiritual troubles. By following Gogol’s advice, women should grow in strength, become immutable. Order in material matters will follow with order in spiritual matters. A wife who gains self-control herself can give confidence, inspiration and backing to her husband. Gogol sees freedom as “not arbitrarily saying ‘yes’ to one’s desires, but in
knowing how to say 'No' to them." Gogol gives the woman the role of the controller:

Let a feeble woman remind him of this! Everything has now become so wonderful that the wife must command the husband, so that he may be her head and sovereign.

The second essay, "What the Wife of a Provincial Governor Is", deals with a woman's potential influence in her community. Gogol stresses that a woman can have a great moral influence not only on her husband, but on every stratum of society. The Governor's wife is the first lady of the town, therefore she should set an example for the rest to follow. Again Gogol stresses simplicity in dress. By banishing luxury, Gogol foresees a disappearance of the source of bribery and injustice. Again Gogol compares the town people to sick lepers whom the Governor's wife should help. This time, however, Gogol advises the wife to seek help from a higher source, namely himself. Gogol places himself as one who is in communication with God, therefore any advice that he proffers will be useful to her. The means of establishing communication between Gogol and the Governor's wife is for her to write him everything: names of important people, the function of their jobs, the women of the town and any unusual incidents. By talking and listening to the various classes of people in the town, the Governor's wife can learn much herself and at the same time she can make the people aware of the importance of the jobs they hold. By these actions she can make the Bishop aware of the problems of the people; she
can recall the priests to their duties and through them can have an effect on the lower classes; the merchants and lower middle class people can be befriended; also the best people of the town can be involved in social action. Gogol stresses that action does not consist of bustle and precipitate rushing, of creating new charitable institutions with mounds of excess paper work. No, action consists of getting to know yourself, your neighbours and friends, better. Action consists of improving your own job. The Governor's wife is advised to praise honesty, to acknowledge it to the world so that everyone will know that that is the goal to strive for.

The concluding paragraph of the essay stands out from the rest. In the main part of the essay, Gogol gave instructions to be followed. The last paragraph is a description of Gogol's own process of self-realization which we conclude was a result of a similar process of questioning and getting to know people and himself. Like Marshal McLuhan, Gogol observes that the medium is the message:

It is sufficient to observe the present more attentively, the future will take care of itself. He is a fool who thinks of the future and passes by the present.18

People have fears and get depressed with present conditions, therefore they look to the future where they hope better things will come. However, the roads to the future are hidden in the "dark and tangled present which no one wants to know."19
To Gogol, the present is very tangible.

Bring me at least a knowledge of the present. Do not be troubled by abominations, serve every abomination up to me! I find nothing unusual in abomination: I have enough abomination of my own. So long as I was not myself sunk in abominations, each abomination troubled me, and I was overcome with melancholy at the great number of them, and I was terrified for Russia; since then, as I began to observe abomination more closely, my soul became more lucid; ends, means, and ways were revealed to me and I venerated Providence still more.\(^{20}\)

The final outcome of his self-analysis is that he has learned to love man more. "And if I have finally acquired a love for people, substantial rather than dreamlike, it is always and in the end for the same reason – that I have observed every kind of abomination more."\(^{21}\) The tone of the passage suggests Gogol was bordering on egomania, yet if we disregard the means of expression, the message makes sense.\(^{27}\)

Gogol advised the Governor's wife to concern herself with the present. Thus she will be a better person; she will get to know herself better and in this way will be able to love people irrespective of their faults and weaknesses.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

So far we have looked at the various modes in the evaluation of Gogol's woman portrayals. Throughout the work, certain types of characters have appeared: the ideal woman, the aggressive middle-aged woman, the old woman and the witch. These can further be subsumed under two groups: the positive and the negative types of women characters. The division into positive and negative characters does not necessarily imply that they are seen by Gogol as either good or evil. The criterion for this choice lies outside the woman portrayals. It is the male characters who in their interaction with the women characters discover whether the woman's influence on them is good or evil. An evaluation of the sum total of the positive and negative traits as seen from his portrayals gives us a very good idea of Gogol's own view of women.

