SUPERFLUOUS MAN: MELANCHOLY, MODERNITY, AND REALISM

IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIA AND FRANCE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Superfluous Man: Melancholy, Modernity, and Realism in 19th-Century Russia and France

by ALLISON LEIGH

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The idea that melancholy pervades cultural production and serves as one of the primary temperaments has deep roots in Western culture. But in nineteenth-century Europe, a growing interest in what was seen as a new and pervasive kind of malaise became central to discourses on the rise of Realism in art and literature. This dissertation explores how painters in two of the primary artistic centers of Europe – Paris and St. Petersburg – sought to depict these inner psychological struggles associated with modern life. There was a dialogue between France and Russia in the nineteenth century and the distinctly modern form of existential sadness was viewed in both primarily as a malady among men, one which arose concomitant with new male heroes in literature. In Russia, the character type known as the “superfluous man” suggested growing fears about the idleness of male aristocrats and in France, discourses on the flâneur and spleen formed a central part of ideas on the detrimental effects of modern life. All were fundamentally alienated beings, but their visual manifestations illuminate the divergence in these two countries’ use of Realism and their respective experiences of modernity. As much as subject matter was analogously considered a vehicle for bringing about social change,
artists in these nations utilized the depiction of “real life” to varying effects. While French artists such as Gustave Courbet, Edouard Manet, and Edgar Degas valued impartial observation and objectivity, Russian artists like Pavel Fedotov, Ivan Kramskoy, and Ilya Repin were exponents of a Realist style that prized tendentious judgment and empathy. Drawing on a wide variety of literary material from the nineteenth century – from poetry, prose and criticism to letters, memoirs, and manifestoes – this dissertation discusses these disparate kinds of writing in dialogue with paintings and graphic works from the same period. The work seeks via this interdisciplinary and cross-cultural method of analysis to present the constitutive signs of the affective experience of modern life as a complex constellation of visual structures that are tied inextricably to the environments of class upheaval, political change, and warfare in which they were produced.
DEDICATION

For all the superfluous men.
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Introduction –

Do not look for solutions in this book – there are none; in general modern man has no solutions.
—Alexander Herzen, Introduction to “From the Other Shore” (1848-50)¹

The relation of art to life is the same as that of history; the only difference in content is that history, while speaking of the life of mankind, is concerned mainly with factual truth, whereas art gives us stories about the lives of men in which the place of factual truth is taken by faithfulness to psychological and moral truth. The first function of history is to reproduce life; the second, which is not performed by all historians, is to explain it. By failing to perform the second function the historian remains a mere chronicler and his work serves merely as material for the genuine historian, or as reading matter to satisfy curiosity. When performing this second function the historian becomes a thinker…

—Nikolai Chernyshevsky, “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality” (1853)²

I know that I am only going to a graveyard, but to a most precious graveyard, that’s what it is! Precious are the dead that lie buried there, every stone over them speaks of such burning life that once was there, of such passionate faith in their deeds, their truth, their struggle, and their learning, that I know I shall fall on the ground and shall kiss those stones and weep over them.
—Fyodor Dostoevsky, “The Brothers Karamazov” (1880)³

Melancholy and the Mal du siècle

The notion of melancholy as one of the primary temperaments has deep roots in Western culture. Some would have it that there is a kind of sadness inherent to art production, and that art historians become irrevocably stained by it as the writers who cling to the meaning of objects and seek to recreate the lost worlds from which they come.⁴

² Chernyshevsky, Selected Philosophical Essays, trans. by the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 376.
Sometimes it seems as if melancholy is as old as time itself.\(^5\) The Renaissance had its share of black bile-abundant melancholic masters—those who were thought to suffer from an imbalance of the humours or whose temperament was in a state of “semper dolens.”\(^6\) By the nineteenth century, there was a growing interest in a new, distinctly modern, and pervasive kind of melancholy, one that had become central to discourses on Romanticism and the development of Realism in art and literature. Seen primarily as a malady among men – what the French called variously spleen or the mal du siècle, and several Russian authors termed the phenomenon of the “superfluous man” – this novel type of modern hero was touted as an exemplary case of pathos growing among the ruins of the old aristocracy, a new champion of privilege that had developed from romantic idealism, but had become transformed into a being even more contradictory and tragically disillusioned than ever before.

In now famous and oft-quoted lines, the French poet and art critic Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) wrote in 1846:

…the frock-coat, that outer skin of the modern hero […] Is it not the inevitable uniform of our suffering age, carrying on its shoulders, black and narrow, the mark of perpetual mourning? […] All of us are attending some funeral or other. A uniform livery of grief is proof of [our] equality…\(^7\)

When Baudelaire wrote these lines at midcentury he was highlighting a trend in men’s fashion which he believed served as a defining feature of the new beauty and heroism of


\(^{6}\) Associated with John Dowland, whose motto was *Semper Dowland, semper dolens* (“always Dowland, always mourning”).

modern life. But in describing the black frock coat as a sign of the times, Baudelaire was also highlighting the melancholic disposition, the funereal outlook, of his generation.

Baudelaire chose this element of men’s fashion, that same trend which is on view in so many paintings of the time – from Courbet’s funeral to Manet’s masquerade balls and Fantin-Latour’s imaginary gatherings of artists (Figure 1) because he felt it, and the sadness it demonstrated, constituted the beauty of the modern. It is telling that a fashion trend would in this moment be the sign of modernity, for the word itself in French – la modernité – was based on the term for fashion – la mode. The modern was felt to be like the onslaught of trends - nothing if not the grind of constant brevity, life as a state of continuous movement and perpetual change, relentlessly striving for the next and the new which replaced what was passé and old in a cycle of endless death.

In this historical moment, as modernity was being born, Baudelaire and his Parisian compatriots were not alone in feeling the weight of some growing mal de siècle. Russian writers had begun to describe a loss of hope, a kind of tragic madness emanating from modern life. Paralleling Baudelaire’s conception of a “suffering age” in “perpetual mourning,” the Russian writer and radical social critic Alexander Radishchev (1749-1802) also figured the beginning of the nineteenth century as a kind of death. At the very outset of the century, Radishchev wrote:

No, you shall not be forgotten, O age of ours both mad and wise,
Accursed will you be forever, ever the wonderment of all,
In blood steeped in your cradle, your lullaby the thunder of battles;
Ah, soaked in blood shall you descend into the grave.

What these writings and the parallel growth of a discourse about melancholy in the nineteenth century show is that modernity presented similar problems across Europe for the people who experienced its birth pangs.

There was a dialogue between France and Russia in this time, there had been during the century before as well, since Tsar Peter the Great had turned his attentions to Europe and carved out a “window” to the West. But the nineteenth century saw relations between the two power-centers grow to new levels. Napoleon invaded Russia in 1812, forcing his way into the country and finally conquering the city of Moscow only to watch as Muscovites burned their own city to the ground rather than let the French pillage its resources. Political tensions would continue to grow over the remainder of the century as the two nations clashed again in the Crimean War during the mid-1850s. And Russia felt the repercussions of events in France throughout the century. The revolution of 1848 saw the tightening of already restrictive censorship regulations and travel rights were almost completely suspended for citizens in Russia. Despite these events, artists from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts were able to spend extended periods of time in Paris after midcentury and were influenced by what they saw there, even exhibiting works in the annual Salon.

Running parallel with these tumultuous times of war and the changes ushered in by the industrial revolution as it came to both countries was a contemporaneous growing fascination with the representation of men in states of various kinds of withdrawal, ennui, and melancholy – a tendency within depiction in both countries which was intrinsically related to Baudelaire’s description of his time as one of “perpetual mourning,” and Radishchev’s figuring of the nineteenth century as a descent “into the grave.” This
dissertation is about the effort to visualize these ideas in painting, and the broader problem of transnational artistic and cultural affinities between Russia and France which demonstrate the centrality of melancholy to formulations of modernity during a time of turbulent transformation in Europe.

The work which follows explores how artists in the primary artistic centers of Paris and St. Petersburg used the style of Realism to depict the inner psychological struggles associated with modern life. The affliction felt at this time was ironically viewed both as constituting modernity and at the same time symptomatic of it. Alienation, narcissism, and anomie are all tropes deeply embedded in writing on modernism and my study examines these notions for how they constitute part of the changing notion of melancholy and also demonstrate resonances between different cultural centers in Europe. Russia’s “superfluous man” and French typologies of masculine urban life such as the bohemian and flâneur are all examples of fundamentally alienated beings. In the nineteenth century’s sea of funeral-clad and nearly indecipherable men, in their de rigeur black suits and top hats, a veritable swamp of darkened humanity mourned the loss of exclusive male importance in the public realm. As cultural dominance began to give way, it was followed by an interiorization and sublimation of hope. Representations of these men in the throws of these societal changes in both Russia and France speak to a similar crisis of masculinity which came to the fore at this time – albeit in two different cultural environments with widely diverging socio-economic structures, levels of industrialization, political systems, and histories.

As an art movement, Realism has primarily been explored as a French phenomenon of the second half of the nineteenth century, albeit one with far reaching
influence. My work challenges the long-held notion of a singular and dominant French impact on Russian art by examining how in both of these two distinct but equally ambitious cultures, new subject matter became a vehicle for social criticism as well as for nationalist identity formation. In creating a more culturally discursive account of Realism, I seek to develop the conception of modernity itself, and challenge hegemonic understandings of the development of art in this period as solely indebted to a small group of artists working in a single culture. The process of influence between Russia and France, both politically and artistically, deserves much greater attention in art history, both for what a less Franco-centric notion of modernity might add to our understanding of the time, but also for what an examination of Russian works might do for invigorating the traditional canon. Because Russia was outside the fold of Western Europe proper, it both aligns with French models for depicting everyday life and deviates from them and I examine the works of the time as a complex constellation of visual structures which are tied inextricably to the environment of class upheaval, industrialization, political change, and warfare in which they were produced.

As much as the development of Realism in both France and Russian can be seen as running parallel because subject matter was analogously considered a vehicle for bringing about social change, artists in these two centers utilized the depiction of “real life” to varying effects. While French artists such as Gustave Courbet, Edouard Manet, and Edgar Degas sought to make paintings which were objective and contemporary to the

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9 In part here I am working through a problematic first recognized by Michael Fried, what he calls “ontological illusionism.” He describes “commentaries on realist painters [which] focus on questions of subject matter, either narrowly or broadly construed” and then underscores that “features of the representation have been made invisible and attributed to reality rather than art.” I agree and believe that the understanding of Realism as primarily an art movement which focused on new or different subject matter is an oversimplification, one which calls for greater reflection and analysis. See Courbet’s Realism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 3.
utmost degree, Russian artists like Pavel Fedotov, Ivan Kramskoy, and Ilya Repin were exponents of a realist style prized for its “tendentiousness”. Russian critics and artists alike espoused a system of Realism embedded in subjective judgment and empathy which varied from the dominant ideology in France.

Art historians such as Michael Fried have begun troubling the dominant Franco-centric notion of what Realism was by examining the work of artists in cultures outside of France, in particular his focus has been on the work of Adolf Menzel (1815-1905) in Germany.¹⁰ The foundations for this type of endeavor have further been laid by historians of Russian art such as David Jackson and Rosalind Blakesley, who have explored the influence which French culture had on Russian artists who studied in Paris in the 1870s.¹¹ My work builds on the model provided by these art historians and draws heavily on each of their works for how to conduct a kind of cross-cultural work which is grounded in rigorous visual analysis and the contextualization of various kinds of source materials.

I am also particularly indebted to one further scholar, Elizabeth Valkenier, who pioneered the study of nineteenth-century Russian art in the English speaking world with her book “Russian Realist Art. The State and Society. The Peredvizhniki and Their Tradition.”¹² The material gathered in this book has been indispensible in terms of my own framing of the subject. While I sometimes come to conclusions which are in conflict with those presented by Valkenier, I am nonetheless indebted to the wealth of data she

has presented over the last thirty years. Likewise, the more recent work of Valkenier and art historian Wendy Salmond on Russian Realism has been seminal for my research and analysis. Their anthology of translated Peredvizhniki texts and documents is a boon to any scholar working in this growing field and I have tried to acknowledge my debt to these scholars throughout the text which follows.

Central Terminology

REALISM

Several terms serve as anchors for larger themes within this dissertation and deserve a moment of explanation here. The term which perhaps encapsulates the largest amount of discourse and which as a result evokes a range of associations in its every use is “Realism.” The French term “réalisme” was apparently first used as an aesthetic description in 1835, when the French art and literary critic Gustave Planche (1808-57) used the term to characterize the manner of Rembrandt. In this instance, Planche used the term “réalisme” to designate the “vérité humaine” of Rembrandt as opposed to what he believed was the “idéalité poétique” of Neoclassicism. In the decades which followed it grew in use as a literary term, due largely to its adoption from 1856 as the title of a literary journal edited by Edmond Duranty (1833-80). Gustave Courbet, the father of the Realist movement in French art in the middle of the nineteenth century, also

15 Ibid, 114.
popularized the word “Réalisme” by describing his paintings as such, also notably giving it a capital “R” in 1855.\footnote{Fried states this in two of his books, but does not provide further documentary evidence in support. See Courbet’s Realism, 2 and Menzel’s Realism, 110.}

Outside of its immediate originary context in the nineteenth century, art historians have used the term to slightly different effects in the century since. Linda Nochlin’s influential 1971 book, simply titled “Realism,” opens with a nuanced definition of the term that also hints at some of the problems associated with it. Her explication of the term deserves to be quoted at length:

Realism, as an historical movement in the figurative arts and in literature, attained its most coherent and consistent formulation in France, with echoes, parallels and variants elsewhere on the Continent, in England and the United States. Preceded by Romanticism and followed by what is now generally termed Symbolism, it was the dominant movement from about 1840 until 1870-80. Its aim was to give a truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of contemporary life. This definition […] inevitably raises a number of questions. For whereas such terms as Mannerism, Baroque or Neo-classicism – whatever difficulties they may present – are generally used to define stylistic categories, proper to the visual arts, the word Realism is also closely connected with central philosophical issues.\footnote{Linda Nochlin, Realism (London: Penguin Group, 1971), 13.}

Several elements of this definition are striking for the purposes of studying the parallel rise of Realism in Russia and France. It is noteworthy that Nochlin acknowledges upfront that Realism was a movement “with echoes, parallels and variants elsewhere on the Continent”—thus acknowledging the existence of and allowing space for the study of Realisms analogous to that practiced in France.

The implication remains, however, that French Realism was, in her own words, the “most coherent and consistent formulation.” In doing so, she posits France’s iteration as the primary version and all others as somehow derivative or inferior. Likewise

Christopher Predergast, in his introduction to a volume of essays on Realism, states: “the
nineteenth century and in particular nineteenth-century France: the exemplary place and moment of what we conventionally understand as the great tradition of realism, in both literature and art.”

He, like Nochlin, underscores the prevailing notion of the centrality of France as the apex of Realism in the nineteenth century. My dissertation challenges this conception by discussing the early developments of Realism in France and Russia in comparison with one another and emphasizing the deep roots of Russia’s parallel and contemporaneous formulation of Realism within the tradition of critical writing and literature.

Nochlin’s definition also draws on this interrelationship. In the very first line she calls Realism “an historical movement in the figurative arts and in literature” – emphasizing the dynamic relation between the forms as central to its classification. The writings of critics and literary figures were indeed a key part of the rise of Realism in Russia throughout the nineteenth century. The popularity of these authors’ writings and the sentiment of dissatisfaction with the status quo that they espoused proved a driving motivation for Realism in Russia. As has been widely studied, a cluster of writers in France also proved central to the rise of Realism in the same years. Much of the work which follows is a discussion of the parallel rise of ideologies for Realism which grow out of writing in France and Russia over the course of the century.

Also important to Nochlin’s definition and my use of it as a point of reference is her emphasis on chronology. I agree with Nochlin’s twofold stress – on both the dates of the movement’s dominance and her bracketing of Realism among the movements which preceded and followed it. In the case of Russia, Realism was the dominant movement

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19 Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast, eds. Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 1.
slightly later than was the case in France, but interestingly its earliest iterations arise slightly earlier in Russia. I will discuss to a larger degree the emergence of Realism and its most nascent forms in both France and Russia in what follows, but the demarcation is not nearly as fixed as what Nochlin’s definition might make it seem to be and the problematic of dating will require greater attention in what follows.

Along these same lines, understanding the movement that came before Realism and the dynamic relationship between the two modes of representation is central to what follows. Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner point out in their book on Romanticism and Realism that: “By 1846 ‘Romanticism’ was no longer a word that could rally the avant-garde, no longer a battle cry, and it would soon be replaced by others.”20 Indeed the rallying call that would come to define the new movement opposing romantic tendencies in art became “Il faut être de son temps.” In the same year, Baudelaire recognized the moment of transition as it was occurring, stating in 1846: “It is true that the great tradition has been lost, and that the new one is not yet established.”21 The art critic and novelist Champfleury (1820-89) also recognized the slippage occurring between Romanticism and the new movement as it was arising: “There will be a new school which…will come out of Romanticism, as truth comes more directly from the agitation of the living than from the sleep of the dead.”22

The transition from Romanticism to Realism at this time in both countries is extremely complicated. In many ways the earliest Realist paintings, be they by artists like Courbet in the 1840s or Pavel Fedotov in the same years can perhaps be better

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understood as Post-Romantic or Proto-Realist. Part of my task in what follows has been to track the emergence of Realism in France and Russia in its earliest forms. The works from the transitional period are marked by the intense and lingering hold which Romanticism had on art-making (and culture more largely) well into the period which is usually designated as Realist. Thus, while Nochlin writes that French Realism “was the dominant movement from about 1840”, I would alter this slightly by designating the works of the 1840s as Post-Romantic instead, with Realism only truly emerging in France and Russia around 1848.

At the same time, the last thing I think art history needs as a field and in practice is more movements designated by the suffix “-ism.” In teaching survey courses, I have been struck by the limited usefulness of such terms for students seeking to understand works of art and the artists who made them on anything deeper than an introductory level. In practice, the proliferation of movement designations and the addition of prefixes such as “pre-,” “proto-,” and “post-,” usually serve as artificial and rather stultifying demarcators which limit rather than grow meaning. Thus I mention the idea of understanding the earliest Realist works in France and Russia as Post-Romantic or Proto-Realist only in this introduction as a means of underscoring the inherently problematic

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23 I am not by any means the originator of these terms. Post-romanticism (or Postromanticism as it is sometimes spelled) is a term used to describe a period in literature and music, but it is much less often evoked for the visual arts. For the subject in terms of literary criticism see Paul De Man, *The Post-Romantic Predicament* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012) and Claudia Moscovici, *Romanticism and Postromanticism* (Lexington Books, 2007). Likewise, I first encountered “Proto-Realist” in an essay on the development of art writing in Russia. In it, Carol Adlam describes her effort to: “[…] examine the development in public textual discourse of a set of concepts that might be said to be cognates of ‘realism,’ […] such as the constitution of nature and the ‘real’, the role of copying, and the rendering of detail. […] ‘proto-realist’ thought in Russia.” See “Realist Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Russian Art Writing,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 4 (Oct. 2005), 638. Also helpful in the development of my ideas on this subject has been the work of Monika Greenleaf and Steven Moeller-Sally. See *Russian Subjects: Empire, Nation, and the Culture of the Golden Age* (Northwestern University Press, 1998).

24 In their work, Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast seem to recognize the problem I am addressing here. They describe it as “reconfiguring realism as a relation” and as a “complicated slippage”—see *Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xi.
nature of any fixed definition for a term with historical and philosophical implications like Realism.

One final word on my use of Realism is in order in this introduction. I chose to capitalize the term throughout the dissertation (and to capitalize the word “Realist” as the term for practitioners within the movement). I do this on one hand to follow Courbet’s example and the historical precedent he set in capitalizing the word in 1855. I also do so to demonstrate my alignment with Nochlin’s work. She capitalizes the terms Realism and Realist throughout her book, whereas other art historians seem to arbitrarily capitalize it in some instances, but then not in others, even within the space of the same chapter or sometimes even page. Capitalizing the term also lends itself to understanding the final part of Nochlin’s definition – her stress on the fact that Realism is more than a stylistic category. I agree completely with Nochlin’s conception of Realism as “closely connected with central philosophical issues.” In fact I might take this further and claim that part of what my dissertation aims to show is that in Russia Realism was itself variously a philosophy, a political stance, and a system of values and beliefs that go far beyond what many other “-ism” designated art movements espouse or contain. Part of what makes Realism such a modern movement (perhaps the first truly modern movement) is exactly this dimension. In the words of Bertolt Brecht, “Realism is an issue not only for literature; it is a major political, philosophical and practical issue and

25 Fried is the art historian who is guiltiest of this distracting and odd variable usage. See especially his Courbet’s Realism.
26 The authors of Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre make almost this same claim: “The heyday of realism in France is the moment that has been termed, in short, the invention of modernity.” See Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast, eds. Spectacles of Realism: Body, Gender, Genre (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), x.
must be handled and explained as such—as a matter of general human interest.”

MELANCHOLY and the SUPERFLOUS MAN

Two other major terms are used throughout the dissertation and also make up key elements within the work’s title. This study originally began as an exploration of the manifestations of the “superfluous man” in painting. This male “type” has long been studied as a phenomenon in literature, but there is a vacuum of scholarship dedicated to examining his existence in contemporaneous visual art of the nineteenth century. At its most basic level then, my work began as an attempt to investigate how a trope of masculinity was represented in varying ways by both writers and painters of the period. This work expanded to include a comparative study of a similar phenomenon in France.

But who is the superfluous man? And how can he be understood in relation to the notion of melancholy? Answering these questions will comprise a large part of the study which follows, but a few words on how I understand their linkage are in order here.

At the most basic level, I understand the superfluous man as afflicted by a peculiarly modern psychic malady resulting from a deep-seated sense of alienation and disillusionment. In this sense, the superfluous man suffers from a kind of melancholy, one that is particular to the nineteenth century, and results at the most profound level from the growth of industrial production and the metropolis, the dislocation of the aristocracy in the face of the rise of the proletariat, and the emergence of women in the

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28 My conception of the superfluous man is in this sense related to an argument developed by the art historian Elizabeth Johns. She argues that the American Realist painter Thomas Eakins depicted his sitters as “suffering from a peculiarly modern psychic malady,” one which she believes resulted from isolation and helplessness as opposed to the purposelessness and alienation I believe led to the superfluous man in Russia. See Thomas Eakins: The Heroism of Modern Life (Princeton University Press, 1983).
public and professional spheres. It is of central importance that the superfluous man was not just an imagined character-type, but was a figure taken to represent a real group of men, perhaps even an entire generation. He was conceived of by authors as a sign of the times and he represented and served as a marker and reference point for an actual element of bourgeois masculine society in Russia.29

The modern melancholy of the superfluous man has strong resonances with similar discourses on spleen and ennui in France in the same period. The art historian T.J. Clark describes spleen as the “dreary conviction that the world itself has nothing to show us” and characterizes it as a kind of lassitude and despair which grew out of boredom and found form among men who “pretend a total indifference and disdain.”30 Thus I use a constellation of terms to describe the modern melancholy which is encapsulated in the figure of the superfluous man and his splenetic counterparts in France. Within the text which follows these include: disaffection, alienation, disillusionment, disenchantment, anomie, ennui, spleen, malaise, apathy, boredom, and indifference. In using this range of synonyms to explore the kind of melancholy which arose at the time I am motivated not by any sort of terminological carelessness, but by an awareness of the inevitable and conscious acceptance of a kind of organic growth which is an inevitable product of the complexity of my subject. The content of the original term “superfluous man” was subject to much variety of understanding in its own time and it continues to accrue meaning as it is applied today.31

29 And he was recognized as such at the time. See Nikolai Dobrolyubov, “What is Oblomovism?” first published in the radical journal Sovremennik (“The Contemporary”) in 1859. PDF accessed September 2, 2013 at https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/297815/
30 The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France 1848-1851(Greenwich, Conn., 1973), 175.
More than anything, in using the broad term of melancholy to encapsulate a more particular circumstance of emotional life in the nineteenth century, I want to locate a problematic in the study of modernity itself – one that underscores how our terms always seem to exceed their ability to lend deep meaning. I do not regard superfluity as a mere iconography of modernity. It cannot be simply seen as present on the surface of this object or in that text, but rather its essence must be read from inside, extracted from within, not imposed from above. I hope to highlight how both the superfluous man and the splenetic melancholy in France can be understood as “not a collection of idiosyncratic masculinities, but as a related set of complex reactions”, one that proves illuminating to both our understanding of modernism and experiences of it at the time. In this sense my work operates under the idea expressed by the Russian abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), who said at the beginning of the twentieth century: “In each picture is a whole life imprisoned, a whole lifetime of fears, doubts, hopes, and joys.”

And this leads me to one final point about my use of the terms “melancholy” and “superfluous man.” Behind the images of these superfluous men and stories of anomie and ennui by writers lies the real suffering of men. The writings of the many French and Russian authors under examination here and the paintings which seek to give visual form to melancholy are evidence of a profound psychological pain as it was experienced by many brave and talented men. No scholarly account should seek to anesthetize this fact for the sake of scientific objectivity or historical rigor. There is a discontent in the

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32 This is an idea which first presented itself to me in a study of the Surrealist movement. Hal Foster writes of his desire “to locate a problematic in surrealism that exceeds its self-understanding, and neither stylistic analysis or social history will suffice; if there is a concept that comprehends surrealism it must be contemporary with it, immanent to its field.” See Compulsive Beauty (MIT Press, 1995), xvii.
33 Again, this is Hal Foster’s phrasing – see Compulsive Beauty, xvii.
Western world that does not stem from hunger or poverty, it does not arise from threat to life or fear of war, but rather from the dissatisfaction with life that grows from alienation and purposelessness.\textsuperscript{35} My dissertation is a study of this discontent and it seeks to develop a system which takes into account the psychological symptoms of modernity by historically situating the phenomenon of the superfluous man as evidence of a particular brand of modern melancholy.

**MODERNITY**

One other term is of central importance throughout this dissertation and it is the one which is perhaps the most fraught with meaning in the humanities – modernity. There are as many definitions of modernity as there are facets to it, for each discipline brings its own special point of view in utilizing it. I use it in its most basic sense to denote the new perception of life which arose in the context of industrialization and urbanization in the countries which comprise my study. But modernity has meanings which extend far beyond this. First, the term as I use it has both a chronological and ideological connotation. Modernity invokes a break in civilization’s understanding of itself, a kind of self-conscious turn away from traditional structures of thought and feeling. But it also marks a fundamentally new relationship to time. Modernity looks to the future and hopes for what is coming in a way that is distinct from periods before it. Pre-modern societies

\textsuperscript{35} My ideas here are indebted to those expressed by Fritz Stern in *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (University of California Press, 1974), xxii. For Stern, the dissatisfaction with life grew directly from “urban and industrialized culture” and I agree to a certain extent. But it is more than just industry and urbanity that seem to be the cause and a large part of my dissertation is dedicated to understanding the full range of sources of this modern melancholic dissatisfaction.
looked to the past for models of everything from behavior to wisdom and culture.\(^{36}\) And this aspect – the new understanding of time – also serves to highlight the facet with which I began this introduction in citing the lines by Baudelaire on the new heroic dark dress of modern men. The transformation of the French term for fashion – “la mode” into “la modernité” marks a kind of epistemological change. This transformation builds into itself and accrues a kind of melancholy as generations of future-looking men become disillusioned by disappointment as it unfolds.

Part of my task is thus to redefine modernity both so that it includes a greater emotional component than it usually evokes, but also so that it might be understood in a more culturally plural way. How is all of this related to painting? What my work seeks to do is reevaluate the idea of the painting of modern life as one in which modernity defines itself in a kind of opposition.\(^{37}\) The facets of modernity that have been most rigorously studied and upheld are essentially its Western European, public, and masculine components.\(^{38}\) But these elements can only truly be read against and through the development of an understanding of their “others” – the Eastern (or anti-Western), the private, and the feminine.\(^{39}\) The ambiguity, mixing and shifting that characterizes modernity and its representation builds within itself the need for oppositions which are

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\(^{36}\) My ideas about the understanding of time as a central component to modernity are indebted to Göran Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945-2000* (SAGE Publications Ltd., 1995), 4-5.

\(^{37}\) T.J. Clark touches on this kind of oppositional definition in his discussion of Pisarro. He claims that in his painting practice, Pisarro utilized the fact that modernity depended on images of its opposite. Thus Pisarro painted peasants as still existing in a space of enchanted life, one that resisted modernity. See chapter two: “We Field-Women” in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 55-137. Clark also discusses a working definition of modernity in his introduction to *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 10-16.

\(^{38}\) The writings of Baudelaire, Georg Simmel, and Walter Benjamin especially equate the modern with the public (and therefore the masculine).

\(^{39}\) Janet Wolff writes of the need to account for the modern in the private and interior because they were a central part of life in the nineteenth century. See “The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 2, no. 3 (November 1985), 37-46.
both parallel and diametric. Thus as notions of class rely on there being a high versus low and masculinity depends for its own definition on the feminine against which it forms and upholds difference – France (or Frenchness) depends on others against whom to self-define (be it Oriental others, or Russian others). My work examines distinctions as productive of meaning and takes the mutual existence of a Realist movement in art in roughly the same time period in both France and Russia as an opportunity to explore each culture’s formation of a modern identity through its modes of painted and literary self-depiction.

**Methodology**

The text which follows proceeds by chronologically clustered case studies. Each chapter opens with a single event in the history of either French or Russian cultural or political life. I use these events to both begin and bound my discussion of the time period which follows. Some chapters deal with a very short period of time – as few as eight years in the case of chapter four. Others serve a more introductory function and cover a larger span of time in order to contextualize those years’ effects on later decades. Each chapter also centers around small clusters of works and the artists who created them. Throughout, I devote attention to the works of Gustave Courbet, as his conception of Realism has largely been the starting point for studies of Realism and he serves as a pivotal figurehead against and through which to make comparisons. My shifts from French to Russian artists and their works may sometimes seem rather sharp, but I maintain that this approach of placing works in direct association with one another is best for examining both their parallels and contrasts. This method of detailed cross-cultural
analysis lets connections and relationships emerge which might otherwise be lost without direct counterpoint and interplay.

The same might be said for my juxtaposition of paintings and various kinds of writing from the period under study. The work which follows draws on a wide variety of literary material from the nineteenth century. I utilize poetry, prose (from short stories to novellas and novels), criticism (both of art and of literature), the journalistic writings of the Russian intelligentsia, dissertations, biographies, letters, memoirs, exhibition pamphlets and manifestoes – and all of these disparate kinds of works are put in direct dialogue with works of art from the same period. During the century, in both France and Russia, many painters and writers were driven by a mutual investment in depicting modern life. Thus I use the writings in both countries to add a contextual thickness to what is my primary focus – the visual images themselves.

Overall my dissertation, in terms of its source material and the method which can be said to arise from the kinds of data investigated, is at core both cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary. The combination of these two kinds of research and analysis can present great difficulties for the writer, but I also believe they can reap great rewards. Putting various kinds of material, in this case visual and literary, in dialogue while at the same time setting cultural juxtapositions in motion has the potential to reveal new relationships and create more nuanced definitions of even the most outworn themes and periods in history. I have chosen to utilize this mode of cross-cultural interdisciplinarity because it reveals something new about Realism, modernity, and life itself in the nineteenth century. Placing Russia and France in the same arena of analysis and examining representations of their mutual iterations of melancholy creates a new
understanding of each center, but also a fresh meta-explanation for the larger circumstances in which they both existed.

This kind of analysis is growing in force in art history, but in disparate ways. Art historians have long explored the relationship between French art and literature in the nineteenth century.\(^{40}\) And this scholarship on French art has proven that an examination of the interrelation between writing and image-making in the nineteenth century is key to understanding the cultural history of the period. It has also provided an important model for my own interdisciplinary work. There has been a break away from traditional monographic studies of individual artists in recent years. Scholars have begun focusing on pairs of artists and thus challenging the single-study model for examining artists and their development.\(^{41}\) My work builds on this trend by also placing pairs of artists in comparison with one another. Several clusters emerge in the pages which follow – the most important of which in each chapter are Courbet and Orest Kiprensky in chapter one, Courbet and Pavel Fedotov in chapter two, and Edouard Manet with Ilya Repin in chapter five. The writers I discuss also form clusters or pairs in some sections – the writings of


Baudelaire are discussed in comparison with those of Nikolai Chernyshevsky, as are those of Belinsky with Proudhon.

A few further points on methodology need to be made in this introductory section. My work is very much aligned with the recent interest in the humanities to explore “global modernisms.” Various fields within the humanities have expanded to include more global conceptions of modernism’s emergence. This trend is in part a reaction to the recognition of our age as one of globalization more generally, and thus a greater degree of transnational study seeks to meet the challenges of the contemporary world by and overcoming the barriers of difference to create greater harmony in the world at large. As such, the study I conduct draws on a variety of interrelated fields – from comparative literature and gender studies to philosophy and psychology – all in the name of creating a model for investigating art across a spectrum of interrelated cultures.

It is also of central importance that what follows is almost exclusively a study of painting. My focus on this single medium is based on the conviction that the phenomenon I am examining – manifestations of the melancholic crisis in masculinity in the nineteenth century – can be found most prominently and powerfully in images conceived and executed as paintings. The extended period of time required for carrying out a work comprised of oil on canvas, and the flexibility of choices and emphasis that

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43 My work also engages a subset of discourse within the “global modernisms” trend, namely the study of center and periphery modernisms. But I am concerned that this kind of discursive construct emphasizes the hierarchies that were in place in the historical moment under review in a way that isn’t central to my discussion per se. The study of cultures in terms of center and periphery is useful for all it can uncover about the kinds of economic, racial, and gender hierarchies that structured the uneven production and development of various nations, but I leave this work for another scholar.
this medium allows lend themselves particularly well to artists’ attempts to visually record the emotional life of their subjects. Put most simply, the prolonged nature of melancholic absorption, the perpetual nature of what it means to embody the qualities of the superfluous man, the continuous unfolding inherent in boredom and ennui – all of this is matched by the activity of painting itself as an endeavor which takes place over long periods of time spent sitting, often alone, and observing. Thus painting is the medium I track in the pages which follow, for it provides the most significant source of data for investigating the mal du siècle as it progressed in both France and Russia over the course of the century.

Lastly, the text which follows is based largely on a reading of primary source materials, some of which have been translated and others which have not. I utilize these sources and cite the translation I am using wherever possible. All translations not indicated as quotes or translations from another text are my own. Along these same lines, it was important to rely most heavily on the work which has been carried out in English by scholars of Russian art. This first generation of British and American historians carved out the field, many of them while the primary source material required was still in closed or difficult to access Soviet archives. I cannot underscore how tremendous the efforts of these scholars must have been as they endeavored to create a new field of inquiry within art history by presenting Russian art of the nineteenth century to the world for the first time. For this reason, I focused on demonstrating that the body of scholarship they created and the amount of primary source material which has been translated now make it entirely possible to carry out a serious inquiry into Russian art from this time period without absolutely needing fluency in Russian.
Of course, in order to provide a thorough examination of the topic, I have utilized sources which are not translated and made these translations to continue furthering the availability of source materials. But I have in this dissertation avoided the problematics which accrue from the use of much of the available Soviet scholarship on the rise of Realism and on the Peredvizhniki movement in particular. The bias of many twentieth century critics operating under the ideology of the Soviet Union lent itself to the creation of a philosophy for Russian Realism that demonstrated the movement’s proto-socialist nationalism and anti-Westernism. My dissertation seeks largely to work against this biased conclusion. I return to the primary source material to investigate the influence the West did indeed have on Russian artists despite their espousal of a system of Realism which differed from the overall Western model. By emphasizing the Western scholarship available in English, while minimizing the largely untranslated Soviet studies, I hope to prove that the field of Russian art is no longer just for specialists, but rife for intensive study by anyone who is intrigued by the strength of the artworks themselves.

Chapter Breakdown
Chapter one, “Fathers and Sons: Romanticism, Realism, and Idealism in Two Cultures, 1812-1848,” serves as an introductory discussion of the transition from Romanticism to Realism in Russia and France in the first half of the nineteenth century. It examines the effects of Napoleon’s invasion in the War of 1812 and the opportunities this allowed for Russia to begin comparing herself with Europe in a profound and ultimately pessimistic way. The lingering Romanticism in the earliest self-portraits by Courbet is compared to a
similar tendency in the works of Orest Kiprensky. The paintings of these artists provide important background to the discussion of Realism that develops over the course of the remaining chapters. They are ultimately discussed in terms of the Freudian constructs for narcissism and mourning and I posit a revised version of the notion of absorption and theatricality that allows for the exploration of melancholy as a central tenet of modernity that will be further explored over the course of the chapters that follow.

Chapter two, “Calls for Realism: The Masculine Interior and the Rise of Critical Contemporaneity, 1825-1848,” explores the effects of the failed Decembrist revolt in Russia and Tsar Nicholas I’s ensuing oppressive reign on the art which was produced from approximately 1825 to 1848. I posit the failure of the Decembrists as ushering in a period of disillusionment which paralleled the growth of the superfluous man as a character type in literature and painting. This chapter examines the genre of the interior in painting as demonstrative of a nascent Realism, one that arose at the same time that the earliest calls for art to depict “reality” were being theorized by Belinsky and other members of the intelligentsia in Russia and France. I discuss in detail the works of Pavel Fedotov as central to the rise of Realism and I compare his works to the Russian interior painters of the 1830s and Courbet’s contemporaneous works of the 1840s. All of these paintings demonstrate a concern with masculine malaise and melancholy and are evidence that this was a central trope of what it meant to be modern in both cultures at the time.

Chapter three, “Wounded Men: War, Revolution, and Disillusionment, 1848-1863,” explores the effects of the 1848 revolution on both French and Russian artists in the 1840s and 1850s. I discuss the reactionary and even more repressive rule of Tsar
Nicholas I after 1848, followed by the rise of the new Tsar Alexander II. The reigns of these men and the effects of the events of 1848 on the Russian intelligentsia are compared to their effects on French artists and writers and to the rise of Napoleon III in France. This chapter further discusses the self-portraits of Courbet and several other French artists in the late 1840s and 1850s and the rise of depictions of men in states of wounded withdrawal. Courbet’s works are compared to contemporaneous Russian depictions of men in a similar state of either injury or profound dishabille. I explore how these depictions can be understood as evidence of the continually growing crisis in masculinity, one that results to a large extent from the disillusionment which resulted from the failures of the 1848 revolution and the Crimean War. In this chapter I also continue to explore the writings on the superfluous man as they are growing in force in Russia. The characterizations of the type by Turgenev and Goncharov are compared to the rise of the theme of spleen in Baudelaire’s poetry from the same years. The growth of both superfluous and splenetic men are discussed as part of the tendency to depict men in a wounded state and I explore the repercussions this has for understanding modernity at midcentury.

Chapter four, “Ideologies of Realism: Criticism, Collectivity and a Social Chasm, 1863-1871,” explores the events which led to the revolt of the fourteen students from the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts and the contemporaneous Salon des Refusés which originated also in 1863. Both are discussed in terms of the growth of ideologies for Realism in the decades which preceded and in terms of the repercussions the events had for the Academy. In Russia, the Emancipation Reform of 1861 which freed the serfs proved an important catalyst for a renewal of hope among the intelligentsia and artists
The fourteen student secessionists formed an artists’ collective called the Artel in the 1860s and this proves important for strengthening artists’ bonds with one another and their solidarity against the Academy. Ivan Kramskoy and Vasily Perov, both central fixtures of the Artel, continue to develop Realism mainly through portraiture and the effects of the growing body of literature calling for art to depict reality are analyzed for their effect on these artists and the Artel more widely. The writings of Proudhon, Castagnary, and Baudelaire are examined in terms of the strengthening of the French ideology of Realism and these writings are compared to the criticism of the intelligentsia in Russia in the same years.

Chapter five, “Flâneurs and Wanderers: ‘Total Realism’ and the Antihero of Modern Life, 1870-1881,” discusses the formation of the Peredvizhniki or Wanderers in Russia in 1870 and the full maturity of Realism in Russia in the decade that followed. The works that Ilya Repin produced in Paris and those which come from the time after are examined in terms of what was described at the time as “total realism.” Repin’s works are compared to those of Degas and Manet in this same period and a discussion of Russian notions of collectivity versus French tendencies toward greater individualism are investigated in relation to the works produced by these artists. The effects of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune of 1871 are also explored for the repercussions they had for French artists and writers. And the superfluous man is again explored as a type in painting, but now as a new kind of antihero for modern life – one that can also be related to French types like the flâneur. This chapter closes with a discussion of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, the great ‘Tsar Liberator.’ I posit that the years immediately leading to and following these events can be seen as the highpoint of
Realism of the kind originally called for by Belinsky and Chernyshevsky in the 1840s-50s.

In the largest possible sense, what follows is a study of the representation of a particular kind of melancholy which rose to the fore concomitant with the rise of modernity in France and Russia in the nineteenth century. Realism, as a movement in art that achieved dominance in roughly the same period in both cultures, allowed artists to depict these new emotional elements of life. And Realist art, as not just a set of stylistic parameters, but a philosophical goal, was committed to a form of visual representation grounded in truth. In this sense, my work is above all an account which seeks to open up discourse about an understudied aspect of art production. And what follows is, like the movement it studies, a work strongly committed to truth. As an interpretive history of nineteenth-century French and Russian thought and culture, it is the product of my reflection and interests. But it is also an effort to reshape our understanding of modernity by challenging old and enduring myths which surround it. I offer this work then, not as a systematic analysis with definitive answers, but as an episode in the shared pursuit of meaning that is historical analysis.
Chapter One – Fathers and Sons:
Romanticism, Realism, and Idealism in Two Cultures, 1812-1848

How you will pity me! How wretched my personal anxieties will seem to you! You who have passed through all the hardships of life, what will you think of a young man with neither strength nor moral courage, who finds the source of his torments within himself, and can hardly lament any misfortunes save those he has brought on himself? Alas! Do not punish him too severely; he has already been harshly punished!
—Chateaubriand, ‘René’ (1802)\textsuperscript{44}

…disillusionment, moreover, like all other vogues, having had its beginning in the higher strata of society […] was being worn threadbare, and now, those who were really and truly bored strove to conceal their misfortune as if it were a vice. […]

“Anyhow, I suppose it was the French who introduced the fashion?”
“No, the English.”
—Mikhail Lermontov, ‘A Hero of Our Time’ (1839-41)\textsuperscript{45}

Introduction: The War of 1812 – ‘the path to glory’

On 24 June 1812, Napoleon Bonaparte, then Emperor of the French, invaded Russia. His Grande Armée crossed the Russian border at the Neman River with approximately 420,000 troops constituting its ranks, and would grow to a force of almost 600,000 including later reinforcements.\textsuperscript{46} Napoleon’s army was met by some 120,000 Russian soldiers under the command of Tsar Alexander I. In the end, the campaign would prove one of the most lethal military operations in history.\textsuperscript{47} The war which resulted from this original invasion came to be known as the Great Patriotic War (Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna) and indeed it was an engagement largely characterized by tremendous popular support. The entire country rallied behind Alexander in support against Napoleon and the French.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{44} Chateaubriand, Atala/René, trans. Irving Putter (Berkeley: University of California, 1952), 86.
\textsuperscript{46} Nicolas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 6\textsuperscript{th} edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 311.
\textsuperscript{47} See R.G. Grant, Battle: A Visual Journey through 5,000 Years of Combat (Dorling Kindersley, 2005), 212-13.
\textsuperscript{48} Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 311.
As the war unfolded, the Grande Armée made continual advances into the heart of Russia, despite the tenacity with which the Russian soldiers continually fought.

Napoleon was convinced that taking Moscow was essential to conquering the country and over the course of the summer his army advanced toward the centuries-old city. This culminated on September 7 in a battle in the village of Borodino, just seventy-five miles outside of Moscow. The battle which took place there would prove one of the bloodiest days of fighting in all of the Napoleonic Wars. A staggering 42,000 casualties (out of a total army of approximately 112,000) were suffered on the Russian side in a single day of fighting. Eventually the Russian army was forced to retreat, leaving the road to Moscow open.

In an act which underscores the remarkable popularity of the effort against Napoleon and the overall patriotic fervor of the war effort, the governor of Moscow ordered the city to be evacuated and burned. A small detachment of police were charged with remaining to burn the city to the ground. Houses had been prepared with flammable materials and fuses been set throughout the city to ignite the blazes. In addition, as most of the population abandoned the city, those remaining began robbing the stores of food, in order to deprive the French of their use. The French troops

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50 The French side suffering near equal losses – 58,000 out of 130,000 combatants. See Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 312.
51 There is still some debate as to the origin of the fires. Most French and some Russian specialists assert that the city was ordered to be set ablaze, but it remains a disputed issue. See Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 312. Contemporary sources also describe the uncertainty as to how the fires came about. See Armand-Augustin-Louis Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia*, trans. Jean Hanoteau (New York: Morrow, 1935), 115-118.
52 Caulaincourt, *With Napoleon in Russia*, 118 and 121.
53 Ibid., 114.
endeavored to fight the fire with whatever means they could, but they found that the city's fire-engines had been disassembled.\textsuperscript{54}

The memoirs of Armand de Caulaincourt, Napoleon’s close advisor during the campaign, describe the rapidity with which the fire spread and the intensity of the flames: “...the fire was giving off so much light that it was bright enough to read in the middle of [the night in] my room [...] About four o'clock in the morning the conflagration was so widespread that we judged it necessary to wake the Emperor...”\textsuperscript{55} Moscow was still constructed largely of wood and burnt down almost completely. Estimates place the total damage as having destroyed nearly four-fifths of the city (Figure 2). Caulaincourt described the emperor’s reaction in his memoirs:

It would be difficult to describe the impression made on the Emperor by this news. Never have I seen him so deeply impressed. [...] this report undoubtedly plunged him into the gravest reflections. His face normally so impassive, showed instantly and unmistakably the mark of his bitter disappointment.\textsuperscript{56}

Later in the century, artists like Vasily Vereshchagin (1842-1904) would depict the disappointment of the great General in paintings commemorating historical acts of Russian patriotism from earlier times (Figure 3).

In the end, the French were forced to retreat. Unable to obtain peace from Alexander I, Napoleon gave the order to retreat before the onset of winter.\textsuperscript{57} The march began on October 19 and over the remaining months of the year hypothermia and starvation led to the loss of tens of thousands. Though the Russians considered it a relatively mild winter, the Grande Armée were still wearing their summer uniforms and

\textsuperscript{54} Caulaincourt, \textit{With Napoleon in Russia}, 117 and 119-20.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 113.
\textsuperscript{57} Riasanovsky, \textit{A History of Russia}, 312.
not equipped for cold weather. Russian depictions of the freezing soldiers highlight the awfulness of the retreat (Figure 4) and de Caulaincourt recounted scenes of the tremendous losses: “One constantly found men who, overcome by the cold, had been forced to drop out and had fallen to the ground, too weak or too numb to stand. […] They begged one to let them alone. […] Once these poor wretches fell asleep they were dead. [...] The road was covered with their corpses.”

The campaign would prove the decisive turning point in the Napoleonic Wars. Out of an original force of around 600,000, only 30,000 to 50,000 frostbitten and half-starved survivors entered back into France. Napoleon’s reputation was severely shaken. But in Russia the Patriotic War resulted in a strengthened national identity that would have a lasting effect on Russia for the remaining years of Alexander’s reign. And the indirect result of the combination of contact with the French and patriotic fervor was a new desire for the modernization of the country. But calls for reform were met with silence from the Imperial powers. In the years after Alexander’s death in 1825, this failure to bring about reform would come to result in a series of revolutions, starting with the Decembrist revolt which is the central focus of chapter two. But this chapter will focus on the years leading up to the revolt and how they are important for understanding the disillusionment growing in Russia at the time.

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58 For a primary source account of the weather from a Russian perspective see Denis Vasiliyevich Davydov, “Did the cold exterminate the French army in 1812?” in Dnevnik partisanskih deystvi (Journal of Partisan Actions). See Davidov, In Service of the Tsar Against Napoleon, 1806–1814 (Greenhill Books, 1999).
59 Caulaincourt, With Napoleon in Russia, 259.
60 Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 312.
61 The entry of Russian troops into Paris is often cited by scholars as a key event in the history of interactions between Russia and the West. The Russian army pursued the French all the way from Moscow to Paris, entering triumphant into Paris on 31 March 1814 and staging grandiose parades involving some 80,000–150,000 troops, which focused in particular on disseminating powerful images of Alexander. See Janet M. Hartley, Russia, 1762-1825: Military Power, the State, and the People (ABC-CLIO, 2008), 172 and Dominic Lieven, Russia Against Napoleon: The True Story of the Campaigns of War and Peace (Penguin, 2010).
Napoleon I and ‘the lure of disillusionment’

Napoleon (1769-1821), as a leader, as a man, and as a disseminator of artistic propaganda, has been the subject of a great deal of writing and scholarly research. In Russia he was pictured in the years after 1812 as the Antichrist and around two hundred caricatures of him and his army circulated from 1812-14. On one hand, Russians harbored a deep resentment toward the foreign invader, but Napoleon was also held up as a kind of tragic hero. Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) wrote the poem “Napoleon” in 1821 and described the leader in just such ambivalent terms:

A wondrous fate is now fulfilled,
   Extinguished a majestic man.
In somber prison night was stilled
Napoleon's grim, tumultuous span.
The outlawed potentate has vanished,
   Bright Nike's mighty, pampered son;
For him, from all Creation banished,
   Posterity has now begun. [...] To self-rule unrestrained importune
   The lure of disillusionment.

In this work Pushkin vacillates between the two lines of opinion. Napoleon is for him both “a majestic man” and a “pampered son.” The poet Fyodor Tyutchev (1803-1873) also speaks to this dichotomy of the heroic ideal encapsulated in the figure of Napoleon during the first half of the nineteenth century:

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64 Bowlt, “Nineteenth-Century Russian Caricature,” in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 228.

Two demons there were that served him
Two powers that wondrously merged:
Eagles soared in his head
Vipers writhed in his breast.\textsuperscript{66}

The Russian semiotician Yuri Lotman summed up the kind of fervor for Napoleon demonstrated by Pierre in Tolstoy’s work and on the larger generation of young Russian men he represents:

…the fate of Napoleon Bonaparte became as it were a symbol for the unlimited power man wielded over his own destiny. The expression “We all strive to become Napoleons” was no hyperbole: thousands of junior officers in all the armies of Europe asked themselves whether the hand of fate was not pointing to them. Faith in one’s own predestination, the notion that the world was filled with great men, constituted a feature of mass psychology of young noblemen at the beginning of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{67}

The duality of public opinion was due in part to the treatment Napoleon received as a result of the Romantic tendency then sweeping Europe and Russia. As soon as Romantic artists and writers idealized solipsistic individualism and the notion of a single man focused on changing the world, independent of the contingencies which make others vacillate, Napoleon became a hero at once valorized and pitied. The Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov (1814-41) would write of him as the ideal of behavioral unity amidst circumstance: “Alone,—he was everywhere, cold and unchanging…”\textsuperscript{68}

So how can one man be both the Antichrist and the role model for a generation of idealist young artists who shared the values of Romanticism? This chapter explores this question by examining the role that Romanticism played in art as it was beginning to fall

\textsuperscript{66} Poems & Political Letters of F. I. Tyutchev, trans. Jesse Zeldin (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), 127. Tolstoy’s War and Peace is perhaps the most famous fictionalized account of the events surrounding Napoleon’s invasion of Russia and it contains several passages which speak to this duality of opinion on the French Emperor.


out of favor in both Russia and France over the course of the decades leading up to
midcentury. The terms of self-comparison established by the model of Napoleon (and
Alexander I) provide important conventions for men’s behavior. These men served as
father figures for a generation of disaffected youths in both Russia and France. The
principles for action and conduct which grew from the dissemination of texts on these
rulers helps us understand the transition both of these societies were undergoing in the
nineteenth century and how expectations for masculine honor and heroism were in a state
of flux which would come to define the decades that followed.

Tsar Alexander I - the ‘Crowned Hamlet’

But what of the Russian leader who was Napoleon’s opponent in the Great Patriotic War?
Who was Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825) and how can we characterize not only his rule,
but public opinion of him? Only twenty-three years old when he ascended the throne, he
has been described as “the most complex and elusive figure among the emperors of
Russia.” 69 Coming to power as a result of the deposition and assassination of his father,
Tsar Paul, Alexander began his rule in a state of shock. 70 And this original imbalance
would come to characterize most of his rule. Tsar Alexander vacillated so frequently in
pursuing his domestic and foreign policies that contemporaries referred to him as the
“enigmatic tsar,” the “sphinx,” and the “crowned Hamlet.” 71 Scholars even describe his
overall growing detachment from reality as his two decade rule progressed.

69 Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 300.
70 Ibid., 301.
71 The last being an epithet bestowed on him by Herzen. See Michael Kort, A Brief History of Russia (New
The preeminent Russian historian Nicholas Riasanovsky wrote of Alexander:

“The emperor belonged with those exceedingly sensitive, charming, and restless men and women whose lives display a constant irritation, search, and disappointment. They lack balance, consistency, and firmness of purpose. They are contradictory.”\(^{72}\) One of the chief areas in which the effects of these qualities were felt by the larger Russian people over whom Alexander ruled was in his policy on serf reform. Alexander formed a committee to devise a plan for transforming Russia at the commencement of his rule in 1801.\(^{73}\) The early notes from the meetings of this committee underscore the new tsar’s intention to abolish autocracy and serfdom. But in practice, Alexander never carried out these major reforms, instead hesitating to accept any policy which would diminish the power of the crown.

The relationship Alexander had with his father might provide a clue to these behaviors and to the personality of the “crowned Hamlet.” Their interactions had been volatile and problematic to say the least. Before his death Paul had even planned to divorce his wife and disinherit his children by her, a plan that Alexander was aware of and knew would bring about his ineligibility to rule.\(^{74}\) There is also mystery surrounding the end of his life. He died in 1825 at only forty-eight years old and the court physician inexplicably refused to sign the tsar’s death warrant. Some specialists believe that the explanation for this was that Alexander committed suicide, but this is still debated among scholars.\(^{75}\)

\(^{72}\) Riasanovsky, \textit{A History of Russia}, 302.
\(^{73}\) Ibid., 303.
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 301.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 302.
Suicide itself had taken on new meaning and importance in Russian culture in the early years of the nineteenth century. According to Yuri Lotman, “Towards the end of the [eighteenth] century aristocratic youth was swept by a veritable wave of suicides.”

More than just a part of the Romantic preoccupation with taking one’s life which gripped Western Europe, the phenomenon in Russia saw the development of an ideology of justification which had not only idealistic-Romantic qualities, but political ones as well. The popular writer and social critic Alexander Radishchev (1749-1802) committed suicide shortly after the accession of Alexander I and sent shock waves through Russian society. A government clerk who had become one of the most celebrated, but also controversial writers by the end of the eighteenth century, Radishchev had been sentenced to death for his 1790 literary denunciation of serfdom and imperial corruption “A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow.”

His death sentence was later reduced to ten years of exile. But after he was allowed to return to European Russia by Paul I, Radishchev was kept under police surveillance until Alexander came to power and gave him complete amnesty.

Even after returning to St. Petersburg as a free man, Radishchev became disillusioned by the chasm between Alexander I’s professed liberalism and the actual despotism of his rule. In his writing, Radishchev politicized the act of suicide by claiming that it was the ultimate act of liberation and an action demonstrative of freedom.

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78 Ibid., I: 84-85.
79 Ibid., I: 85.
against tyrants. He depicted suicide as not only the right, but the obligation of a man engaged in honorable battle against all forms of oppression: “If your virtue can no longer find any earthly shelter, if you have reached your ultimate limit, if nothing more protects you from oppression, then remember that you are a man...Die.”

These words made the suicide of Radishchev an act of heroism and must have weighed heavily on the already “sensitive” and “contradictory” Alexander. Radishchev had also been deeply concerned with the character of Hamlet; he wrote on Hamlet’s famous monologue in his own last work entitled ‘On Man, His Mortality and Immortality.’ By the final years of Alexander’s reign the high incidence of aristocratic suicide had even begun to cause the state grave concern. All of this gives new meaning to Alexander’s personality and to the vacillations which characterized his reign. It is interesting to think of the act of “suicide” carried out by Muscovites upon the invasion of Napoleon as a part of this ideology. The inhabitants of the Russian city carried out a kind of suicide by burning the city – one that Radishchev would have characterized as in line with protecting the “body” of the city from the oppression of the French tyrant.

The central focus of this chapter is on how the last years of Alexander’s reign demonstrate the disillusionment growing in Russia and how this generation’s sense of disappointment would become an outright crisis by midcentury. Alexander I,

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80 Radishchev, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1938-41), 1: 295. Quoted in Irina Paperno, Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky’s Russia (Cornell University Press, 1997), 15.
81 Susan K. Morrissey, Suicide and the Body Politic in Imperial Russia (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 57.
Radishchev, and Napoleon are all fathers of what will become “superfluous men” sons. In the words of the Slavicist Judith Armstrong, “the reign of Alexander I… had by the early [18]20s failed to satisfy that section of the educated public who were alive to the Romantic rebellion in Europe” and this would cause a ripple effect across the nineteenth century. Parallel with my discussion of the transition from the generation who fought Napoleon and witnessed the Decembrist revolt of 1825 and the coming cohort who would witness the effects of the 1848 revolutions, is an examination of the transition from the Romantic artists to those espousing the “new” values of the Realist avant-garde. The interactions of these generations of men – artists, ideologues, and martyr-heroes - are necessary for understanding the larger development of Realism in both France and Russia over the course of the century.

*Courbet and Romanticism - ‘the alliance of the mad and the serious’*

So how did all this – war, suicide, emperors defeated, and disillusioned tsars – inform paintings being produced at the time? In 1836, the French dramatist, poet, and novelist Alfred de Musset (1810-57) wrote:

> It was said decisively that romanticism was nothing else than the alliance of the mad and the serious, the grotesque and the terrible, the farcical and the horrible—in other words, if you prefer, comedy and tragedy…From 1832 to 1833, it came to mind that romanticism could be a system of philosophy, and political economy.”

These lines parallel words in one of the last poems Radishchev wrote before he died. In it, he summed up the mood as Russia embarked on the new nineteenth century:

> …finally the ship that bore our hopes meets its destruction, Consumed into the whirlpool already near its haven;

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Happiness, virtue, and freedom are devoured by the raging pool.
See, fearsome wreckage still floats in the torrent.
No, you shall not be forgotten, O age of ours both mad and wise,
Accursed will you be forever, ever the wonderment of all,
In blood steeped in your cradle, your lullaby the thunder of battles;
Ah, soaked in blood shall you descend into the grave.\(^85\)

It is with these lines and the idea of the beginning of the nineteenth century as a
time both “mad and wise,” an era marked by “the alliance of the mad and the serious”
that I would like to begin. These years mark the period just before Gustave Courbet
(1819-1877) began the series of self-portraits that would form the groundwork for the
birth of Realism in France. And in many ways the problem which is represented in the
statement “the alliance of the mad and the serious” characterizes his artistic production in
these years. Courbet’s earliest self-portraits occupy this hinge space; in them can be seen
the hopes and ideals of the Romantics that will “meet its destruction.” And in the process
of this destructive transition, a new “system of philosophy” in art would be born.

It may seem strange to begin with the works Gustave Courbet produced in the
first part of his career in a chapter devoted to the early decades of the nineteenth century.
And indeed it is true that Courbet’s first oil paintings only begin to emerge from his
studio in the early 1840s. But he has for many years now held the title of “father of
Realism” in art history.\(^86\) He was widely recognized as such, largely through his own
efforts at self-promotion and celebrity-seeking, during his own lifetime. But he was also
in the 1840s a figure of and in transition. He occupies the space between generations in

\(^{85}\) Alexander Radishchev, “The Eighteenth Century” (written in late 1801 and first published in 1807),

\(^{86}\) Many scholars have not hesitated to write as such; a short sampling among survey texts that give him this
designation include: Lois Fichner-Rathus, Foundations of Art and Design (Cengage Learning, 2007), 282;
Carol Strickland and John Boswell, The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course in Art History from
Prehistoric to Post-Modern (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2007), 83; and Lois Fichner-Rathus,
Understanding Art (Cengage Learning, 2012), 450.
this decade and the shift from Romanticism to Realism can be seen in his works.\textsuperscript{87} In the words of the art historians Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, “Courbet…bravely and sometimes comically carried on the Romantic tradition of the artist as hero.”\textsuperscript{88} And as such any chapter devoted to examining the transition between these movements in France and Russia would be remiss to not include Courbet’s own position between the two in his earliest works.

The artist’s self-portrait of 1845-46 titled “Man with a Leather Belt” (Figure 5) in many ways encapsulates the transition he is undergoing as an artist at this time. In it the gaze doesn’t quite engage with the viewer. Those eyes look past, through, askance, aside; they engage with something beyond us. They are self-absorbed, but also self-conscious. The figure is made to seem aware of the beholder’s presence as he turns to accept our gaze, but then at the same moment he is oblivious to our regard. Courbet’s self as he posits it here is one in a state of formation. The lack of confident gaze directed out at the viewer acts as a metaphor for the artist’s state of introspection. And the viewer is kept at bay not only by the downcast eyes which refuse yet to see us, but by the figure’s hand (Figure 6). The remarkable embodiedness with which that appendage is painted makes it seem to emerge from the flat surface of the canvas and project into our space, as though corporeal reality is the only surety Courbet is at this moment able to muster.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} I am not the first to make such a claim. T.J. Clark examines the early self-portraits too as demonstrative of the transition. See Clark, \textit{Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution} (Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1982).
\textsuperscript{88} Rosen and Zerner, \textit{Romanticism and Realism}, 226.
\textsuperscript{89} My reading of the embodied quality of that hand is indebted to Michael Fried’s discussion of the early self-portraits in \textit{Courbet’s Realism} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), see chapter two “The Early Self-Portraits,” 53-84. Fried will play a larger role in my discussion the Courbet’s self-portraits in chapter three.
Almost reflective in its sheen, the hand’s skin is glossy; Courbet makes the tendons glow. The intense physical presence of that hand and wrist are painted such that the viewer almost forgets he is not made of flesh but only of oil pigments. That painted hand mimics corporeally the artist’s hand as it once applied paint to the canvas. The figure’s forefinger acts as a visual metaphor for the paintbrush as it touches the canvas. That finger becomes lost to our gaze as it slips into the darkened space between cheek and hair. That recession imitates the layers of built up pigments which constitute the work’s material presence and the work of Courbet as he seeks to constitute a self for public presentation. Exterior reality and representation comingle here as the viewer is called into the painting by that hand. We are asked in not by the gaze, but beckoned and lured by the gesture to come under and inside.  

“Man with a Leather Belt,” a work created midway between 1840 and 1850, came to fruition amidst the series of self-portraits Courbet produced in this vital decade. The works of this time all possess a dark emotionality which serves to bond them together. Courbet presents himself alone, often in ambiguous interiors, places without any indication of the outside – no windows, no doors – just the artist and the compressed space he occupies. His 1842 “Self-Portrait with a Black Dog” (Figure 7) depicts such a space and again, as would be the case in the later self-portrait, the gaze is oddly withheld and inaccessible. The artist does indeed look directly out at the viewer, but the eyes are

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almost lost to sight due to the intensity with which Courbet has rendered them in sfumatoed shadow.

And again, a hand both leads the beholder into the painting, directing us toward the artist seated at the table, but then acts also as a visual barrier. The arm and hand in both of these paintings snag our gaze, but then serve to keep us at a distance. In both, Courbet also uses clothing as a further lure into the image. He depicts the sleeves of the coat and shirt in such a way that the eye pauses at and becomes entangled in them as points of access. These areas of opening into the painting also allow the viewer points of contact with the body and the self it constitutes. In the earlier “Self-Portrait with a Black Dog,” Courbet represents the sleeve of the overcoat folded over at the cuff and opening to reveal the brighter blue of the interior lining as it meets the highlighted white of the shirt underneath. By so doing, he emphasized his own hand, making a focal point of it that serves as a point of entry.

The viewer is drawn deeper and deeper inward as we visually explore these layers of coat and shirt and skin. We are absorbed in the closeness between them and the similar folds of the white collar as it meets neck and coat above. All of this culminates in the dark shadows of the face and a confrontation with its expression. Courbet is materially born out of these layers and it is the viewer’s gaze which consolidates the material levels into a single perceptive presence. This is a man constituted by varying presences, one who is still more of an idea than flesh and blood. In the early 1860s the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-81) would write:

Why, we don't even know what living means now […] Leave us alone without books and we shall be lost and in confusion at once. […] We are oppressed at being men […] we think it a disgrace and try to contrive to be some sort of impossible generalized man. We are stillborn, and for generations past have been begotten, not by living
fathers, and that suits us better and better. […] Soon we shall contrive to be born somehow from an idea.\textsuperscript{91}

Dostoevsky’s observation demonstrates the continuing dilemma of Romanticism even into the 1860s and it is exactly this feeling; this “impossible generalized man” that Courbet has captured in his portrait. Courbet’s man with a leather belt is born from Romanticism, from the world of ideas and ideals.\textsuperscript{92}

What these self-portraits demonstrate is a change in the artist’s self-figuration and way of relating to the world. There is an intense rendering of mood in these portraits; it pervades the space of viewing and lingers. One can see in these paintings the backward pull of Romanticism, a kind of nostalgia for the mode of depicting oneself in eternal conflict which had so gripped French artists in the first decades of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{93} But there is in them also a new perceptive veracity grounded in a fresh emotive authenticity. Courbet is here moving from the type of extroverted theatrical drama which had characterized Romanticism to a more subtle, but no less arresting and nuanced brand of emotionality. And this shift has parallels with how Romanticism and Realism become blurred as the latter develops in these years.

**Russian Romantic Painters**

Courbet was not the only artist experimenting with intensely emotional self-portraiture in these years. The progression away from an emotionalism grounded in Romantic

\textsuperscript{91} Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground, The Double and Other Stories*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), 351. I should point out as well that these lines are especially significant because they constitute the very end of the novel.

\textsuperscript{92} Clark too discusses a similar idea that is parallel to Dostoevsky’s notion of their being some “impossible generalized man” in his examination of various kinds of mythologies for men of various classes in Courbet’s time. Clark writes of Courbet’s “myth of himself” and his construction of an “ideal life history”. See Clark, *Image of the People*, 149-54.

\textsuperscript{93} This is what I called “Post-Romanticism” in the introduction to this dissertation. I will return to this term and the ideas behind it later in this chapter.
posturing has parallels with the larger development towards Realism in Russia in the 1820s and 30s. Although Realism does not fully emerge as a cohesive movement in Russia until the 1860s and 1870s, one can see the seeds of it in the portraits created by a number of artists who were contemporaries of Courbet and even in the decades before. The works by these Russian painters are similar to those by Courbet in the 1840s in their focus on emotional states that absorptively draw the viewer in. In the first half of the century artists like Orest Kiprensky (1782-1836) were producing paintings in the vein of Romanticism and with a focus on “state of mind” which parallels the developments of Courbet’s self-portraiture in the 1840s.

Kiprensky was born of a serf mother and he studied at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg from 1788 to 1803. In 1805 he was awarded the Gold Medal in the Academy’s annual competition, which gave him the opportunity to travel and study in Rome. But the outbreak of war with Napoleon prevented this and it wasn’t until 1816 that he traveled to Italy on a trip financed by the Empress Elizaveta. He stayed until 1822 and even exhibited several works in the Paris Salon of that year. But while his intense psychological portrayals were an important development in Russian art, these qualities were not altogether novel, for the French artists Girodet, Gros, and Ingres had

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94 These biographical details and the ones which follow: V. Zimenko, *Orest Kiprensky* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1988).
95 Interestingly, Kiprensky worked on a series of pencil portraits of the veterans of the Napoleonic Wars in the late 1810s, but was overlooked for a commission from Tsar Alexander to paint the “1812 War Gallery” in the Winter Palace. This commission went to a foreigner – the English artist George Dawe (1781-1829). This led one critic of the time to write: “Russian artists are not appreciated here, while foreign artists visiting us find both employment and patronage.” See Pavel Svin’in, “Vystavka v Akademii khudozhestv,” *Otechestvennye zapiski* 90 (1827), 137-43. Quoted in Alexey Makhrov, “The Pioneers of Russian Art Criticism: Between State and Public Opinion, 1804-1855,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 81, No. 4 (Oct. 2003), 623.
already introduced them in the same period. This is perhaps what led Francois Gerard to comment about Kiprensky in the 1822 Paris Salon: “Cette peinture n’est pas de notre siècle.”

Kiprensky’s “Portrait of a Man” (Figure 8) shows a further example of a confrontation with the viewer similar to that seen in Courbet’s works two decades later. The strength of the gaze directed out serves to fix our attention. But the quality of the gaze is different from that in Courbet’s portrait. Whereas the viewer is called into “Man with a Leather Belt” by the physicality of the artist’s hands and by their very material presence, Kiprensky engages the viewer by the sheer force of the gaze alone. The figure turns his head to meet our gaze and thus communicates by this reciprocation. The angle of his body and turn of his head reinforce the moment of confrontation; we are seduced by the illusion of immediacy, or by the idea that it is perhaps our presence which has incited his look. As the white blankness of his far eye struggles to register and confront us before the painting, the communication is enhanced and we are drawn further into the work. This silent contact is further enhanced too by the slight openness of the mouth, a feature which was also present in Courbet’s “Self-Portrait with a Black Dog.” It seems as though this man has just spoken or is about to speak.

The man Kiprensky paints, and this is very likely a self-portrait,98 beckons to the viewer, pulling us into emotional engagement, but like Courbet, he ultimately deflects us

96 Bowlt, “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 124.
98 According to John Bowlt, “Certain biographical facts—that he murdered his mistress by burning her in turpentine and then married her thirteen-year-old daughter, that he made fakes of Titian and Tintoretto, proffering them to the St. Petersburg Academy, and that he painted many self-portraits, none of which resembled him—demonstrate the quixotic and passionate character of this first-rate artist.” [emphasis added] See “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, ed. Theofanis George Stavrou (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 125.
from the very same space to which we have been drawn. The dissolution of the figure into near-abstraction at the bottom of the canvas and the lack of a fleshted-out sense of body beneath clothing and in space does not ultimately allow the viewer to remain long perceptively within the piece. We sense that this man is dissolving as much as he is constituted, that this representation is ephemeral both in the force of the figure’s gaze and in the state of mind it captures. The figure is immutably insubstantial at the very same time that he draws us in. As in Courbet’s work, we are lured into the image, but then ultimately refused by his very immateriality. He is not a “real” man because he is painted, but also because what he represents is less a person than the personification of thoughts and ideals. He is as Dostoevsky would later write: “born somehow from an idea.” He is projected onto space and holding there as evocative, moody blankness. Beckoning to us to make him more, to make him somehow, like Courbet’s men, fully realized and in that sense whole.

The incomplete quality of the figure in Kiprensky’s portrait can also be read as a sign of its reliance on the Romantic notions of transience and mutability. In other works, the artist was known to purposefully leave areas of the figure unfinished to evoke a stronger sense of spontaneity and immediacy. What is coming to pass in the works of Kiprensky in Russia and over the course of a decade of experimentation with self-portraiture for Courbet is a new stress on the realistic at the expense of the idealistic.99

This resignation to the circumstance of what is forms the core of the rise of Realism.100

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99 I am in part deriving this notion from the writing of Hugh Honour in his book on Romanticism. He describes this change in stress in the works of Gros and calls the new style which evolved as a result “eminently suited for pictures of modern subjects.” Honour, Romanticism (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 44-45. He further calls this a “shift in emphasis from victors to victims” and I characterize this shift as the supreme loss of idealism.

100 Rosen and Zerner also recognize the importance of a lack of fini to the development of Realism. They believe “the ‘unfinished’ texture…implied a phenomenological realism, a faithful representation of the
Incompleteness as a sign of immediacy was born of the sense of disappointment which grew in these years as Alexander failed to bring about much-desired reforms and as even the greatest of men like Napoleon failed in their endeavors. Incompleteness grew from what was ultimately the most important element of the transition from Romanticism to Realism – the loss of idealism.

And Kiprensky can be seen experimenting with the boundaries and conventions of the Romantic mode in more works from these first decades of the nineteenth century (Figure 9). He, like Courbet, produced self-portraits over a number of years before his death in 1836. In many ways, these paintings help draw out something further fundamental to Romanticism that can still be seen in Courbet’s works in the 1840s. Kiprensky, like Courbet, is using the mode of Romanticism for depiction, but as more of an attitude than a style. As Alfred de Musset described it, the “philosophy” of Romanticism runs through these paintings, making them recognizable as belonging to a certain time and belonging to a particular vein of European thought and feeling. In them, we see both Kiprensky’s and Courbet’s desire to perform their viewpoints as part of the Romantic mode. The individual here performs his alienation from the world, his renunciation of it and acceptance of its triviality and banality. The gaze acts as a locus of both communication and conflict, a sign of the otherness of the figure contained in the image and in his resignation.

Both Courbet and Kiprensky here adopt the affective guise of the Romantic hero through the depiction of mood and temperament. All these works possess dramatic lighting to heighten the features of the faces and layers of fabric ensconce the represented

process of vision and an emphatic sense of the material presence of the work of art.” See Romanticism and Realism, 229.
figure like a costume. Both artists have deliberately called us into the picture by eliciting our gaze through pose and facial expression, but the overall confrontation with the viewer they present is different. Kiprensky’s self-portraits have a directness of both gaze and self-presentation that varies from the projected self-absorption and solipsism of Courbet’s works. Even in the early years of the nineteenth century, when Russian artists were supposedly fully absorbed into “copying” the Neoclassical and Romantic modes of Western Europe by virtue of their classical training at the Academy, we see a nascent tendency towards the depiction of emotive authenticity, a kind of naturalness and sincerity in self-representation.

A careful examination of two works by these artists serves to illuminate this core difference. Kiprensky’s “Self-Portrait of 1820” (Figure 10) is in general appearance very similar to Courbet’s “Man with a Leather Belt.” They possess analogous color palettes, moods, and overall compositional structures. Perhaps most notably, both emphasize the hands of the artist in a self-indexical manner. Courbet’s caress of his own face parallels Kiprensky’s clutching of his clothing to his chest. But the self-portrait of Kiprensky looks naïve when compared to the complex assemblage of Courbet’s self-portrait from twenty years later. But it is not immature because of some inability or lack of technical prowess, but because it does not bear the same weight of tradition, it does not need to so desperately make its mark in the lineage. The tension of Courbet’s hand on his belt encapsulates the burden of influence which so characterized the work of French Romantic artists from David through Delacroix and beyond.\footnote{My reference to the “burden of influence” is an allusion to the remarkable work done on this subject by Norman Bryson in \textit{Tradition and Desire: From David to Delacroix} (Cambridge University Press, 1987).} Courbet does not
completely escape it. It is represented symbolically too in the folio on which he rests his elbow and the sculpture in the shadowed background.

The tension of Courbet’s left hand on the belt is paralleled too by the curled finger on Kiprensky’s hand. Like the opposition of active and passive represented by Courbet’s two hands, Kiprensky represents the two forces as well – but in one hand. His relaxed middle finger points upwards, drawing the viewers’ gaze to the face, but the index finger and thumb possess a torque and tension which mirrors Courbet’s encircling of his belt. Both men want to be seen, but they affect us in different ways. And it is perhaps the desire to be seen that makes the desperation of Courbet’s “Desperate Man” (Figure 11) so heightened – amidst the clamor of centuries, the endless strain of the Salons, the judgment of critics, and the juries of the Academy that presided. Courbet forces himself on the viewer, escalating the loudness of his emotive projections over the course of the decade as he searches for a new mode that will accommodate his desire to break free of tradition, to cast off the burden of influence.

But in this moment, Russian artists like Kiprensky are free of the impinging force of the Renaissance that weighs so heavily on French artists like Courbet. Their “Neo” classicism is not entirely new, it does not represent a return to the ideals of the classical past which characterized the Renaissance. Russia had no Renaissance.  

102 Of course this is a much larger question in Slavic Studies that I am engaging in here. My claim is most definitively one that is debated among scholars. There was an influx of classical literature that emerged in the East after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and even before this the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans had driven a number of prelates to Russia, initiating what has come to be known as the “Second South Slavic Influence.” These men brought with them a style of writing that did bring about a shift, but not on par with what occurred in large-scale cultural shift in the West. Likewise, there is a great deal of debate about shift in icon painting, but I maintain nothing that would allow us to describe Russian art as having undergone a shift in icon painting comparable to the developments of the Renaissance in the West. For more on these debates see Ilya Talev, Some Problems of the Second South Slavic Influence in Russia (Munich: Otto Sagner, 1973); Pavel Murativ, “Vystavka drevne-russkago iskusstva v Moskve,” Starye
Instead, the Russian artists emerge in their styles as if fully formed from the head of Zeus, imitating something with which they have no direct historical relationship. Again in the words of Dostoevsky, the Russians felt they were “begotten not by living fathers”; that they were estranged from a past with which they had only an imitative relationship. It was this phenomenon that allowed the classical religious painter Aleksander Ivanov to claim in 1840, “We have no predecessors.”

In addition, the Russian art world was substantially different than that in France in this time. The kind of criticism of Salons which typified the French system, had not yet developed in Russia. The first review of the annual Academy exhibition in St. Petersburg was only published in 1804. This review appeared in the independent journal Severnyi vestnik (The Northern News) and it was written by an anonymous Russian artist. It is interesting to note that in Russia’s case, the birth of art criticism was also accompanied by the simultaneous introduction of the first censorship statute by Alexander I in 1804. This serves as further evidence of the disillusionment which accompanied the attempts by this generation to form a serious and autonomous art world on par with the more established French system in these years.

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103 M. Alpatov, Aleksandr Ivanov (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1956), 175.
104 Makhrov, “The Pioneers of Russian Art Criticism,” 617. I will discuss the development of criticism in Russia to a much larger extent in chapter four, but wanted to note the origins in the very beginning of the century here.
105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 It is further noteworthy that while the system for art criticism which so typified France by this time was virtually non-existent in Russia, they did seem to have parallel audiences attend the Salon. According to sources from the first half of the century, there was no shortage of visitors to the Academy exhibitions in St. Petersburg. Nikolai Gnedich in his review of 1820 describes: “The sailors, cabman, lackeys, who look without seeing; these women in rags, who move in crowds without purpose, pushing one another and not
But the Romantic mode provides a sweeping undercurrent for the Russian paintings in these first decades of the nineteenth century and is the first style not adopted wholesale from the West. According to the Slavicist Judith Armstrong, Moscow and St. Petersburg were at this time microcosms of what was occurring in Western Europe in terms of Romantic rebellion.\(^{108}\) She in particular cites the popularity among Russian audiences in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century of Goethe’s “The Sorrows of Young Werther” (1774), a key text which would influence the later Romantic movement. In fact, Kiprensky had sought out the author in a trip he made to Marienbad, where he produced a pencil portrait of Goethe (Figure 12).\(^{109}\) On the growth of Romanticism in opposition to Classicism in Russia, John Bowlt writes: “At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Russian intellectual society rapidly divided into many factions, and new artistic philosophies evolved, questioning the rectitude of the classical idea, proposing alternative systems, and contributing to the formation of a more romantic tendency.”\(^ {110}\)

Thus whereas the Neoclassical was in many ways as affected as the European dress and manners adopted by the nobility in the years of Peter the Great’s reign, Romanticism was a mode that emerged, much like in France, in both Russian literature

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\(^{110}\) Bowlt, “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 118. Byron too was very popular in Russia at this time. Several scholars write of the central importance of this key Romantic literary figure: “Byron was idolized in Russia in the early nineteenth century: one of the Decembrists carried his poetry to the scaffold, while others read him in exile; his works were translated into Russian soon after they were published in English and many Russians learned them by heart.” See Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 139-140. And in addition E.J. Simmons, *English Literature and Culture in Russia 1553-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1935).
and art as a reaction to the disillusionment of failed revolutions and Enlightenment values which were being to lose their meaning. The disaffection with the existing order resulted in a sense of estrangement from the present, one that was expressed by the deliberate adoption of affectations. Key to this rise in Russia is another early writer on the fine arts, Aleksei Tomilov (1779-1848) who strongly questioned the canons of classicism in art, asserting that “feeling” and the “imagination” were of primary importance and that the artist had the right to communicate his own intuitive response in his works.  

Just as Courbet grappled between styles in the 1840s, so too Kiprensky occupied a space between several opposing, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, realms then developing in Russia. He was, first and foremost perhaps, a foreigner living for extended periods of time in Italy, and torn between different modes: the Classicism of the Academy in which he was trained and the Romanticism then sweeping Europe. The latter was likely to have been most easily aligned with his volatile personality, but the artist’s tight paint-handling (Figure 13), his seamless brushwork, the intense tenebrism – all hearken back to Renaissance ideals and Caravaggio’s Baroque heroism (Figure 14).

All of these Classical elements combine with a powerful evocation of mood and feeling which is staunchly Romantic. These figures betray the impact of Caravaggio, but they merge and coalesce with an intense emotive realism. Kiprensky’s “Young Gardner”

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111 Bowlt, “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 119. This idea of “intuitive response” has direct parallels with Ruth Leys’ discussion of automatic or reflex-like emotional responses in “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” Critical Inquiry 37 (Spring 2011), 434-472. Affect theory will play a larger role in my discussion chapter of the 1870s in chapter five. But I note the problematics regarding ideas about how emotional responses are formed and what kind of knowledge they constitute between mind and body here.

112 It is also important in terms of this brief discussion of Classicism vs. Romanticism in Russia in the first half of the century, to note that the writings of both Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Anton Raphael Mengs were known in Russia since the end of the eighteenth century. For more information on Winckelmann’s influence in Russia, see Konstantin Lappo-Danilevsky, “Die Anfänge der Winckelmann-Rezeption in Rußland,” Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie 58 (1999), 293-311.
lies somewhere between “Courbet’s Man with a Leather Belt” and “The Sculptor” (Figure 15). He revels in the physicality of the depiction; again there is a gaze that doesn’t quite catch us, as well as arms and hands that lead our eyes around and in. But even in as much as the viewer is lured into the image, they are ultimately denied by the theatricality. These paintings are so constructed; the figures are made so utterly self-absorbed; they depict men who are held captive in the depth of the thought that has just consumed them.  

Theories of Emotion in Art before Midcentury – ‘state of mind’

In his seminal work on Courbet, T.J. Clark addresses the artist’s self-portraits of the 1840s at length. He too is concerned with deciphering the transition in style that Courbet undergoes around 1848. Of “Self-Portrait, Man with Pipe,” he writes:

…it is a definite success, the first picture we can call Romantic without regretting the fact. […] He is the prototype for all the self-portraits to come, at last assertive without being coquettish, grim-faced without being self-pitying, suffering without going into a swoon. The portrait is melodrama, but this time without bathos; Romanticism with a new kind of conviction.  

Clark here sums up the tension between the artist’s lingering romantic style and the emerging new self-assurance. Clark calls Courbet in this moment a man “still between

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113 My work here is heavily indebted to Michael Fried’s book on the oppositional forces of absorption and theatricality in the eighteenth century. He posits these as two different modes for how the beholder engages with a work of art (and how the painter originally conceived of the power of his painting). The construction I see at work in Courbet’s and Kiprensky’s paintings builds off of this work by Fried, while also incorporating the theory developed by the philosopher Richard Wolheim for absorption and the imaginary space of the viewer. Wolheim discusses the works of Manet and Degas as comprising two different and opposing (though related) modes for viewing. He pits the absorption at work in Manet’s paintings against works which are “all about show” (145). Ultimately, Wolheim sees Degas as depicting alienation rather than the preoccupation at work in Manet’s paintings (170) and this is related, though distinctive from Fried’s construction. See Wolheim, Painting as an Art (Princeton University Press, 1987) and Fried, Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (University of California Press, 1980) and The Moment of Caravaggio (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).  

114 Clark, Image of the People, 41.
two centuries.”115 And in this sense, the self-portraits become an ideal vehicle for analyzing the change Courbet is undergoing. In many ways it may be better to describe Courbet in the 1840s as a late-coming romantic or post-romantic, he has not yet let go of the Byron-esque bathetic drama, what Clark calls “the paraphernalia of Romanticism.”116

Courbet’s self-portraits over the course of the 1840s explore the emotional and temperamental boundaries of the self117 and they demonstrate a desire to depict not only the physiognomy of the face and body in an age before photography or to immortalize oneself for the sake of history and memory, but the new desire to accurately represent in painted form the emotional life that constitutes contemporaneity. They serve as an act demonstrative of perceptive consciousness and grounded in one’s relationship with modern reality itself.