Throughout the study, we can observe that the women do very little to change their physical surroundings. Rather their mere physical presence radiates enough chiaroscuro to fill the scenes during the lyrical mode. In other stories, the backgrounds are merely congruous to the social type of character portrayed. Gogol places much more importance on the clothes worn by his women. We have already referred to Bely's essay on the colour range used by Gogol. It need only be mentioned that during the course of Gogol's
literary career, the importance of colour dwindled. Whereas the lyrical stage abounds in colour, Dead Souls is almost colourless, with gray the predominant shade. However, the ideal woman - in Dead Souls, the governor's daughter - is still visualized in white tones, only the intensity has been changed from the "dazzling whiteness" characteristic of the lyrical mode to "pale" white. A purely sensuous impression created by women was deemed enough for Gogol's early stage of writing. Only in his later works, after having observed to what an extent women disfigure their natural beauty by inappropriate dress, did Gogol see clothes as a means of exerting sociological influence. The self-decorating instinct in women taken to the point of extravagance motivates the men as a whole to become acquisitive, materialistic, and makes the whole culture commercial and competitive. Gogol, in contrast, wanted the men to be spiritual in the sense of self-contented. A woman by choosing simplicity in dress and life-style can aid men in finding self-contentment.

There are two images of women presented by Gogol: the idealized and the comic women. The idealized image is first presented in the work "Woman" as Alcinoe, the epitome of triumphant beauty. Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka has many of these idealized beauties, while in the later works they are met at rare intervals, yet they never disappear. Even in Gogol's unfinished works, "Rome" and the second part of Dead Souls, Gogol was still interested in presenting his image of the ideal woman.
A question arises: how does his ideal image of a woman differ from any other depiction of a woman character? To answer this, a closer look at his prototype of the ideal woman, Alcinoe, or any young girl from Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka is necessary. Alcinoe has the magnificent features common to all of Gogol's beauties: the proud brow, the striking eyes, long luxuriant hair, high breast and exquisite feet. The features in themselves are not unique; it is Gogol's use of qualifying adjectives, metaphors and similes that imparts a new dimension. We have noted that the metaphors and similes in reference to the idealized women are all of positive value, giving a heightening effect. However a closer look at the type of vehicle used gives us a new perspective of the ideal image. Pidorka's cheeks are compared to poppies. We are not told that her cheeks feel like the softness of the petals, nor that they exude a smell like the poppies, rather her cheeks looked like "fresh and bright poppies". In a similar manner, her eyebrows are like "black strings" not because they feel like black string, but because they look like "strings such as our girls buy nowadays from travelling Muscovite pedlars to hang crosses or coins on." Most of the comparisons arise from a visual association. The result is that the idealized woman appears rather cold, like a statue. In fact, Gogol actually uses the images "marble arm" or "petrified statue" in the descriptions of the girls.
Critics like Setchkarev regard this type of depiction as stock or "stereotyped epithets". There is no doubt that Gogol's women characters are similar to those found in the German Romantic writers: Friedrich Schiller, Ludwig Tieck, Ernst T. A. Hoffmann, Heinrich Heine and others, as indicated by Setchkarev and Erlich. The interjection found in "Terrible Revenge", where the author warns the reader of the dangers of being caught by the drowned water nymphs, seems to be simply an extension of Hoffmann's Undine, the soulless spirit that personified the fascination of the watery deep, or Lorelei, the beautiful siren who sat on a rock jutting out into the Rhine and lured men to their destruction. Yet to say that Gogol's women characters are simply reproductions of prototypes of other writers is to misread Gogol. The coincidence of the image discovered by more than one mind is to be seen as confirmation of the truth of that image, rather than repetition or imitation. Gogol believed in his discovery of the ideal image. The fact that his image fits into the basic archetypal trends which are universally seen by creative minds only exalts Gogol as a good writer.

The second group of women portrayals can be classified as comic, varying from gentle mocking to satiric or grotesque representations. There is little physical description of this second group of characters. Where comparisons are made, they are for comic effect, usually downward. The comparisons, as for the
ideal image, are based on visual association. The witch in "St. John's Eve" is seen "wrinkled as an old apple." Whereas, the idealized women assert their presence simply by being, the comic women do so by their actions. Pride, avarice, stupidity, poor education, self-centredness are all revealed in their actions.