Courbet wrote of the tight-knit relationship between one’s moods and the overarching narrative of life in 1854, “I have made many portraits of myself during my life, corresponding with the changes in my state of mind – I have written the story of my life, in short…”118 For Courbet it would seem that the changes in his state of mind constituted life itself – the vacillations comprising the very substance of experience. It is no wonder then that the depiction of a great many variances in “state of mind” form such a central focus in this early part of his oeuvre. The years after Courbet wrote these lines

115 Clark, Image of the People, 41.
116 Ibid.
117 Fried would say they explore the emotional and temperamental boundaries between the sitter and the beholder, but my argument is slightly different.
118 Letter from Courbet to Bruyas, May, 1854 (Borel, op. cit., p. 20), quoted in Linda Nochlin, Courbet (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 49.
would witness an explosion of theorizing about emotions and emotionality’s role in life.¹¹⁹

Marie-François-Pierre Maine de Biran (1766-1824) kept a journal between 1794 and 1824 that proposed to track the effects of everyday circumstances “on our machine and on our soul.”¹²⁰ This journal noted all the impressions of Maine de Biran’s daily existence, no matter how trivial, and notably included detailed records of his mood swings and feelings. He also published a number of treatises in his lifetime, including one in 1807 titled “Mémoire sur les perceptions obscurs” (An Essay on Obscure Perceptions).¹²¹ In attempting to break away from the Sentimentalist approach taken by earlier theorists like Diderot, Maine de Biran avoided tying his theories on emotion to ideas of moral sensibility, instead focusing on what he saw as the complex connection between emotions and the body.¹²² While according to the scholar Nathan Elbert Truman, Maine de Biran gave only a very fragmentary account of the relationship between aesthetics and emotion, his account on ‘Ethics and Aesthetics’ does include this telling section:

The feelings which art arouses are inherent in human nature. Artists discover relations between these feelings and apply to them combinations of elements modeled by the imagination. ...the power of the artist rests in the beauty of expression...Art...makes us feel what cannot be shown in sense or represented in imagination.¹²³

¹¹⁹ After mid-century, thinkers like François Delsarte (1811-71) emerge; his “System of Oratory” (published in 1884/93) was concerned with how actors should represent emotion and can be used to lend insight to later portraits by Degas and Manet. Alexander Bain (1818-1903), a Scottish philosopher, also wrote a book on emotion in these years (“Mind and Body” - published in 1872). Hippolyte Taine (1828-93), a French critic and historian published “On Intelligence” in 1870. Taine’s lectures on art are cited by the Russian artist Ilya Repin as among the works read at the Artel’s open Thursday evenings in the 1860s - see Ilya Repin, Dalekoe blizkoe (Moscow, 1937), 229. Also important is Charles Darwin’s influential “The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals” (published in 1872).


¹²¹ Reddy, The Navigation of Feeling, 218

¹²² Ibid., 218-19.

¹²³ Nathan Elbert Truman, Maine de Biran’s Philosophy of Will (The Macmillan Company, 1904 ), 76.
Before this period, the painter and art theorist Charles Le Brun (1619-90) had represented the leading force in understanding the role of emotions in art and theorizing on their depiction. His posthumously published treatise, “A Method to Learn to Design the Passions” had a strong influence on the expression of emotion in painting for the next two centuries.\(^{124}\) According to Helene E. Roberts, the tradition instituted by Le Brun that certain facial features represented specific emotions were still very much in effect and influenced Courbet in the 1840s.\(^{125}\) Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace too claim that “Charles Le Brun...lectured on both the fixed signs of the head and the communicative features of passing emotions...Even the ‘Realist’, Gustave Courbet, working in the context of new notions of insanity in the mid-nineteenth century, espouses the same notion [as Le Brun] of how the soul is expressed in the contorted mask of someone in deepest despair.”\(^{126}\) Le Brun was still being cited and discussed in defense of Courbet’s work by such notables as Champfleury (1820-89) in the 1860s. In defense of Courbet’s “Burial at Ornans,” Champfleury quipped: “You critics who pretend to understand the Beautiful, go look in a mirror and then dare to print that your face conforms to the “Characters of the Noble Passions,” by the illustrious Le Brun.”\(^{127}\)

Certain of the expressive elements described by Le Brun in his section on “Sadness” align with Courbet’s self-portraits from the 1840s. Le Brun states that:

Sadness...is figured by such motions as seem to express the inquietude of the Brain and the dejection of the heart; for the ends of the Eyebrows are more elevated towards the middle of the Forehead then [sic] towards the Temples; in a person affected with this Passion the Pupils are cloudy, the Whites of the Eye yellow, the Eye-lids fallen

and somewhat swelled, the Round of the Eyes livid, the Nostrils drawing downwards, the Mouth somewhat open and the corners down…

Many of these details are true of the two self-portraits already discussed – the cloudy pupils, fallen eyelids, downturned mouth. Courbet may have been familiar with the Academic principles of Le Brun’s theory and others such as Maine de Biran circulating at the time.

It is possible that Le Brun’s works were known in Russia through Nikolai Yusupov (1751-1831), who was one of the richest men in Russia in the early nineteenth century, and had an identifiable impact on standards of taste. During one of several trips to France in 1808-10, Yusupov bought works by Le Brun and Greuze. According to the art historian Rosalind Gray, he was “integral to the dissemination of French artistic values in Russia.”

Over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, Kiprensky composed a number of paintings of groups of unidentified men that highlight the variance of their respective temperaments and states of mind at the moment the artist captures them. The force of the boys’ opposing personalities in his “Neapolitan Fisherboys” (Figure 16) – one gazing directly out of the painting and the other in reverie – testifies to Kiprensky’s interest in the depiction of focus and the emotional world of men. In addition, the artist’s “Readers of Newspapers in Naples” (Figure 17) demonstrates a willingness to represent men in a state of private bourgeois dishabille. Each of the men in the group are shown in dressing gowns and this is a strange and singular choice of dress for a group portrait. And this was not the only time Kiprensky chose this singularly

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129 Gray, Russian Genre Painting, 21-22.
strong symbol for masculine leisure for a formal portrait. Several others survive from the early years of the century (Figure 18).

These paintings are related to the late eighteenth-century French tradition to depict great thinkers like Diderot (Figure 19) in similar states of dishabille as a means of underscoring the notion that we are capturing a glimpse of the private life of a great man. But Kiprensky’s dressing gown-clad men have a different nuance to them. These works make us feel as though we are catching more than a glimpse of the process of a writer behind closed doors. In contrast to the kind of staged, pre-packaged perfection of Diderot’s dishabille, Kiprensky’s portraits are concerned with presenting the appearance of greater authenticity.130 They seem to record a private moment and are grounded in a kind of naivety. It is as though the Russians have a different sense of propriety about what is proper for formal portraiture. And this further underscores the difference in Russia’s artistic heritage and historical past as well as the very different ways that the Russians represented their connections to this past.

Images of men in states of dishabille will be addressed at greater length in chapter three, but Kiprensky already in these paintings evinces an interest in new questions and modes. Even in this early moment in the century, he is dabbling in what will become Realism by showing an interest in the accurate depiction of man in moments of private leisure. His willingness to depict men in various states of semi-orderly undress belies the theatricality of Romanticism in which the standard art historical narrative has always subsumed this artist. In the case of the Russians, the case seems to be that they were less

130 I use “authenticity” here to describe a mode of self-presentation which is natural in the sense that it does not calibrate or shape itself to abide by codes for social behavior and expectation. Authenticity presents itself from the strata of inner nature or unconscious affect, without recourse to any artful or theatrical mode aimed at public self-presentation. It is thus naive in the sense that it is largely unregulated for reaction or effect.
Romantic or less attached to the values of Romanticism than was previously believed and the French were perhaps more so or retained their attachment for longer – even figures like Courbet who have long been considered the very epitome of Realist practice in art-making.

**Disaffection and Affectation**

Kiprensky and Courbet are both experimenting in portraiture with the construction of versions of the self. In his self-portraits, Courbet was not only trying out various modes for self-depiction, but more profoundly struggling with the formulation of a visual and conceptual representation of what he could call “self” in these years. He assumed various substantive poses which serve as projections for his sense of having multiple selves. And these become characters for him to affectively inhabit. Even the titles of the paintings reflect this quality. Courbet’s works are not titled simply “Self-Portrait” or “Portrait of the Artist,” but “Self-Portrait, The Desperate Man,” “Self-Portrait, Man with a Leather Belt,” etc. It is as though Courbet is positing (both visually and thematically) different versions of himself – as distinctively and quantitatively different men at different moments.\(^{131}\)

States of mind were now taken to a conceptual extreme. The sheer number of self-portraits produced in this short span demonstrate that Courbet did not find satisfaction in any single representation of himself. Courbet circulated around a series of selves (Figure \(^{20}\)) – men in different moods (desperate, fearful, melancholic), in different

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\(^{131}\) The conception of the self is a relatively new idea at midcentury and one growing in importance. By the 1880s it is thought impossible to pin down one self. The work of William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) is important in this regard, but comes late for the discussion I want to focus on in terms of the first half of the nineteenth century.
circumstances (wounded, at leisure, playing music), and with different accoutrements (belt, dog, striped collar, pipe, etc.). He sometimes even gives these alter ego conceptions of himself various creative guises and occupations – positing himself as an artist before the easel, as a languishing sculptor embedded in nature, as a cellist (Figure 21). These selves are rarely identified by place or time or any sort of external circumstance, but instead specifically in reference to objects which accompany and externalize their dramatic qualities. These possessions through which Courbet shows himself become metaphors for the artist himself, for his concerns and circumstances. They are used like an actor’s props for the stage – key to his performance, forming it and constituting his role while at the same time persuading us of its authenticity.¹³²

Courbet’s and Kiprensky’s men, all take part in a grand play of the artists’ creation; together they seem to indicate to the viewer that these men can be known, grasped, understood. In reality, however, they serve as modes of evasion. Their theatricality pushes us away in the same moment that it inspires our curiosity. In the same way that the pose and depiction of hands in “Man with a Leather Belt” visually invite the viewer into the scene, but ultimately serve as a barrier to our full imaginative entrance into it, the abundance of selves and self-conceptions in these portraits ultimately deny the viewer empathic entrance. We are confused by the sheer number of selves on offer before us which supposedly constitute this one man.¹³³

¹³² Bill Brown has written productively on the role of “things” and the potency of objects in a materialist society. He describes “a new materialism that takes objects for granted only in order to grant them their potency—to show how they organize our private and public affection.” See Bill Brown, “Thing Theory,” Critical Inquiry 28, No. 1, Things (Autumn, 2001), 7. His discussion in this essay was important for the development of my ideas on Courbet’s use of objects.

¹³³ This does present a problem in terms of how Courbet meant for us to view these self-portraits in their sum totality. They cannot in reality be viewed altogether (except perhaps if we imagine they were by Courbet himself as the first and ultimate spectator/beholder), but they can be viewed this way conceptually. In fact, they are often discussed by scholars in particular as a group and investigated summarily together, in
Which are we to imagine the artist viewed as most authentic? Are we to envision this as a statement on the complicated nature of humanity? That we are all constituted by various selves; that we look different depending on time and mood and circumstance?

Yes, perhaps, but the work Courbet and Kiprensky are doing here is more complex than that. They are grappling with the profound multivalence that is self as an identity construct and both artists are using self-portraiture to plumb the depths of perception and their own sense of alienation. This self-absorption could be viewed as narcissism, if we subscribe to Sigmund Freud’s (1856-1939) theory that a libido that has been withdrawn from the external world and redirected inward to the ego gives rise to the attitude of narcissism.\(^\text{134}\) But it’s not simply that – Romantic artists grappled with the problems which inhere in intensive self-gazing and the process of constant self-judgment in regards to the world. Where Freud is helpful is in understanding how in the work of Courbet in particular, the assessment of his own perceptive uniqueness began to border on the pathological; it became a kind of melancholic narcissism as he became more and more isolated and disappointed with his failure to achieve public recognition and success in the 1840s.\(^\text{135}\)

The self-portraits of Courbet and Kiprensky demonstrate the transition they are undergoing between philosophies and styles. And as representations of a change in


\(^{135}\) Courbet seems to be also growing closer over this decade to dedicating himself to a public persona which relates to the melancholic genius – a trope that was certainly being revived during the early nineteenth century. Clark makes an argument similar to this, but with the added dimension that Courbet is linking his identity to the bohemian in *Image of the People*. Also central to my thinking on this subject of the melancholy of artists in this period and of art historians as the interpreters of their works has been Michael Ann Holly’s *The Melancholy Art* (Essays in the Arts) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).
emotional investment, they also demonstrate a kind of mourning work. The writings done in 1917 by Freud help draw out the psychological mechanisms driving this particular form of sadness. Freud described melancholy as a kind of mourning, but one without an object. He believed it was a reaction to the loss of an ideal. And I would argue it is this dynamic of loss which appears so strongly in the works which are made before midcentury. For what is most important to understand about the generation of men in the Napoleonic era (both in Russia and in France) is that they were disillusioned with the world – with their leaders, with their revolutions, with the politics of the time. Napoleon’s ultimate defeat in 1812 and the exile which ensued represented one kind of very specific loss – as did the burning of Moscow, even though this represented only a partial defeat. What makes this generation profoundly different, and quintessentially Romantic, is that their disillusion never went so far as to become disillusionment with themselves. They were still sustained by the superiority of their valiant and individualistic struggles with doubt. Their sickness of soul may have been a sickness (and recognized as such), but it was nonetheless still their most valued characteristic. Even suicide for men of this generation upheld a sense of personal valor and self-fulfillment in the face of the forces of tyranny outside of one’s self.

What changed in Russia with the failure of the Decembrist revolt in 1825 and with the ultimate collapse of the popular revolutionary uprisings in France in 1830 and

136 Freud called this process of investment of mental or emotional energy in a person, object, or idea “cathexis.” The original German term - ‘Besetzung’ – denotes interest, but is also suggestive of related meanings such as “occupation” by troops or a “charge” of electricity. My argument here attempts to bypass the problems of Freud’s terminology (and of translating his writings more generally) while seeking to at the same time utilize his idea of how we become invested in at various times and under different circumstances ourselves, others, and/or objects in a kind of never-ending and variable cycle which self-portraiture seems to highlight in a particularly fascinating way.

1848 was the object of man’s disenchantment. And the art of the coming decades would reflect this. In the course of the first half of the century what was lost was the belief in an ideal self, the affectation and posturing which inhered in the superiority of the male aristocrat’s view of himself. As they came to be dethroned by an increasingly bourgeois society in the second half of the century, valiant fathers gave way to utterly disaffected sons. Romanticism as a mode of self-expression and self-understanding also gave way to the mourning work of Realism, to the “reality” of the loss of the ideal of oneself and one’s ability to effect purposeful change.

138 Interestingly, Freud specifically discusses how the melancholic can be understood as having experienced an “object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness” but which is personal. “…The melancholic seems puzzling to us because we cannot see what it is that is absorbing him so entirely…an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale…it is merely that he has a keener eye for the truth than other people who are not melancholic…we only wonder why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind.” See Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917) in The Standard Edition of the Complete Works, XIV: 245.
Chapter Two – Calls for Realism: The Masculine Interior and the Rise of Critical Contemporaneity, 1825-1848

The spleen is what the English call it, We simply call it Russian soul.
‘Twas this our hero had contracted;
And though thank God, he never acted
To put a bullet through his head,
His former love of life was dead…
No, nothing touched his somber heart,
He noticed nothing, took no part.

—Aleksandr Pushkin, “Eugene Onegin” (1825-32)\(^{139}\)

The Decembrist Revolt - ‘A profound feeling of aversion for official Russia’

14 December 1825 saw two important events unfold in the streets of St. Petersburg which were to have lasting effects in Russia throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century.\(^{140}\) The day marked the beginning of the reign of Tsar Nicholas I. A cold Monday, by contemporary accounts temperatures reached a low of -8 degrees Celsius. Russian superstition held that Mondays were an unlucky day and the cold was considered a further bad omen for the coming reign.\(^{141}\) But the real mar to the accession was the protest demonstration by thousands of Imperial Army officers and other liberal-minded citizens. This revolt was not one comprised of dissatisfied peasants and workers as had been typical of Russian uprisings in the past.\(^{142}\) Rather it was organized and carried out in large part by members of Russia’s nobility, including some from the highest registers of the aristocracy. The dissatisfaction with unrealized reform during the reign of

\(^{140}\) The date would have been December 26 according to the New Style calendar.
\(^{142}\) The Pugachev Rebellion of 1773-75 was the principal revolt in a series of popular rebellions that took place in Russia after Catherine II seized power in 1762. The rebellion consolidated several groups including peasants, Cossacks, and Old Believers. See John T. Alexander, *Autocratic Politics in a National Crisis: the Imperial Russian Government and Pugachev's Revolt, 1773-1775* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969).
Nicholas’ brother led the protesters in December to refuse a swearing of allegiance to the new tsar. They hoped to force the government to accept a constitutional monarchy. These highly educated men expressed deep dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between what Russia could have been and the stagnation which in reality characterized it. When Russian troops forced Napoleon all the way back to France, they began to see just how backward their nation was compared to the rest of Europe. They began to express through their writings and their actions that after decades of failed promises from Tsar Alexander, something had to be done to bring about reform in this new era.

For several long hours there was a stand-off in the square between the 3,000 disorganized rebel soldiers and the 9,000 loyal troops stationed outside of the Senate building. The uprising was eventually smashed by the order of Nicholas, who appeared in person and ordered three artillery pieces to open fire on the crowds, causing the rebels to scatter and flee to the frozen Neva river to the north of the square.143 On the Tsar’s order, they were pursued and the artillery and canon fire broke the ice as the protester’s attempted a crossing, causing tremendous casualties. The events of 14 December became known as the Decembrist Revolt—what scholars now believe to be Russia’s first revolution.

Its failure is often explained by the disorganization and the vacillation of its key leadership figures. The Russian historian Nicholas Riasanovksy describes the “ambivalences, hesitations, and weaknesses” of the Decembrists: “It is generally agreed that their one hope of success lay in quick and decisive action; but nothing was done. And these were some of the bravest and most daring officers of Russia, heroes of

Napoleonic wars.” On the day of the accession, many of the the very leaders of the uprising failed to show up in Senate Square. The revolt had been deserted by both its elected “dictator” Prince Sergei Trubetskoy, who had a last minute change of heart, and then also his second in command, who by all accounts vanished from the scene.

Trubetskoy’s ranking assistants who were present on the day of the uprising, Colonel Alexander Bulatov and Captain Alexander Iakubovich acted so strangely in the wake of their leader’s failure as to suggest complete mental breakdowns. They deserted the rebel cause and swore allegiance to Nicholas. Bulatov would later regret this action and commit suicide in prison.145

In the aftermath, the main perpetrators of the revolt were found and taken to the Winter Palace to be questioned and tried. Five men were sentenced to death by public hanging. But on the day of the execution, the ropes that were being used to hang the men broke before any of them actually died. This caused a sigh of relief in the crowd because, according to a centuries-old tradition, any condemned prisoner who survived a botched execution was considered pardoned by God and was released. Nevertheless, rather than free them, Nicholas ordered new ropes brought and the prisoners, several of whom had broken their legs in the fall, were hanged again.146 Having experienced the trauma of mass uprising on the very first day of his reign, Nicholas I became determined to restrain Russian society thereafter.

**Tsar Nicholas I and ‘Muscovite Melancholy’**


145 Ibid., 10.

The years following the failure of the Decembrist revolt were characterized by a sense of disillusionment among Russia’s educated classes. The art historian Dmitri Sarabianov describes the months following that fateful December as a time in which “the soul of educated Russia was plunged into despair.” The ineffectiveness of attempts to bring about change and the wholesale failure of the elite leadership ushered in a time of despondency. If Russia’s best and brightest couldn’t even be counted on to show up when the nation needed them, then what hope could there be for the future? Was Russia to be doomed by the ambivalence of her sons? Alexander I had long promised to abolish serfdom, but had taken no definite action to actually bring this reform about and now the noble leaders of what was to be a great revolution had failed even to show up at the event they themselves organized. A period of existential gloom ensued.

Nicholas quickly became known for the dominating force of his decisive and sometimes cruel actions. Ordering the protesters to be fired upon in Senate Square and calling for grapeshot and artillery fire as the rebels scattered over the frozen Neva were to be the first moments of his autocratic rule. But he was also famous for his domineering physical presence as well. Standing six feet three inches tall, he was remembered by contemporaries as possessing a god-like presence. The American diplomat and historian Andrew Dickinson White (1832-1918) served as attaché at the U.S. legation in St. Petersburg from 1854–55 and wrote:

In reviewing this first of my sojourns in Russia, my thoughts naturally dwell upon the two sovereigns Nicholas I and Alexander II. The first of these was a great man scared out of greatness by the ever recurring specter of the French Revolution. [...] He had thus become the fanatic apostle of reaction throughout Europe, and as such was everywhere the implacable enemy of any evolution of constitutional liberty. The despots of Europe adored him. [...] he overawed all men by his presence...Colossal in

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stature; with a face such as one finds on a Greek coin, but overcast with a shadow of Muscovite melancholy; with a bearing dignified, but with a manner not unkind, he bore himself like a god.  

The “Muscovite melancholy” of Nicholas I was seen as an extension of his brother’s wavering and largely ineffectual efforts at reform.

Thus the “crowned Hamlet,” as we have already discovered Tsar Alexander I was known, was brother to the man who would become tsar and suffer from a similar vacillating melancholy. Russia’s rulers were seen even in their own time to be men whose souls were shaded by a peculiar kind of hopeless despair. Alexander had by all accounts wished to free the serfs but never carried out this professed desire and now his brother was seeking to dam the constant rush of revolt at home and abroad. Of the years after the failed Decembrist revolt, Alexander Herzen (1812-70) would later write:

Thirty years ago, the Russia of the future existed exclusively among a few boys, hardly more than children, so small and inconspicuous that there was room for them under the heels of the jackboots of the autocracy—yet in them lay the heritage of December 14, […] as well as the learning of all humanity. This new life struggled on like the grass sprouting at the mouth of the still smoldering crater […] The leading characteristic of all them all was a profound feeling of aversion for official Russia […] and in some of them a vehement desire to change the contemporary state of affairs.

A New Hero - ‘our generation's vices in full bloom’

These same years saw the emergence of a new hero in Russian literature who was to recur in prose and poems by a range of authors throughout the century. He came to be known as “lishnyi chelovek” – the “superfluous man” – bored and melancholic, usually from the upper classes, a man for whom time meant idleness and purpose in life was

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148 Andrew Dickinson White, Works of Andrew Dickinson White (Mobile reference, 2010).
149 Herzen was writing this section of his memoirs in the 1850s.
always either a daydream never met with action or an anxious afterthought among the
search for satiety. His existential boredom is cut only by a small range of typical
behaviors such as gambling, short-lived romantic intrigues, and duels. The term was
popularized by Ivan Turgenev's 1850 novella “The Diary of a Superfluous Man” and was
then applied to characters from earlier novels, such as Alexander Pushkin’s verse-novel
“Eugene Onegin” (1825-32) and Alexander Griboedov’s popular play “Woe from Wit”
(1823-25). The many permutations of the superfluous man have been variously
described as “neurotic, melancholic... ridiculous,”151 as an “ineffective idealist”152 and a
“hero who suffers defeat because of the inability of society to understand the
individualist,”153 or as one “who is sensitive to social and ethical problems, but who fails
to act.”154

The diary which makes up the body of Turgenev’s 1850 novella tells the story of
Chulkaturin, a man of comfortable means leading a dreary and largely solitary existence.
The journal entries cover a period of two weeks following Chulkaturin’s diagnosis with a
fatal disease, one which ultimately leads to his death at the end of the novella. In the face

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152 D.S. Mirsky, A History of Russian Literature, ed. Francis J. Whitfield (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,
1973), 189.
153 Ellen B. Chances, Conformity’s Children: An Approach to the Superfluous Man in Russian Literature
(Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1978), iii.
Aside from those already noted above, other excellent studies on the superfluous man include: E. A.
Polotskaya, “Ilya Oblomov and the Superfluous Men of the 1880s and 1890s,” Scottish Slavonic Review
Patterson, “The Superfluous Man’s Superfluous Discourse,” Language and Style 20, no. 3 (1987): 230-241
Works on the subject in Russian include: B. Brusov, “Lishnie o slova o ‘lishnikh lyudyakh,” Voprosy
Russkaya literature 3 (1976), 109-21; and V.V. Vorosky, “Lishnie lyudi,” Literaturno-kriticheski Stat’i
(Moscow, 1956), 98-118.
of his impending demise, the story’s hero wallows in his inactivity and the realization of his life’s enormous futility and uselessness.\textsuperscript{155} Chulkaturin states:

I must confess one thing - I have been an utterly superfluous man in this world […] Superfluous, superfluous….That’s a capital word I have devised. The more deeply I penetrate into myself, the more attentively I scrutinize the whole of my own past life, the more convinced do I become of the strict justice of that expression. Superfluous—precisely that. That word is not appropriate to other people. …People are bad, good, clever, stupid, agreeable, and disagreeable; but superfluous….no. That is to say, understand me: the universe could dispense with these people also….of course; but their uselessness is not their distinguishing characteristic. […] But I….of me nothing else could possibly said: superfluous—that is all.\textsuperscript{156}

What would come to the fore in Turgenev’s work had its roots in the earlier writings of Alexander Pushkin.\textsuperscript{157} His verse-novel “Eugene Onegin,” whose eponymous character is considered the original archetype of the superfluous man in Russia, is the story of a bored St. Petersburg dandy much like Chulkaturin, but of the earlier generation of the 1820s. His extreme selfishness, narcissism and indifference lead him over the course of the story to kill his friend in a duel as well as to scorn and then decide to pursue the love of an innocent and honorable young woman.\textsuperscript{158} Onegin’s tragedy is his interminable lack of satisfaction.

[...] wearied by the ballroom’s clamour,
He sleeps in blissful, sheer delight—
This child of comfort and of glamour,
Who turns each morning into night.
By afternoon he’d finally waken,
The day ahead all planned and taken:
The endless round, the varied game;

\textsuperscript{156} All the ellipses not in brackets are the author’s own. See Ivan Turgeneff, The Diary of a Superfluous Man and Other Stories, Isabel F. Hapgood, trans. (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1904), 13-14.
\textsuperscript{157} Especially helpful in the development of my understanding of Pushkin has been the work of Monika Greenleaf. See Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony (Stanford University Press, 1997).
\textsuperscript{158} Superfluous men are often counterbalanced by strong, active female characters or male foreigners who provide a foil for their eternal lassitude and boredom. Noteworthy examples of this are Pushkin’s Onegin and Tatyana and Goncharov’s Olga and Stolz in Oblomov.
Tomorrow too will be the same.
[...]

soon he lost all warmth of feeling:

The social buzz became a bore,
And all those beauties, once appealing,
Were objects of his thought no more.

[...] The spleen is what the English call it,

We simply call it Russian soul.
‘Twas this our hero had contracted;

[...] His former love of life was dead.

Like Byron’s Harold, lost in trances,

Through drawing rooms he’d pass and stare;

But neither whist, nor gossip there,

Nor wanton sighs, nor tender glances—

No, nothing touched his somber heart,

He noticed nothing, took no part.

[...] He locked himself within his den

And, with a yawn, took up his pen

And tried to write. But art’s exaction

Of steady labour made him ill,

And nothing issued from his quill

[...] Once more an idler, now he smothers

The emptiness that plagues his soul

By making his the thoughts of others—

A laudable and worthy goal.

He crammed his bookshelf overflowing,

Then read and read—frustration growing:

[...] nothing new was in the new;

So...over all that dusty crowd

He draped a linen mourning shroud.

Onegin is doomed to an ennui and loneliness which he himself perpetuates. He would serve as the inspiration for a new generation of writers concerned about the apathy they saw largely pervading Russia’s upper classes.

Throughout his life, Pushkin himself suffered the impositions of the autocratic state, first under Tsar Alexander I and then Nicholas I. In his youth he was exiled from the capital for a few mildly seditious verses and then was plagued by constant police surveillance and censorship in his later years. He never fully succeeded in escaping from the constant obligations of government service required by his class and begrudged the

necessity of having to rely upon imperial favor.\textsuperscript{160} Pushkin requested permission from Nicholas I several times to leave Russia and live abroad. He was continually denied, demonstrating that even members of Russia’s noblest classes were restricted at the most basic level from living where they wished. Many scholars have recognized the influence which Pushkin’s trouble with the authorities had on his work.

And it is notable that the first chapter of “Onegin” was published the same year as the Decembrist revolt. Several of Pushkin’s close friends were active participants in the uprising. Pushkin himself was unable to have much direct involvement due to his exile on his family estate in Mikhailovskoe in 1824-26.\textsuperscript{161} Nonetheless, the dissatisfaction which led up to and followed the event can be seen in his complex rendering of the angst-ridden and dispassionate hero Onegin. Of this dynamic, the literary scholars Jesse and Bette Clardy wrote, “Onegin’s weakness is the fault of Russian society which demands that he do nothing.”\textsuperscript{162} The work is pervaded by the feeling of futility and disillusionment which marked Pushkin’s own generation after the failure of the Decembrist revolt.

Mikhail Lermontov’s “A Hero of Our Time” (1839-41) depicted another early iteration of the superfluous man.\textsuperscript{163} Its protagonist, Pechorin, can be seen as a nihilist and fatalist; his emotional unavailability and boredom persist despite the series of exciting journeys and episodes which befall him over the course of the novel’s five short stories. In his own words: “Afraid of decision, I buried my finer feelings in the depths of my

\textsuperscript{160} Falen, introduction to Pushkin, \textit{Eugene Onegin}, ix.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., xxxiv.
\textsuperscript{162} Clardy, \textit{The Superfluous Man in Russian Letters}, 21.
\textsuperscript{163} Especially helpful in the development of my understanding of Lermontov has been the work of David Powelstock. See \textit{Becoming Mikhail Lermontov: The Ironies of Romantic Individualism in Nicholas I’s Russia} (Northwestern University Press, 2011).
heart and they died there.” The preface to the work explains Lermontov's idea of his character and the wider implications he has for Russian society:

‘A Hero of Our Time,’ my dear readers, is indeed a portrait, but not of one man. It is a portrait built up of all our generation's vices in full bloom. You will again tell me that a human being cannot be so wicked, and I will reply that if you can believe in the existence of all the villains of tragedy and romance, why wouldn't you believe that there was a Pechorin? If you could admire far more terrifying and repulsive types, why aren't you more merciful to this character, even if it is fictitious? Isn't it because there's more truth in it than you might wish?  

In a series of heart-breaking self-realizations over the course of the novel, Pechorin admits:

Whether I am a fool or a villain I know not; but this is certain, I am also most deserving of pity… My soul has been spoiled by the world, my imagination is unquiet, my heart insatiate. To me everything is of little moment. I have become as easily accustomed to grief as to joy, and my life grows emptier day by day.  

These men emerge at the birth of modernity, from the vortex that opens between early attempts at reform and class conflict. In them, dissatisfaction, impending industrialization, and revolution met and cleaved. They emerge over the course of the first half of the century, different permutations of a troubled personality type and dark realizations about an entire generation—a society beginning to examine itself—all belied by a veneer of noble demeanor and masculine honor which was becoming increasingly thin and compromised.

The superfluous man as first explored by Pushkin, Lermontov, and Turgenev would ultimately become a literary and cultural force explored by the likes of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekov to the end of and even beyond the turn of the century.  

165 Ibid.
166 The works often discussed and debated in this context are: Lev Tolstoy, The Death of Ivan Ilych, trans. Ian Dreblatt (Brooklyn, N.Y: Melville House Pub., 2008). The Cossacks and Other Stories, trans. I. P.
characterizations of him ranged in accordance with various authors’ conceptions—from brave but apathetic as a result of isolation to completely disillusioned and useless—what remains central to each of the iterations is the boredom and melancholy which in each case eventually consumes him. He is a man of incredible self-pity—idealistic and capable of action, but so lazy he is incapacitated—his privilege makes him tragically dissolute. The superfluous man is a sign of the pathos growing during Nicholas’s reign, as Russia’s aristocracy became increasingly threatened by social unrest among its educated classes, but also painfully aware of the futility of action that would bring about longed for reform.

Even at the time, Russian critics from the intelligentsia viewed the superfluous man as a by-product of Nicholas I’s autocratic rule and the disillusionment which grew from the failure of the Decembrist revolt in 1825. Feeling that Russia would be doomed to never-ending imperialist repression and lacking other options for self-realization, many of Russia’s most well educated men doomed themselves to live out their life in passivity. Jesse and Betty Clardy describe the superfluous man as one who “continues to hope that somewhere in the universe there exists a beautiful truth that will give his life meaning and purpose, and that this will eliminate the vicious pain of feeling useless on this earth.”167 In Russian society in this moment the superfluous man was not just another literary type but a paradigm of all men who had lost a point in life, who had become disillusioned by ineffectual efforts for change. These men couldn’t cope with even the

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most trivial matters of day to day life, much less the kinds of large scale societal issues affecting Russia at the time—from religious persecution, massacre of revolutionaries, and peasant rebellions to widespread censorship, unnecessary wars, and tyrannical rule.

‘Exist only to teach the world some type of great lesson’

In the first comprehensive art historical study in English of Russian Realism, David Jackson sums up the effects of this situation in the second quarter of the nineteenth century: “…the roots of most modern developments in the Russian arts are…traceable to Nicholas’ interventions and restrictions, and to the frustrated ambitions that found an early testing ground in his conservative reign.” In these years, Russia’s celebrated intelligentsia, then still a class of educated men operating predominantly in literary and political spheres, issued calls for the need to establish a national school of art, one that would reflect quintessentially Russian values and focus on contemporary content as opposed to merely aping Western styles and traditions. The intelligentsia arose in the first part of the nineteenth century as Russia’s university system expanded with the rapid foundation of a series of landmark institutions: the University of Kazan in 1804, Kharkov University in 1805, St. Petersburg University in 1817, and St. Vladimir’s in Kiev in 1834. In the same period, numerous journals were established which regularly included essays.

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168 David Jackson, *The Wanderers and Critical Realism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Painting* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 9. Of course, Elizabeth Valkenier’s work on the Peredvizhniky and Russian Realism came before Jackson’s books, but hers is not strictly art historical, hence my designation above as such.

169 The dating of the origin of the Russian intelligentsia has met with some debate in Slavic studies. In a four-essay cycle originally published in *Encounter* in 1955-56 and reprinted in *Russian Thinkers*, ed. Henry Hardy and Aileen Kelly (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 114-209), Isiah Berlin located the origins in the decade from 1838 to 1848, what he variously termed "a marvelous decade" or "a remarkable decade." Alternatively, James Billington dated the intelligentsia's rise to 1858 to 1863 (“The Intelligentsia and the Religion of Humanity," *The American Historical Review*, 675:4 (July 1960). Both have received support among scholars of Russian history and are valuable to any discussion of the intelligentsia's role in the transformation of art in the years around mid-century.
on art, such as Telescope (Teleskop), Moscow Telegraph (Moskovskii Telegraf), and Library for Reading (Biblioteka dlia chteniia).\textsuperscript{170}

The state and purpose of art interested the Russian intelligentsia profoundly. But there was debate as to how the goal of its transformation was to be achieved. Two primary factions within the group of literary authors and thinkers hotly debated the way forward. The more conservative Slavophiles, many of whom supported the autocracy and upheld the traditions of the Academy, were concerned about criticism being too strong a force within art. They espoused content which would act as a panegyric to Russia’s uniqueness. They called for a general celebration of what they perceived as singular values different and separate from the West’s “decadence.” In opposition, though running parallel to this thinking, was the more liberal view of the Westernizers who celebrated the achievements of Peter the Great and Russia’s engagement with Western Europe from the early eighteenth century on. They called for content in art which was outwardly critical and contemporary and an engagement with socio-political issues singular to Russia at the time.\textsuperscript{171}

A first wave of strong criticism was ushered in by Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856) and Vissarion Belinsky in the 1830s and 40s. In 1836, Chaadaev published an open letter addressing what he perceived to be Russia’s near total lack of usefulness and influence:

Isolated in the world, we have given nothing to the world, we have taken nothing from the world; we have not added a single idea to the mass of human ideas; we have contributed nothing to the progress of the human spirit…not one useful thought has

\textsuperscript{170} S. Starr, “Russian Art and Society, 1800-1850,” in \textit{Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia}, ed. Stavrou, 95. The development of art criticism in Russia will play a larger role in chapter four.
\textsuperscript{171} Stavrou, ed., \textit{Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia}, xv. In the words of Stavrou: “Russia remained a sort of Janus, gazing with equal perplexity both East and West as it strove to achieve a distinct cultural identity.”
sprouted in the sterile soil of our country; not a single great truth has sprung from our midst…whatever anyone says, we mark a void in the intellectual sphere.  

Chaadaev’s pessimism regarding Russia’s position at the time grew out of what he claimed would be a harnessing of its potential in years to come: “We are an exception among people. We belong to those who are not an integral part of humanity but exist only to teach the world some type of great lesson.” On what this great lesson was to be, Chaadaev was decidedly mum. But he did recognize that Russia’s distinctive and odd place among cultures was a key to its potential: “we are neither of the West nor of the East, and we have not the traditions of either. We stand, as it were, outside of time…”

Herzen would later describe the importance of Chaadaev’s letter in the development of the intelligentsia: “a shot that rang out in the dark night; whether it was something foundering that proclaimed its own wreck, whether it was a signal, a cry for help, whether it was news of the dawn or news that there would not be one—it was all the same: one had to wake up.”

Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848) followed this cynical outpouring with his own liberal-minded call to arms as critic and editor of two major literary magazines: Otechestvennye Zapiski (Notes of the Fatherland) and Sovremennik (The Contemporary).

Summing up the position of the intelligentsia, he noted how:

…the Russian public…is determined by the condition of Russian society in which fresh forces are seething and struggling for expression; but weighed down by heavy

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173 P. Ia. Chaadaev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pis’ma*, t. 1, trans. Nathaniel Knight (Moscow, 1991), 90, 92-93. Interestingly, Chaadaev was the model for the protagonist Chatsky in Griboyedov’s play and a close friend of Pushkin.

oppression, and finding no outlet, they induce merely dejection, weariness, and apathy.\footnote{Letter to N. V. Gogol (3 July 1847) in \textit{V.G. Belinsky: Selected Philosophical Works} (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948.).}

In reaction to the oppressive Tsarist autocracy, Belinsky developed the idea that the purpose of art and literature was to express the problems of contemporary society. He upheld the tenets of “naturalism” which he saw developing in Russian literature. He believed this new art was based “exclusively on real life, eschewing all ideals.” Belinsky was the first to call for art that was a “representation of reality” and he called for artists to “make an exclusive study of the crowd, the mass, to depict ordinary people.”\footnote{Belinsky, “A View of Russian Literature in 1847,” in Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, eds. \textit{Art in Theory: 1815-1900. An Anthology of Changing Ideas} (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 357.}

In his essay “The Idea of Art” (1841), Belinsky saw art and literature as primarily utilitarian, their goal being to transform society, not focus on the contemplation of aesthetic principles. Belinsky charged art with the duty to “defend civilisation, enlighten the human spirit, resist autocracy and obscurantism, and to formulate a national character”,\footnote{Jackson, \textit{The Wanderers}, 22.} remarking in 1840: “Art must serve mankind, not mankind art.”\footnote{Bowlt, “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in \textit{Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia}, ed. Stavrou, 128.} Further, Belinsky believed that “…the Russian has a deep, though still undeveloped, instinct for truth”\footnote{Letter to N. V. Gogol (3 July 1847) in \textit{V.G. Belinsky}, 146.}—one that art could call upon in its new evolution. The writer and liberal democrat Ivan Turgenev would write towards the end of his career on Belinsky’s revolutionary values and commitment to social justice:

Belinsky devoted himself wholly to the service of this ideal. He belonged to the camp of the “Westernizers” […] because he was deeply convinced of the need for Russia to absorb everything the West had produced for the development of her own powers and
Belinsky loved Russia; but he loved freedom and enlightenment as ardently. Thus the tension between Westernizing forces and more conservative Slavophile thinkers was developing in earnest in these years, but it would ultimately only be in the 1850s and 60s that these critical intellectual tendencies reached their full maturity.

Still in the 1840s, many agreed with Chaadaev’s earlier thoughts on the lack of originality in Russia. In 1846, Nestor Kukol’nik (1809-68) wrote in “Kartiny russkoi zhivopisi” (Pictures from Russian Painting) that Russia had not made any contribution to European art, instead merely having absorbed its primary traditions. Others too addressed concern over European influences on Russian art. Aleksei Khomiakov (1804-60) wrote “What is there in common between the Russian soul and Russian art? Nourished on alien thought, foreign examples, under foreign influence, does it show any signs of Russian life?” Khomiakov further underscored the importance of creating a Russian school focusing on contemporaneity, calling for artists to look at what Gogol was creating in literature and derive their “forms exclusively from the depth of their souls, from the treasure-house of contemporary life.” Belinsky in these same years drew together aesthetics and social obligations and said that “To deny art the right of serving public interests means debasing it…”

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180 Gbian ed., Russian Reader, 390-391.
181 Elizabeth Valkenier “The Intelligentsia and Art,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 156.
182 “Pis’mo v Peterburg” (1845), in Polnoe sobranie sochinenii (St. Petersburg, 1900-04), 3:104-18.
183 “Pis’mo v Peterburg” (1843), in Ibid., 3:86-97 quoted in Valkenier “The Intelligentsia and Art,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 156.
184 “A Survey of Russian Literature in 1847,” in Selected Philosophical Works (Moscow, 1956), 459. There are many excellent scholars who have worked on the debates between the Slavophiles and Westernizers and on Belinsky in particular. In English, see especially Richard Freeborn, Furious Vissarion: Belinskii’s Struggle for Literature, Love and Ideas (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 2003); Victor Terras, Belinski and Russian Literary Criticism: The Heritage of Organic Aesthetics (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974); and Z.V. Smirnova, The Socio-Political and Philosophical Views of V.G. Belinsky (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955). I choose in this chapter to still draw out specific quotes from Belinsky’s writings on art and aesthetics because the
Writers like Chaadaev and Belinsky faced very real dangers for their beliefs in these years. Nicholas I’s reign had been one of extreme conservatism in terms of both intellectual repression and the stalwart defense of such institutions as serfdom and widespread censorship. Chaadaev’s letter received a swift and clear response from the authorities. The journal “Telescope” in which it had been published was banned and its editor exiled to the far north. Chaadaev himself was put under house arrest after being declared “clinically insane” for writing the open letter. Another radical thinker, Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-89), who will be the subject of discussion in the next chapter as he rises to the fore of the discussion on Realism in art in the 1850s, was subjected to a civil execution in which he suffered the humiliation of being made to stand on a scaffold while armed guards broke the flat of a sword over his head and declared him a ‘non-person.’ He was then sentenced to fourteen years of hard labor and life exile in Siberia. These punishments doubtlessly loomed large in the minds of the generations of writers and artists that followed. They served as a rallying point confirming the urgency and importance of the mission while at the same time instilling fear of recriminations for acts that could be considered treasonous or seditious by the autocratic powers maintaining a stranglehold on all aspects of Russians life.

work done by Slavicists is typically much more focused on Belinsky’s effect on literature and social politics. And even more rare is it in scholarship on this thinker to put Belinsky’s thought specifically on visual art in dialogue with Western ideologues like Baudelaire. Hence I largely avoid the evocation of this line of scholarship here, despite my indebtedness to it, in order to return to the sources themselves and reinterpret their effect on art-making before midcentury in Russia. 185 Jackson, The Wanderers, 24. Important in the development of my understanding of Chernyshevsky has been the study conducted by Irina Paperno. See Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior (Stanford University Press, 1988).

186 Several scholars also highlight the importance of Chaadaev and Chernyshevsky’s punishments and their effects on the intelligentsia. See Adam Bruno Ulam, Ideologies and Illusions: Revolutionary Thought from Herzen to Solzhenitsyn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 41-42 and (most recently) Mark Schrad, Vodka Politics: Alcohol, Autocracy, and the Secret History of the Russian State (Oxford University Press, 2014), 135.
Life for artists at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg had been highly proscribed nearly from its inception, but became even more so after the Decembrist uprising. Since Peter the Great’s reforms in the eighteenth century, students who graduated after years of grueling study were given the title ‘Artist’ and granted the fourteenth and lowest rank in the civil service. Artists training at the Academy were thus incredibly beholden to the state, they depended on it for much needed support in terms of commissions, but also for the attainment of a full citizen’s rights. As shall be discussed later in this chapter, many depended on the possibility of attaining a social ranking for their very freedom from serfdom. The system, while offering an important means of advancement through achievement rather than a locked societal position designated by birth alone, also created a sense of oppression among creative laborers. The writings of Belinsky and the wider intelligentsia would not have fallen on deaf ears among members of the Academy so tied to an oppressive state institution for not only their livelihood, but their social position as well.

Russia’s ‘Remarkable Decade’ – The Masculine Interior

The previous chapter examined how the romantic style among Russian artists under the influence of Italy began to display elements of nascent Realism which would prove important to artists in the generation to come. In particular, the works of Kiprensky possessed a remarkable mix of both the idealizing so characteristic of Romanticism in this period as well as a sensitivity to “objective” recording of both emotional and physiognomic data. Artists of what has come to be known as the “remarkable decade” of 1838-1848 demonstrate another important shift towards Realism that will become fully

187Ibid., 9.
mature among the “shestidesiatniki,” a term translating roughly to “People of the Sixties” which is used to describe the generation of artists, writers, and revolutionary liberal thinkers who came of age in the 1860s. Central in the turn towards a socially and politically informed art practice which would focus on the real and the everyday was the rise in depictions of the “interieur” and the works of Pavel Fedotov (1815-1852).

The genre of the interior has gone largely un-discussed by critics who have instead focused on the development of landscape in the same period. But images of domestic spaces were gaining greater attention in the 1830s and 40s in Russia. This subject demonstrates a growth of interest in the everyday, an important precursor to Realism’s focus on the mundane and modern life. The depiction of common activities centering on the home and studio, and especially on middle class life, became an important subject for genre painters like Pavel Fedotov, Fedor Tolstoy (1783-1873), Kapiton A. Zelentsov (1790-1845), and Fedor Slavyansky (1817/19-1876).

The earliest demands for paintings of interiors seem to have been simply intended to record the opulent residences of society’s elite and began as early as the middle of the eighteenth century. In her book on the development of genre painting in Russia, the art historian Rosalind Blakesley (née Gray) cites the first view of a private Russian interior as early as 1757. By the first decades of the following century, interiors were becoming increasingly personalized recordings of not only the spaces occupied by the aristocratic upper classes, but their taste and worldly possessions as well. Two notable

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188 John E. Bowlt is one of the few scholars to point out this tendency to focus on landscape at the expense of analyzing the development of the interieur as a legitimate genre. See his “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, ed. Stavrou, 129. Rosalind Gray does devote some space to the subject in her book on Russian genre painting, but it comes as introduction to the works of Fedotov, rather than an autonomous subject for analysis. See her Russian Genre Painting in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 125-130.
189 Gray, Russian Genre Painting, 125. Gray cites Fedor Rokotov’s “The Study of Ivan Ivanovich Shuvalov” as “the first known view of a private Russian interior.”
examples of “interieur” painting from the 1820s by Kapiton Zelentsov (Figure 22 and Figure 23) show genteel family estates and their inhabitants. Himself a member of the tsar’s state service, first in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and later in the Personal Office of the Emperor, Zelentsov at the same time undertook studies in the 1820s with Alexei Venetsianov (1780-1847), Russia’s leading painter of idealized peasant life. Though Zelentsov never left the state service to pursue painting exclusively, he achieved a certain level of renown for his technical proficiency and even received from the Academy of Arts the title of a “painter” in 1830.\(^\text{190}\)

Zelentsov’s airy and light-infused spaces from these years are filled with furniture and art, underscoring the well-to-do social position of the figures depicted within them. They give the viewer a glimpse into the spaces of men in the first part of the century, albeit still in an idealized and pastoral register. The spaces are clean and clutter-free, less depicted as fully lived-in than merely occupied by dignified members of Russia’s elite. These don’t seem to be spaces where real life unfolds – eating and entertaining and sleeping – but rather prettified, quiet glimpses of idyllic afternoons spent reading and receiving the occasional visitor. Everything here has its place – the furniture is carefully arranged against the walls, portraits and prints and mirrors have been salon-style hung on vibrantly painted walls – all supporting a vision of aristocratic life as supremely controlled and beautifully ordered. The interiors reflect little of the inner life of the men who occupy the depicted spaces, though one can glimpse the serene unfolding of leisure which was their chief occupation.

\(^\text{190}\) For more on Venetsianov see Tatyana Alexeyeva, *Venetsianov and His School* (Moscow: Isskustva, 1984).
In her brief but valuable examination of the genre, Gray points out that with increasing frequency from the 1830s on, the notion of work became central to these depictions. As “dispassionate record[s] of labor, leisure, and habitat”\(^{191}\) they occupy a space difficult for us to quantify on the scale of Realism. They are likely to be fairly accurate renderings of the decoration and layout of rooms within bourgeois homes, of dress and manners, but their idealization of said spaces belies any notion of the critical and real as it would be called for by Belinsky at midcentury. What is perhaps most fascinating about these interiors from the standpoint of the development towards Realism in Russia is artists’ growing concern with representations of daily life which evoke the passage of time.

Fedor Slavyansky, another member of the group of artists in the Venetsianov circle, also produced a number of interiors in the 1830s and 40s (Figure 24). Works similarly infused with the careful rendering of decorative elements, they nonetheless also hinge on their ability to evoke space and time. What is particularly notable about all the interiors discussed here is the emphasis on the passage of time in what may immediately read as simplistic and somewhat facile visual rendering. What marks them out from the works of Venetsianov is their very slight move away from idealization. While Venetsianov can and should be considered an important figure in the early stages of Realism in Russia, what separates Zelentsov, Slavyansky, and others out from his practice is not simply that they are concerned with middle and upper class life in their paintings (whereas Venetsianov was almost purely concerned with peasant life), but that they introduce an element of pathos into the rendering of the domestic world. And the tension between real and ideal in them plays out on the stage of time itself. The

\(^{191}\) Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 128-129.
emptiness of the rooms acts as a counterbalance to the also “filled” nature of the spaces. There is a vastness to the amount of canvas given over to floor and ceiling that tightens the space which the figures occupy. The men are compressed onto the horizon line along with their possessions – as much a part of the furniture on which they sit as the portraits are like interlocutors for their thoughts.

Space is deceptive in works like Slavyansky’s. The viewer has the immediate impression of a single wide-open fore room; one that is underscored by our unimpeded position and access to the space because of the empty floor leading to the central figure. But this space is also open in two additional ways. The wall of windows along the entire left side works in tandem with the doorway on the left which opens to several more rooms behind this one. The vastness of floor and ceiling combine with the trompe-l’oeil of recessive rooms projecting backward to create a “mise en abyme” of seemingly infinite reproduction that is spatially disorienting. At the center of this concentrated openness is the male figure clad all in black with head resting on hand. Semi-reclining and lost in thought, he sits counteracting the light and beauty of the space. He is made all the more alone by the barren emptiness of the unoccupied chairs all around him. There are no books or papers in his hands or on the tables, no servants visible in the receding rooms. He is alone with his thoughts, at the center of a space which seems to both close in on him and open outward in its emptiness all around him.

This is a formula that would be repeated in many of these interiors from the first half of the century. Whether depicting a single figure like Slavyansky or pairs as in Zelentsov’s work, the emphasis is consistently on isolation. Zelentsov’s Interior from the 1820s reads less as if the two men depicted are separate entities interacting with one
another and more as though two distinct moments in the same man’s afternoon have been captured on one canvas. In Mikhail Davydov’s handling of the genre (Figure 25), the figures seem both too small in comparison to the space they occupy and too large. The amount of canvas given over to ceilings and floors acts as a visual wedge to tighten the rendering around them, giving the rooms depicted an oppressive nature despite the openness of the architecture itself. The focus is on the solitary nature of existence, on the monotony of daily life, as opposed to on the friendship among men. The figure on the left gesticulates with his pipe to the man seated before him, but his interlocutor seems lost in thought. Seen in perfect profile, he may as well be alone in the room he sits so staunchly upright and bundled up, gazing beyond his host and out through the window.

Another “interieur” from these years by an unidentified artist (Figure 26) puts equal emphasis on the lone figure amidst cavernous interior space. While it is possible to explain the strange quality of space in these pictures as largely a result of problems with the technical handling of perspective, the repetition by more than one artist across two decades hints that something more systematic may be at work here. Certainly in images like this one the artist is working out the placement of objects in recessive space and the rendering of three-dimensionality on a flat surface. But the play of shadows, the reflection of the mirror, the interaction of outside and inside – all emphasize a level of artistry and creative choice beyond spatial exercise. In these interiors the artists communicate more than factual data about possessions and habitat. The viewer gets a sense of the sitters’ personalities from their various ways of occupying the space, one that seems to emphasize the boredom and emptiness of everyday life. It will not be until Degas in paintings like “The Interior” (also known as “The Rape”) (Figure 27) almost a
half century later that such striking tension between space and figures will come to the fore.¹⁹²

Even when space is more logically worked out, as in Fedor Tolstoy’s “Interior” (Figure 28) the emphasis still centers on the solitary nature of daily life. As in Zelentsov’s handling of the subject, the male figure seated in the foreground seems lost in thought. While less brooding than Zelentsov’s lone gentleman, this man too sits contemplating the empty space before him. He is without book, without pipe, withdrawn and perhaps even oblivious to the interaction that takes place in the room behind him. In this work it is the sculptures rather than portraits which are the companions to his thought. But they act as mere empty mirrors, companions that offer little companionship; he neither contemplates them nor seems even aware of their presence. If anything they bolster the profundity of his solitary existence, making his life “full” in the sense that they flesh out the space, but offering little in the way of real comfort. He is no closer to finding a way to occupy his time than if they were not there at all. They are but empty markers of his class and society taste, demonstrating his engagement with culture and Western ideals, but serving little beyond this purpose.

In the introduction to “Interior Portraiture and Masculine Identity in France, 1789–1914,” Temma Balducci, Heather Belnap Jensen and Pamela J. Warner discuss what is at stake in a reexamination of the interior genre.

The interior has typically been associated with women and femininity, and scholars of the nineteenth century have conventionally linked men and masculinity almost exclusively with the public realm. The overwhelming number of nineteenth-century portraits of men in interior spaces, however, suggests that such interpretations of both the interior and masculinity are limited. These images need to be investigated in terms

of how they construct various understandings of interiority and masculinity, as well as how such representations helped to fashion conceptions of the modern.\textsuperscript{193}

Paintings of the interior spaces of men are complex negotiations between forces that seemingly run counter to one another: public and private, masculine and feminine, work and leisure, genre painting and portraiture. Not simple depictions of place, they demonstrate and hold in balance the changing roles of men and women in this time and make claims to the identities of the sitters depicted within them that might otherwise evade historical analysis. Paintings of domestic areas, what these authors call a “charged conceptual space,”\textsuperscript{194} act as much more than transcriptions of reality. The interior increasingly came to act as a metaphor for externalizing men’s inner lives.

What is so striking about the Russian brand of interior portraiture in this moment is the quality of brooding aristocratic loneliness which so pervades the genre. And this emotional tenor is only reinforced by the sparse cleanliness of the spaces. If “men were thought to project the deepest recesses of their psyches outward onto their most intimate living space,”\textsuperscript{195} then the received picture of bourgeois masculinity in Russia in these years was one of growing melancholic malaise. The Russian case is not one of men putting themselves on display,\textsuperscript{196} but rather of men fashioning themselves so strongly as part of a Western cultural ideal that they appear like the furniture, paintings, and sculpture which surround and engulf them. It is also fascinating that in the case of Russia, the genre of the interior proved an important testing ground for emerging conceptualizations of the modern. This particular genre of portraiture proved a fertile

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{193} Balducci, Jensen and Warner, eds. \textit{Interior Portraiture and Masculine Identity in France, 1789–1914} (Ashgate, 2010), 1.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 1.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 8.
\item \textsuperscript{196} Natasha Ruiz-Gómez analyzes Auguste Rodin’s agency in fashioning his own image as an artist for display in chapter 11. Ibid., 197-212.
\end{itemize}
area for testing the boundaries of the real and ideal – one that would prove central to the critical brand of Realism that developed in the following decades.

Men in the nineteenth century adopted the interior as an important site for the articulation of their identities, be that on an individual basis or on a larger cultural scale. One can see how Russia’s grappling with the genre of the “interieur” provides yet another case for artists’ looking towards and being influenced by developments in the West. But the particularities that emerge from an examination of these works show the singular conception male artists had of what private life actually looked and felt like. They demonstrate the ambiguous negotiations between body and space that occupying the interior realm actually meant and how the influence of the West and expectations for what one’s life should look like affected what one wore, hung in one’s home, and how one actually spent their time on a daily basis. In her essay on Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), Jennifer Olmsted describes the apartment and its décor as having the function of another character in portraits. Both in France and in Russia, the combined forces of the figures themselves and the decorated space they occupy show how bourgeois domesticity was something to be acted out as much as routinely and naturally lived, with each mediating the other in a mutually reinforcing way. But in Russia, this acting out of class and identity had a dual nature. Russians were not just performing upper class leisure, but a specifically European ideal of what aristocratic free-time meant and what it looked like and was constituted by.

197 Jennifer Olmsted, “Public and Private Identities in Delacroix’s Portrait of Charles de Mornay and Anatole Demidoff” in Ibid., 54.
198 For an insightful and penetrating analysis of leisure in Russia in a slightly later period, see Louise McReynolds, Russia at Play: Leisure Activities at the End of the Tsarist Era (Cornell University Press, 2003).
Another peculiarity faced Russian artists in particular as they grappled with this emerging genre in these years. There was an added tension in Russian depictions of the bourgeois interior singular to these artists compared to their Western European counterparts. The majority of the artists receiving training throughout the nineteenth century, whether at the Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, or in more provincial art schools like Venetsianov’s, came from the lower classes. The class system in Russia was more rigid than elsewhere in Europe because the status differences were not only observed in social relations but also carefully defined by law. Of the artists trained by Venetsianov in the first half of the century, Slavyansky was born a serf in the village of Vyshkovo in Tver Guberniya. He began study in 1839 with Venetsianov, who attempted to buy the artist’s freedom for the next five years. Grigory Soroka (1823-1864), a later student of Venetsianov and also a serf born in Tver Guberniya studied with him from 1842-1847 but was then returned to his owner. After the Emancipation Reform of 1861 in Russia, Soroka still remained a serf and was flogged after making a formal complaint to be freed that was rejected. In 1864 he committed suicide.

Because of the staunchly upheld system of advancement for artists at the Academy, Russian artists throughout the century were highly dependent on the state. In fact, there is still debate among critics as to how much artists were considered a part of the intelligentsia even up to the 1860s. It was largely thought that because they were still so allied with the Academy and its traditions (and therefore fearful of the censor and able to be coerced by threat of punishment), there was little hope for the fine arts as a rich

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199 The population was divided into five estates (soslovinya): gentry (dvorianstvo), clergy (dukhovenstvo), distinguished or honorable citizens (pochetnye grazhdane), petty bourgeoisie (meshchane), and the peasants (krest'iane).

200 See Tatyana Alexeyeva, *Venetsianov and His School* (Moscow: Isskustva, 1984) and K. Mikhailova et al., *De l’histoire du Realisme dans la peinture russe* (Moscow: Isskustva, 1982).
ground for legitimate dissent and uprising. The Academy itself recognized the low and largely uneducated status of its incoming students and instituted a system of general education to remedy the situation, including often simply making sure its students became literate. The Academy’s general education program was however discontinued by Nicholas in 1840. This resulted in a generation of Academy graduates some of whom were half-literate and still rather raw youths from distant provinces. Many never managed to overcome their ignorance or to shed their crude manners.

And it seems that a disproportionate number of artists were overall drawn from the lowest registers of Russia’s social caste system. Long divided between the peasantry and nobility, Russia by the mid-nineteenth century was a country in which peasants composed a very large portion of the population. According to the census of 1857 the number of private serfs was 23.1 million out of 62.5 million Russians or 37.7% of the population. Added to this was the fact that the educated population was extremely small, perhaps no more than 1.5 percent by the 1830s. In the same years the nobility numbered only around 720,000. One can speak of only a few hundred thousand adult men and women with any strong likelihood of access to the arts. With only a few exceptions scattered over the course of the century, most artists training at the Academy came either from the peasantry or the petit bourgeoisie (meshchane), both of which made up the two lowest classes. This segment of the population was subject to severe restrictions on their movement through an internal passport system and via

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201 Jackson, The Wanderers, 7.
202 Ibid., 7.
203 Ibid., 9.
206 Ibid., 91.
taxation and random calls to fulfill civic duties.\footnote{Jackson, \textit{The Wanderers}, 19.} As shall be discussed in the final chapter, of the artists who became leaders of the Realist movement in the 1870s, Ivan Kramskoy came from the meshchane, Vasily Perov was underprivileged because of his illegitimate birth, and Ilya Repin (1844-1930) was the son of a state peasant.\footnote{Valkenier, \textit{Russian Realist Art}, 11. This phenomenon of artists frequently being of low social rank goes back much further into the century – a notable example is provided in the case of Vasily Tropinin (1776-1857), one of the earliest and most talented genre painters in Russia. He remained a serf until his release at age forty-eight. David Jackson describes how: “He had come to his Ukrainian master as part of a wedding dowry and managed to study painting on a part-time basis in St. Petersburg when sent to the capital, aged twenty-two, to train as a confectioner. In 1804 he was recalled by his master and until his release fulfilled the functions of cook, gardener and valet.” See \textit{The Wanderers}, 14.}

Thus training at the Academy often meant much more to these men from the provinces than their counterparts in Western Europe. The education they received there was unavailable in the peasant villages they came from and graduation provided one of the few means of social betterment and class advancement. The humble roots of many of Russia’s artists bear strongly on the paintings they produced. Their particular vision and the urgency of the desire to improve their lot were brought to bear in the nascent documentations of contemporary Russian life. In many cases the bourgeois interiors depicted by members of Venetsianov’s school in the 1820s-40s must have seemed like foreign palaces to the serf artists who painted them. It is perhaps the discrepancy in artists’ societal position which lends itself so strongly to the distinctively odd characterizations of domestic rooms as both cavernously large and uncannily stifling. These spaces of leisure and retreat must have felt surreally vacant – both of activity and meaning – to men depicting them as outsiders and for the first time. The awe of the capital, the Petersburg Academy’s spacious halls and Italianate architecture, the pomp and ceremony of soldiers in the city – all must have struck these men from the provinces as remarkably modern, but essentially quite strange.
It is also possible to see the emergence of a genre of the interior as a slightly subversive means of commenting on social inequality. The interieur was a way of making subtle critical commentary and engaging with problems of the day without inciting the wrath of the omnipresent state censor. Jackson points out how: “The tactic of evading censorship by effectively outwitting the office and making one’s criticisms tangentially or by association would seem an attractive one, particularly where overtly contentious topics were simply unapproachable.” Such a topic coming to the fore in these years was the immense gap between the rich and poor, nobleman and serf, and rural versus urban laborers. What strikes the modern viewer as perhaps staid and somewhat boring representations of domestic interiors emerging from Russia in the first half of the century can in light of the lower class background of most of the artists and the intelligentsia’s calls to action of the time be read as nuanced handlings pointing to the extreme discrepancy between classes.

The bourgeois domestic interiors of Zelentsov, Slavyansky, and Davydov are in one sense aspirational. They demonstrate the serf artist’s understanding of the genteel life of the upper classes through accurate recording of it, albeit from an outsider’s perspective. They literally show him as painting a view from inside the very innermost pocket of this life, as having gained insider access by virtue of needing to be in the space itself to depict it. But at the same time, the artist’s exclusion from this realm is made apparent by the aristocratic men’s constant obliviousness to the artist’s presence. In every case, the interiors of the 1820s-40s are painted from the objective, documentary standpoint. The figures by and large do not in any way acknowledge the existence of the painter or the presence of viewers. These men do not look out from the painting, but are

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totally consumed in their own activities – whether playing with a dog, engaging in conversation, reading, or simply consumed in thought.

These artists show an incredible metaphorical desire to belong in their inclusion of painted decorative objects as key iconographical markers of the interior. The artist virtually inscribes himself into these interiors by the inclusion of painted portraits on the walls. These paintings demonstrate the skill of the artist in a range of genres, acting as a kind of advertisement and enticement to further commissions. But they also underscore a mutual need – of the bourgeoisie for paintings which demonstrate their wealth and engagement with Western cultural traditions and on the part of artists to achieve success as painters and thereby freedom from state servitude. In essence the “mise en abyme” of rooms within rooms in so many of these works is doubled by the paintings within the paintings. The artist wants to belong to this world, to use his creative skill to achieve even that lowest of rankings and he uses several means of obtaining inclusion. An incredible tension is created by the push and pull of the artist’s insider/outsider status in these images; one that can be read as perhaps subconscious critical commentary on the institutions in Russia that were otherwise unapproachable at this time. The paintings within these interiors keep watch over their sitters in a way strikingly similar to the way the lower classes, including and perhaps especially artists in this moment, looked on their “masters,” for the most part serving quietly and fulfilling the roles society had proscribed for them, but gaining in force and strength.

‘The gleamings of an empty heart’
This chapter began with a discussion of the emergence of the superfluous man as a type in literature in the 1820s. But while this new hero has been widely explored by Slavicists in terms of his recurring manifestations in Russian literature, the appearance of this type in painting has gone largely unexamined. Central to any discussion of the unrest growing in Russia in the years of Nicholas I’s reign, the superfluous man has larger implications for understanding the ambivalent position of artists and the intelligentsia in these years. The type has implications beyond literary imaginings, proving central to conceptions of modernity as they were being formulated in this time. Emerging parallel with his earliest iterations in the writings of Pushkin and Lermontov in the 1820s and 30s, the well-to-do men of endless leisure represented in Slavyansky, Zelentsov, and Davydov’s interiors can similarly be read as part of this concern. These are examples of “superfluous men,” but before the term was even codified and popularized in the 1850s. Nevertheless, we can still read their signs in these images. In light of Pushkin’s writing, might we not see the lone figure reading with his back to the viewer in Zelentsov’s “Interior: Reception Room with Columns on the Mezzanine” as a sort of Onegin? A well-dressed member of the upper class, his apartment reads as a lofty abode above St. Petersburg’s meandering streets; the paintings and prints on his walls and the rugs and furniture in his rooms are signs of his travel and erudition. But his aloneness, his complete lack of an interlocutor parallel the superfluous man’s interiority.

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and inaction. These images provoke a similar kind of contemplation, one that arises from the same context that produces the superfluous man’s manifestations in literature.

In light of the writings of the time, Slavyansky’s “In the Rooms of A. Semenov in Tverskoy” and Tolstoy’s “Interior” become similar meditations to those in prose and poetry, though now in a purely visual vocabulary, on the plight of malaise-stricken aristocratic men. Alone and now here without even book to occupy his mind, Slavyansky’s black-clad figure assumes the pose of a melancholy thinker, surrounded by empty chairs and portraits. These accoutrements and their effect on the viewer call to mind Pushkin’s verse of the same period:

I have outlasted all desire,  
My dreams and I have grown apart;  
My grief alone is left entire,  
The gleamings of an empty heart.

The storms of ruthless dispensation  
Have struck my flowery garland numb,  
I live in lonely desolation  
And wonder when my end will come.  

The man in his dressing gown in “Interior with Smoking Figure” recalls Chulkaturnin’s last days spent alone, the very walls seeming to close in on him. But these paintings are not illustrations to the works of poets and prose writers, they stand as separate testaments to the force of thinking on melancholy in this time. Read together, discourses on superfluous men among both artists and writers becomes apparent.

In a similar way, Kiprensky and Courbet’s visual formulations discussed in the previous chapter also demonstrate a growing concern for depicting men in a state of existential crisis – one that will gain enough force over the course of the nineteenth

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century to prove central to an understanding of modernity itself. These paintings can be attributed to the growing concern for men grown purposeless in the wake of Nicholas’ bureaucratic and domineering stranglehold over all aspects of Russian life. The depictions of these troubling iterations of male existence look different in the hands of each artist who struggles to represent it, developing over the decades as a reaction to socio-political events and in dialogue with varying depictions in popular writings of the time.

**Pavel Fedotov and the Masculine Interior**

Amid the tensions created by Nicholas I’s repressive reign and the developments of the superfluous man as a type in literature and painting arising out of large-scale disillusionment among the educated upper classes, Pavel Fedotov emerged as a leading force in painting in the 1840s. He answered the call by members of the intelligentsia for a more socially-driven Realist art and is often credited with ushering in the first stage of the development of Realism in Russian painting. In her book on Russian genre painting in the nineteenth century, Rosalind Blakesley also recognizes the importance of Fedotov in terms of nascent Realism. She discusses Fedotov’s role in the gradual transformation within the genre of the interior from simple stately views of aristocratic residences to more complex and conflicted depictions of bourgeois interiors. David Jackson likewise underscores Fedotov’s importance:

More than any other artist Fedotov most firmly established the legitimacy of genre in Russian art, and with a more overtly critical flavor, even if wisely, he tempered it with humour. In Russia he is regarded as the first critical artist, one who studied and

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212 Sarabianov, *Russian Art*, 93.
213 Blakesley, *Russian Genre Painting*, 125.
exposed the contradictions, absurdities and vices of society and who, in so doing, paved the way for the tougher brand of Realism during the 1860s…

Fedotov was born in Moscow in 1815, the son of a retired officer; he was to have a military career like his father and was sent to the Moscow Cadet School at the age of ten. From his early years he took great pleasure in the careful study of objects and nature. Upon graduation he chose to serve in the Finland Regiment of the Imperial Guards in St. Petersburg. While still serving in the army, Fedotov began attending evening classes at the Academy of Arts. Located not far from the barracks, the Academy’s evening classes were open to all. While on guard duty at the Winter Palace he began copying the Old Masters, primarily the works of Dutch and Flemish artists he found in the halls of the Hermitage. But he only briefly audited these classes at the Academy as he was barred from officially enrolling because he was considered too old.

In the late 1830s he produced hundreds of drawings and watercolors of fellow soldiers, friends, and passersby and even began to attain a reputation as a skilled painter of battle scenes and military life (Figure 29). It wasn’t until 1844 that he retired to devote himself completely to painting. Active in intellectual circles, Fedotov knew many of the most important painters and writers of the time. He received early advice and mentorship from Karl Briullov (1799-1852) and Alexander Ivanov (1806-58), then the most renowned painters of the day. The poet Nikolai Nekrasov recruited him to

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216 Vasily Timm (1820-95) was an important painter of these types of battle scenes and a contemporary of Fedotov. He travelled with the French battle painter Horace Vernet (1789-1863) to Paris in 1844. Vernet, interestingly, also travelled to Russia in 1836 and then again in 1842-43. See Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 131.
218 Briullov told Fedotov that at the late age of twenty-five he had come to painting too late and couldn’t possibly hope to have a serious career, but then Briullov ironically pronounced less than ten years later,
illustrate a new almanac and Fedotov’s illustrations to one of Dostoevsky’s earliest short stories, “Polzunkov,” appeared in a literary journal around the same time as the writer’s famous arrest and mock execution. Musings within his journals indicate that he shared the views of the liberal intelligentsia and that his favorite poet was Lermontov. While Fedotov has always been characterized as a keen observer of contemporary Russian urban life, often compared to his European contemporary Paul Gavarni (1804-66) (Figure 30) and the earlier caricaturist William Hogarth (1697-1764) (Figure 31), both of whom he greatly admired, it wasn’t until he began to work in oil that Fedotov’s particular brand of satirical Realism fully matured. His first public success came in 1846, when “A Newly Decorated Knight” (Figure 32) created a sensation upon its exhibition. It drew large crowds who flocked to see its open ridicule of arbitrary imperial distinctions. Critics responded positively to what they saw as paintings which were representative of the liberal ideals espoused by the intelligentsia. Apollon Maikov (1821-97), a critic for “Sovremennik,” wrote in 1849 that in Fedotov’s works, “idealization was replaced by the representation of real phenomena in their entire fullness and truth.” The artist himself wrote of the difficulty of carving out new stylistic territories in art:

“My congratulations! I have expected it out of you, I have always expected it out of you, but you have outstripped me.” See M. Shumova, Fedotov (Leningrad: Aurora Art Publishers, 1974), 16.

Zagyanskaya, Fedotov, 11.

See Ya. Leshchinskii, Pavel Andreevicch Fedotov. Khudozhnik i poet (Moscow-Leningrad, 1946) for a thorough selection of Fedotov’s writings.

Zagyanskaya, Fedotov, 7.

For more on Fedotov’s associations with Hogarth see Gray, Russian Genre Painting, 138-41.

Jackson, The Wanderers, 17. Starr in his essay on “Russian Art and Society, 1800-1850,” points out that ‘if precise records exist as to the number of persons who attended exhibitions and cultural events in Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century, they have yet to be made available for study. In the absence of such precise documentation, we must resort to the voluminous impressions recorded by contemporaries.” See Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 95.

“Vystavka v Imperatorskoi Akademii Khudozhestv,” Sovremennik 11 (November 1849), 82-83 quoted in Valkenier “The Intelligentsia and Art,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 158.
“I’m accustomed to setbacks…[as] an artist in a rowdy political age…[I’m] seeking a new, purely pictorial language.”

But even before the success of this painting, Fedotov had been experimenting with portraits and genre scenes centering on soldiers’ lives. He was by all accounts obsessed with rendering persons and objects with perfect accuracy, once stating, “I shan’t amount to anything until I learn to paint mahogany.” This single-minded focus, what Elizabeth Valkenier calls Fedotov’s “obsessive concern with depicting the specific and yet the typical”, meant that the artist intensely studied those around him. He grew his skills of observation and learned to depict moods and states of mind by focusing on subtle details, especially those of the eyes and face (Figure 33). Fedotov focused on what he knew best – the daily routine in the barracks.

One of his earliest fully realized portraits (Figure 34) at first sight appears to be little more than a typical portrait of a decorated officer. Zhdanovich is seated facing out toward the viewer, to his right is a large desk with various writings and official papers arranged on it, classic signs of the sitter’s labor and erudition. Zhdanovich is placed in an interior setting, a typical bourgeois dwelling, neither profusely ornate, nor overly spare; he seems at home in this dwelling. The warm red and orange tones carried throughout the painting provide a sense of harmonic unity between man and the space he occupies. The expression on the sitter’s face is one of quiet composure. Pleasant and self-assured in his dress uniform, he betrays little of his emotional life here.

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226 A. Druzhinin, “Vospominaniya o russkom khudozhnike P. A. Fedotove” (1853), in *Sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1865), 8:693.
227 Valkenier “The Intelligentsia and Art,” in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 158.
One detail within the rather traditional painting, however, shows Fedotov’s interest even in the earliest stages of his artistic practice for visual elements which create emotional tension and complexity. The fingers of the hand which Zhdanovich rests on the table before him tap pensively, opening out the space of recorded time which the artist has captured. That one single raised finger is charged with temporal significance, allowing the viewer to imagine the span of time it took to create this portrait. Otherwise well-hidden amongst masculine military decorum, the drumming digit creates a durational experience which resonates for the viewer by invoking a sense of waiting and boredom—states which Fedotov described in his journals as being the very core of military life.\(^{228}\) The tapping works in tandem with the warmth of the room to create a heightened sense of stifling interiority. This does not seem to be a room filled with light and air, but rather a candlelit inner chamber of masculine sanctuary. Even the doors opening slightly behind Zhandovich seem only to open onto a closet—a negative barrier in the viewer’s search for further space and respite from the captivity of this interior. The hazy room appears as buttoned up as the sitter in his rigid epaulettes and brass buttons. And that slight opening of the door mirrors the raised tapping of the single finger—breaching the barrier of the insular space and the closedness of the moment to provide insight into the sitter’s unfolding state of mind.

The depiction of time’s duration and ensuing states of boredom prove a central theme across Fedotov’s oeuvre. His study of off-duty soldiers from the 1840s (Figure \(^{35}\)) also hinges on the representation of day to day experience. In it he presents a group of soldiers (though only the gentleman seated with his back to the viewer is in uniform)

\(^{228}\) His journal of 1835 describes the monotony and boredom of soldiers’ life and the range of activities which comprised these men’s lives—from playing cards and playing the guitar, to drawing and gambling. See Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 134.
engaged in a game of cards. Several men observe the game with varying levels of attention. One holds a guitar languidly on his lap. Fedotov’s writings create a similar picture of everyday life. He muses constantly on the state of his health, how he is sleeping, and his various ways of passing time – citing drawing portraits for friends, playing cards, strumming on the guitar, having dinner, and the consumption of wine as key occupations. Fedotov is here painting what he knew, the familiar, even the mundane. In depicting the everyday – without idealization or glamour – his works become central to understanding the origins of Realism within genre painting in Russia. The men in Fedotov’s painted study relax together in various states of undress – their gentile crossed legs and pomaded hair being one of the few signs of their bourgeois upbringing. They are otherwise largely disheveled and unkempt – shirts are unbuttoned, sleeves too long, one of the men looks as though he has just woken up and another as though he is drowsing.

Another painting from the time takes the theme of the private realm of men’s malaise even further (Figure 36). These silent, slumping soldiers are lost in thought killing time. Fedotov presents them on one hand as upstanding citizens defending the Imperial Russian State, all epaulets and shiny buttons, but they seem at the same time reduced to stifling boredom and disillusionment. One is reminded of the failure of the Decembrist soldiers here, men who were some of the bravest and most daring officers of Russia, heroes of Napoleonic wars, but then failed to act decisively when the need truly arose. Further research in Russia would be required for me to determine if this was something critics of the time also noted about Fedotov’s works. I have yet to come across documents that support this as an interpretation from the time, but they may exist. This would simply require greater access and time spent with documentary sources than I have been able to carry out during the dissertation research phase.
different views of one man at different moments. But the gaze of the central figure directly out at the viewer grabs attention and absorbs us into the ennui of the scene.\footnote{We do well to recognize that it was among soldiers like these in Russia at the time that the game of Russian roulette was invented as a reaction to the endless boredom of soldierly life. See Angela Brintlinger and Ilya Vinitsky, \textit{Madness and the Mad in Russian Culture} (University of Toronto Press, 2007).}

The tilt of the head provides an important sign of communication. The hunch of the other two figures, the one on the right staring vacantly into space and the other deep in thought – all this underscores their inactivity, their embeddedness within the space before that blank wall. Their lives become like that one long, smoke filled exhale, human voids centered around apathetic deliberation. The outside world impinges on them in the papers and notes open and waiting but unseen on the table before them. But the pen of the figure on the left is held backward and another remains in the inkwell untouched.

The visible exhale evokes the same element of time as the tapping finger in Fedotov’s portrait of Zhdanovich. A remarkable pictorial gesture, it is weighted with emotional and temporal significance. These paintings work in tandem with the interiors created by Russian artists in the 1820s-40s, creating a Realist genre with a continuous theme of masculine melancholy and disillusionment. The odd mask-like sculptures in Fedotov’s portrait of the Druzhinin brothers, two incomplete profiles that form an imaginative whole, become parallels for the faces these men present in private and public life. On the one hand they are young, handsome sons of Russia’s bourgeoisie, eligible bachelors of education and good birth. But their facial expressions and body language belie that public ideal. The tilt of the head, the self-absorbed slouch, detached and deadened eyes – these combine to communicate a sense of pervasive melancholy. These
privileged men of the world become reduced by the acute Realism of Fedotov to
superfluous men, totems of autocratic rule and a backward bureaucracy.

Fedotov depicted himself in such angst-ridden Realist terms as well. His self-
portrait from the 1840s (Figure 37) demonstrates an uncanny and piercing outward gaze.
He locks eyes with the viewer while leaning heavily on an upturned, but closed hand—
the classic pose of the melancholic artist, on the model of masters such as Albrecht Dürer
(1471-1528) and Raphael (1483-1520) (Figure 38). An insightful comparison can be
made between Fedotov’s self-portrait sketch and a contemporaneous work by Delacroix,
his “Michelangelo in his Studio” (1849-50) (Figure 39). Delacroix imagines
Michelangelo paralyzed amongst his works, his chisel fallen to ground, consumed by a
vacant stare. His body rests heavy and unmoving, as absent to the world as the sculptures
which surround him. Delacroix captured here, in the guise of this Renaissance master
who was described in his own time as a melancholic genius231 – a double for himself and
for all artists. This pseudo self-portrait and Fedotov’s drawing crystallize the great effort
of creativity, the endless cycle of visual apprehension and thought as it hardens into
representation.

There is a desire in the kind of melancholic disenchantment captured by Delacroix
and Fedotov here. The cycle of melancholy and boredom evinced in those deep gazes
provided something to push constantly against and out of, a creative source for
representation through negativity. The desire within melancholy is one of constant
anticipation, a hope for purpose and perfection that becomes almost pathological.

231 Writing in the 1520s, Gioio thought Michelangelo to be melancholic and unsocial and the artist himself
in a 1525 letter to Sebastiano del Piombo refers to his own “melancholy, or even madness.” See Morten
Steen Hansen, In Michelangelo’s Mirror: Del Vaga, Da Volterra, Tibaldi (Pennsylvania State University,
2013), 84.
Fedotov tapped into a rich lineage of the depiction of melancholy in figuring himself this way. And Delacroix did not have to depict Michelangelo in this charged guise of malaise. Other artists in this time also embraced the Renaissance master as subject matter, but to strikingly different effect. Jean-Léon Gérôme’s (1824-1904) Michelangelo (Figure 40) is the epitome of activity, such a master in his realm that he teaches. He is shown as a figure who has reached the point beyond desire or anxiety, an ideal of satisfaction that is productive beyond itself. Alexandre Cabanel’s (1823-89) portrayal (Figure 41) of the same subject has more in common with Delacroix’s upon first sight – the languid pose, the hint of contemplation – but his Michelangelo seems only momentarily paused. He is surrounded by works brought to nearly full completion, the staircase before him and the lift of his heel off the floor implies he will in but another moment spring forward and tackle the Moses again. His chisel remains firmly in his hand where Delacroix’s has fallen to the ground, sitting useless and forgotten. Cabanel is not concerned here with the private moments of a great artist as he struggles with creation. His painting is rather a narrative; the viewer is invited to be more concerned with the entrance of the patron-pope and his minions than on Michelangelo’s state of mind.

But Delacroix’s painting is different. Like Fedotov’s, it is a painting about a state of mind, a feeling, a personality and a temperament. Both highlight part of what it sometimes meant to make art – the struggle, the desire, the process. These are personal works, but also partake in the furthering of a public mythology about genius in general. The poses are pensive, preoccupied, brooding. They demonstrate a prolonged and indefinite stillness, again the drawing out of a single moment to dilate time itself within
the singular representation. Other scholars have written about artists who capture a
similar momentary absence to the world, about the “failure to connect,” the “abstraction
of the moment,” and “preoccupation”\(^{232}\), but they don’t draw on the place where
melancholy intersects with boredom, where it transitions into it.

Delacroix’s “Tasso in the Madhouse” (Figure 42) likewise grapples with the
depiction of the suffering creative genius. The long tormented Renaissance poet parallels
both Fedotov’s self-portrait and his portrait of the Druzhinin brothers as soldiers killing
time. All lost in thought they are the “living void”\(^{233}\) for whom time is centered around
pensive deliberation. The outside world impinges on them – the public beseeching the
author to resume his writing, the papers and notes open and waiting but unseen on the
table before the soldiers—but to no avail. Both have elements of the theatrical. The
heavy green curtain opened onto the stage where Tasso pensively despairs reveals an
interior audience behind the bars, one which mirrors the viewer’s position of helpless
entry before the painting. The odd mask-like sculptures in Fedotov’s work provide an
element of theater as well to his scene of boredom. The two incomplete profiles form an
imaginative whole, perhaps paralleling the faces these men present in public life and
bourgeois society. They are supposedly upstanding citizens who defend the Imperial
Russian state, but here, like Tasso, like Michelangelo, like Fedotov himself, reduced to
just signs of stifling disillusionment.

Delacroix and Fedotov both wrote a great deal during their lifetimes. Leaving us
journals and letters, as well as a novel in the case of Delacroix and poetry from Fedotov,
both authors’ writings are filled with contemplations on boredom and the search for a

\(^{233}\) Clardy, *The Superfluous Man in Russian Letters*, 16.
purpose to make life worth living. Echoing the despair of literary manifestations of superfluous men, these artists wrote of their experiences of the battle between idleness and the fulfillment of work. Both came to similar conclusions about the imperative for labor. They believed the work of an artist – painting, sketching, searching for subjects and reading literature – was the only remedy against the deadly inactivity and leisure they constantly felt closing in. Delacroix wrote often of his “poor state of mind” and asked “must one not always be fighting against some bitter idea?”