That the women are per se evil is no more than a hypothesis implied by their apparent negative qualities. The witch in "St. John's Eve" demands that Petro kill Ivas, and later drinks the blood. The witch in "Viy" is said to have killed Sheptun's wife and child, yet this is only gossip. Actual acts committed by the witches are: metamorphoses; sexual seduction of men; temptation of men by means of riches; to which we may add the performance of unpleasant acts such as drinking human blood. None of these acts are in themselves evil, although some of them are unusual. It is the characters of the stories that surmise that these abilities are given to the women by the devil and that, therefore, the women are witches and evil. Poprishkin's statement "Woman is in love with the devil" is nothing more than an expression of rage at the world where he cannot get what he wants and is unhappy with what he has. It is not that the woman herself is evaluated by the author as being good or bad, but that such moral judgement is passed by the male characters.

The beautiful girl-witch of "Viy" is a synthesis of the idealized and the comic images. Her beauty is such as to give
pleasure to her father. Yet her actions in seducing Khoma and Mikita would suggest that she is evil. But is she? Both men are drawn by an irresistible force, yet is this force from within them or not? The girl doesn't kill them, they succumb to their own passions. The girl is only an intermediate link between the rational man and the man obsessed by passion.

The ability to change from one state to another is not an evil act, yet it causes disaster for the men characters. Extended to the St. Petersburg scene, it becomes: the transformation of a beauty into a prostitute; the transformation of a young girl into a shrew. It is with this in mind, that Gogol says "But God save you from peeping under the ladies' hats!" for on Nevsky Prospect everything is a deceit. Women are at fault for presenting this false image, yet they do it out of ignorance rather than intending to do evil. In Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends Gogol shows faith in women, acknowledging that they will realize their mistakes and will act to rectify them. However, until that time it is up to the men not to succumb to temptations.

The male characters of the stories are very much affected by the women characters. As mentioned, both the young and the old men are drawn to the young beauties. The older women, although beauty has left them, nevertheless attract the men, primarily by sex appeal. However, the attainment of a union with the women
characters never brings everlasting happiness. The young men in *Evenings Near the Village of Dikanka* all have to perform some deed to get the girl. Usually they have to contend with an evil force which lies outside of them. In the story "Taras Bulba", love briefly fulfills Andrey's life, but, because of it, he has an early death. The seeds of destruction, as seen in the portrayal of Andrey, are now shown as an integral part of man. Taras Bulba knew that his younger son was predisposed to an attachment to women. Giving oneself up to the passions of sexual intercourse or merely giving oneself up to the passion of dreaming of the beautiful girl will both result in disaster for the men. It is not being able to control their inner passions that makes men place the blame on outside sources. The supreme evil force does not lie outside man, but is inherent in him. Gogol did not have this opinion from the beginning of his works, but the formulation of the idea can be traced by following the reactions of the male characters to women. So long as men think that they can find happiness from without, they will be unhappy. Gogol's later stories are all concerned with man's adjustment to the world. Having examined a series of attempts to find happiness from sexual love and concluding that it is not a solution, Gogol pursues the disclosure of other passions that torment man. We should point out that Gogol dismisses sexual love not because of the sexual act, but on the basis that if one allows one passion to dominate
it cannot but lead to disaster. The diminishing role of women is understandable if we regard Gogol's works as man's search for adjustment in this world. A woman, as is argued in Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends, can aid man to lead a meaningful life, yet she should never allow man to become dependent on her. Man has to find meaning within himself. But woman can always remain a joy to behold, like the sun, a source of pleasure to man. Man and woman can exchange fullness without being dependent.

Up to this point, we have looked at the textual material to substantiate the idea that Gogol had a high regard for women. It is interesting to relate his artistic work to his life. In Chapter One we saw that in his behaviour Gogol was always respectful to women. We have noted how little contact he had with women in his early life and in the early stages of his career. This fact partly explains Gogol's method of characterising women. Having little physical or sexual contact with women, Gogol could only describe their external appearance. He avoided reference to sense-perceptions that would presuppose closer physical contact. His recourse was to depict them as he saw, heard or imagined them. Interestingly enough, in his imagination he compared women to man's noblest achievements, namely to works of literature, paintings or statues. The result is that the women appear cold, yet Gogol's purpose was to present them in the best light that he could.
Kant defines aesthetic judgement in *The Critique of Judgement* in the following way:

... we do not refer the representation ... to the object by means of understanding, with a view to cognition, but by means of imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding) we refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure.\(^1\)

Gogol's women characters are the representation, the reader and the author are the subjects. The criterion for judging a work of art is whether it gives us pleasure or displeasure. We base our opinion on how the representation stirs our imagination and not simply on understanding or cognition of the object represented. Gogol's women characters do not aid us in understanding the psyche of women; they do enliven the stories by their mere presence. Envisaging them must have given Gogol great pleasure. It is up to the reader to decide whether he can derive comparable pleasure from Gogol's artistic representation of women.