Writing of Delacroix’s concern with the loss of energy and time, Jack Spector sums up a central mental inconsistency of the artist:

Like others of his generation, a sufferer from the mal du siècle, Delacroix did not in his youth feel unequivocally committed to productivity. Manifesting an ambivalence characteristic of the bourgeois Romantic he aspired to leisure as an aristocratic luxury...and at the same time abhorred it as a sign of failure and unproductiveness beneath his lofty genius. [...] Delacroix often thought of death as a release from his private hell - the surcease of life's efforts and pains.

Fedotov’s writings are filled with similar conflicts; his journals contain laborious accounts of ennui and testify to his feelings of insignificance in a masculine world of privilege. His journal of 1835 describes the monotony and boredom of the soldier’s life, in contrast to the artist’s own extraordinarily strict work ethic.

On a larger level, Fedotov’s paintings of a generation of malaise-stricken men are important not just because they represent activities and states of mind previously outside the “acceptable” decorum of portraiture, but because they spotlight the underbelly of

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236 Ibid., 92-93.
237 Ibid., 104. Also telling, are several other mental conflicts discussed by Spector. Delacroix “expressed an urge to eat without limit in his obsessively repeated phrase ‘largo satiare cibo’ (‘I eat abundantly to sate myself’). [...] But in fact, as reported by Baudelaire and others, Delacroix was well known to have eaten very sparingly...” (Spector, 91).
238 Gray believes it made have contributed to his premature death. See Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 134.
dissatisfaction which was coming to characterize modern urban life in Russia. These works are visual testaments to exactly how Realism arose from widespread societal discontent. They were produced by a man who feared his artistic endeavors would be subsumed by the politics of censorship and autocracy of his time. Fedotov’s breakthrough work, “A Newly Decorated Knight,” was refused the official permission it needed to be reproduced as a lithograph in 1846. Afraid of losing this important stream of income, Fedotov deferred to authorities by removing the central figure’s “offensive” medal and retitling the work “After the Party.” In 1848 he finally received the much sought after title and social rank of Academician for “The Major’s Courtship” (Figure 43), but hard times ensued in the following years. His mature output began around 1848, when in the wake of European political unrest censorship laws were made even tighter than they had been previously. His association with Dostoevsky further encumbered his career when the writer was arrested and underwent trial with the group of revolutionaries known as the Petrashevsky circle. Fedotov had also planned to publish a satirical weekly journal with another member of the Petrashevsky Circle, Evstafy Bernadsky (1819-89), which drew further negative attention on him from the authorities. His patronage almost completely dried up in the years following 1848 and the censor repeatedly refused publication of his works.

Scholars frequently focus on the satirical elements in Fedotov’s works and cite this as a source of his problems with the authorities. Gray describes the process by which caricature was introduced into Russia and became extremely popular with the rise of illustrated books and journals by the 1840s. Russian caricature had its roots in the lubok,

which had become widespread after Napoleon’s invasion, but French journals were also widely read in Russia and became a major influence of the artist.\textsuperscript{242} Fedotov was without a doubt influenced by his French counterparts in satire, Gavarni and Honoré Daumier (1808-79), but it is his emphasis on creating an emotional tone for his paintings which largely sets him apart from these Western artists. The difference can perhaps best be seen by comparing two extremely similar works by Fedotov and Daumier.\textsuperscript{243} Fedotov’s “Untimely Guest” (Aristocrat’s Breakfast) and the Daumier print “Dejeuner frugal” of 1839 (Figure \textsuperscript{44}) deal with a remarkably similar narrative theme. Both depict the frugal breakfast of a bourgeois gentleman (and his pets), but Fedotov has created a remarkable tension in his work that is missing from the pure satire of Daumier’s version. Again, the emphasis is on the very passage of time itself as the Russian aristocrat rises from his armchair – twisting around and covering his meager breakfast in one motion. It was exactly this rising motion with Fedotov paid special attention to in studies for the work (Figure \textsuperscript{45}). Chaadeav’s pessimistic words on Russia from the “First Philosophical Letter” of a decade before parallel the scene Fedotov has constructed:

\textit{Look around you. Everyone seems to have one foot in the air. One would think that we are all in transit. No one has a fixed sphere of existence; there are no proper habits, no rules that govern anything. We do not even have homes; there is nothing to tie us down, nothing that arouses our sympathies and affections, nothing enduring, nothing lasting. Everything passes, flows away, leaving no trace either outside or within us. In our homes, we are like guests…}\textsuperscript{244}

The off-kilter positioning of the legs and motion of rising as the aristocrat moves away from the chair underscore a lack of fixity. The viewer gets a sense of the unfolding of this moment from the wad of food still being chewed in his mouth and the hand as it

\textsuperscript{242} Gray, \textit{Russian Genre Painting}, 132-37.
\textsuperscript{243} Gray was the first to take up this comparison, see Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{244} P. Ia. Chaadaev, \textit{Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i izbrannye pis’ma}, t. 1, trans. Nathaniel Knight (Moscow, 1991), 90, 92-93.
draws the curtain aside in the background. These durational elements are missing from Daumier’s more simplistic rendering. The French version is all biting sarcasm – the old dandy and his cats – but the Russian work is a complex and nuanced scene that is humorous, but also chilling.  

While satire within genre painting is without doubt important to understanding Fedotov’s works, it is his early brand of critically-minded Realism which I want to emphasize here. His paintings are characterized by both an intense observance of everyday life, criticism of society’s rankings and foibles, and the creation of a deeply resonant emotional tenor. Fedotov’s contribution is in this sense unique. The art historian Dmitri Sarabianov also emphasizes Fedotov’s importance in this sense: “…his significance lies in his ability to convey, in an inspired and elevated artistic language, the joys and despair of the human predicament as well as the extremes of nobility and degradation of which the human soul is capable.” Fedotov responded to the call for depictions of real life espoused by radical writers. His works in fact predate the full formulation of what art in Russia should be, but nonetheless mirror what Chernyshevsky would call for a few short years later:

The first and general purpose of all works of art […] is to reproduce phenomena of real life that are of interest to man. By real life we, of course, mean not only man’s relation to the objects and beings of the objective world, but also his inner life. […] often a man lives in the world of his emotions. These states, if they become

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245 One might use the language of the Romantic horror writer Jules Janin who described his novel *L’Ane mort et la femme guillotine* (1829) as a “parodie sérieuse” that strove “to arrive at certain bitter truths by means of an exaggeration…a satire on society and on the human heart…” See Nine Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, “Géricault’s Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Poetics of the Scaffold,” *The Art Bulletin* 74, no. 4 (Dec. 1992), 599. She also quotes M. Angenot as referring to Janin’s novel as “une parodie qui tourne au sérieux.” See note 4 in “Géricault’s Severed Heads and Limbs.” Fedotov too, while working completely outside the horror school which became so popular in France in the 1820s, creates works which trouble the line between serious truth and parody through exaggeration.

246 Sarabianov, *Russian Art*, 84.
interesting, are also reproduced by art. [...] art has another purpose besides reproduction, viz., to explain life.\textsuperscript{247}

Fedotov dealt with both tasks; representing not only the mundane “phenomena of real life” – eating, playing cards, smoking, etc. – but reproducing the “inner life” of man as well.

Daumier gives us little to nothing of the inner life of his gentleman (aside from perhaps his love of cats), but Fedotov creates whole worlds of embarrassment and social climbing and ennui. His depictions of aristocratic life seem to fulfill what would be Chernyshevsky’s call for art to reflect reality:

Let us suppose that a work of art [...] depicts a man in conflict with himself; or, if you will, the conflict between passions and lofty strivings [...] – does not real life provide cases where the same situation develops? Is not high wisdom obtained from the observation of life?\textsuperscript{248}

Fedotov’s powerful “observation of life” became central to his practice by the late 1840s and continued until his early death at the age of thirty-seven. After 1848, he produced a series of powerful paintings depicting men in conflict with themselves and further developed the central themes of time, boredom, and disillusionment. In these years, when he began to see his paintings rejected from the Academy’s annual exhibition, the artist’s work also became notably darker.\textsuperscript{249}

“Encore! Once More Encore!” of 1850 (Figure \textsuperscript{46}) shows a change in Fedotov’s style. His work was not accepted in the Academy exhibition of 1851 and he began to focus less on the precise and meticulous rendering of objects.\textsuperscript{250} While experimenting

\textsuperscript{247} Chernyshevsky, \textit{Selected Philosophical Essays}, trans. by the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 373.

\textsuperscript{248} Chernyshevsky, “The Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality,” in \textit{Selected Philosophical Essays}, 375.

\textsuperscript{249} Hare, \textit{The Art and Artists of Russia}, 211.

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid. This is an element of Fedotov’s practice which also serves as a parallel to that of Courbet. I will return to a comparison of these two artist’s works in a section below.
with atmospheric effects and color, he still continued to focus on genre scenes depicting soldiers and the petite bourgeoisie. Many of the same objects from previous works appear again here – guitar, poodle, pipe, pitcher, and candlestick – all objects from everyday life here rendered in hazy stillness. Gone is the profusion of objects that characterized works like “A Newly Decorated Knight.” The tablecloth is no longer intricately patterned, there are no carpets or trinkets or framed decor. There is little more than a household’s necessities here. A canteen, broom, and various tools line the walls. Perhaps we are seeing the hero of “Untimely Guest” many years later, reduced to poverty, his only remaining entertainment watching his trusty poodle jump over a stick at his command. The stifling atmosphere and color tones evoke heat and recall the artist’s earlier works such as the “Portrait of Zhidanovich.” But here the oppressive constriction of the interior is taken to the extreme.

“Encore!” acts as a summary of Fedotov’s works, drawing together motifs and objects from the previous decade and closing the narrative. In looking at it, one might again recall the words of Chaadaev, who was by Fedotov’s time famous throughout Russia: “We live only in the most confined present, without a past or a future, in the midst of a dead calm.” It seems remarkable, but this is one of only two oil paintings in the artist’s entire oeuvre which includes a window to the outside world. And yet it in many ways feels the most enclosed of them all. The artist uses a palette of blazing shades of red, ochre, and brown to render warmth and the feeling of heat. The single flame of a candle at the center of the composition fills the room with glowing light and contrasts sharply with the cold winter night seen through the window in the background. Fedotov creates a stark parallel between warm and cold here, the grays and blues of the house
visible through the window, a mini-winterscape at the heart of this “interieur.” There is a tension in the painting between inside and outside. Intense sfumato and the raking perspective of the floor and ceiling intensify the closed-off interiority. The amount of canvas given over to the ceiling recalls earlier interiors by Russian artists from the 1820s-40s, but here the hero lies completely horizontally. Studies for the work show Fedotov’s concern with capturing the protagonist in this foreshortened recumbent position (Figure 47).

As in many of his works, Fedotov worked to evoke the duration of time within the painting. Here the motif of the poodle jumping over the riding crop functions similarly to Zhdanovich drumming on the table and the smoke-filled exhale of the Druzhinin brother. The dog rendered in mid-jump creates a sense of suspension, of timelessness and of prolonged temporal expansion. Working in tandem with the repetition of the title, “Encore! Once More Encore!” – Fedotov evokes a motion occurring over and over again as the dog is encouraged to continue jumping. The sense of endless repetition, the droning quality of existence itself, is underscored by a further motif within the painting. Through the window in the background the outside world is not just rendered as the blank darkness of a night in the Russian north, but provides a view onto another hut the same as the one this figure is occupying. The red of the windows blaze like two eyes looking back at what must be the same sight from outside that hut. Looking out or in, the gaze is returned by only sameness.

Fedotov creates a feeling of meaninglessness and futility that is palpable. The narrative here is the same as in his portrait of “Andrei, Grigory and Alexander Druzhinin” – killing time – as the dog is ordered to jump over the stick again and again.
The stifling heat and repetition indicated by the title call to mind the eternal tortures of hell complete with laughing, haunting specter crammed into the corner of the room. Called by one historian a “meditation on life,” it is the feeling of superfluity as endemic and yet still so remarkably lonely that is at the symbolic center of Fedotov’s painting. This is a space closing in on its hero; he is consumed by the interior he inhabits. Absorbed in the act of repetition and within himself he has become a metaphor for boredom and ineffectuality, his time spent watching a dog jump over and over.

Fedotov would continue to render further stifling interiors in 1851-52. “An Officer and his Orderly” (Figure 48) shows what appears to be the same two men as in “Encore!” only the poodle has been replaced by a kitten. The same sense of oppressive closedness characterizes this interior. Here even the window has been lost, shutting in the figures completely. Again, a candle burns at the center of the work and illuminates an empty chair in the foreground nearest to the viewer. Beckoning us to enter the scene, the high chiaroscuro makes these men like specters, mere shadows of themselves as they fade into the walls and floor around them. A painting by Courbet exhibited only a little over a year before in the French Salon (Figure 49) presents a remarkably similar interior of stifling closedness. Nearly exact contemporaries (Fedotov was born four years before Courbet), both men would create works foundational to the movement of Realism in their respective cultures. But while Fedotov can only be credited with carving out a nascent

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251 Shumova, Fedotov, 24.
252 T.J. Clark discusses Courbet’s midcentury works similarly, describing Courbet as “not a painter […] of movement. He gave us images of a massive and stifling stillness….” See Clark, Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution (Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1982), 95.
space for Realist depictions of contemporary life in Russia, Courbet would become the pillar of Realism in France.253

Both canvases demonstrate the level to which Courbet and Fedotov assimilated the art of the Old Masters as autodidacts working in the Louvre and Hermitage respectively. We should not read too much into the difference in the overall palette of the works. Courbet’s “After Dinner” has suffered severe darkening over the years due to his habitual overuse of the pigment bitumen.254 The most notable difference between the works is their size. Courbet used a monumental scale for rendering the figures near life-size, hitherto dimensions reserved only for “noble” historical subjects. But Fedotov never worked in anywhere near such a large scale over the course of his short career. In fact, his paintings are for the most part extremely small, rarely over twenty or thirty centimeters.

This comparison demonstrates the importance of the interior to both artists’ conception of “reality” in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Both paintings rely on the singularity of inner realms for the visual impact and unity of their scenes of masculine domesticity. Both works also render in visual form the state of mind of the sitters both individually and as a group. Both also contain pseudo-self-portraits – the second figure from the left was long thought to be Courbet himself and the figure with the guitar is often considered to be Fedotov.255 Inserting their likenesses into the scene, Courbet and Fedotov heighten the sense of an inner world being depicted. Time beyond the moment is rendered in both works. Fedotov emphasizes duration through several iconographical

253 Courbet will be the subject of further discussion in chapter three and the position of all of these artists in terms of their respective Academies and as “outcasts” will be dealt with in the final chapter on the Salon des Refusés and the Peredvizhniki.
255 Callen and others identify this figure as Urbain Cuénot, see Ibid., 50.
markers. The tallow candle burning ever downward, the kitten balancing on its hind legs in a state of suspension, and the gentleman at the rear of the room drawing an inhale from the long pipe all emphasize a beyond that lies outside this fixed moment. Courbet likewise found ways to expand outward and at the same time contract the narrative. Similar to Fedotov, Courbet creates suspension as Marlet, the third figure from the left, tips his large glass back to drink and Alphonse Promayet plays the violin. We imagine the song as it unfolds, the scene holding much the same in the minutes and even perhaps hours beyond the moment captured by the artist.

Thus these works are dually “of the moment.” They depict contemporary life as it looked and felt in each respective culture at the time, but also demonstrate the contemporaneity so longed for by the intelligentsia. The images hold us as viewers in the cavity of the moment as it unfolds and ensues. In these works, both artists create pockets of absorption that draw us both temporally and spatially into the scene. We are taken up and into Fedotov’s painting by the empty chair highlighted by the candle before us – beckoning for us to join these men at the table. And the figure with his back to us in Courbet’s scene provides a mirror for our position before the canvas, bodily drawing us in to imagine our place physically as well as mentally within the scene.256

But what scholars have usually emphasized as the Realist instantaneity in these works – their functioning as captured single moments of present time – is not the entire story. It is the remarkable oxymoronic suspension of the instant which proves so visually striking and allows their reality to function beyond the moment of their isolated here and now. It is both early Realist artists’ emphasis on the weight of the moment, the heaviness

256 I am of course not the first to describe this absorptive facet of Courbet’s painting practice, see Michael Fried, Courbet’s Realism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
of a single instant plucked from the everyday which serves as the strongest marker of their Realism and proclaims modernity. The paintings are seemingly theatrical presentations for us— the cat balancing before the stick, Promayet playing the violin— but also completely closed, self-absorbed systems of obliviousness to us. None of the figures in either painting recognizes our presence; the monotony of their moment is too strong to draw them out from themselves. The figures don’t even respond to each other, how could they possibly break the fourth wall to see us when they are so absorbed in their own moment? Without the fixedness of the depicted figures’ boredom, the emphasis on the sameness of the mundane moment as it unfolds now and endlessly after, these paintings could be neither evocative of reality nor modern— this is the contribution which these fathers of Realism make to the emerging movements in France and Russia. Both Courbet and Fedotov posit melancholic malaise as the sign of modernity, as central to the visual explication of the contemporary moment’s unfolding. Boredom is the subconscious of these paintings, the river that runs under the ground of modern life.

Fedotov’s emphasis on the perpetuated moment would culminate in his last painting, “The Gamblers” of 1852 (Figure 50). In this work and the many studies for it (Figure 51), Fedotov again depicts a stiflingly closed bourgeois interior. This is the realm of men— five male figures surround a small card table, a long evening of drinking and gambling seems to be coming to a close. Again, Fedotov finds means of suspending the present moment. Three of the men stretch and yawn, caught in mid-action as they unwind their arms and backs, loosening their bodies after hours of sitting. As in the two works from 1849-51, there is the glow of candlelight as a fourth figure brings two fresh tallows from the left. But the sharp chiaroscuro does not emanate from the two flames,
instead seeming to emerge from the table itself in the center of the composition, casting deep shadows from the figures and objects in the room and creating a singularly haunting mood for the overall work.

The studies for “The Gamblers” show Fedotov’s obsessive concern with capturing the bodily positions of the various figures in their yawns and stretches. Working at this point in poverty and isolation, the artist used mannequins as models. Replicating over and over the poses, he created a whole sign system for boredom and fatigue. Fedotov has here compressed space and time, distilling the moment into one long gaping yawn, summarizing an entire life in a single instant from one protracted evening. This expansion finds its antithesis in the gesture made by the man at the heart of the composition (Figure 52) – his upturned hand and jeering face like some devil beckoning his companions back to the table. This gentleman, clad in dressing gown and smoking a short cigar, bears a striking resemblance to the artist himself and his imploring gesture serves as a focal point for drawing the viewer into the painting. It is through him that we are absorbed into the painting, drawn into the scene by the artist’s doppelgänger; we become fixed there in trying to read the gesture and unfold the narrative. On the table in front of this figure are not playing cards as we might have originally expected, but a single sheet of paper to which he gestures. Fedotov emphasized his concern with this hand in many of the studies for the work (Figure 53), even earlier positing both hands upturned, though ultimately deciding to distill the gesture to only one.

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258 Zagyanskaya also believes this is a self-portrait, see *Fedotov*, 11.
259 There is some debate as to whether the scene depicted is of a card game or not. Shumova describes the host seated at the table as gesturing for the game to continue, see *Fedotov*, 24.
That single upturned and high-lit open palm serves as a signal for the viewer’s attention, heightening the tension between the opening relaxation of the surrounding figures with their raised arms and the central figure’s upright and compressed half-length body. Again, this work bears comparison with a nearly contemporaneous self-portrait by Courbet, his “Man with a Pipe” of 1848-49 (Figure 54). An obvious similarity resides in the fact that both artists chose to depict themselves smoking, the angle of Fedotov’s cigar even paralleling that of Courbet’s pipe. But aside from this easily observable correspondence, the self-portraits are remarkably different in overall handling and mood. Courbet’s painting still operates under the strong influence of Romanticism – his deeply shadowed eyes and backward tilting head combine with the forward hunch of his shoulders to flagrantly posit the self as all tortured and moody hero. Fedotov’s self-portrait belongs much more to the realm of genre. It is almost anecdotal in its brazen narrativity. Both Courbet and Fedotov’s works are incredibly theatrical – the latter’s arranged like a “mise en scene” for our viewing edification and the former positing himself as the actor in some tragic drama. But Fedotov is also showing here how far he has departed by 1852 from the simplistic mode of the “interieur.” One might think of Belinsky writing on the new Realist purpose of art: “theatrical effects are not emotional expression.” Fedotov posits himself darkly, without a hint of the Byronic angst which so characterizes Courbet’s self conception. The cigar glows hotly amidst the row of his bared white teeth; he is a figure impossibly flat and compressed into the space, almost becoming a part of the room itself. He implores his friends (and the viewer by proxy) to the table, to that blank sheet of paper before him. That single leaf is the empty heart of

the painting – we are called in, we look, but for naught.\footnote{For a brilliant analysis of writing within painting, see T.J. Clark, “Painting in the Year 2,” \textit{Representations} 47 (Summer 1994), 13-63. I am also continuing to work through Lacan’s ideas about “dompte-regard” in my analysis of Fedotov’s paintings.} Purposelessness lies at the heart of the presentation.

By positing himself in the center of this monotonous meditation, Fedotov drives home visually the idea that idleness is one the great tenets (and dangers) of modern life. Fedotov was a master at finding ways to delineate the tragic aspects of even banal everyday life.\footnote{Mikhail Alpatov, \textit{Russian Impact on Art}, Martin L. Wolf, ed. and Ivy Litvinov, trans. (Literary Licensing, 2011), 211.} In his notes for the painting, he compares a man to a glass of water. Describing how if one leaves even the clearest glass of water to sit, it will eventually grow moldy and foul, as will man. All things, even the purest, come to this end.\footnote{Shumova, \textit{Fedotov}, 11.} Fedotov’s writings provide insight into his personality and state of mind in the last years of his life. He wrote a fable about a flower on the windowsill of a poor home saying, “I long for sun, but it doesn’t favor my window.”\footnote{Hare, \textit{The Art and Artists of Russia}, 211.} That imploring gesture drives home the urgency of Fedotov’s depression, encapsulating a lifetime of cigars and yawns and prolonged evenings of boredom and malaise. His close friend, one of the Druzhinin brothers whom he had painted in the late 1840s, described Fedotov as “working merclessly, without rest; it’s frightening.”\footnote{Alpatov, \textit{Russian Impact on Art}, 214.} Not long after completing “The Gamblers” Fedotov went to an undertaker and ordered his own coffin.\footnote{Zagynanskaya, \textit{Fedotov}, 68.} He was found by his longtime military servant sobbing alone in the middle of an open field. Pressing his head between his hands – one might imagine much like the figure rising from the table in his last painting or as Courbet presented himself in his “Self-Portrait (The Desperate Man)”
of 1843-45 (Figure 55) – the artist was brought home for rest. Shortly thereafter he became violent and had to be put into a straightjacket. He died in an insane asylum soon after.\textsuperscript{267}

The news of his death was suppressed by authorities and not allowed to be published in newspapers. Only a few close friends attended his funeral.\textsuperscript{268} Despite this tragic end, his paintings have withstood the test of time. Hailed in Russia as one of the great masters of the first half of the nineteenth century, his work would inspire many artists of the coming Realist generation in the 1860s. Writers continued to publish works with superfluous men in leading roles, in fact the type only grew in intensity and frequency in the years following Fedotov’s paintings of the subject. As visual manifestations of this type and his surroundings, paintings of interiors serve as important markers for the growing concern over a crisis among bourgeois men. And Fedotov’s heroes serve as signs of the superfluous man’s increasing prevalence in the years leading up to and around the revolutions which would sweep Europe in 1848.

\textsuperscript{267} Ibid., 211.
\textsuperscript{268} Shumova, \textit{Fedotov}, 25.
Chapter Three –
Wounded Men: War, Revolution, and Disillusionment, 1848-1863

I am a graveyard, hated by the moon,
Where worms, with dust I loved, hold intercourse,
[...] — From now on we’ll be petrified, a stone,
Buried I apprehension, flesh and bone,

A timeless, sleeping sphinx engulfed in sand,
Ignored by everyman, in no man’s land;
Left off the maps, alone, with grim delight,
We’ll celebrate the dead sun’s dying light.269

—Charles Baudelaire, “Spleen” (1857)

The 1848 Revolution

22 February 1848 saw crowds flood the streets of Paris in protest. A severe food
shortage which had begun nearly two years before had caused a recession that led to
massive unemployment and widespread discontent. Percy St. John, an English journalist
who witnessed the events of that day wrote:

Hundreds went with a settled determination to bring things to an issue; for early on
Tuesday morning I saw swords, and daggers, and pistols concealed under the blouses
of the workingmen...everywhere the crowd increased; all Paris seemed moving to the
boulevards... it was impossible not to admire the courage of this body of young men,
who, wholly unarmed, thus braved the strict orders of a government, backed by an
immense army and whole parks of artillery. They were liable at every moment to be
charged or fired on.... the people were flying to arms...barricades were rising in every
quarter...270

Contemporary accounts like these highlight how the events unfolded. The crowds which
gathered called for increased participation in the government and directed their anger
against King Louis Philippe and his chief minister of foreign and domestic policy. It

269 Baudelaire, Complete Poems, 195. Two other contenders for this epigraph spot include a quote from
Huysmans "La-Bas" or Dostoevsky’s NfU (see Epigraphs file).
See scanned digital resource at: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1848johnson.asp (accessed August
13, 2013).
wasn’t long before fighting broke out between citizens and the Parisian municipal
guards.\textsuperscript{271}

At two in the afternoon the next day, a large crowd gathered outside the Ministry
of Foreign Affairs. An officer ordered the crowd not to pass, but people in the front of the
crowd were being pushed by the rear. The officer ordered his men to fix bayonets. But a
soldier discharged his musket, and the rest of the soldiers began firing into the crowd.

…a gun was heard, and the 14th Regiment of Line leveled their muskets and fired.
The scene which followed was awful. Thousands of men, women, children, shrieking,
bawling, raving, were seen flying in all directions, while sixty-two men, women, and
lads, belonging to every class of society, lay weltering in their blood upon the
pavement.\textsuperscript{272}

Altogether, fifty-two people were killed and Paris was soon a city in the throes of
revolution. Omnibuses were turned into barricades and thousands of trees were felled to
reinforce them. Fires were set, and angry citizens began converging on the royal
palace.\textsuperscript{273} Terrified, King Louis Philippe abdicated and fled to Britain. Again, St. John is
helpful for his description of 23 February as it drew to a close:

…a body of men, now no longer hindered by the soldiers, proceeded to remove the
heaps of dead and dying […]. Seventeen corpses, however, were retained and placed
upon a cart. Ghastly was the spectacle of torch and gaslight, of that heap of dead, a
few minutes before alive, merry, anxious, full of hopes, and perhaps, lofty aspirations
for their country.\textsuperscript{274}

While I will discuss the importance of this emphasis on the body and particularly the
dead male body over the course of this chapter, what is central to note here is how the
events of February in Paris proved a catalyst for a brushfire of revolutions which swept
Europe in the coming months. The revolution of 1848 remains the most widespread

revolutionary wave in European history, but within a year, control had been regained, and the revolutions collapsed. Understanding how this could have happened is no easy task.

In the wake of the revolution, politics and art in France became for a time united in supporting the idea of the dignity of the common man and his right to labor. The revolution erupted before the mid-March opening of the Salon that year and had a dramatic impact on that year’s presentation at the Academy. The jury was suppressed and all artists were allowed to exhibit at the renamed National Louvre Museum. An unprecedented 5,180 works were in the livret for the Salon of 1848.\[275\] The critic Théophile Thoré describes the remarkable events of that year:

\begin{quote}
The revolution of February surprised the jury of the academy in the midst of its functions. The weighing of souls had begun […]. But at the first hint of insurrection, the worthies of the Civil List snatched up their glasses and wigs and took to their heels. […] Since the beginning of the upheavals, the arts have been left to fend for themselves.\[276\]
\end{quote}

This salon of artists "left to fend for themselves" would ultimately prove a catalyst for a general loosening of the Academy’s strictures for exhibition, a trend that would continue over the course of the following decades. Thoré’s observation of the real effects the revolutionary events had on the Salon and the Academy would also largely come to characterize the French art scene in the 1850s – “revolution,” “insurrection,” “upheavals” – these are no circumstances, but they charged and drove art at midcentury.

By the summer the people of Paris again rose in insurrection, igniting what became known as the June Days Uprising - a bloody but unsuccessful rebellion by urban workers sparked by the failure of an effort to provide temporary work for the jobless.\[277\]

\[277\] Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art*, 256.
1,500 rebels died in waves of protest in the streets and 12,000 were arrested.\textsuperscript{278} Living in exile at the time, the Russian novelist Alexander Herzen (1812-70) was in Paris in June of 1848 and summed up the emotional aftermath of the revolutionary events in his memoirs: “With profound sorrow I watched and recorded the success of the forces of dissolution and the decline of the republic, of France, of Europe [...]. Those five years were [...] the worst time of my life; I have not now such riches to lose or such beliefs to be destroyed.”\textsuperscript{279} In the wake of the revolution’s failure, Herzen was describing not just the sentiment prevalent at the time in France, but in much of Europe as well as a generation became plunged into a state of suspension and despair.

Russia, however, remained largely immune to the wave of uprisings which swept Europe in that year.\textsuperscript{280} The events in the West nonetheless did have negative repercussions for Russian intellectuals and artists. Nicholas I, a conservative ruler already as has been seen, only became more strident in his suppression of free thinking in the aftermath of 1848. In the words of the historian Nicholas Riasanovsky, the Tsar responded to the turmoil of Europe “by becoming more blunt, uncompromising, doctrinaire and domineering than ever before.”\textsuperscript{281} Herzen too describes Russia’s position in these years in bleak terms: “Russia lay speechless, as though dead, covered with bruises, like an unfortunate peasant-woman at the feet of her master, beaten by heavy fists. She was then entering upon those fearful five years from which she is at last

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{280} The revolutions of 1848 did however have a strong influence on the parts of Eastern Europe under Hapsburg and Ottoman rule. The spread of nationalist ideas among the various Slavic peoples in Poland and Hungary combined with the steady decay of the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires to create a volatile situation in this period. See Jonathan Sperber, \textit{The European Revolutions, 1848-1851} (Cambridge University Press, 2005).
\textsuperscript{281} Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, \textit{A History of Russia}, 6\textsuperscript{th} edition (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 336.
\end{flushleft}
emerging now that Nicholas is buried.” Herzen here refers to the end of Nicholas I’s reign and underscores the widespread feeling that his time as ruler had brought the country to a state of low despondency as a result of years of autocratic subjugation.

The historian Richard Wortman, in his influential text on power in Russia, also provides an account of Nicholas’s reaction to the revolutions sweeping Europe:

The crushing of the Hungarian revolution in June and July of 1849 thrust Nicholas forward as defender of the throne and opponent of liberation throughout Europe. The spread of revolution only raised his fears that the infection might spread. He embarked on a series of restrictive measures, ranging from terminating deliberations on redefining relations between serfs and landlords, to the tightening of censorship rules [...]. Police surveillance intensified [...]. Travel abroad required the personal approval of the emperor, which he was increasingly loathe to grant.

The middle of the 1850s in Russia thus saw the deepest and most bitter consequences of Nicholas’s imperialist power. Russia’s participation in the Crimean War from 1853-56 also provides another important factor in the sense of hopelessness growing at the time. In these years, Russia suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of an alliance between France, Britain and the Ottoman Empire. The Crimean War became notorious for logistical failures on all sides, but in particular for those made by the Tsar. This war was not easy on France either and the early 1850s were a time of tremendous upheaval and disappointment in French society. In December of 1848, Louis Napoleon, the nephew of the former emperor, was elected president and ushered in the Second Republic. But three years later, he established a military dictatorship and proclaimed

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282 Herzen, My Past and Thought, 2: 670-71. These lines were written in 1856.
himself emperor. He would rule France as Napoleon III for nearly the next two decades, until the outset of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.  

Interestingly, however, in both Russia and France the years immediately after the Crimean War were also characterized by a renewal of hope among the intelligentsia and the general population more widely. As with the change of power in France, a new period of optimism arose with the passing of Nicholas I in Russia in 1855. According to Richard Wortman, the crowning of Nicholas’s son Alexander II as the new Tsar was accompanied by a renewed sense of positivity:

Alexander had taken on a new role, the bearer of good feelings, uniting educated society, the clergy, and the state. The metaphor of rule as love created the bond between monarch and people without narrowing the distance between them or sacrificing monarchical prerogatives. The myth of a supreme Western monarch, in its new form, would animate a heroic spirit of reform.  

This dualistic tension between disillusionment and hope would characterize much of the art and literature which emerged out of Russia and France in the 1850s. Both sentiments coexisted in this moment and produced art that was characterized by the emergence of new parameters for both subject matter and formal rendering. Out of this hotbed mix of disenchantment and anticipation the Realist movement arose in both countries.

**Wounded Men**

In the years around the 1848 revolution in France, a fascination with the depiction of men in states of wounded withdrawal developed parallel with the rise of Realist subject matter in both Russia and France. In the 1840s, the artist who would come to lead the Realist movement, Gustave Courbet, created a series of self-portraits well-known for their drama and psychological veracity. These works are tour de force depictions of mood and

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temperament that comprise an oeuvre unto themselves within his larger body of work. They demonstrate both the backward pull of Romanticism, the mode of depiction which had so gripped French and Russian artists in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and also the rise of a new perceptive acuity more invested in finding ways to depict emotion and the boundaries between different states of consciousness. Courbet’s self-portraits and Russian depictions of men in a state of leisured dishabille over the course of the 1840s provide a case study for exploring how Realism developed in both France and Russia during the same years and how new subjects emerged from the disillusionment which followed the political and social turmoil in Europe at midcentury.

Of the revolution, Courbet wrote: “In ’48 there were only two men ready: me and Proudhon.” But it is known that when the revolution did actually come, Courbet in fact hesitated and abstained from the action. In his biography of the artist, Jules-Antoine Castagnary (1830-88) wrote: “Although Courbet was not politically oriented, at least at that time, his art was accused of being so; exposed to the same hate, [the works submitted to the Salon of 1850-51] fell under the same blows as the February Republic.”

Echoing Castagnary, the art historian T.J. Clark has described the reality of Courbet’s political inaction in this crucial period:

Not a trace of activity in the clubs, Socialist or otherwise, has come down to us; hardly a trace of political involvement on the streets. Courbet was, for the first few months of 1848, a spectator. Toubin recalled him later, standing in the Tuileries Gardens with his new friend Baudelaire, watching the great clash between the workers and the Garde Municipale on 22 February […] As far as we know he did not fight on the barricades: he avoided claiming that, even in 1871.

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290 Clark, *Image of the People*, 47.
His involvement in the events of 1848, or lack thereof, and the impact the uprising had on him both personally and artistically have been well explored by art historians. In the first chapter I explored several self-portrait modes that Courbet experimented with in the 1840s as his style matured and moved away from the Romantic to Realist modes of representation. But the depiction of himself as “L’Homme blessé” (The Wounded Man) (Figure 50) proves uniquely insightful to understanding the changes the artist underwent around 1848 as a result of the revolutionary events and the development of his aspiration “to be not only a painter, but […] to create living art”.292

Begun in 1844, “The Wounded Man” was reworked by Courbet a decade later in the wake of the revolution and serves as a culmination of the melancholy aesthetic statements he made through his portraiture practice in these years. Courbet envisions himself in this painting differently than in his earlier self-portraits – as no longer completely whole, but rather as torn into flesh. He embraces his own body as though he is literally holding himself together. The hands which so evocatively caress his cheek and grasp his belt in the earlier “Man with a Leather Belt, A Portrait of the Artist” (Figure 57) have become in “The Wounded Man” a means of support to hold the body together. The hand emerges from the white highlight of the sleeve under the cloak and leads the eye to the wound slightly above it. But Courbet keeps this visually climactic point from sight, declining to materialize the injury though it is the narrative center of the painting.

292 Courbet, “Realist Manifesto” quoted in Linda Nochlin, Realism and Tradition in Art, 1848-1900: Sources and Documents (Prentice-Hall, 1966), 34.
His body as he presents it here lacks anatomical logic beneath the cloak; forcing one to imagine contours where Courbet hasn’t given them. The self here is visually falling apart, but he is injured in a way that can’t exactly be seen. Its proof is secondary; it exists only in that smudge of red pigment on the white linen shirt above his heart. This bloodstain was only added in 1854, nearly ten years after the self-portrait was first conceived.\textsuperscript{293} The composition originally contained two figures, Courbet at the center, with a woman leaning on his shoulder (Figure \textsuperscript{58}). But in the reworking, Courbet excised the female presence. In the course of the decade that passed from this work’s inception and completion, his mistress, Virginie Binet bore him a son in 1847. But by the early 1850s, she had left him, taking her son with her.\textsuperscript{294}

These biographical events had a lasting effect that is evinced in the painting. It is not incidental that Courbet painted out the female figure and posited himself in the new image as wounded. But in the painting the blood which figures the wound has not soaked or permeated the shirt’s fabric, it does not spill forth; rather it appears like stage blood. Without it, the protagonist would appear to be sleeping rather than dying and this ambiguity underscores the performative aspect of the work. This is Courbet’s demonstration of the loss and pain he had experienced – intangible, but wounds nonetheless.

Courbet had reason to feel injured in these years and posit himself publicly in this manner. Before the revolution in 1848, he had sent no less than eighteen entries to the Salon jury. They rejected all but three.\textsuperscript{295} In 1847, the same year as his illegitimate son

\textsuperscript{293} T.J. Clark, \textit{Image of the People}, 29.
\textsuperscript{294} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{295} Clark, \textit{Image of the People}, 39.
was born, the jury in fact rejected everything he had submitted.296 Prosper Haussard wrote of Courbet in his Salon of 1849, “the long trials endured by M. Courbet, are all visible in his paintings, which are marked by a certain somber and concentrated force, by a sadness of expression…”297 Thus Courbet is here demonstratively public in presenting himself as unjustly wounded. In this self-portrait, one sees Courbet moving from one style to the next over the course of a decade. Leaving the world of the romantic ideal, he broke firmly into “Réalisme” and figured the transition as a kind of death in this painting. In so doing, Courbet was not trying to promote an illusion, but instead draw the viewer’s attention to his plight via the very constructed-ness of his scene. In so doing, Courbet also firmly posits himself as different from his predecessors, as ushering in a new kind of self-figuration and art-making.

This can be seen in further elements of this painting. In figuring his own sense of injury, Courbet used the same red for his own signature on the bottom left of the canvas (Figure 59). But the red here somehow feels heavier, thicker, more viscous than the red of the blood above. The line of the signature is felt as wound; it metaphorically evokes an incision and parallels the blindness and evasion above.298 Courbet here doesn’t just sign his name, but underlines it emphatically and that underscore even breaks the bottom barrier of the frame. His mark spills over, breaks the bounds; it represents a break in the

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296 Ibid.
297 Ibid., 23.
298 Michael Fried wrote of the importance of Courbet’s signature in the artist’s Stonebreakers as a surrogate for the painter himself: “…we are not dealing here with just any signifying entity. The proper noun “G. Courbet” is in an obvious sense still another representation of the painter-beholder.” And further: “…from the mid-1840s on Courbet seems to have been fascinated by his signature—by the convention that called for him to affix that further, supplementary, representation of himself to the products of his art. (He almost always did so in carnal red, in letters that appear to have an obdurate corporeality of their own: the signature in Courbet’s paintings and drawings is never merely a verbal signifier.” See “Painter into Painting: On Courbet’s ‘After Diner at Ornans’ and ‘Stonebreakers’,” Critical Inquiry 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982), 642-643.
solidification of self as represented at the very same moment as it attempts to prove its very substantibility. It adds to the theatrical effect – doubling the wound and spreading “blood” across the stage that is the canvas.

Courbet is here at his most self-absorbed; he does not even return the gaze. The veiled lids and the darkened nostrils are all blankly amorphous entry points, places to become trapped and lost while looking. Courbet presented himself as having drifted off into another realm – sleep/death providing a metaphor for sadness, for the kind of self-absorption and creative narcissism which drove Romantic self-portraiture. The “concentrated force” Prosper Haussard wrote of in describing Courbet’s works from this time - his pain here and in the other self-portraits - is self contained, but not absorptive of the viewer beyond the level of the gaze. The absence of the wound underscores that the viewer is not invited to share in the pain and sadness or vicariously experience it, but rather to observe its contours. And this is a key element in understanding the transition from Romanticism to Realism as modes of picturing the self and the world.

This anti-absorptive effect would also be true of “The Stonebreakers” in 1848 (Figure 60). The viewer is not invited to share the burden of their labor, but to observe, without seeing the years of toil written on their faces. The worker was the hero of the 1848 revolution, it was his right to labor that crowds took to the streets and toppled a

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299 I am again here quite consciously evoking the theories of Jacques Lacan regarding the gaze, specifically what he calls dompte-regard, the taming of the gaze, and its interaction with le donner-à-voir, the offer to view. According to Lacan, “…in the picture, something of the gaze is always manifested. The painter knows this very well—his mortality, his search, his quest, his practice is that he should sustain and vary the selection of the gaze. […] It might be thought that, like the actor, the painter wishes to be looked at. I do not think so. I think there is a relation with the gaze of the spectator, but that it is more complex. The painter […] gives something for the eye to feed on…” See Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI The Four Fundamentals of Psychoanalysis, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 101.

300 Clark too seeks to investigate what he characterizes as the ambiguity of Courbet’s self-absorption, asking: “Is the Bohemian self-absorbed, or dependent on the audience he provokes?” See Image of the People, 45.
regime. But Courbet withholds the visages of these men much like he refuses to present the wound in his self-portrait. In doing so, he disallowed full emotional and empathic engagement. In these early French Realist paintings and in the origin that they represent, observation has been sanctified. Purported objectivity became the new ideal, perhaps the last ideal. Under the banner of ‘Il faut être de son temps’ the world was observed and preserved in oil on canvas. Perception was captured, but not meant to be deeply felt. Reality was espoused, but still while working through past models for understanding its nature. From an understanding of self emerged the desire to extrapolate objectivity to the world. This is perhaps what lies behind a statement like the one made by Courbet in 1861 that “painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the presentation of real and existing things […] an object which is abstract, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting.” Or Flaubert’s 1854 pronouncement that “we have to confine ourselves to relating the facts.” The goal for French artists was to represent without judgment, just as is.

Parallels | Wounded-Sleeping-Dead

The Russian artist Nikolai M. Alekseev (1813-80) painted a self-portrait in 1859 (Figure 61) with strong correspondence to Courbet’s self-portrait as a wounded man. Aside from the remarkably similar pose, both portraits possess an intense emotional charge, though

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301 I am engaging here with the argument that drives Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison’s book Objectivity (New York: Zone Books, 2007), who attempt to show that every cultural and historical epoch generates its own perspective on the world that influences the way science tackles its objects. Also of central relevance to the argument I am developing in this chapter is the work done by Jonathan Crary in Suspensions of Perception: Attention Spectacle, and Modern Culture (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999). The notion of “objectivity” as I’m using it here technically did not exist before mid-century, but hints at its development and conceptual growth in these years are evinced by quotes like those submitted above.


303 Ibid.
of a slightly different tenor. In both, the artists depict themselves as wrapped in layers of clothing and clutching an over-cloak around their bodies with the left hand. The gaze doesn’t meet the viewer’s in either image – in Courbet’s case the eyes are closed and in Alekseev’s they are averted. Alekseev’s sight line moves to something outside the frame, much like Courbet’s earlier portrait with the leather belt (Figure 62). These two works also rely on the same s-curve sweep of the left hand as it clutches the clothed body.

But despite the differing upright stance of the body in Alekseev’s portrait of himself compared to Courbet as the wounded man, the former evokes a wound that cannot be seen as well. Alekseev portrays himself as though the viewer is privy to an unexplained fiery emotional state. Alekseev here, similar to Courbet, utilizes the visual vocabulary of Romanticism – the abstract and stormy clouds which swirl behind the figure, the oval trompe l’oeil frame within the picture, the spotlight directed at the figure’s face as he turns toward the viewer. All of these elements combine theatrically. Alekseev is here aware of his audience even if he doesn’t register the viewer’s gaze.

Theatricality for both of these artists, and on a larger scale both of these cultures at this moment, provided one of the few means by which deeply felt emotion could be kept at bay. The gaze directed away from the beholder acts as a barrier, blocking empathic engagement despite the lure of emotion evinced in the sitter’s bodies and faces.

Between Alekseev’s dramatic self-presentation and the extreme self-absorption of Courbet’s portrait as a wounded man, one can see developing in the years after the 1848 revolution a fascination with masculinity wounded on a much larger scale. In the coming years, others would take up the mantle of depicting men as wounded, but not necessarily in the form of self-portraiture. A tension grows from this moment in the work of
Courbet, a shift in which men perceive themselves more and more as bodies lacking health and a growing tendency to make this a subject of depiction. Ten years after Courbet finished his self-portrait as a wounded man, Frédéric Bazille (1841-70) painted a portrait of his friend Claude Monet (1840-1926) confined to bed after sustaining an injury to his leg (Figure 63). As in Courbet’s work, the wound here is barely visible. It appears little more than a blush on the front of the exposed shin near the center of the painting (Figure 64). But the injury, and the immobilization that it produced for Monet, is underscored by the large basin and bucket positioned together at the foot of the bed. We as viewers must pass over them to gain access to the figure who is the subject of the painting. The emptiness of these two receptacles (Figure 65) visually mimics the injury of a wound. In their dark recesses the viewer imagines the full scope of what will confine Monet to his bed for months on end – the processes inside the body which bring about the blush of inflammation on his skin. Monet is posited here not only as despondent in his immobility (Figure 66), but even as fragmented.304 As in Courbet’s work, one has trouble positing the body under the folds of the messy bedding. His bedclothes make it difficult to tell where he ends and the sheets below and around him begin. This is a man slipping out of view; a man constituted and posited synecdochally as his injury.

A few years before Bazille, Charles Auguste Émile Durand, known as Carolus-Duran (1837-1917), also painted an image of a man convalescing (Figure 67). Much more like Courbet, however, Carlous-Duran drew together the intermediary space between sleeping and death as states of consciousness. And unlike Bazille, who pictured Monet as wounded but fully awake, Carolus-Duran’s convalescent is sleeping, but bears

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304 For a wonderful study of this painting and the relationship between Bazille and Monet see Mary Manning, “Monet’s Vulnerable Masculinity in Frederic Bazille’s The Improvised Field Hospital,” Journal of Men’s Studies 21, Issue 2 (Spring 2013), 127-134.
no sign of his injury. Whether this man suffers from a physical wound or is in some perpetual state of sickness (mental or physiological) cannot be ascertained. In fact, there is little visually that tells the viewer he is ill at all. And this dynamic becomes further complicated when we add to the comparison a work Carolus-Duran completed shortly after “The Convalescent,” a painting called “The Sleeping Man” (Figure 68). Again there is the difficulty of assessing whether the man is healthy or sick. Running parallel to the slippage between sleep and death and the perpetual difficulty of ascertaining the wound, Carolus-Duran’s works hint at the unknowability of another’s physical or psychical state; they highlight the idea that perception of someone’s mood or temperament or health is always to a certain extent unstable. A wounded man can look remarkably similar to one who is healthy. And the nuances that tell the key information become of increasing importance as artists like Courbet, Bazille, and Carolus-Duran experiment with how to encapsulate the felt elements of reality, to translate lived experience onto canvas as per the dictates of Realism growing in force in the 1850s.  

In his book “Absorption and Theatricality,” the art historian Michael Fried examines sleep as a manifestation of the preoccupation with absorption on the part of French painters in the eighteenth century. Fried’s work provides an important model for understanding how viewers have responded to images depending on how the artist has

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305 I am here engaging with both Baudelaire’s notion of “lived experience” as the starting point for aesthetic analysis (as opposed to more traditional modes of aesthetics or beauty) and Benjamin’s take on the shock experience of modernity through his later readings of Baudelaire. For more on the relationship between these two key figures with an emphasis on how they utilize perceptions of time to create memories of experience see Elissa Marder, *Dead Time: Temporal Disorders in the Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)* (Stanford University Press, 2001). On Benjamin and “shock” see Richard Shiff, “Handling Shocks: On the Representation of Experience in Walter Benjamin's Analogies,” *Oxford Art Journal* 15, No. 2 (1992), 88-103. Catherine Witt describes Baudelaire’s relationship to experience as heavily mediated by language as opposed to one of pure immersion in sensory impression – see “Passages through Baudelaire: From Poetry to Thought and Back,” in Joseph Acquisto, ed. *Thinking Poetry: Philosophical Approaches to Nineteenth-Century French Poetry* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).  

constructed the work in different times. He describes sleep as one of the “automatic, involuntary, and unconscious actions [that] were perceived by critics of the early and mid-1750s as signs of intense absorption…” Figures engaged in sleep are completely oblivious to being looked at, or rather, they appear to be. In the case of the paintings under examination here, however, sleep creates ambiguity between states of consciousness. Sleep functions on a sliding scale between consciousness and unconsciousness as it ambiguously morphs into death. And since, as Fried points out, “absorption and unconsciousness are keyed to one another,” the amount of absorptive pull that each image possesses is highly dependent on the viewer’s ability to discern cognizance in the main figure depicted. Ascertain the level of awareness each man demonstrates draws the viewer in and creates an “intensely empathic note.” And this state of absorption on the part of both viewer and painted protagonist mirrors the meditative-absorptive state that the artist enters into to depict any subject, especially if that subject is himself.

307 Ibid., 31.
308 Shakespeare famously highlighted the relationship between sleep and death (and dreaming) in many of his works. It is especially prominent in Hamlet, Macbeth, and A Midsummer’s Night Dream. The recurring significance of this theme makes it a metaphysical issue in many of the plays. See S. Viswanathan, Exploring Shakespeare: The Dynamics of Playmaking (Orient Blackswan, 2005), 29-45.
309 Fried, Absorption and Theatricality, 31.
310 Ibid.
311 This is a big topic, and one that is handled in varying ways by leading theorists of self-portraiture in the nineteenth century. My argument here is most influenced by Michael Fried’s blending of philosophy, psychology, and the history of perception in Menzel’s Realism. In that work, he engages with the theory of empathy known as Einfühlung which had gained widespread popularity among German philosophers and aestheticians by the end of the nineteenth century. More relevant historically to my argument about Courbet’s self-portraits, however, are the strains of thought which emerged in the first half of the century by the philosopher Karl Christian Freidrich Krause, who was a follower of Fichte. In the 1820s, he coined the term “Selbstschauung ‘Ich’” (self-observation ‘I’) in an attempt to come to grips with how self-representation without a mirror can be understood as a technique of visual embodiment from inside. For an analysis of both Fried and Krause, see Karl Clausberg, “Feeling Embodied in Vision: The Imagery of Self-Perception Without Mirrors,” in John Michael Krois, ed., Embodiment in Cognition and Culture (John Benjamins Publishing, 2007).
Another artist in this period, Théodule Ribot (1839-1916), produced a number of images of wounded men in these years as well (Figure 69). But again, one sees a suppression of the wound itself and ambiguity regarding states of consciousness. These are men who appear either already dead or just on the brink of life and engage with an earlier tradition of depicting Christ and martyred saints. The bodies presented in extreme foreshortening appear utterly decimated, but the source of the injury is not visually apparent. The bodies of these men, while grotesque and contorted, are nonetheless, like Courbet’s still whole and even beautiful in their nudity. Their bodies are presented such that the viewer has total access to them. They are not just oblivious to us in the Friedian sense, but utterly gone to the world as a result of their unconsciousness. Many of these paintings also contain a surrogate for the viewer in the figures of the “Samaritans.” The viewer too, in searching for the wound, the source of the pain and the problem, becomes narratively entwined in the scenes. Sleep and death, seeing and understanding, are all drawn together in Ribot’s work.

Throughout the late 1850s and early 1860s, Ribot focused on the depiction of wounded men, but in an increasingly religious context (Figure 70). His multiple depictions of St. Vincent are particularly remarkable for their woundlessness – especially given that this saint was martyred on the gridiron, a technique which involved essentially broiling the victim to death.312 This extremely painful and prolonged form of torture eviscerated the flesh of the body and makes the glowingly perfect male bodies of Ribot’s St. Vincents uniquely disquieting. These are men, even more so than Bazille’s Monet or Carolus-Duran’s convalescent, whose pain is not visually evinced on the body itself.

though in this case it especially should be. One might read Ribot’s characterization of the saint’s unharmed body as a sign of his virtue and inner purity, but these images go beyond that trope, making the figure depicted almost unrecognizable.

What is also particularly striking about these paintings is that the men seem contemporary while at the same time referencing history and religion. Their bodies are at once idealized – the smooth perfection of their skin, their alabaster whiteness and muscularity – but also physically convincing through the force of details – the way the ribs jut alarmingly from the torso, the gnarled toes and knobby knees. They bridge the gap again, like Courbet’s wounded self-man, between romantic conceptions of the beautiful and sublime and the real of the body decimated and left for dead. These seem to be men of the present with their long sideburns and matted dark hair. But stripped of their clothes they become timeless; the place they occupy could be a twilight landscape anywhere. We know not if they are unconscious, sleeping or dead—they are pure in between.

Interestingly, Ribot’s other works of this period are filled with an intensely palpable melancholy (Figure 71). Even when depicting subjects as wide ranging as Giotto learning to draw or a humble cook at his daily labor, Ribot infuses the scene with quiet resignation and sadness. Both Giotto and the cook seem to have slipped into a pervasive malaise. They are utterly absorbed and indifferent to the viewer before them as if oblivious to being pictured or as though it is completely incidental. All of these men are somehow suffering, but again like the other images, without either bodily or narrative source. Their odd hurt is pictured, it finds figuration, but its cause is missing.
It is possible to view this phenomenon of slippage between sleep and death as the culmination of the tendency towards dishabille within Romantic portraits of Russian men, as if their bourgeois hauteur has been let down in the moment of the greatest need for its substantiation – the occasion of having a portrait painted. The dissolution from a state of buttoned-up and rigorous decorum (Figure 72) to one of informal leisure makes plain the change taking place over the course of the century towards the depiction of interior states. This tendency became a larger scale willingness to depict men at times in their lives and in moods that would have previously been considered improper. And artists like Kipresnky representing men in their dressing gowns and in moments of private leisure grew by the 1850s into a greater tendency to depict men in states of even extreme ill-health and disease.

A very early work by Ivan Kramskoy (1837-87) (Figure 73), the painter who would become a leading member of the Realist circle in St. Petersburg in the 1870s, illustrated a scene from Pushkin’s verse-novel Eugene Onegin. The wound is not suppressed here, Kramskoy’s hero clutches at his throat, bringing attention to his pain. But it is not bloody or profusely gory. As much as a wound may be present, it is extremely stylized and theatrical. Kramskoy is here still operating under the rubric of romantic drama. He depicts Lensky with his eyes rolling back as he collapses into a swoon and passes into unconsciousness. But the whiteness of the eye as the pupil moves up and backward has a remarkable parallel with the blindness of the deeply shadowed eyelids in Courbet’s wounded man self-portrait.

Kramskoy’s depiction also has parallels with another early self-portrait by Courbet, “The Sculptor” of 1844 (Figure 74). All these men are depicted as completely
self-absorbed – the wounded man with his eyes closed, Lensky sightless as he falls into a state of unconsciousness, and the sculptor in his own “engrossment in reverie”. And all rely on a natural setting as metaphorical for the passage the men are undergoing from life and culture to death and the earth. One might apply Fried’s analysis of Courbet’s early self-portraits to Kramskoy’s painting in terms of the “ontological impermeability of the picture surface […] its standing as an imaginary boundary between the world of the painting and that of the beholder.” But while both works share this layer of imagined bounding, Courbet’s figures are characterized by their extreme proximity, whereas Lensky has been pushed further back. By utilizing the oval canvas shape for this work, Kramskoy presents Lensky as if through a keyhole, making the viewer a voyeur on the scene of anguish and death. Courbet’s men spill out of the picture, troubling or breaking the bottom edge of the canvas closest to the viewer. And Kramskoy utilizes a similar effect in cropping Lensky’s body so radically both on the right side and lower half, making the left arm of the figure and the gesture he makes ambiguous. Both the voyeuristic presentation of the figure and the cropping of a central narrative element break the boundary between sitter and beholder, though by slightly different means.

Likewise one can relate the ambiguous nature of Lensky’s hand as it has been depicted by Kramskoy to Courbet’s treatment of the hands in “Man with the Leather Belt.” While two hands are presented in the latter portrait, one in a state of tension and vigor as it grasps the belt and the other in a relaxed caress, both of these elements are distilled into the single visible hand of Lensky by the Russian artist. The hand which grasps at the throat looks both tense and relaxed, as though in it is condensed “both an

314 Ibid., 59.
extinguishing and a dilation of ordinary waking awareness" that enhances the passing from one state of waking consciousness to the unconscious state of injury and death. Similarly the open mouth represents an element of extreme relaxation as the jaw slackens, whereas the eyes straining backward with pupils rolling upwards present as utterly tense, even resulting in a crease between the brows. The ambiguity or doubleness of these details dramatizes the passage of states – one of outward perception before the eyes of the beholder and the other as revolving inward to the utmost degree. But where Fried takes the breaking of boundary between painting and beholder and the tension between relaxed and strained as signs of Courbet’s (unconscious) desire to thematize his own embodiedness, for Kramskoy the duality serves as a mechanism for absorption of the viewer emotionally and perceptively into the scene. This mode, similar to that evinced in the interiors discussed in chapter two, serves as a device for empathically drawing the viewer in, not as Fried would have it, in order to make beholder and sitter/painter congruent, but to draw out an emotional relationship between them.

There are important precedents to these depictions of wounded men both for Russian and French artists. There had been a growing tradition in French art since the Neoclassical period to capture the dead male body in painting (Figure 75). But these depictions of heroes from Greek and Roman antiquity have key differences from those of the mid-nineteenth century. The heroic nudes of David and Briullov (Figure 76) were colored as though blood still pumped through their veins. In the French case, the depiction of death as a result of contemporary revolutionary activity drew on these precedents, but explored new territory. The deceased male figures in works by artists like Delacroix and Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier (1815-91) (Figure 77) demonstrate the

315 Ibid., 58.
growing dedication to the new objective Realist mode of recording contemporary life
even in its most gruesome aspect.

Having personally witnessed the June Days as an artillery captain in the National
Guard, Meissonier wrote: “When the barricade in the rue de la Mortellerie was taken […]
I saw defenders shot down, hurled out of windows, the ground strewn with corpses, the
earth red with the blood it had not yet drunk.” Meissonier’s work shows a
desensitization to the sight of death which crept into painting after more than half a
century of intermittent revolutions. This seems to have been a facet of the artist’s work
even recognized by contemporaries. In 1859, Delacroix wrote:

I went with Meissonier to his studio to see his drawing of the Barricade. His
faithfulness in representation is horrible, and though one cannot say that the thing is
not exact, perhaps there is lacking that indefinable thing which makes of an odious
object an object of art […] there is something else in painting beside exactitude and
precise rendering from the model. This something “lacking”, “something else”, is perhaps the sensitivity, the judgment, the
creation of an ideal which so typified the earlier Romantic mode. Whereas Delacroix’s
painting reveled in the splendor of heroic death for the greater good, Meissonier’s
stresses the banal tragedy of useless sacrifice in all its “horrible”, “exact” and “precise”
glory.

A further theme and type of subject matter provides an important precedent to
both the wounded men of the 1840s-1860s and depictions of contemporary revolutionary
death. The rendering of the grotesque which gained popularity in the wake of the French
revolution and in the Romantic period provide further proto-instances of these kinds of
depictions. The art historian Nina Athanassoglou-Kallymer has argued that Théodore

316 Chu, Nineteenth-Century European Art, 256.
317 Delacroix, “The Journal of Eugène Delacroix,” (March 5, 1849) in Harrison, Wood, Gaiger, eds. Art in
Theory: 1815-1900, 360.
Géricault’s (1791-1824) “Severed Limbs and Guillotined Heads” (Figure 78) are important evidence of how generations after the Reign of Terror and Napoleonic Wars sought to work through their communal trauma. The grotesque is considered in this work a crucial and potentially universal device that societies used to conceptualize violence and change. Kallymer also discusses Géricault’s works in relation to the left-wing movement calling for the abolishment of the guillotine as a method of capital punishment which grew in the 1810s. Since 1792, the guillotine had served as the official instrument of execution in France and it could be incurred for crimes as petty as shoplifting and banknote forgery. Kallmyer cites the astounding frequency of death sentences under the Bourbon regime: “134 in 1825, 150 in 1826, 109 in 1827 […] men and women in their teens and citizens in their eighties likewise marched to the scaffold…”

Critics of the method (and of capital punishment more generally) at the time cited medical research which explored the possibility that consciousness lasted beyond the moment when head was severed from body. Étienne Dumont (1759-1829), a Liberal who worked closely with the Société de la Morale Chrétienne, wrote in a preface to Jeremy Bentham’s (1748-1832) “Théories des peines et des recompenses” from 1825: “With respect to decapitation, there is reason to suspect that sensibility can last beyond the procedure: it can be preserved in the prolongation of the spinal marrow or in the brain. One sees, at least, numerous insects that continue to move after the head has been

319 Ibid., 605.
severed from the trunk.”\textsuperscript{320} One might thus see the portraits of wounded men as an extension of these medical debates and the lingering political outcry over capital punishment. An interest in the comingling of states of consciousness and the ambiguity of transitions between injury, sleep and death characterizes all of these discourses.

Examining Gericault’s paintings, Kallmyer argues that “the horror of the guillotine is the real issue here… [because of] the emphasis on the bleeding gashes of the necks.”\textsuperscript{321} She points out that by the time Géricault would have come to paint the heads, they would have long been drained of blood.\textsuperscript{322} But in the case of these works, the wound is pushed to the foreground as opposed to hidden or withheld as in the case of Courbet and his contemporaries. Géricault forced a confrontation with what can perhaps best be posited as the über-wound. In many ways these works provide an important precedent not only for the depiction of men in states of injury and debility, but for Realism as well. Géricault, like Meissonier two decades later, sought a visual vocabulary for expressing the grisly aspects of horror and violence which characterized the society he lived in. That even the severed heads and limbs are still idealized and made “beautiful”\textsuperscript{323} through compositional structure and allegorical allusion links with what I posited in chapter one as the core difference between Realism and Romanticism for both Russian and French artists.

Géricault’s paintings of severed heads and limbs grow as well out of the antecedent tradition of “portraits de guillotinés,” though they differ sharply from it in

\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., 603.
\textsuperscript{322} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{323} Delacroix wrote of these Géricault works that they are “the ‘best argument for beauty’ because of the abolition of subject: what is beautiful comes entirely from the composition, the paint, the light, the handling.” See Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, \textit{Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art} (New York, 1984), 46-47.
their anonymity and lack of temporal fixity. Jacques-Raymond Brascassat’s (1804-67) “The Head of Fieschi at Bicêtre, February 2, 1836” (Figure 79) is an example of this type of portraiture and can be compared not only to Géricault’s works, but also to Courbet’s “The Wounded Man.”324 In both the blood of the actual wound has been largely displaced from its source into the signatory gesture at the bottom of the canvas (Figure 80). But whereas Courbet uses the red pigment of the wound for his signature, Brascassat uses it to inscribe the cloth on which the severed head sits with the identity and date of the executed man. In both it is the name which bears the sign of the wound, for Courbet it provides a metaphor for his feeling of injury at being rejected from the Salon, and for Fieschi it links his mode of death with the historical resonance his name will bear as a result of it. Likewise, in both the state of consciousness is ambiguous. Fieschi, despite his head having been completely severed from his body, is depicted as though still lastingly prescient. The active and expressively sad downturn of the mouth and slightly open eyes bespeak an impossible consciousness that has strong parallels with the slippage between perceptive states in Courbet’s work. In paintings like Brascassat and Géricault’s the link between consciousness and death is drawn even closer together and made even tenser.

All of these images link woundedness with the lasting tradition of the guillotine in France and stand in contrast with the images of masculine injury and debility in Russia. Kramskoy’s depiction of Lensky in 1860 stands as very much an aberrant case. There are few other depictions of fatal injury which emerge from Russia before the 1880s. In the

324 In his “A Biography of Courbet,” Jules-Antoine Castagnary described the artist’s admiration for Géricault: “…when Courbet later reviewed his own achievements and tried to determine his historical role in our school, he said that in painting reality ‘he continued the tendencies of Gros and Géricault.’” See Courbet in Perspective, 9.
previous chapter I discussed the importance of the “interieur” genre to the development of Realism in Russia at midcentury. Several of these works can also be seen as part of this tendency to depict men in states of inner turmoil and ill health, but are different from that which emerges in France. One can draw a triple comparison – between Slavyansky’s “In the Rooms of A. Semenov in Tverskoy,” Courbet’s self-portrait as the wounded man, and Carolus-Duran’s “The Sleeping Man” (Figure 81) – all three circulate around a reclining male figure in a state of indispose. But while the gentleman at the center of Slavyansky’s painting is deep in thought as opposed to convalescing or wounded, all three are utterly self-absorbed in their mutual states of interiority. Thinking, sleeping and death can be drawn together as further mechanisms in a system for states of absorption.

All three figures are oblivious to the viewer. But the two French images do not invite the viewer to imagine him or herself into and as the protagonist of the painting, despite their proximity to the beholder. The figure depicted is there for viewing, presented theatrically for the gaze. Whereas the two French images are closed to the viewer in the sense that they do not create a space for our assimilation, the Slavyansky painting, like Kramskoy’s of Lensky, invites the viewer to enter the space laid out before us, to explore it in order to understand the figure depicted within it. Where Courbet and Carolus-Duran push all of the elements to the fore, such that they spill out into the space of the viewer, Slavyansky recedes the interior into depth such that one must approach and enter in order to fully view the painting.

Further, the blood in the French works compared to its complete absence in the Russian artistic realm in part speaks to these two cultures’ different methods of capital punishment. While execution by guillotine was prevalent throughout the nineteenth
century in France, Russia’s method of capital punishment had long been hanging.\(^{325}\)

And Russian artists like Ilya Repin were fascinated by its depiction much like their French counterparts. Géricault traveled to England and observed public hangings there in the 1820s and Repin likewise produced at least one known sketch of a hanging (Figure 82). But it wasn’t until significant numbers of Russian artists spent extended periods studying in Paris that the kind of bloody depictions which were characteristic in French painting rise to the fore. Both Kramskoy and Repin studied in Paris in the second half of the century and one can see a rise in the amount of gore in their paintings after this period (Figure 83). The observance of differing modes of execution between the two countries and the fascination with the French mode is also evinced in an exchange from Dostoevsky’s “The Idiot” published in 1868-69:

> “Do they execute people there?”
> “Yes. I saw it in France. […]”
> “They hang them?”
> “No. In France they always cut their heads off.”\(^{326}\)

While this time in Repin and Kramskoy’s careers will be discussed in detail in chapter five, these works have strong connections with French depictions of death and woundedness and deserve attention here.

Interestingly, the images by Repin and Géricault function differently in terms of narrative and emphasis. The latter chose the moment of most intense suspense as each of the men is having the noose and/or bag placed over his head. The look of terror on the face of the figure at left is utterly absorptive in terms of the draw it has on the viewer.

\(^{325}\) In fact, the guillotine as a method of capital punishment lasted well into the twentieth century in France. The last public guillotining in France was of Eugen Weidmann, who was convicted of six murders. He was beheaded on 17 June 1939. The guillotine remained the official method of execution in France until the death penalty was abolished in 1981. See Loi n°81-908 du 9 octobre 1981 portant abolition de la peine de mort. www.Legifrance.gouv.fr. Accessed on 10 September 2013.

Repin, however, in opposition to this, chooses the moment after the execution has commenced. His gruesome portrayal of the broken necks of these men is belied by the economy of line utilized in conveying the scene. We might remember here the words of St. John as he described the revolution of 1848: “that heap of dead, a few minutes before alive, merry, anxious, full of hopes, and perhaps, lofty aspirations for their country.”

Both Repin and Géricault demonstrate with remarkable acuity the obsession with death as a means of social control which gripped both cultures at the time. The viewer might imagine the men depicted as victims of the revolutions of their time, as “a few minutes before […] full of hopes”. The scenes depicted also bring to the fore the meaning of Théophile Gautier’s (1811-72) description of this time from 1834: “The age was disposed to carrion, and the charnel-house pleased it better than the boudoir…”

Thus, all of these images further draw together absorptive states and engage with discourses prevalent at the time regarding stages of consciousness and their ambiguous relationship to death. Thinking, sleeping, convalescing, suffering and death – all were figured by artists and thinkers at the time as interconnected and as fundamentally related to the ambiguous nature of perception as it was being tested in various realms. Belinsky stated in the 1840s, “For me, to think, to feel, to understand and to suffer are one and the same thing.”

Underscoring the notion that to be a thinker in this time meant suffering under the burden of inevitable truths, Belinsky’s words would come to have even greater meaning in the wake of the 1848 revolution.

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327 Gautier (May 1834), Mademoiselle de Maupin (New York and London, 1944), xii-xiii.
Similar to the comparisons conducted above, one can reassess “Interior with Smoking Figure” in parallel with Bazille’s portrait of Monet and Carolus-Duran’s “The Convalescent” (Figure 84). This interior could easily be a depiction of the space of a man in ill-health as well, confined like the others to his room while he recovers from some unseen malady. He, like Monet, is depicted looking out at the viewer and all three are seen in various states of dishabille, clad in dressing gown or night shirt. But again the French tendency was to push the elements of the scene forward into the viewer’s space, forcing a confrontation with the depiction, while the Russian artist leaves his protagonist at a distance. The viewer is invited to enter the interior by the breadth of empty foreground and the narrowness of the room. All of these paintings partake not only in the growing tendency to depict contemporary life, but to posit the vulnerability of the masculine domestic interior. They are all charged with the sense that the viewer is catching a glimpse of some special and private enclave, but one that is also deeply troubling in a way that is difficult to determine.

All of this culminates in a painting like Edouard Manet’s (1832-83) uncanny and surreal “Dead Torreador” of 1864 (Figure 85). Yet another male figure that slips between recognizable states of consciousness, Manet’s hero is visually somewhere on the spectrum between wounded, dying and dead since we cannot tell from the visual data alone that he is a corpse. As a work it is remarkable for its cold and affectless presentation of the violent loss of a human life. The wound again is suppressed as in Courbet’s self-portrait; it is in fact only indicated incidentally by the blood which stains the horizon-less ground on which the torreador’s body floats. Without that slight pool of red and the title, it would be difficult to guess the narrative here. Years of reigns of
terror, guillotines and Napoleonic wars, dissatisfaction with the political status quo, all led to a new and unprecedented devaluation of life and the individual – one that can be seen at work in these paintings in complex ways.

Fedotov’s interior genre paintings discussed in the previous chapter also beg comparison with some of Courbet’s works from the 1840s. “Encore! Once More Encore!” of 1850 has strong resonances with a contemporaneous unfinished work by Courbet, the so-called “Mad with Fear” (Figure 86). Both images hinge on the prolongation of time and the creation of visual and emotional unsteadiness. The moment is held in balance by Fedotov’s depiction of the poodle in mid-air and by Courbet’s precarious body position as he seems on the verge of toppling into the space in the foreground. In both the main figure has one hand above his head and the other outstretched. While Courbet’s image is a more dramatic self-depiction of anguish and torment, Fedotov’s too, as discussed in the previous chapter, has its own tensely dreary hold. Both show men poised forever on a verge. Time unfolds before and around them as the viewer seeks access into the paintings.

While Fedotov never traveled to France and would not have seen Courbet’s work of the time, his painting also has stunning resonances with Courbet’s “Portrait of Baudelaire” from 1848 (Figure 87). Again, the depiction centers around the prolongation of time, but this time it is the main figures’ utter absorption in their respective activities which is so striking. Courbet shows Baudelaire reading a book which he holds before him; the writer is completely engrossed in his work. Like the man in “Encore!” Baudelaire is here shown durationally – the viewer imagines the moment before and after the one shown as virtually the same. These paintings reveal the private worlds of men at
mid-century, the dark, interior spaces they inhabit and the activities which comprise their inner lives. The masculine interior is here exteriorized for public consumption, but the viewer is not uplifted by the sight.

‘Exhaustion of spirit’ – Superfluous Men and Spleen

Running parallel with the painted depictions of masculinity in various states of injured debility, writers in both countries were also grappling with the literary depiction of a profound crisis of spirit. In the previous chapter I explored the emergence of the superfluous man as a Russian literary and painterly type in the 1830s and 40s. This phenomenon would only grow in force in the decade which followed. Some of the most famous and noteworthy examples of the character were to be explored by writers in the generation after 1848. After his success with “The Diary of a Superfluous Man,” Turgenev composed his first novel “Rudin” in 1855-56. It continues to explore and develop the superfluous man type. Written by Turgenev in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean War, the novel was influenced by tensions in this period which had arisen among educated Russians calling for reform. It depicts a typical man of this generation – the “men of the forties” – its hero is an intellectual who possesses a desire for revolution but is ultimately unwilling or incapable of achieving anything. In the main character’s own words:

329 It is important to point out that by this time, Turgenev was living in Western Europe (where he spent much of his later years). He had left Russia in 1854, largely scholars believe to escape the autocratic stranglehold of Nicholas’s Russia. In France and England, Turgenev became friends with many of the leading writers of the time, including Emile Zola. For more on this see: Richard Georges Kappler, "Ivan S. Turgenev as a Critic of French Literature," Comparative Literature 20, No. 2 (Spring, 1968), 133-141; Victor Terras, "Turgenev’s Aesthetic and Western Realism," Comparative Literature 22, No. 1 (Winter, 1970), 19-35; and Alexander Kaun, "Turgenev the European," Books Abroad 7, No. 3 (Jul., 1933), 274-277.
Nature has given me much; but I will die without accomplishing anything worthy of my powers. I lack...I can't say what I lack...I will end by sacrificing myself for some nonsense in which I won't even believe...My God! At thirty-five still to be trying to set about doing something! ...Alas! If only I could devote myself to these occupations and finally conquer my apathy...But no! I will remain the same unfinished creature I was before...At the first obstacle I will give up completely... I was simply frightened of the responsibility laid upon me.  

Interestingly, the novel ends with Rudin’s death on the barricades in Paris during the revolution of 1848. He finds something to devote himself to as he had longed for, but fulfills his own prophesy that he would “end by sacrificing myself for some nonsense in which I won't even believe.” And something that proved a waste. This formulation of the superfluous man as someone who possesses great potential, but is unable to realize it was central to Turgenev’s largely pessimistic view of human nature, an outlook expressed throughout his literary career and one that has strong parallels among French writers. Baudelaire described himself as feeling like a wounded man in his poem ‘The Cracked Bell’:

My soul is cracked and desperate for spring  
And every time it tries to move or sing,  
To fill the empty air, it chokes instead –  

A wounded man inside a mound of dead  
Immobile within the hecatomb  
Engulfed in blood as the world goes numb.  

The reality of these depictions of inner sanctums is not one of enlightened bliss or romantic frivolity, but stifling interiority and immobility. Turgenev used the character of Rudin to describe the pessimism of his generation:

“I have no great fondness for the whole human race.”  
“What could have given you such a poor opinion of it?”  
“Probably a study of my own heart in which I daily find more and more trash. I judge others by myself.”

Many critics suggest that the character of Rudin was at least partly autobiographical, though this is largely debated among scholars of Russian literature.333

Turgenev’s viewpoint was perhaps best expressed in his speech “Hamlet and Don Quixote” from 1860. In it he compared the narcissistic and endlessly analyzing Hamlet with the un-thinking, but active Don Quixote. The main character of the novel, Rudin, is identified with Hamlet as had been the lead character Chatsky, in Griboyedov’s earlier play “Woe from Wit.” As discussed briefly in chapter one, Hamlet had long been a spark for intellectual debate in Russia.334 First translated into Russian by Alexander Sumarakov in 1748,335 Belinsky commented in 1838 that, “Hamlet is you, me, every one of us.”336 James Billington states, “The principal reason for the sustained interest of the aristocracy lay in the romantic fascination with the character of Hamlet himself. Russian aristocrats felt a strange kinship with this privileged court figure torn between the mission he was called on to perform and his own private world.”337 The issue in the play for Russians was not between choosing life or death, but the choice of how to live. In his famous soliloquy, Hamlet was considered to be debating with himself about whether it was better to take action or to endure passively. A question that in the case of the superfluous man was answered with a resounding “not to be.”

332 Turgenev, Rudin, 59-60.
333 See Introduction to Ibid.
336 Aleksei Semenenko, “Hamlet the Sign: Russian Translations of Hamlet and Literary Canon Formation,” doctoral dissertation (Stockholm University, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, December 15, 2007), 140.
Hamlet had become the focus of some case studies on psychological phenomena in the early 1860s in other parts of Europe as well. Xavier Ambryet, a writer and acquaintance of Manet,\(^{338}\) wrote that Hamlet was “the most fully formed representative of modern fatality.” He described the character in an article of 1860 as suffering from the malady of the nineteenth century – an inability to act, debilitating fear, and “le Doute.”\(^{339}\) Turgenev too saw the larger implication of his Hamlet-like superfluous man. He brought “Rudin” to a close by summing up the position of his hero among the men of his generation:

> It's not our business to punish him: he has already punished himself far more severely than he ever deserved…\(^{340}\) [He] expressed an ultimate exhaustion of spirit, a secret and unspoken misery far removed from that half-pretended melancholy which he used to parade on occasion and which is generally the prerogative of young men full of hope and self-confident ambition…\(^{341}\)

This has strong parallels with the writings of Baudelaire in the years around midcentury. The spleen described by the French poet resonates with the feelings of superfluity which emerge so strongly among men in Russia in these years. Baudelaire encapsulated this mood in much of his poetry:

> Limping days as far as the eye can see,  
> And snowblind years for all eternity;  
> Indifference expands into ennui,  
> With overtones of Immortality.  
> — From now on we’ll be petrified, a stone,  
> Buried in apprehension, flesh and bone,  
>  
> A timeless, sleeping sphinx engulfed in sand,  
> Ignored by everyman, in no man’s land;  
> Left off the maps, alone, with grim delight,


\(^{340}\) Turgenev, Rudin, 158.

\(^{341}\) Ibid., 166-67.
We’ll celebrate the dead sun’s dying light.  

“Indifference,” “ennui,” “petrified,” “sleeping,” “alone” – the melancholy of men in both Russia and France was a nihilistic self-abnegation arising from extreme narcissistic absorption. They robbed themselves of time itself and in this way committed the ultimate self-betrayal.

Herzen again proves helpful in understanding what life was like after the failure of 1848. As a bridge figure caught between the two cultures, he wrote in his memoirs:

In the troubled times of social storms and reconstructions in which states forsake their usual grooves for a long time, a new generation of people grows up who may be called the choristers of the revolution; growing on shifting, volcanic soil, nurtured in an atmosphere of alarm when work of every kind is suspended, they become inured from their earliest years to an environment of political ferment, and like the theatrical side of it, its brilliant mise en scène…Among them are good, valiant people, sincerely devoted and ready to face a bullet; but for the most part they are very limited…they stop short at some programme and do not advance.

The portraits under discussion here – by Courbet, Carolus Duran, Ribot, Bazille, Fedotov, and Kramskoy – all demonstrate with heartbreaking acuity this “stop short” and lack of advance. Courbet’s self-portrait as a man slipping from consciousness aligns with Turgenev’s novelistic “exhaustion of spirit.” And the wounded but woundless men of Bazille and Ribot become figurations of the “secret and unspoken misery” Turgenev writes of. Likewise, these same lines and ideas intersect with what we see in Russian artists’ self-portraits throughout the 1850s, providing a direct visual parallel to Turgenev’s representation of the willful but apathetic young hero of his novel.

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342 Baudelaire, Complete Poems, 195.
343 One might be tempted to equate my description of the disillusionment which characterized life at midcentury as a form of nostalgia like that experienced by the Edwardians. But I would caution that in the Russian and French case it is not so much a longing for the past or the curious mix of pleasure and sadness that is caused by remembering something from the past and wishing that you could experience it again, but rather a deep resignation from the present that arises from an inability to separate the present from the past in the moment.
344 Herzen, My Past and Thought, 2: 673.
Important examples of the superfluous man continue to abound with increasing frequency from midcentury and on. Some of the strongest manifestations are usually considered to include Alexander Herzen's character Beltov from “Who is to Blame?” (1845-46) and the eponymous character of Ivan Goncharov’s “Oblomov” (1859). Goncharov’s novel deserves special attention for its place in the development and popularity of discussion surrounding the phenomenon of superfluous men in the nineteenth century. As the most extreme example of the character, Oblomov represents a culmination of much of the thinking from the decades before.

An idle, daydreaming nobleman who lives in St. Petersburg on the income of an estate he never visits, he intermittently muses on his own apathetic shortcomings:

I have no strength and no will of my own [...]. From the very first moment I became conscious of myself, I felt that I was already flickering out. I began to flicker out over the writing of official papers at the office; I went on flickering out when I read truths in books which I did not know how to apply to life, when I sat with friends listening to rumours, gossip, jeering, spiteful, cold, and empty chatter...I was flickering out when I walked idly and dejectedly on Nevsky Avenue among people in raccoon coats and beaver collars – at parties, on reception days...I was flickering out and wasting my life and mind on trifles...345

Again, we might connect this notion of “flickering out” to Herzen’s description of the generation of men “growing on shifting, volcanic soil” who end up being “limited” and unable to advance. All of these writings find parallel in the images of wounded men from the 1840s and 1850s. The slippage between sleep, injury, and death is a kind of recession into extinguishment – a “flickering out” to use Goncharov’s phrase. The viewer seems to watch as the light of life in these men goes out.

Throughout the novel the character of Oblomov rarely leaves his room or bed, instead debating what he should do when he does get up. Goncharov’s hero famously

only manages to move from his bed to a chair in the first fifty pages of the novel, dwelling in a state of dreamy, lethargic procrastination. And this makes him too, a type of wounded man. In the novel the reader searches for a “wound,” for the source of Oblomov’s sickness, much like the viewer searches for the physical injury in the paintings. “After breakfast he sat up and nearly got out of bed; glancing at his slippers, he even lowered one foot from the bed, but immediately put it back up again.”

Oblomov’s very name comes from the Russian word that means “fragment,” and would become the basis for the Russian term “obломовщина,” best rendered as oblovitis in English – the sickness of nineteenth-century melancholy. This term came to describe a person exhibiting the same type of laziness, indecision, and uselessness which so characterized its namesake and it continues to be in Russia today.

Goncharov portrayed the superfluous man as one deserving of sympathy, but the novel was largely read as a satire of the faltering social and economic position of the Russian nobility as a whole. As a result of the novel’s widespread popularity, Oblomov became an archetype and rallying point for criticism of the nobility’s idleness. The character was held by many to be a personification of the national psyche itself. In one telling exchange, Oblomov admits the futility of his station:

“But you did do something, sir, didn’t you? …It’s impossible not to—”

“It is possible, sir, and I am the living proof of it. Who am I? What am I? …I am a ‘gentleman’. Yes, I am a gentleman and I can’t do anything.”

Goncharov summed the superfluous man up thus: “All his anxiety resolved itself into a sigh and dissolved into apathy and drowsiness.”

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346 Ibid., 16.
347 Milton Ehre, introduction to Ibid., xi.
348 Ibid., 354.
of the “gentleman” parallels Baudelaire’s description of a flâneur in “The Painter of Modern Life,” a man who sits watching from the window of a café as Paris rushes by: “…he is rapturously breathing in all the odours and essences of life; […] he remembers, and fervently desires to remember everything.”350 But all he does in watch. He is all memory and inaction.

The popular literary critic and radical thinker Nikolai Dobrolyubov (1836-61) analyzed the superfluous man as an affliction peculiar to Russia and discussed the phenomenon as one of the many detrimental results of serfdom.351 But this chapter has shown that the disillusionment which so characterized the superfluous man was also true of his splenetic French counterpart. Recall again Courbet, with all his talk of socialism and his friendship with Proudhon, standing in the Tuileries Gardens watching the revolution of 1848 unfold. The ultimate bystander, the epitome of Baudelaire’s flâneur — Courbet, like Rudin, like Oblomov, seems in the key moment to have found himself “frightened of the responsibility laid upon me.” Clark describes Courbet’s “flippant detachment” in these crucial years and this has remarkable parallels with the writing on the chief characteristics of Russia’s superfluous men.352 Clark further characterizes the artist’s inaction in these years, describing it as “no longer detachment, more a paralysis of the will.”353 Dobrolyubov too found indecision to be the central quality of the superfluous man: “…how does he spend his life? In beginning everything and finishing nothing,

349 Ibid.
352 Clark, Image of the People, 48.
353 Ibid., 49.
attending to everything at once, passionately devoting himself to everything, but unable
to devote himself to anything…”  

What we see in these men – represented as variously executed, wounded, bored,
sleeping, dying, or dead – is a certain growing disillusionment, a growing consensus
about the ultimate waste of the young men whose lives were lost in their striving to bring
about reform, whether it was on the barricades in Paris or in Senate Square in St.
Petersburg. A nascent nihilism and melancholy began to pervade society after 1848, both
on the part of artists and those in their immediate social circles. The generation of the
1850s was mourning the present - not longing for the unrecoverable past per se, but
experiencing a deep sadness for the present moment as it unfolded, and for the perpetual
inevitability of its sameness. Courbet himself wrote of his “Self-Portrait, Man with a
Pipe”: “…[it is] the portrait of a fanatic […] a man disillusioned […] who searches for
principles of his own to hang on to.” These men grappled with the depiction of their
search for beliefs and principles. A generation mourning not the future because of a loss
in the past, but the future as being anything different from the present. Michael Fried
describes the ambiguity of Courbet’s early self-portraits and their “metaphorics of
merger, incompleteness, and even disappearance.” It is this state of unfinished and
merging transition in stages of consciousness which I believe is the emblem of the mid-
nineteenth century in both Russia and France.