2. Ibid., p. 22.

3. Ibid., p. 23

4. Lavrin, in particular.


6. Ibid., p. 45

7. Ibid., p. 23

8. Ibid., p. 23

9. In 1839 Gogol returned to Moscow briefly from Rome. At this time he dated his letters to his mother from Trieste and Vienna, wanting to handle his sister's affairs alone.


12. Ibid., p. 13.


15. V. Nabokov and V. Setchkarev.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER I


18. Ibid., p. 42.

19. Ibid., p. 42.

20. Ibid., p. 41.


23. Ibid., p. 33.

24. Ibid., p. 43.

25. Ibid., p. 46

26. Ibid., p. 36

27. Ibid., p. 35

28. Ibid., p. 56

29. Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends, although compiled from personal letters, nevertheless is still considered an artistic work by Gogol.


FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER II - PART I

2. Ibid., p. 38.
3. Ibid., p. 116.
4. Ibid., p. 123.
5. Ibid., p. 142.
7. Ibid., p. 113.
8. Ibid., p. 157.
9. Ibid., p. 171.
10. Ibid., p. 175.
11. Ibid., p. 188.
12. Ibid., p. 205.

PART II

2. Ibid., p. 213.
3. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Ibid., p. 19. - Gippius, though fully aware of Gogol's potential for mystification, cautions the reader against discounting automatically any statement of motives or intentions.
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER II - PART II


8. Ibid., p. 64.

9. Ibid., p. 65.

10. Ibid., p. 67.

11. Ibid., p. 79.

12. Ibid., p. 79.

13. Ibid., p. 82.

14. Ibid., p. 94.

15. Ibid., p. 84.

16. Ibid., p. 84.

17. Ibid., p. 143.

PART III


2. Ibid., p. 231.

3. Ibid., p. 231.

4. Ibid., p. 232.

5. Ibid., p. 234.

6. Ibid., p. 236.
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER II - PART III


8. Ibid., p. 237.


10. Ibid., p. 229.

PART IV


2. Ibid., p. 106.

3. Ibid., p. 158

4. Ibid., p. 128.
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III - PART I


3. Nikolai Gogol, *Evenings Near the Village of Dikonka*, (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1957), p. 120.

4. Ibid., p. 136.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.


8. Ibid., p. 179


11. Ibid., p. 139

12. Ibid., p. 139

13. Ibid., p. 59


15. Ibid., p. 241


17. Ibid., p. 194
FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III - PART I


27. *Ibid.*, p. 28


34. *Ibid.*, p. 147


FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III - PART I


FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III - PART II


FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III - PART III


FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III - PART III


20. Ibid., p. 468.

21. Ibid., p. 473.

22. Ibid., p. 536.

23. Ibid., p. 682.

24. Ibid., p. 637.

25. Ibid., p. 449.


27. Ibid., p. 727.

28. Ibid., p. 448.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER III - PART IV

1. Nikolai Gogol, Selected Works, Moskva: Knigoizdatel'stvo A.S., Panafidinoy, 1909, p. 567. (The translation is my own, S.W.)

2. Ibid., p. 567.

3. Ibid., p. 566.

4. Ibid., p. 566.

5. Ibid., p. 566.


8. Ibid., p. xxi.


10. Ibid., p. 133.

11. Ibid., p. 133.

12. Ibid., p. 16.

13. Ibid., p. 16.


15. Ibid., p. 170.

16. Ibid., p. 162.

17. Ibid., p. 162.

18. Ibid., p. 134.

19. Ibid., p. 135.

20. Ibid., p. 135.

21. Ibid., p. 135.

CHAPTER IV

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