Further historical details from the time help illuminate this phenomenon of
disenchantment. In May of 1850 a law was passed which in essence eliminated three

354 Dobrolyubov, “What is Oblomovism?” 351. PDF accessed September 2, 2013 at
https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/297815/
355 In a description written for Bruyas in 1854, quoted in Clark, Image of the People, 45.
356 Fried, Courbet’s Realism, 84.
million voters from France’s lowest classes. It required that each voter prove three years’ residence and since the proof of residence was the evidence of the tax-collector, the non-taxpaying poor became completely disenfranchised. And though France’s economy prospered under Napoleon III, worker’s lives during the Second Empire remained miserable. Amidst this poverty, Louis Napoleon began an ambitious project to overhaul Paris in 1853. Describing the decorative sculpture commissioned for the remodeled façade of the Opéra, one critic wrote: “Look at those tired, sagging legs, those flaccid and deformed torsos, and, admit it, we are in the midst of the nineteenth century, in the midst of a diseased and undressed Paris, in the midst of Realism.” Under these circumstances, the affected spectacle of fatality in Courbet’s self-portrait, the suspended boredom of Fedotov, and the wounded men of Kramskoy, Manet, Ribot, Bazille and Carolus Duran all help us understand the role that melancholy was coming to play in modern life. There was no visible wound, but there was pain nonetheless.

And thus both Russian and French artists depicted men in these states of debility with greater frequency from the midcentury on not simply because death was a newly urgent Realist subject. The willingness to depict one’s self and those around you as splenetic, superfluous, or wounded was a testament to the fundamental change brought about in men’s experience of themselves and the world in these years. It was a sign of

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358 Ibid., 267.
359 Ibid., 274.
360 This paraphrases Dostoevsky: “The consciousness that you have no enemy to punish, but that you have pain” - Notes from Underground, The Double and Other Stories, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003). It is also interesting to think about Louis-Napoleon’s project to overhaul Paris as a further kind of “wounding” – one in which the city itself became a kind of injured body.
modernity itself. Herzen described the position of artists and other creative laborers after the revolution:

In addition to naïve people and revolutionary doctrinaires, the unappreciated artists, unsuccessful literary men, students who did not complete their studies, briefless lawyers, actors without talent, persons of great vanity but small capability, with huge pretensions but no perseverance or power of work, all naturally drift into this milieu […] left to themselves these people do not know what to do […] there is no need to work: what is not done to-day may be done to-morrow, or may even not be done at all.

This was a generation of men grown purposeless and ineffectual by their failures.

In this light, Baudelaire’s ‘On the Heroism of Modern Life’ takes on new meaning as well. In now famous lines, he wrote of the beauty of the black frock-coats of the time as “an expression of the public soul – an immense cortège of undertaker’s mutes (mutes in love, political mutes, bourgeois mutes…). We are each of us celebrating some funeral. A uniform livery of affliction bears witness to equality…” I cited these lines in the introduction to this dissertation, but return to them now to discuss how Baudelaire perceived this time as one of national mourning. Baudelaire underscores here how men’s dress came to reflect the feeling of “affliction” which so characterized the era. He wrote further in this same piece that it was “the thousands of floating existences” that would “prove to us that we have only to open our eyes to recognize our heroism.” Thus it was the transience, the affliction, the mute silence which constituted heroism for Baudelaire. France’s wounded men had become its heroes – their “floating existences” not a shame, but a reality to be embraced and exalted. These were the new saints of

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361 Dobrolyubov tellingly wrote that “…we regard Goncharov’s novel as a sign of the times” (his emphasis). See “What is Oblomovism?” 350.
364 Ibid.
France; they were martyrs to boredom and suffered for their apathy. The same way that St. John described the heroes who gave their lives in the revolution as “a few minutes before alive, merry, anxious, full of hopes, and perhaps, lofty aspirations for their country,” so this new generation became in a sense the living dead.

Again the section from Baudelaire’s “The Painter of Modern Life” cited earlier in comparison to Goncharov’s “Oblomov” resounds with relevance.

In the window of a coffee-house there sits a convalescent, pleasurably absorbed in gazing at the crowd, and mingling, through the medium of thought, in the turmoil of thought that surrounds him. But lately returned from the valley of the shadow of death, he is rapturously breathing in all the odours and essences of life; as he has been on the brink of total oblivion, he remembers, and fervently desires to remember everything.  

Baudelaire in this section of the essay draws further parallel between his figure of the convalescent as a flâneur man of the world and the figure of the artist. Baudelaire even goes so far as to claim that artists are always in the spiritual condition of the convalescent that he figures watching the world from the café window. Both are embroiled in absorption as they stare at the crowd, in a state of “turmoil,” and perceptively on the constant brink of oblivion.

Seen in this light, Courbet’s midcentury masterpiece “The Funeral at Ornans” (Figure 88) takes on new meaning. Fried describes the painting as “an image of collective drift” — a sentiment which mirrors what I have already posited as the existential itinerancy of the time. But the actual subject of the painting is a graveside funeral procession – and not just any funeral, but one being held in a new cemetery that had only

just begun being used in September of 1848. Interpretive work on this painting has focused on it from a number of illuminating perspectives, but few have focused on the basic meaning of the subject it depicts. Courbet’s monumental masterpiece is a painting first and foremost of an “enterrement” – a funeral – as the work’s title vehemently underscores. But the funeral of whom (or what)?

The suggestion has been made that it is the burial of Courbet’s maternal grandfather Oudot which this painting serves to commemorate, as he had died in August of 1848. But I agree with scholars such as Michael Fried that it is more likely that Courbet had no specific person in mind. What the artist represented in this monumental painting is both a scene of typical daily life in the provinces and the allegorical interment of the hope of a generation that the past could serve as a model for the future. In depicting a funeral, Courbet paid almost excessive attention to creating portraits of his family members, to their weathered faces, the textiles they used as veils, for handkerchiefs, the topcoats and their cut and trimmings. It is thus a painting very much anchored in the artist’s own past. But the Realism of Courbet’s own familial presence is layered with a further emphasis on what is metaphorically being put to rest in that gaping grave. In line with Courbet’s depiction of himself as a wounded man and in conjunction with the multifarious images of men in states of indispose, debility, and decline in this period, Courbet’s “Funeral” serves as a culmination of the pervasive melancholy and disenchantment which characterized modern life. Clark calls the 1848

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Salon “Courbet’s farewell to the past” and indeed it is that send-off and departure which finally finds form in this subject of a burial and its funereal commemoration.\footnote{369}

Along with Baudelaire, Courbet recognized that “each of us is celebrating some funeral” and he commemorates the losses of the time in this grand history painting. What had been lost was the way of relating to one’s time, what had passed were the previous styles and subjects – from Neoclassicism to Romanticism – none of which would any longer serve the artist who wishes to “create a living art.”\footnote{370} It had to be recognized as dead (and buried) so that the new style could be born. Courbet was certainly no stranger to creating allegories of this sort even in his Realist works. In 1855 he would paint a work specifically titled as an allegory, his “The Painter’s Studio: A Real Allegory of a Seven Year Phase in my Artistic and Moral Life.” This work has served to puzzle art historians and critics since its inception, but it is as a metaphorical diatribe that it can best be understood.\footnote{371} And so with “A Funeral at Ornans.” It is an allegory of the passing of styles and the death of a way of understanding the world.\footnote{372}

\footnote{369} We might also consider a further detail in Courbet’s biography as central to both A Funeral at Ornans and The Wounded Man – the artist is known to have become sick with cholera in the early summer of 1849. Francis Wey described him in July as wretchedly thin, convalescing at their country home at Louveciennes. See Clark, *Image of the People*, 51. This time of illness may have brought Courbet more deeply in touch with his own sense of bodily fallibility and mortality, inspiring the change to the self-portrait and sparking the notion of depicting a funeral on a massive scale. Indeed he began work on A Funeral as soon as he had recovered, returning to Ornans in September to begin work on the great trilogy of Realism.

\footnote{370} Courbet, “Realist Manifesto” quoted in Nochlin, *Realism and Tradition in Art*, 34.


\footnote{372} It is important to point out that the two paintings are very different in their overall manner of handling the allegorical mode. The Painter’s Studio is a pastiche, an invention, a “staging” of characters who are themselves individually allegorized. But the Funeral lacks this kind of individualizing in its allegorical mode, instead producing a kind of meta-allegory. I will raise this idea of “pastiche” again in terms of Repin’s *A Parisian Café* in chapter five.
Baudelaire and Courbet were not alone in celebrating this burial. Champfleury too described the habit noir of men in 1850 as “the necessary garb of our suffering age, which wears the symbol of perpetual mourning.”\(^373\) Courbet was familiar with Baudelaire and Champfleury’s writings on modern life in these years; indeed it is the sea of men in black which most characterizes the preparatory drawing Courbet made of the subject in 1849, shortly after the cemetery began being used (Figure\(^89\)).\(^374\) The artist himself was called the “bête noir” by Théophile Silvestre in 1856.\(^375\) It is in the “Funeral” that he encapsulated the dark “suffering” of the age, distilling its mourning through the subject he has chosen and through the change from sketch to final canvas – bringing as he did the grave itself to the very center foreground of the composition. The grave visually mimics the wound of the earlier painting, but here it is not hidden from sight or displaced. It becomes the site of mourning and a sign for change. Fried describes the grave as providing an “answer for a certain desire for excavation and filling in”\(^376\) – one that I would argue underscored the passing from one style or mode of depiction to another. What is buried here is the past – Romanticism and revolution – but what will grow from the site of the injured body and the wounded earth is a new approach to visualizing the world – Realism. Courbet himself told viewers as much, writing in 1861 that “…The Burial at Ornans was in reality the burial of Romanticism.”\(^377\)

\(^{373}\) Champfleury’s article appeared in L’Ordre, 21 September 1850. See Fried, “The Structure of Beholding,” 643.

\(^{374}\) For detailed accounts on the relations between Courbet, Champfleury and Baudelaire see Clark, Image of the People, p. 52-76 and The Absolute Bourgeois, 143-77 and Alan Bowness, “Courbet and Baudelaire,” Gazette des Beaux-Arts, sér. 6, vol. 90 (Dec. 1977), 189-99.


\(^{376}\) Fried’s emphasis, see “The Structure of Beholding,” 654.

\(^{377}\) Gerstle Mack, Gustave Courbet (Da Capo, 1989), 89.
While Théophile Gautier was not to be among the supporters of Realism in painting, even he recognized the importance of the time and its tragic heroism, writing in 1848:

Artists, never was the moment more beautiful […] by boldness and freedom in your work, you must strive to be artists worthy of this colossal, climactic century, this great nineteenth century, the most beautiful epoch ever seen by humankind since the Earth first started its swirl around the Sun. 378

The melancholic tenor of the portraits from the 1840s and 50s is demonstrative of a key element of what it meant to be of this beautiful moment, to be a hero of modern life. Art for the first time, because of its new emphasis on reality and the here and now, was able to capture these feelings of passage, tragedy, and superfluity. Its language had fundamentally changed.

Perhaps this is what led Max Buchon (1818-69), a friend of Courbet’s from his youth, to declare in 1850 that “Mr. Courbet paints as he feels.” 379 Realism was not just about the depiction of peasants or technological changes, but perhaps even more so about the new emotional life that all of these changes brought about for the men who were experiencing them at the time. In 1867, Adolphe Thiers, then a French politician, but soon to become president of the Third Republic in 1871 said of Courbet’s work: “He loves truth too much…one should not love truth to such an extent.” 380 The evocation of disillusionment among men in these two cultures at midcentury is demonstrative of their parallel experiences of modernity and their mutual search for a formal means to depict it.

The case of both the French and the Russians at midcentury was not so much one characterized by a nostalgic longing for the past in the present (or even the realization

that the moment we imagine the time we live in it is inevitably lost), but rather that the past and present can be drawn remarkably close together in that they are, under the new parameters of modernity, hopelessly the same. While T.J. Clark characterizes “contingency” as the ultimate defining feature of modern life, I believe it is more the boredom which arises from the realization of life’s contingency. And man’s new sense that there is an inevitability which cannot be overcome, that all action is ultimately futile, is what gives rise to both images of “superfluous men” types and their closely related cousins – the wounded men of the 1850s.

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…that hell of unsatisfied desires turned inward, that fever of oscillations, of resolutions determined forever and repented of again a minute later [...] silent impotence to sink into luxurious inertia, brooding on the fact that there is no one even for you to feel vindictive against, that you have not, and perhaps never will have, an object for your spite, [...] but still there is an ache in you, and the more you do not know, the worse the ache.

– Fyodor Dostoyevsky, “Notes from Underground” (1864)382

Naturalism had never ventured into such subjects before. Never had a painter [...] so brutally dipped his brush in the glaze of his bodily secretions or in the bloody palette of his wounds. [...] an art pushed to its limit, one summoned up to express both the invisible and the tangible, to make manifest the lamentable impurity of the body and to refine the infinite distress of the soul.

– Joris-Karl Huysmans, “Là-Bas” (1891)383

The Revolt of the 14 – ‘the subject does not coincide with the aspirant’s direction’

8 October 1863 saw fourteen graduating students petition the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg for the right to freely choose the subject for that year’s Gold Medal painting competition. The First Class or Grand Gold Medal competition as it was known carried with it an award for a six-year scholarship to travel abroad and was the great aspiration of students at the Academy.384 The usual order of events held that those competing in the annual competition were given the subject that they were to depict. But 1863 was different. In the words of the original petition put forward by the students:

…we for our part have decided to announce our sincere wish that those of us who are desirous of doing so be permitted to select freely a subject of our choice, over and above the assigned theme. On these grounds we petition the Council to extend this

384 David Jackson, *The Wanderers and Critical Realism in Nineteenth-Century Russian Painting* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 11. In addition, the Gold Medal competition was important for Academy students because it allowed the winner to achieve the rank of “Master Artist” (*klassnyi khudozhnik*) after they had also successfully passed their exams. See Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier and Wendy Salmond, eds. *Russian Realist Painting. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology*, Experiment Journal 14 (2008), 64.
rule to all cases where the theme or subject does not coincide with the aspirant’s direction.\textsuperscript{385}

Their request was denied. They petitioned again, this time meeting with the Academy’s professors one by one to explain their position and try to gain individual support.\textsuperscript{386} But the Council again denied the request and issued the subject for the competition as “The Feast of the Gods in Valhalla,” to be based on iconography drawn from Scandinavian mythology.\textsuperscript{387} The artists present at the issuing of the subject then asked to be excused from the competition altogether. Forfeiting their ability to compete for a much needed opportunity to travel abroad and gain further training, these men asked simply to be issued the diplomas that would certify them as artists.\textsuperscript{388}

This call for greater artistic freedom can be seen as part of a larger tendency which had been growing in Russia. The act of rebellion by the fourteen reflected the “spirit of the 1860s” – a time that saw the achievement of liberal social reforms which had been called for in Russia since the beginning of the century, back to the time of Alexander I’s reign. In Russia the rupture of traditional social structures that followed the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 brought about the newfound feeling among artists that they had a moral duty to seek their own freedom as well and to use their art for the betterment of society. This overall mood was described by the literary critic Nikolai Shelgunov (1824-91):

\textsuperscript{386} Letters from Ivan Kramskoy to Mikhail Tulinov (November 13 and 21, 1863) in Gol’dshtein, ed. Kramskoi. Pis’ma, 1:9-10, 11-12. Translated in Ibid., 60.
\textsuperscript{387} Bowlt, “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, ed. Stavrou (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 131.
\textsuperscript{388} Letters from Kramskoy to Tulinov (November 13 and 21, 1863) in Gol’dshtein, ed. Kramskoi. Pis’ma, 1:9-10, 11-12. Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniky: An Anthology, 60.
We [...] strove for personal and social liberation and worked only for that [...] The idea of freedom agitated everybody, penetrated everywhere [...] People were straining all their powers to create for themselves a new, independent situation and to transfer the weight of social initiative to themselves.\textsuperscript{389}

This desire for liberation was particularly acute among artists. The leader of the protest against the Academy, Ivan Kramskoy, wrote of his own feelings amidst the fervor of the sixties: “By 1863 I had matured so much that I sincerely wanted freedom, and so sincerely that I was ready to use all means so that others would also be free.”\textsuperscript{390}

It was not only the momentous abolition of serfdom, but the sweeping changes that it led to and which followed it – the rise of a middle class, population shifts from country to city, the continuing suppression of revolutionary activity, and ongoing Tsarist imperialism in the Balkans and Central Asia – all of this turmoil played a large role in the development of Realist art in the second half of the nineteenth century. With political and social reforms came a new pressure on artists to innovate beyond the past, to make art that would be transformative through its very depiction, that would keep pace with the changes constituting modernity which were sweeping not only Russia in these years, but most of Western Europe as well. Artists were to grapple in ways they never had before with the depiction of everyday life and ideologies for this kind of depiction arose to support the challenge.

The secession of the Academy students in St. Petersburg ushered in a new phase for Russian art, one which was to have wider repercussions during the remainder of the 1860s and into the decades beyond. On one hand, the petition which the students


\textsuperscript{390} Letter of July 21, 1886, to V. Stasov, Ivan Nikolaevich Kramskoy. Pis’ma, Stat’i. 2 vols. ed. S.N. Goldshtein (Moscow, 1965-66), 2: 252. Quoted in Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, 33. Kramskoy and the other petitioners’ desire for freedom is especially ironic in the face of the inscription chiseled on the portico of the Academy, which reads: 

\textit{Svobodnym khudozhestvam} (For the Free Arts).
submitted was evidence of the growing unrest in Russia – the same discontent that has been under discussion in the previous two chapters – but it was also a watershed moment of change. Up until 1863 the discussion of art’s purpose, as well as the debates on the future of Russia between the Westernizers and Slavophiles, and the calls for new directions in art and literature among the intelligentsia – all of this had largely been the subject of only thought and discourse. But the fourteen students at the Academy chose to take action for change.

The petition and the act of secession which followed it were decisive feats for transformation, and the artists who issued them were suddenly faced with the reality of what they had done. Without the patronage of the Academy and the commissions it had long bestowed on artists in Russia, these fourteen men found themselves without a means to earn a living. Russia did not have the same infrastructure for buying and selling art that characterized her European counterparts. An official annual report of the Academy published in 1836 stated that artists had almost no opportunities to find work outside the Academy.  


392 Jackson, The Wanderers, 12.

The problem of patronage made the [Russian] artist’s dilemma more acute and the state’s power-hold more secure. Notwithstanding a general disinclination on the part of the aristocracy to patronize native art, the odds were stacked heavily against its development […] The educated population was very small, perhaps no more than 1.5 percent by the 1830s […] Some estimates have placed the active number of patrons at no more than 3,500 for the entire empire, a pitiful figure by any standards.
The dire financial situation was one quickly realized by artists at the time. Kramskoy wrote in a letter just days after the student’s departure from the Academy’s pecuniary sanctuary: “…help us somehow, with some advice, or indicate some source of possible income for us. Our plans, as you can imagine, are not particularly practical, yet are characterized by honesty and great technical skill in art.”

And it would be these two core qualities – “honesty” and “skill” which would characterize the works produced by the fourteen artists in the years that followed. Above all, “honesty” was the quality most valued and proves central to understanding how the paintings produced in the years after the secession coincide with the maturing of Realism in Russia. All in all, the fourteen artists who left the Academy were lucky. Neither the administrators at the school nor those in the Imperial regime took punitive measures against the men for their act of defiance. All of the graduating students were, however, subjected to police surveillance for the next decade. And the students were made to feel the pressure of the Imperial regime to such a degree that they expressed their concern to one another.

In order to survive, these artists formed the “Artel’ svobodnykh khudozhnikov” (literally the “Free Artists’ Workshop,” but usually referred to as the “St. Petersburg Artel of Artists”) (Figure 90), an association of cooperative artistic production and exhibition, the goals of which were to find greater numbers of commissions and thereby

394 Ibid., 58.
395 Interestingly, no mention of the secession was made in the press at the time. In response to calls to take action and publicize the act themselves, Kramskoy replies in the negative and reveals his concerns about the government’s power: “…to put [our action] in print amounts to pointing us out to the government. They already have their eye on us without that, they have it in for us and hate us…” Ivan Kramkoy in a letter to Mikhail Tulinov (December 20, 1863) in Gol’dshein, ed. Kramskoi. Pis’ma, 1:12. Translated in Ibid., 63.
allow the participating artists to make a living.\textsuperscript{396} Again in Kramskoy’s words, “…we have decided that, in order not to perish we must hang on to one another. We wished to form an artists’ association, that is, to work together and live together. United for, perhaps five years, during which time we would accumulate capital.”\textsuperscript{397} The actual structure of the Artel’s membership required members to contribute ten percent of the income they earned independently and twenty five percent of what they earned from commissions obtained through the Artel.\textsuperscript{398} They also tried to popularize the new Realist style and subject matter by holding private exhibitions at their communal studio apartment and by organizing the first traveling group exhibit in 1865 at a fair held every year in Nizhny Novgorod.\textsuperscript{399}

But how did this fervent desire for freedom – of subject matter, but also of the people – come to pass among artists in Russia? What factors influenced the growth of such a request and fueled these artists to such an extent that they would leave the Academy so that they could be “Free Artists” as the name of their organization dictated? Before I answer these questions and enter into a discussion of the Artel’s formation and impact on the arts in Russia in the 1860s, it is important to examine what the Academy was like in Russia in the decade leading up to this action. Key facets of its constitution and its relationship with the imperial regime make it critically different from its Western

\textsuperscript{396} See the original statute as ratified by the Minister of the Interior on June 9, 1865 in S.N. Gol’dshtein, ed., \textit{Ivan Nikolaevich Kramskoi. Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo} (Moscow: Isskustvo, 1965), 46-47. Translated in Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{398} Valkenier, \textit{Russian Realist Art}, 34.
\textsuperscript{399} Elizabeth Valkenier, “The Peredvizhniki and the Spirit of the 1860s,” \textit{Russian Review} 34, no. 3 (July 1975), 253. This exhibition in Nizhny Novgorod is an important precursor to the central goal of the \textit{Peredvizhniki} group which would still not be formed for another five years. The exhibit was aimed at attracting new buyers among the merchants gathered for the annual event. It is also fascinating to think of the Artel’s apartment exhibitions as a precursor to the underground exhibitions which would characterize the Nonconformist art movement in Soviet Russia in the next century.
European counterparts. And that difference played a role in the various modes of rebellion which characterized artists’ relations with their respective Academies, be that in St. Petersburg or in Paris.

The Imperial Academy of Arts – ‘the general stamp of rhetoric and superficiality’

While chapter two provided a discussion of the dissatisfaction in Russia that largely characterized life among the intelligentsia under Nicholas I, and chapter three explored the disillusionment which grew in French society after the 1848 revolution, this chapter will explore the roots of artistic rebellion which characterized the 1860s within both countries in their respective training grounds. Russian artists were indebted to the state and made acquiescent to it and this underscores a crucial difference from the artistic climate for artists at the French Academy. The sense of imperial control exhibited by the Tsar being in artist’s studios as well as in the omnipresence of systems of surveillance and punishment within the training spaces provides insight into the dissatisfaction which led to the secession. Artists training at the Academy must have felt indebted to the state in a way almost completely foreign to French artists at the Académie des Beaux-Arts. While both institutions were to a large extent in place to foster and protect cultural production by training artists, and while both were centered around yearly Salon exhibitions and the awarding of prizes for travel to their most talented students, the similarities largely end there.

On the Russian side, life at the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts had been tightly controlled from its inception. Peter the Great had inaugurated civil reforms in 1722 which

400 For more on this see: N. Moleva and E. Beliutin, *Russkaya khudozhestvennaya shkola vtoroi poloviny XIX v.-nachala XX v*. (Moscow, 1967).
essentially bureaucratized all walks of life in line with the civil service and military through the establishment of a Table of Ranks by which entire sections of society were organized.

Artists who graduated after the full fifteen year term of study at the Academy were under this system given the title ‘Artist’ and granted the fourteenth and lowest civil-service rank. Over the course of his career an artist could hope to move slowly up the ranks, but was ultimately delimited by the tenth social ranking, which he could achieve by attaining the level of ‘Academician.’ A series of examinations and promotions granted by the state checked his progress through every rung of this ladder of ranks and titles. An artist could never hope to achieve the rank which granted hereditary nobility (rank eight), thereby assuring not only his own position, but those of his children as well. Under pressure from the existing nobles that felt their ranks were being diluted, Nicholas had decreed in 1845 that civil servants had to reach the higher ranks of nine and five to qualify for personal and hereditary nobility respectively. And Alexander II would also raise the bar for hereditary nobility to rank four in 1856, making it increasingly difficult for artists to further their social standing as the century progressed.

According to Slavicist Elizabeth Valkenier: “during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-55) the Academy was transformed into an instrument that molded artists into servitors of the state, subordinated art to the needs and tastes of the court, and controlled artistic life throughout the country.” Artists of the time represented Nicholas taking a particularly hands-on approach in artistic matters, even visiting the studios of Academy artists (Figure 91) to personally approve of the work being done there. The ethos of militarism,

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402 The details of this system are described in further detail by Valkenier in *Russian Realist Art*, 5.
403 Ibid., 4.
orthodoxy, and bureaucracy which typified his regime extended to the academic training of artists as well.

As discussed in the case of artists like Fedotov, Slavyansky and Zelentsov in chapter two, the possibility of attaining a social ranking was of dire necessity since so many artists came from the lowest strata of society. And the possibility of this attainment became more and more difficult during the reigns of the two Tsars in power leading up to the Artel’s formation. These elements of life at the Academy provide an important context for understanding why the kind of disillusionment that led to the secession arose among artists at this time. It is, however, also important to note that Nicholas I’s reign had some aspects which were at least in part positive developments for the arts in Russia at midcentury. Nicholas finally followed through on his father’s promise (unfulfilled by Alexander for eight years) to establish the Hermitage as a public museum.

And new collections were continually added through purchases in France, Italy and Germany during the 1840s and 1850s. These Western works would prove important for largely self-taught artists like Fedotov and many members of the generation of the 1860s to come. But at the same time, looking at contemporary works from Western Europe pointed up the vast differences between Russian artists and their Western counterparts in terms of freedom. Seeing paintings from the major cultural centers in France, Germany and Italy increased artists’ desire to travel abroad for training, a right which in these years required the express permission of the Tsar, as noted earlier. And gaining the right to travel became even more difficult in the years after the revolutions of 1848 and was largely impossible for artists with limited incomes like Kramskoy.
In what also seems a positive turn, Nicholas increased financial support for the Academy of Arts, but scholars believe this was actually part of a larger effort to bring the institution more firmly under autocratic control and establish the Tsar as the ultimate arbiter of taste. The increase in funding meant that a greater number of artists were able to study and travel abroad, but only under the firm scrutiny of the Tsar and his minions. Nicholas himself increasingly took a greater interest in the individual affairs of artistic production, stifling the freedom and creativity of students at the Academy. He traveled in 1845 to Italy to assess in person the work of Russian pensioners living there. Not exactly the most auspicious of circumstances for young Academy students abroad for the first time and struggling to acquire a style of their own in a foreign nation. Not even artists working on Russian soil were able to evade the watchful eye of the Tsar and his daughter the Grand Duchess Maria, whom he had appointed head of the Academy in 1852. The control of the state led the novelist Ivan Turgenev to characterize it as: “a whole phalanx of people, talented to be sure, but on whose talent lay the general stamp of rhetoric and superficiality corresponding to that great but largely external strength (e.g. the state) of which they served as an echo.”

Discipline at the Academy was also notoriously strict. Nicholas aimed at creating a more compliant student body by issuing degrees which allowed punishment for students that could include induction into the military for a period of twenty-five years. This militaristic style of discipline even at the Academy of the Arts extended to the Academy’s staff which included a policeman on constant guard and the ubiquitous

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404 Starr, “Russian Art and Society, 1800-1850,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 100-01.
405 I.S. Turgenev, Literaturnye I zhiteiskie vospomininia (Leningrad, 1934), 88.
presence of the state censor. The various titles originally instituted by Peter the Great in the eighteenth century also entitled their holders to civil-service ranks equivalent to an army major or a naval captain, so that on the studio floor a professor might wear a uniform, making him indistinguishable from his military counterpart. This proves quite telling in terms of how the Tsar perceived the role of the artist around midcentury.

Remarkably, the decisive moment at which both institutions were challenged in a way that would prove the first step toward their mutual demise occurred in 1863. In that year the French Salon jury rejected an unusually high number of paintings. This resulted in an uproar and was met by Napoleon III’s call for the establishment of a special Salon where a portion of the refused works would be exhibited. This Salon des Refusés opened on 17 May 1863, less than five months before the fourteen graduating Russian students issued their petition for greater freedom from the Academy in St. Petersburg.

The creation of the Salon des Refusés is considered a turning point in French art history because it opened a space, literally, for the public to serve as a new arbiter of taste and for both critics and artists to challenge the reigning opinion of the state sponsored status quo. And in terms of the issues discussed in the previous chapter, one can see how the democratic opening up of the Salon’s juried system as a result of the 1848 revolution helped usher in a period of hope and excitement – one that was ultimately to be quashed when the state of affairs returned to what they had been within only a brief span. If one calls to mind the 5,180 works accepted in the Salon of 1848 when the jury was suspended altogether, one can better understand the protests in 1863 that forced Napoleon III into

407 Ibid.
408 Ibid., 11.
the creation of the Refusés. The formation of the Artel and the Salon des Refusés allowed both Russian and French artists to challenge their Academies in ways they hadn’t previously. And in participating in these new exhibitions, they found new ways to sell paintings.

Interestingly, however, in both countries, the ties with the Academy were never fully severed. The Wanderers’ inaugural exhibition in 1871, which shall be the focus of chapter five, actually took place within the halls of the St. Petersburg Academy. And while the Salon des Refusés did not take place in the halls of the Louvre, it was held in another state sponsored location, the nearby Palais de l’Industrie. Most importantly though, the new exhibition structures posited in 1863 in both countries showed that the power of the Academy could be questioned. This was to have lasting effect not only on how art was exhibited and sold, but on what art looked like as well.

**Art and Reality - ‘the sensation of real life’**

In the introductory section for this chapter I asked several questions regarding the actions of the fourteen seceding students in St. Petersburg. How did the desire for freedom of subject become so strong among artists in Russia? What factors influenced their petition to “be permitted to select freely a subject of our choice”? What motivations led these artists to actually leave the Academy? These questions have in part already been answered by uncovering the censorial and bureaucratic underpinnings of the Academy during the reign of Nicholas I and Alexander II. But I would like to return to these

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questions here and discuss further the underpinnings of that act in terms of the development of an ideology for Realism in both Russia and France.

In chapter two I examined the intelligentsia’s role in the growth of an ideology for Realism in Russia in the 1830s and 1840s. Debates concerning the fate of art and literature in Russia continued in the decades which followed, paralleling a similar rise in philosophies for the new style being detected by critics and authors in the works of several French artists at midcentury – most notably Courbet and Jean-François Millet (1814-75). Thinkers in both France and Russia formalized thinking about Realism as a movement in art and literature. Belinsky died of consumption in 1848 at the young age of thirty six and left a vacuum in the intelligentsia for new thinking on the purpose and future of art in Russia.413

The revolutionary philosopher Nikolai Chernyshevsky filled this vacancy by writing several important tracts in the 1850s, outlining the need for a critical account of the depiction of “reality” in art. His ideas would prove tremendously influential on writers and artists alike over the next two decades.414 The collective impact of his two major works, an 1855 doctoral dissertation titled “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality” (later published as a book) and his 1863 novel “What Is to Be Done?” served as catalysts for revolutionary thinking and fervor throughout the century.415 The

414 Repin cites Chernyshevsky’s The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality as among the works read at the Artel’s open evenings of painting, reading, and discussion on Thursdays. See Ilya Repin, Dalekoe blizkoe (Moscow, 1937), 229.
415 In the original Russian, the titles of these works are “Эстетические отношения искусства к действительности” and “Что делать?” It is important to note as well that Chernyshevsky was promoted by Soviet scholars as the pillar among 19th-century exponents of unwavering ideological art. A student of Fedorov-Davydov (1931-2000), Petr Sysoev (1906-98) promoted Chernyshevsky’s theories as the basic source for the new critically-minded aesthetics. See Sysoev, “Tvorchestvo V.G. Perova,” in V.G. Perov. K stoletiyu so dnia rozhdeniya (Moscow, 1934) and Sysoev with E. Melikadze, “Il’ya Repin,” Novyi mir 8
significance of the former was instantly recognized at the time. Leading intellectuals attended Chernyshevsky’s public defense of his thesis in which he promoted the need for art to depict reality not only for the artist’s own benefit, but that of humanity itself.  

Summing up the new need for art with a newfound purpose Chernyshevsky wrote:

Artistic form does not save a work of art from contempt or a pitiful smile if the importance of its idea cannot answer the question: Was it worth the trouble to make? A useless thing has no right to respect. “Man is an aim in himself”; but the aim of the things man makes must be to satisfy man’s needs and must not be an aim in itself. Chernyshevsky believed art was not meant for mere decoration or beautification, but that it should fulfill the needs of humanity. He went on to state that: “the aim and object of works of art; they do not rectify reality, do not embellish it, but reproduce it, serve as a substitute for it.” He called for an egalitarian art that would embrace everything in the world and be useful to everyone:

…the sphere of art is not limited only to beauty and its so-called elements, but embraces everything in reality […] that is of interest to man not as a scholar but as an ordinary man; that which is of common interest — such is the content of art. […] the artist (consciously or unconsciously, it makes no difference) tries to reproduce for us a certain aspect of life…

(1936), 276-300. All adherents of the Wanderers movement ended up being claimed as adherents of the revolutionary aesthetics of Chernyshevsky throughout their careers. According to one Soviet scholar: “By depicting the dark side of life, the sufferings of the working people…they tried to evoke warm sympathy and love for the oppressed.” At the same time, it was claimed in numerous symposia and monographs on Peredvizhnik painters that they were throughout their careers undermining “the foundations of autocracy.” See “Velikoe nasledstvo,” Isskusto 4 (1947), 17-22. All of this is a very different proposition from what I am claiming Chernyshevsky and the other Realist ideologues were actually used for by Russian artists of the second half of the century. For more on these issues, see Valkenier’s Russian Realist Art, 165-95.  


Chernyshevsky, “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality,” in Selected Philosophical Essays (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1953), 367. Chernyshevsky’s idea that “A useless thing has no right to respect” is stunning in comparison to writers and theorists on art who will rise to the fore in England at the end of the century. While it is outside the scope of this dissertation, Oscar Wilde’s art for art’s sake aestheticism, his idea that “All art is quite useless,” could not be more opposite to the Russian conception of the purpose of art at midcentury. See Oscar Wilde, Preface to The Picture of Dorian Gray (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1908), 6.

Ibid., 365.  

Ibid., 369-70.
One might think here of Courbet’s self-portraits and Fedotov’s genre scenes – the new content of art was the depiction of “a certain aspect of life” – namely boredom and malaise. And these subjects which went beyond classical art’s previous commitment to beauty and its “elements.”

The rise of Realism through writings like Chernyshevsky’s liberated artists from classical subject matter and allowed them to grapple with depicting the particular kind of personal tragic pathos and disillusionment which had begun to be conceived by writers as primary aspects of modern experience. The idea of making art “that is of interest to man” as an “ordinary human being” would prove the very core of the program of both the Artel and exhibition groups that formed outside the rubric of the Russian Academy in the 1870s.

Even in his own time, one can see the effects of Chernyshevsky’s thinking on Russian portraiture. In the wake of Fedotov’s brand of nascent Realism, several Russian artists at midcentury utilized portraiture to reproduce new aspects of life, namely the angst of a generation of men. Chernyshevsky believed that “…art expresses an idea not by means of abstract concepts, but by means of a living, individual fact. […] a work of art must contain as little of the abstract as possible; everything in it must be, as far as possible, expressed concretely in living scenes and in individual images.”420 This parallels a quality that Courbet declared was central to Realist art practice in 1861: “…painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the presentation of real and existing things […] an object which is abstract, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting.”421 His friend Castagnary would also express a parallel idea to

Chernyshevsky’s when he wrote that the works of Courbet “transmitted the sensation of real life”. It is this desire to reproduce and reflect “living scenes” and “the sensation of real life” that one can see evinced in portraiture among the French and Russians at the time.

Reproducing “reality,” as Chernyshevsky had called for, allowed these artists to produce a number of stunningly emotional self-portraits throughout the 1850s and 60s. Fedotov had laid the groundwork for depictions of existential torment, producing small portraits with a psychologically subtle veracity. In one of his last, the 1850-51 “Portrait of S.S. Krylov” (Figure 92), the weight of the sitter’s thoughts is filtered through the careful handling of physiognomic details. This young soldier stares blankly into space beyond the bounds of the picture frame. The pose with arms crossed in lap combines with the buttoned-up presentation of the figure in his dress uniform to lend an impression of withdrawal and inner turmoil. And Fedotov’s painting is again marked by the closeness of the space in which the figure sits. Aside from the arm chair, no other details of the room are present. The blankness of the space and its lack of exterior light combine to heighten the viewer’s sense of this as a closed-off room. The cigarette poised between his fingers serves as a marker of time’s passage, allowing the viewer to gain further sensorial impression of the scene and heightening the sense of time unfolding, what Chernyshevsky would have perhaps called an instance of a “concretely” “living scene.”

In a section that seems to be critical of the tendencies prevalent in Russian art at the time Chernyshevsky writes of how “instead of seriously depicting human life a great many works of art represent a too youthful […] view of life […] Art seems to be a

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pastime too sickly sentimental for grown-up people […] the first harm that is inflicted on art by the conception that ‘the content of art is beauty’ […] is artificiality.”

Though he doesn’t use the word itself, these Romantic forces—the “too youthful,” “sentimental,” and “artificial”—were seen by ideologues as directly opposed to art’s true goal to “explain life.” Chernyshevsky wanted to see an art that would serve parallel to science and history in helping men understand the world around them. Realism became the rallying cry for this endeavor.

Portraiture as the Preeminent Genre of Modernity – ‘render visible the invisible’

With greater frequency in the 1850s, painters answered the call to create works devoid of the sentimentality and artificiality which Chernyshevsky found so harmful. Fedotov’s portrait is an instance of this turn away from sentimentalism and towards the kind of depictions of reality Chernyshevsky called for during the next decade. Even at the time, reviewers recognized the change. An anonymous reviewer of the 1849 Academy exhibition wrote of the works on display by Fedotov and several of his lesser-known fellow genre painters: “Their sort of painting depicts a rich and varied content, like the real life they represent [emphasis mine].”

This reviewer and others at the time sought ways to describe the change to subject matter occurring in these years. The category of “genre” as it had been understood by the Russians was used almost exclusively for Flemish painting practice until this moment. But reviewers like this one began to analyze the differences they saw between the “real life” represented by Fedotov and those works

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424 Ibid., 373.
from the Western European heritage. The reviewer quoted earlier continues in the same review:

May [artists] not forget that above all the idea must inspire the canvas […] not the capturing of form alone, but also the variety and manifestation of spirit and idea. This will save them from the materialism of the Flemish and will place the very genre of their painting onto a higher level.\footnote{426}

At midcentury, the category of “genre” painting is in a state of flux due to the growth of the representation of “real life.”

Fedor Bronnikov (1827-1902), an artist from the generation following Fedotov’s, would continue where his predecessor left off after the latter’s death in 1852. While he was not a member of the Artel in the 1860s, he did in 1875 join the Association of Traveling Exhibitions (Peredvizhniki) which shall be the subject of discussion in the next chapter.\footnote{427} Bronnikov produced an early self-portrait in the mid-1850s (Figure 93) which demonstrates the change Russia underwent in terms of the development of Realism under the influence of Belinsky and Chernyshevsky’s ideology between the 1840s and 50s. Bronnikov’s self-portrait emphasizes melancholic emotionality in a way similar to Fedotov, but the blank background wall heightens the viewer’s attention to the details of the face, creating even more of a bare palette for emotional projection than anything Fedotov created and more in line with Courbet’s self-portraiture practice. This self-portrait becomes especially striking when compared to Bronnikov’s usual fare of Neoclassical and religious themes. His other works from the 1860s include: Horatius Reads before Maecenas (1863) and Pythagoreans Celebrating the Sunrise (1869). His self-portrait is a striking departure compared to the rather banal fare of his other, more

\footnote{427} S.N. Goldshetin et al., eds. Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnykh khudozhestvennykh vystavok: pisma, dokumenty, 1869-1899 (Moscow: Isskustvo, 1987), 2: 627.
Gazing out beyond the bounds of the picture, Bronnikov, like Fedotov before him, establishes a mood of quiet resignation and seriousness, but without a hint of “artificiality.” Again, the somber expression and communication of the gaze out of the picture heighten the image’s emotional affect. Bronnikov is here all mood and emotional presence. Stripped of any of an artist’s usual props – brush, palette, canvas – he looks inspired, but rather darkly, as if the entire force of the representation was meant to hang on the strength of that singular gaze, perhaps hinting at the kind of “turmoil” Baudelaire envisioned for artists as eternal convalescents in France.

Nikolai Nevrev (1830-1904) painted a self-portrait in 1858 (Figure 94) and like Bronnikov and Fedotov, he attempted to capture not only a likeness, but evoke mood as almost a subject in and of itself. Similarly blanking out the background, Nevrev’s portrait relies more heavily on deep shadows to evoke mysteriousness, but the gaze out of the painting is haunting in its poignant evocation of awareness and communication. This self-portrait perhaps has the most in common with Courbet’s depictions of himself in the 1840s as the lingering vestiges of Romanticism gave way to Realism. Nevrev takes Bronnikov’s absence of artistic implements to identify himself with his trade even further by giving the viewer even less of a sense of his figure. Using chiaroscuro to blank out most of his body, the artist forces all attention to the face itself and to that single un-shadowed eye as it looks away. The melancholy which pervades his self-portrait finds

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428 This would support the idea that portraiture (and self-portraiture in particular) provided an opportunity for artists to experiment with Realism when they might otherwise not have had an outlet for such work. 429 Neverev, like Bronnikov, was not a member of the Artel, but joined the Wanderers in 1881. See Goldshetin et al., eds. Tovarishchestvo, 2: 627.
confirmation in what we know of the circumstances of his death. The artist was ultimately to commit suicide in 1904.

In 1847 Belinsky wrote on portraiture:

Nothing would seem easier than making a faithful portrait of a man. Some men have practiced this genre all their lives and are still incapable of painting a familiar face in such a manner that another should recognize whose portrait it is. [...] But were the portrait by Tyranov or Bryullov, it will seem to you that no mirror so faithfully reflects the image of your friend as does this portrait, because it will not be merely a portrait, but a work of art which has caught not only the outward resemblance but the soul of the original.\footnote{Belinsky, “A View of Russian Literature in 1847,” in Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger, eds. \textit{Art in Theory: 1815-1900, An Anthology of Changing Ideas} (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), 359.}

Artists in the 1850s answered this call for portraiture that would capture “the soul” with an output of stunningly emotional self-portraits. Fedor Chumakov (1823-1911) painted a self-portrait (Figure 95) which largely resembles those already discussed, but with several key changes to heighten the gloomy mood. This time, the gaze is penetrating. The artist stares directly out at the viewer from over his shoulder. Again, one might be reminded here of the buttoned-up and rather stifling costume of Fedotov’s soldier. Chumakov presents himself as a gentleman; his black costume is buttoned to the chin, with only slivers of white collar and shirt hinting out from underneath and penetrating the darkness of the garb. The strength of that gaze combines with the glowing red halo of a background behind the artist to produce an almost sinister effect. The closed-off interiors of Fedotov have morphed in these paintings to now represent men as completely their interiority. And as Belinsky had called for portraiture to do, these works capture “not only the outward resemblance but the soul,” providing a bridge from the interior state to the outside world.

The artist Vasily Perov (1833-82), a key member of the Artel in the 1860s who
became the leading genre painter in Russia after Fedotov, also painted a self-portrait of himself as a young man (Figure 96) that breaks the common mold among his contemporaries to present only one’s upper torso. Seen here seated at half length, Perov also unusually depicts himself with an artistic accoutrement that is a sign of his professional labor. He holds a pencil in his hand as though he has just paused in the midst of sketching. But here too, the artist has tried to capture more than the unique characteristics of his individual physiognomy, what Belinsky referred to as the “outward resemblance.” What the inclusion of a greater amount of the body allows the artist to do is show himself in a state of momentary torsion. The body is slightly contorted as the legs twist and are crossed to the right while the torso turns full-frontal toward the viewer. The body positioning and pencil lend a sense of both spontaneity and the difficulty of the artist’s work here – the long hours of sitting and turning, over and over, to capture the sight of something and depict it.431 All in all these do not seem the happiest or most contented of men. Rather, artists throughout the decade would develop a visual and emotional language for depicting the “soul” which posits them as intense, serious, and brooding individuals. And their intensity in retrospect gives us insight into the tensions that were brewing throughout the 1850s and which would lead to the dissent which gave rise to the secession in 1863.

What these works also demonstrate is the centrality of portraiture to artistic practice in this moment. Portraits were increasingly popular during the first several decades of the nineteenth century in Russia and the careful and accurate drawing that was

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431 The twisting pose and melancholic expression may also reflect more complicated dynamics regarding Perov’s lineage. He was born the illegitimate son of Baron Grigory von Krüdener and his illegitimacy denied him the right to his father’s name throughout this life, even though his parents married soon after his birth. See Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 155.
required for achieving a good likeness was considered a specifically Russian artistic skill. Nestor Kukolnik (1809-68), editor from 1836-41 of the publication “Khudozhestvennaia gazeta” (Artistic News) insisted that Russian artists excelled particularly as draughtsmen (risoval’shchiki), stating: “drawing is the key to the Russian school, its own characteristic.” What this emphasis on draughtsmanship underscored was the perception that Russian artists possessed meticulous powers of observation – which were particularly well-suited to the demands of portraiture in terms of the acute rendering of material details. The portrait also conveyed immediacy and contemporaneity in a way that heightened its significance in terms of the development of Realism. Because it demanded that artists focus for the most part on the living and the real in the moment before them, the portrait became the paramount genre of modernity, one unsurpassed in its ability to hone real life into an authentic illusion.

And this proves to have also been a strong facet of writing on Realism in France at the time. The rallying call that would come to define the new movement opposing romantic tendencies in art became ‘Il faut être de son temps’. In Belinsky’s view, art was to take up philosophical activities and themes by transcending reason and drawing on the spontaneous, “Nature originated spontaneously and unconsciously [...] In the same way spontaneity in a phenomenon is its basic law, [it is] the inevitable condition in art that lends it its lofty and mystical significance.” And for Kukolnik, what the portrait allowed artists to do was finally divorce themselves from what he called “the

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432 Adlam, “Realist Aesthetics,” 650.
434 This is also the argument of Carol Adlam in her essay “Realist Aesthetics” – I am indebted to her development of this idea in the context of photography. See specifically pgs. 650-657.
435 Linda Nochlin, Realism, 28.
436 Quote is from Belinsky, Estetika i literaturnaia kritika, 467, quoted in Edith W. Cloves, Fiction’s Overcoat: Russian Literary Culture and the Question of Philosophy (Cornell University Press, 2004), 40.
embellishment of the ideal.” He believed the new direction of art would allow artists to rely even more heavily on art’s “purely imitative and portrait-like” aspects and in so doing become as “faithful…as possible.”

This further parallels Belinsky’s thinking a few years later that: “The world…needs not the gaudy kaleidoscope of the imagination, but the microscope…of reason, to draw the distant near and render the visible invisible.” In the writings of these thinkers, the imagination becomes the handmaiden of the ideal at the expense of the real. They shared a view in favor of art which had its basis in intense material and emotional scrutiny – a process they believed would incorporate even the ugly and the everyday, but in so doing be particularly well-suited to Russian artists’ acute powers of observation and drawing.

Interestingly, Belinsky’s call for art which renders “visible the invisible” stands in opposition to Courbet’s conception of “Réalisme” which was discussed earlier. Courbet wrote that “painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the presentation of real and existing things […] an object which is abstract, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting.” But Russian Realism differed from this in its fundamental ideology. Belinsky, Kukolnik, and Chernyshevsky all believed it was the task of Realist artists to render both the living, real, and contemporaneous, but also the “invisible” – what they had called “not only the outward resemblance but the soul.”

**Ideological Variances – ‘the truth that you claim to serve’**

In returning to a discussion which draws together the theories being espoused for Realism

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438 Belinsky, “Rech’ o kritike” (1842). Quoted in Ibid., 654.
439 Nochlin, Realism, 23.
in these two countries, I would like to further explore both their parallels and differences as evidenced by the writings of their central theorists and proponents in the years around 1863. First, it is notable that the early developments of an ideology for Realism from a literary standpoint happened slightly earlier in Russia than in France, as already discussed. While Proudhon was writing on the new tendency in art as early as 1843, it wasn’t until Baudelaire’s “Salon of 1846,” that the discourse on Realism becomes a discernible force in France. In Russia, Belinsky’s “The Idea of Art” of 1841 advanced the notion that art should function as a means of transforming society by moving away from the contemplation of aesthetic principles. Throughout the 1840s, he used the term “natural” and employed it in a positive, laudatory sense as a synonym for “Realistic.” Writing against the majority of critics at the time who saw the novelist Nikolai Gogol (1809-52) as a Romantic writer, Belinsky insisted that in his works was to be found “Russian reality” and that the author himself was a great social critic.

Following these early moments was Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s hugely influential “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality,” which was published in 1855 and served as the first singular piece of criticism to deal with the subject of art and reality outright.

440 James Rubin discusses the importance of Proudhon’s early writings in regards to Courbet in Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon (Princeton University Press, 1981). He specifically points to Proudhon’s De la création de l’ordre dans l’humanité, ou Principes d’organisation politique (1843) and Système des contradictions économiques, ou Philosophie de la misère (1846). It is also important to note Gustave Flaubert’s role in the development of an ideology for literary Realism in France. While he is not the main fixture of my discussion here because of his focus on literature, Rosen and Zerner perform a very useful analysis of his writings in Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art (New York: Viking Press, 1984).

441 It is difficult to determine when it was published, if not in 1841, then the reason is probably that in 1833 he began to write for ‘Nadezhdin’s Teleskop,’ but this journal was suppressed in 1836 for publishing Chaadaev’s “Philosophical Letter.” See Victor Terras ed., Handbook of Russian Literature (Yale University Press, 1985), 43.

442 Another critic, Faddei Bulgarin, originally used the term “natural” when referring disparagingly to a group of writers, including Gogol, as the “natural school.” Belinsky seized upon this term and used it in much of his criticism thereafter. See Ibid., 44.

443 Ibid.
And on the French side, Charles Baudelaire’s similarly foundational “The Painter of Modern Life” of 1863 has long been considered a work of singular importance for understanding Realism. There are, however, several fundamental differences between the ideologies created for these movements as they were espoused by Chernyshevsky and Baudelaire. And these variances underscore the comparative differences in Russian versus French Realism as it developed in this time. It is also important to note that these leading writers were formulating their views separately from one another, but chronologically in parallel. I have found no evidence that Chernyshevsky read Baudelaire prior to formulating his thesis or vice versa.444

Despite the differences between these two cultures, it is valuable to juxtapose their distinct variants of Realism and track the cycles of repulsion and attraction between them. The word is used by both cultures to mean some of the same things, both ideologically and visually and while the two were most often enemies militarily; their cultures continued to fertilize one another in different ways. And this tensions operates within the paintings created during this era. In terms of further comparing these two cultures and the central thinkers in terms of the brands of Realist ideology they espoused, the most glaring difference was that Chernyshevsky’s credo for Realism infused art with moral obligations that were fundamentally not a concern for Baudelaire. He claimed:

> The first and general purpose of all works of art [...] is to reproduce phenomena of real life that are of interest to man. By real life we, of course, mean not only man’s relation to the objects and beings of the objective world, but also his inner life. [...] often a man lives in the world of his emotions. These states, if they become interesting, are also reproduced by art. [...] art has another purpose besides reproduction, viz., to explain life. 445

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444 Though it is possible that they could have encountered each others’ writings in literary journals or through a common go-between like Turgenev.
Chernyshevsky’s call for art to reproduce the inner life of man and by doing so explain it echoes earlier writing by Belinsky.

Art and literature in our day have more than ever become the expression of social problems, because in our day these problems have become more general, more accessible, and clearer, have become for all an interest of the first degree, have taken precedence over all other problems. […] Artistic interest as such could not but yield to other more important human interests, and art nobly undertook to serve these interests as their mouthpiece. Art has not thereby ceased to be art, but has merely acquired a new character.446

This call for art to reflect “human interests” and “explain life” is markedly different from what French theorists of Realism were calling for.

Only Proudhon, writing more than a decade after Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, paralleled the Russian case by issuing a similar call for the recognition of art’s moral obligations. In his “Du Principe de l’art at de sa destination sociale” of 1865, Proudhon explicitly calls upon artists to aspire to the highest levels of human occupation:

…art cannot subsist apart from truth and justice […] its first law is […] to respect morals and rationality […]. The goal of art is to lead us to a better knowledge of ourselves, by the revelation of all our thoughts, even the most secret, of all our tendencies, our virtues, our vices, our affectations, and thus to contribute to the development of our dignity, the perfection of our being.447

This work by Proudhon was translated into Russian the same year it was published in France and served as support and reinforcement for Chernyshevsky’s notion of the social relevance of art which had already been circulating for a decade.448 But it is difficult to find anything comparable in terms of a radical call to arms for the new school of art among Proudhon’s earlier contemporaries.

448 See Gray, Russian Genre Painting, 9.
Writing in 1857, Champfleury was much less concerned with the depiction of man’s “inner life” or notions of “truth and justice.” He called instead for the “serious representation of present-day personalities, the derbies, the black dress-coats, the polished shoes or the peasants’ sabots.” These external features were seen as a guide to a man’s personality and were above all thought to have more value than the depiction of outworn myths and histories better relegated to the past. Champfleury’s words in this regard parallel those of Baudelaire discussed in chapter three on the heroism of modern life as seen through its dress: “…the dress-coat and the frock-coat not only possess their political beauty, which is an expression of universal equality, but also their poetic beauty…” And this is in direct opposition to what the Russians were calling for. Contrary to the objective depiction of reality called for by Baudelaire and Champfleury – black frock coats and derbies and polished shoes – Belinsky and Chernyshevsky charged art with a higher and deeper task.

In fact, Champfleury directly criticized art that was “the expression of social problems” as Belinsky had phrased and lauded it. The Frenchman wrote in 1851:

Woe to those artists who want to teach through their works…Painting no more has as its mission the exposure of social systems than does music; when painting is turned into teaching it is not painting anymore. It becomes a pulpit that is sad and painful to look at, because there is no preacher on it. Belinsky’s notion of art as the “mouthpiece” of “human interests” and “social problems” contrasted sharply with Champfleury’s idea of the negative value of art that served as a didactic or moral “pulpit”. Belinsky wanted artists to be preachers; he believed that was their new duty. And in direct line with the ideals of Belinksy and Chernyshevsky,

449 Champflury quoted in Nochlin, Realism, 28.
Kramskoy lectured the members of the Artel on the moral role of art, saying “it was essential not only to draw and paint well but [that pictures had to be...] educational” as well as beautiful.452

Russian writers stressed the importance of the artist’s subjective powers of judgment. Going further than Belinsky, Chernyshevsky described the entire artistic endeavor as one infused with moral obligation.

The poet, or artist, being unable to cease to be a man, cannot, even if he wanted to, refrain from pronouncing judgment on the phenomena he depicts. This judgment is expressed in his work – this is another purpose of art, which places it among the moral activities of man.453

This runs very much parallel with what Proudhon called for in art a decade later:

Critical, from the Greek, krino, I judge. Critical art, meaning art that renders justice, [...] art no longer content to express or impart impressions or symbolize ideas or acts of faith; but which, in its turn uniting conscience and science to feeling, discerns, discusses, blames and approves in its own way…454

What Proudhon called in this same section of writing the “critical school,” “critical idealism,” and “critical art,” Chernyshevsky had called judgment. And this idea of critical judgment in art would come, as we shall see in the next chapter, to be called “tendentiousness” by critics in the 1870s. But as opposed to being something that should be evacuated out of art if it was to be truly and objectively “real” in the French Realist sense, the Russians believed tendentiousness and judgment were some of the best and most singularly Russian qualities their art could possess.

And this is markedly different from what writers like Baudelaire and Castagnary wrote about in terms of French Realism. Elizabeth Valkenier describes how: “The

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disposition to consider art not as an autonomous realm but as intertwined with ‘life’ – as primarily expressing extrinsic moral, civic, or national values, not intrinsic esthetic qualities – is a pronounced Russian trait.” Chernyshevsky believed artists inevitably were “judgmental” of their subjects, be that the peasantry, revolutionaries, or themselves and that this brought art imminently into the moral domain. Again, Courbet’s words mentioned earlier serve to illuminate the difference of the French position: “…painting is an essentially concrete art and can only consist of the presentation of real and existing things […] an object which is abstract, not visible, non-existent, is not within the realm of painting.” Chernyshevsky’s words that “judgment is expressed in [the artist’s] work” stand in opposition to Courbet because that judgment cannot but be derived from the realm of the “abstract” and “not visible”.

Proudhon is also helpful in teasing apart what artists and theorists meant in terms of the new subjects for art that they were espousing. He draws an important distinction:

Should one then say […] that these pictures are pure Realism? Take care, I should reply; your Realism would comprise the truth that you claim to serve. The real is not the same thing as the true; the former refers mainly to matter, the second to the laws that govern it; the latter alone is intelligible, and can on that account serve as the object and goal of art.

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455 Elizabeth Valkenier “The Intelligentsia and Art,” in Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia, 153.
456 Nochlin, Realism, 23. I am again engaging here with the work on “objectivity” that has been done by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison (see their Objectivity (New York: Zone Books, 2007). My discussion in this section is problematic because the notion of “objectivity” did not exist as an idea before the mid-nineteenth century, but I believe there are other ways to describe the sentiment which lies behind that word by exploring the ideas which pertain to it in the works of Chernyshevsky, Baudelaire, etc. On the other hand, the idea of “objective reality” does have a lineage which goes back further than the 19th century. As Ian Watt explains, this modern understanding of reality “begins from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through the senses” and as such “it has its origins in Descartes and Locke, and received its first full formulation by Thomas Reid in the middle of the eighteenth century.” See Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 12. I leave these issues for further discussion in another arena to instead keep the focus on comparing the ideologies for Realism developed in Russia and France from multiple angles, i.e. not just in terms of “objectivity.”
Thus Proudhon calls for artists to engage with the realm of truth and the true, but the Russians were concerned with the real as the true. Chernyshevsky’s tract was not called “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Truth” but to “Reality.” The Russian language distinguishes between truth and reality in a way that is similar to its French and English counterparts. The title of Chernyshevsky’s dissertation in Russian, “Эстетические отношения искусства к действительности” carefully utilizes the word for reality, not for truth.  

Kukolnik too weighed in on this matter – drawing a further distinction between truth and “similitude.” He wrote in 1837, nearly thirty years before Proudhon: “Give us lines from nature, give us a body from nature […] and you will draw the truth, far removed from the bare truth of similitude.” In his “The Idea of Art” Belinsky was also concerned with disseminating the definition of art as “the immediate contemplation of truth, or thinking in images (myshlenie v obrazakh).” And he had been grappling with the relationship between subjectivity and truth as well since the late 1830s: “I know that I should be striving toward liberation from subjectivity, toward the absolute truth; but what can I do when for me the truth resides not in knowledge and science but in life?”

Proudhon also further emphasized the difference between the two when he described the work of Courbet: “Courbet’s pictures are mirrors of truth; […] their merit, till now unequalled, lies in the profundity of the idea; the fidelity of the types, the purity of the

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458 The Russian word “действительность” is the noun form of the adverb “действительно” meaning “really, actually, truly.” It is perhaps most literally then translated as realness or actualness. “действительность” can also be translated as “actuality, real, fact, validity” whereas “truth” in Russian would have to be some form of “истина, правда, точность.”


460 Quoted in Victor Terras ed., Handbook of Russian Literature, 43.

461 Belinsky in a letter to Bakunin in the late 1830s (SS13, 10:271) quoted in Cloves, Fiction’s Overcoat, 39.
mirror and the power of the reflection.” Thus parallels between Chernyshevsky’s theory for art and that of Proudhon’s a decade later can only be drawn so far. They diverge at an important ideologically infused point in terms of the difference between what can be called true and what real.

The French situation was also different from that in Russia in that critics were from the inception largely writing about Realism as a tendency they already saw in the art of the Salons. Baudelaire’s case is especially important in this regard. He was responding directly to what he saw in the works of Courbet, Manet, and Constantin Guys (1802-92) in the late 1840s and 1850s and issuing a call for more. In Russia, however, the critics of the 1850s were dealing much more in the hypothetical realm. The Realism they longed for was only seen as emerging so far in literature, with painting seen to be lagging behind, though I have argued in earlier chapters that Realism can already been seen in these early decades in the works of Kiprensky and especially Fedotov.

Belinsky summed up both the new moral purpose of art and the situation of painting in 1847:

To deny art the right of serving public interests means debasing it, not raising it, for that would mean depriving it of its most vital force, i.e. idea, making it an object of sybaritic pleasure, the plaything of lazy idlers. This would even mean killing it, as is evidenced today by the wretched plight of the art of painting. This art, seemingly oblivious of the seething life around it, with eyes closed to everything that is alive, modern and valid, seeks inspiration in the outlived past and derives there from ready-made ideals to which people have long ago grown cold, which are no longer of interest to anybody and give no warmth or evoke lively sympathy in anyone.

Writings like these calling for art to be “alive, modern and valid” served as the catalyst for what had already been surfacing in poetry and prose. And in a time of reform and

change, with the “spirit of the 1860s” in full swing, these would become the main themes for Russian painting as well. Seen in the background of all of this discourse, the secession of the fourteen students from the Academy takes on new meaning as does the notion of what Realism meant for artists making work under that banner in both countries at the time.

**Painting and Literature –**

In terms of comparing the growth of ideologies for Realist art in these two countries, it is important to discuss a further quality that characterized the cultural scene in both centers. As can perhaps already be seen from the literary sampling discussed above, it was the case that in both France and Russia artists were in direct dialogue with writers and critics. One way that this is demonstrated is in the fact that painters made an unprecedented number of portraits of major literary figures in both countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Even a small sampling of the works by Courbet, Manet, and Degas reveals an astounding number of portraits of some of the leading thinkers on Realism after 1848 (Figure 97). And this is also the case in Russia, where the leading collector of Russian contemporary art in the second half of the century, Pavel Tretyakov (1832-98), put into action a plan to create a painted pantheon of the great luminaries of Russian thought from the time (Figure 98). But the trend for these kinds of depictions had been growing in Russia even since the beginning of the century. Kiprensky painted a now famous portrait of the poet Alexander Pushkin in 1827 (Figure 99) and Karl Briullov (1799-1852) also painted several portraits of prominent writers in the 1830s (Figure 100).
Additionally, artists in both France and Russia often read and were influenced by the works of authors and in some cases maintained mutual correspondence. This was particularly true of the French. It is well known that Emile Zola was the strident champion of Manet in particular, as Proudhon had been for Courbet, and Baudelaire for Constantin Guys and then Manet. This is somewhat less true for Russian writers and artists however. While Repin and Kramskoy maintained an important correspondence with Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906), the leading art critic in Russia in the 1870s and a strident supporter of the Peredvizhniki, it is difficult to find parallel cases of intense friendship between novelists or poets and their fine arts counterparts.

As we have already seen with the case of Baudelaire, notable authors often wrote reviews of Salon exhibitions. And Russian writers did take an interest in the works of prominent painters, but this was largely a phenomenon which arose in force only in the 1870s. These relationships proved productive for the development of Realism in both cultures, but the structures of French versus Russian criticism had notable fundamental differences in the 1850s and 60s. In contrast to France, where the Salon found almost immediate critical response within the press once regular exhibitions were established

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464 For selected letters between Zola and Manet see Appendix I (edited by Colette Becker) in Manet, 1832-1883: Galeries Nationales Du Grand Palais, Paris, April 22-August 8, 1983, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, September 10-November 27, 1983 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983). Selected letters between Manet and Baudelaire can be found in Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire: The Conquest of Solitude (University of Chicago Press, Feb 18, 1986). Letters between Courbet and Baudelaire as well as Proudhon can be found in Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, ed Letters of Gustave Courbet (University of Chicago Press, Mar 15, 1992). As shall be discussed in chapter five, both Repin and Kramskoy kept regular correspondence with Vladimir Stasov, the leading critic and theorist of Realism in the 1870s. See Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology. Repin’s correspondence with Tolstoy can be found in I.E. Repin, Pisma, perepiska s L.N. Tolstym, v dvuk tomakh (Moscow-Leningrad, 1949). Also relevant, Nikolai Ge corresponded with Herzen whom he had originally sought out in Italy – see Jackson, The Wanderers, 27. A somewhat dated but still useful general overview of the Russian case can be found in Mikhail Gorlin and Nina Brodiansky, “The Interrelation of Painting and Literature in Russia,” The Slavonic and East European Review 25, No. 64 (Nov., 1946), 134-148.

465 In fact, there are some examples of frank disagreement between artists and writers. Repin is known to have vehemently clashed with Tolstoy over his views on peasant virtue and the writer’s belief in preserving their traditional existence. See Repin’s letter to V. Chertkov (29 August 1887), Repin, Pisma, I: 332-333.
after 1737, in Russia the first exhibition reviews were only published in 1804. And this was despite the fact that the Russian Academy held regular exhibitions from 1762 onwards.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, criticism in Russia was growing in both quantity and quality. Vladimir Stasov began his career publishing reviews of contemporary art in 1847, nearly three years after he decided to set about the career of criticism. It is also important to note that criticism may have played a role in strengthening the resolve of the student secessionists after their departure. A particularly scathing review of the 1863 exhibition was published by Ivan Dmitriev (1840–1867) with the title “Rassharkivaishcheesia iskusstvo” (The Art that Bows and Scrapes). In it, Dmitriev argued that the students’ not being able to choose their own subject matter was a sign of their slavery. But even after midcentury, art criticism in Russia continued to be largely the endeavor of artists, art lovers, and a large number of anonymous writers and it did not develop a high level of literary quality the way it had in France even by the end of the eighteenth century.

Another means of interchange between artists and writers which was not exclusive to the nineteenth century, but further established the bonds between the respective artistic parties in both cultures were instances in which painters illustrated

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467 Makhrov, “The Pioneers of Russian Art Criticism,” 616. The first Academy exhibition in 1762 was followed by a public sale of works which was intended to arouse the public’s interest in the new Academy. See Gray, Russian Genre Painting in the 19th Century (2000), 1-2.
468 Makhrov, “The Pioneers of Russian Art Criticism,” 615.
469 “Rassharkivaishcheesia iskusstvo,” Iskra (The Spark) 38 (October 4, 1863), 521-30.
470 John Bowlt has even argued that “a solid tradition of art criticism was missing in Russia before the twentieth century.” See Bowlt, “The Art Criticism of Pushkin, Gogol’, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy,” Art News 75, No. 5 (1977), 87.
writings for publication. Fedotov’s illustrations to Dostoevsky’s early short stories were mentioned in my discussion of the artist’s development in chapter two. Courbet also utilized this avenue early in his career when he made illustrations to a volume of Max Buchon’s poetry in 1839. These works comprise Courbet’s debut in the art world.⁴⁷¹ There are numerous other examples of this kind of work in both cultures. Especially notable in terms of the discussion of depictions of melancholic men are Delacroix’s illustrations of “Faust” from 1825-27 (Figure 101) and his thirteen lithographs based on “Hamlet” published in 1843. Delacroix also carried out a number of paintings and sketches of scenes from Hamlet throughout his career (Figure 102). And Manet made illustrations for a translation by Stéphane Mallarmé of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven” (1875).⁴⁷²

Art historians have long explored the relationship between French art and literature in the nineteenth century, a topic which hardly needs further exploration here.⁴⁷³ This art historical scholarship on French art provides a model for successful interdisciplinary work and has proven that an examination of the interrelation between writing and image-making in the nineteenth century is key to understanding the cultural history of the period. During the second half of the century, in both of these countries, painting and literature were driven by a mutual investment in depicting modern life. And as has already been seen, these shared goals of Realism were from the inception based on

⁴⁷³ A very brief selection of some the most prominent work in this regard can be found in my Introduction.
more than aesthetic concerns.\footnote{Interesting as well is the fact that the word for “Realism” in Russian is basically the same as the French (and English): реализм (Realism). Critics of the time did not, however, use the term from the same moment when it gains traction in France. Stasov rarely used the term ‘Realist’ in the 1850s and even into the 60s, even when he was discussing Russian art in the context of European art (as he did in a review of the 1862 London World Fair – see “Posle vsemirnoi vystavki (1862),” [1863]). Instead, he usually used the terms “new art” or the “national school.” See Adlam, “Realist Aesthetics,” 639.} In parallel ways in these two cultures, artistic and literary Realism were vehicles for examining society and bringing about social and political change.

**Cultural Chasms – ‘to embody my ideas in truth’**

That being said, however, in contrast to the situation in France, Russian artists were not considered a part of the cultural elite in this time and their relegation outside of the literary intelligentsia is important for understanding both the works of the period and the larger action of the secession. Several scholars of Russian art have researched and debated the social standing of artists in the 1860s. Elizabeth Valkenier maintains that members of the Artel were largely not politically radical.\footnote{Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*. 22. To her credit, Valkenier does not seem to have fully worked out this problem in her book. She contradicts herself regarding the politics and education of the Artel members several times. In another section she claims that the students did read the writers of the day, but that we should understand them as having “followed the lead of liberal writers, not the radicals”. But then she fails to explore the distinction between the two sets further. See Valkenier, *Russian Realist Art*, 35.} She claims that the art students were for the most part innocent of politics; that they were captivated by the Russian literary classics, but not by the radical journals of the time. John Bowlt, on the other hand, maintains that the dissemination of the radical writings of Chernyshevsky, Belinsky, et al were a central cause for the action of the fourteen students.\footnote{Bowlt, “Russian Painting in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, 132.} He
specifically cites the “radical mood of the younger generation of academy students” as a precursor to the events of 1863.477

While this is not the place for a full assessment of the place of artists in terms of the classes of Russian society, the diaries, letters and memoirs of artists are quite revealing in the matter. They provide a complicated and by no means definitive picture, but one that does indicate that the fourteen students were reading, discussing and influenced by the writings of the radical intelligentsia on art and social problems at the time. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Kramskoy and the other secessionists formed an artists’ cooperative out of economic and financial necessity after leaving the Academy. The Artel was centered around a communal workshop where members worked during the day.478 Evenings were devoted to their own creative work which was often also accompanied by members reading aloud to one another.479

Ilya Repin was a frequent visitor to these evenings from 1865 on and described them as his “second Academy.”480 So what works were read and discussed there in the 1860s? The work of Proudhon discussed earlier in this chapter, “Du Principe de l’art et de sa destination sociale” was among the pieces of writing cited by Repin as read and discussed at the Artel’s open evenings.481 Kramskoy also mentions the discussion of a translation of this Proudhon work in his correspondence.482 In his memoir, Repin lists Chernyshevsky’s “The Aesthetic Relation of Art to Reality” as also among the works

477 Ibid. For more on these debates which are so central to the construction of the ideology for Socialist Realism in the Soviet period, see writings such as: Sysoev, “I.E. Repin kak predstavitel’ revoliutsionnogo narodnichestva,” Novyi mir 10 (1934), 245-72; Gerasimov, Za sotsialisticheskii realizm (Moscow, 1952); and Fedorov-Davydov, Russkoe iskustvo promyshlennogo kapitalizma (Moscow, 1929).
478 These jobs included mostly painting ikons, composing portraits from photographs, and retouching photographs. See Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, 34.
479 Ibid.
480 Repin, Dalekoe blizkoe, 229.
481 Ibid.
482 Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, 199 (note 7).
read on these evenings. But all of this is complicated by the fact that a university student
and contemporary of Repin’s named Adrian Prakhov (1846-1916), wrote in his diary that
when he undertook to “educate” Repin, he discovered that he had to start his friend on
Lermontov and Gogol, not on the radical writers he wanted to inform him of.483 Another
artist of the following generation, Vasily Maksimov (1844-1911) recalled how attempts
by university students to educate and enlighten him resulted in “conversations studded
with foreign words [like] despotism, absolutism, prerogatives, etc.” that only served to
confuse and befuddle him.484

Art historian David Jackson also weighs in on this subject and recognizes the
complicated nature of historically reconstructing the situation. On the factors which
influenced the rise of Realism he writes:

Perhaps more important [than artists’ desire to choose their subject matter], if less easy
to qualify, was the pressure brought to bear on artists from Russia’s celebrated literary
intelligentsia as, aware of the cerebral gulf which separated them, artists frequently
allowed the agenda to be dictated by these university-educated thinkers. It is,
however, highly debatable as to how much influence artists imbibed from here, even if
it seems reasonable to suggest they could hardly have been oblivious of the broad
trends in intellectual developments.485

The problem lies largely in the fact that the majority of Russian artists training at the
Academy at this time came from the lower classes and were uneducated. As discussed in
chapter two, the majority of artists in Russia came either from the peasantry or the
meshchanstvo (usually translated from the Russian as petit bourgeoisie) and even after
the liberation of the serfs in 1861, these groups were still subject to restricted movement

483 Excerpts from this diary are reprinted in Khudozhestvennoe nasledstvo. Repin (Moscow-Leningrad,
1948), vol. 2, 9. See also Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, 199 (note 45).
484 V. Maksimov “Avtobiograficheskie zapiski,” Golos Minuvshego 6 (June 1913), 161. Cited in
via an internal passport system, arbitrary taxation, corporal punishment, and forced
military conscription.\footnote{Ibid., 19.}

Thus the social gulf which separated most artists from the class which presided
over the artistic establishment was remarkably large in Russia.\footnote{Interestingly (and problematically), Baudelaire in his The Painter of Modern Life describes a very similar situation for French artists: “Apart from one or two exceptions whom I need not name, it must be
admitted that the majority of artists are no more than highly skilled animals, pure artisan, village intellectuals, cottage brains. Their conversation, which is necessarily limited to the narrowest of circles, becomes very quickly unbearable to the man of the world…” I believe this is simply Baudelaire being facetiously tongue-in-cheek as opposed to accurately describing the situation in France. The majority of French
painters at this time came from the middle and upper middle classes – a very different situation than in
(Phaidon Press, 1986), 7.} A situation which
makes the action of the student secessionists all the more remarkable for the real danger
and social “suicide” it could have meant. But while Repin and his fellow artists may
have begun their lives as uneducated men from the provinces, they were for the most part
eager students who made quick progress. In his memoirs, Repin summed up the situation
of his place in society: “I am a man of the sixties: I am a \textit{backward person} (emphasis
mine) for whom the ideals of Gogol, Belinsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoy and other idealists,
are not as yet dead. I strive to embody my ideas in truth; contemporary life affects me
deeply, it gives me no peace, it demands to be represented on canvas.”\footnote{Letter to N. Murashko, 30 November 1883, in \textit{I. Repin. Izbranniye picma, v dvukh tomakh} (Moscow, 1969), vol. 1, 291-92. Cited in Jackson, The Wanderers, 24.}

In the 1860s membership in the intelligentsia absolutely required a university
education and since the Academy of Arts had ceased its general education program under
Nicholas I’s order in 1840, it could no longer be said that being a student there meant one
had received that level of learning.\footnote{I discussed this termination of the general education program to a larger extent in chapter two. See also
Ibid., 7-9.} A generation later, this meant that the social gulf
between artists and writers had grown to serious proportions.\(^{490}\) The strain felt by artists was thus threefold. Born into the lowest strata of society, they were in one sense denied by birth from holding the positions in society which would allow them to bring about larger political transformation. They lacked social standing and thus influence. Add to this the lack of education which emanated from this lowly birth, which was no longer ameliorated even by admittance to and years of intensive work at the Academy. And as if this was not enough in terms of impediments, their class standing and lack of proper education excluded them from the part of society to which they felt they should belong as artists devoted to personal and professional emancipation – the intelligentsia. Ultimately artists at midcentury were stuck in a self-defeating cycle which led to frustration and disillusionment among students at the Academy.

The chasm which had grown between artists and liberal writers in the 1860s, and which produced this lingering sense of insufficiency and alienation, would affect the coming generation as well. Kramskoy wrote tellingly in 1880 that: “I have never envied anybody so much as an educated person. Formerly, I even panicked like a lackey before every university graduate.”\(^{491}\) According to artists themselves, it wasn’t just their lack of education and class standing which prevented them from being part of the intelligentsia. It sometimes came down to a basic lack of manners and knowledge about the way to properly act in the higher realms of society.\(^{492}\) Another example from Repin’s early student days highlights the social gulf which existed not just between artists and the intelligentsia, but artists and the wealthy patrons who governed the artistic establishment.

\(^{490}\) Valkenier, “The Peredvizhniki and the Spirit of the 1860s,” *Russian Review* 34, no. 3 (July 1975), 249.


\(^{492}\) Valkenier too makes this point about the discrepancy in manners. See Elizabeth Valkenier, “The Peredvizhniki and the Spirit of the 1860s,” 250.
As a peasant born in a military establishment, Repin did not return home at all during the first several years of his training at the Academy for fear of being conscripted by draft into the military. He took any and all kinds of work in these years to survive including: “decorating the iron roofs of houses, carriages, even iron buckets.” Upon meeting a wealthy General who agreed to sponsor his studies, the artist became so overwhelmed with tears that he fell to his knees and kissed the hem of the general’s dressing gown.

Thus two primary factors affecting artists emerge from the memoirs and various writings of the time. On one hand, artists felt deeply the social chasm which separated them from the intelligentsia and from the artistic establishment comprised of patrons, professors, and critics. But also important was their reaction to this chasm. Russian artists in the 1860s sought deeply to better their social standing through learning, collaboration, and through art-making itself. The desire of artists to become a part of the intelligentsia is reflected in their portraits from this period as well. I noted the lack of artistic implements – brushes, canvas, paper, etc. – in discussing the self-portraits by Bronnikov, Nevrev and Chumakov earlier. In light of what has been discussed about artists’ general lack of education and attempts at cooperative learning via the Artel, this element within the works now takes on new meaning. Artists did not represent themselves with the signs of their labor in the 1850s and 60s perhaps as part of their desire to be accepted as part of the intelligentsia.

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494 Repin, *Dalekoe blizkoe*, 131. Repin further described the mixing of classes and types of people at the Academy in his years there as a student: “Next to each other, rubbing shoulders, were a disheveled lad in a peasant shirt and a gray-haired general in his uniform; next to them was a bearded man in a tail coat (a gorgeous artist with a goatee); further along there was a university student; a tall naval officer with a big beard; on the next step there was a whole pack of blond fellows from the Vyatka region; a corpulent lady – a rare view in those days in the Academy; big-eyed Georgians and Armenians; a Cossack officer; stiff Germans in impeccable suits and hairdos à la Capoul.” See Repin, *Dalekoe blizkoe*, 145-46. Quoted in Evgeny Steiner, “Pursuing Independence: Kramskoi and the Peredvizhники vs. the Academy of Arts,” *The Russian Review* 70 (April 2011), 253.
This was even taken a step further by Repin in an early portrait he painted of fellow artist and children’s book illustrator, Ivan Panov (1844-83) while Repin was still a student at the Academy in 1867 (Figure 103).

Panov is depicted here in rapt absorption as he reads the large journal before him. While the title of the tome he is reading cannot be deciphered, Repin has clearly identified the artist here with learning. Panov sits completely unaware of our presence before him, so attentive is he to the words on the page. In red working man’s shirt, Panov is here figured as intellectual laborer. Again, as in the portraits discussed earlier, there are no signs that he is an artist, but we are made to see that he is an “intelligent,” seeking information through reading and erudition.

Whether it was conscious or not, Kramskoy also operated under this model in terms of his depictions of himself over the course of the 1850s and 60s. One of the earliest works by Kramskoy, a self-portrait from the 1850s (Figure 104) shows him as a young artist – pencil in hand, paper on desk – he looks up from his work and out beyond the viewer. But a decade later, in the wake of the revolt and formation of the Artel, Kramskoy changed his mode of self-depiction dramatically. The self-portraits which emerge in the 1860s present him without any sign of his profession and the manual labor it required (Figure 105). In these works, especially the later self-portrait from 1867, he is the all-decorous gentleman in his dark jacket, clean white shirt, and bow-tie. But his self-figuration is also marked by the intensity of the gaze. These works serve as confrontations with the viewer as the artist directs his vision out at us in each one.

This change from recessive self-presentation as artist to confrontational gentleman is also

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496 The thin neck and gaunt facial features of the later painting also serve to underscore the direness of the financial situation among Artel members after the secession. Kramskoy looks drastically slimmer compared to his self-portraits from his student days.
interesting for what is says about Kramskoy’s desire to be viewed as an “intelligent.”

When compared to a self-portrait from nearly two decades later, after the artist was well-known and firmly established as a leading painter, the discrepancy and deliberateness of the choice become even clearer. Kramskoy’s 1884 self-portrait has him presenting himself to the world definitively as a painter (Figure 106). In this work he could not be more identified with his trade. The concentrated gaze of the artist out of the painting in the earlier self-portraits is now obliterated. It becomes replaced instead with the gaze from the sitter within the portrait he is working on. In so doing, it transforms our relationship with the artist and his work, making it only the latter which now serves as the vehicle for our engagement with the man.

In light of all this, the secession of the fourteen students can be seen as an act that emerged directly out of the frustrations and discrepancies which artists were working so intensely to overcome. Theirs was a reaction meant to bring about real change for the position of artists in society. Herzen recognized the frustration which resulted from the social chasm brought about by Russia’s education system and the exclusivity of the intelligentsia. He wrote in 1850: “They give us a broad education, they inject us with the desires, tendencies, and sufferings of the contemporary world, and they cry to us, ‘Remain dumb, passive slaves, or you are lost.’” Thus the revolt of the students and

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497 The British social and political theorist Isaiah Berlin summed up the situation in Russia in this time beautifully: “In a suffocating society, where there was no opportunity of putting to use one’s natural gifts […] excited by novel ideas which came in from all kinds of sources, from classical texts and the old Utopias of the West, from French social preachers and German philosophers, from books, journals, casual conversations, only to remember that the milieu in which one lived made it absurd to begin to dream of creating in one’s own country these harmless and moderate institutions which had long become forms of life in the civilized west.” I will turn to this theme of how the West is influencing Russia’s sense of the social chasm in the next chapter. See Berlin, “A Marvellous Decade,” Encounter IV (May, 1956), 21.

the formation of the Artel were about much more than the desire for liberation from the
Academy and the free choice of subject matter. Members of the liberal and radical
intelligentsia called for a new art which would not only depict real life, but in so doing
educate society and possess a moral thrust. But at the same time as artists were aware of
these calls for reform and transformation, they were considered excluded from the class
which would bring it about. With this discrepancy in mind, the students’ action becomes
one designed not only to change the position of the artist in Russian society, but make
him through radical action a member of the intelligentsia. It sought to reconcile two
related goals – to bring about artists’ longing for individual fulfillment and to be a part of
the movement for larger societal reform which would bring about greater equality for the
Russian people at large.

Collectivity vs. Individualism

Building on this idea that the secession from the Academy must be viewed in terms of the
larger force for change sweeping Russia at this moment, I would like to make one final
point that also returns us to the discussion of comparing some of the internal dynamics of
Realism in France and Russia in these years. The secession by the fourteen students and
the formation of the Artel were acts of primary importance for the development of
Realism in Russia. But aside from the desire to liberate subject matter and the
importance of the action for the advancement of criticism and ideology for the new
Realist art, the actions of Kramskoy and his compatriots constitute Realism in Russia as
uniquely collective in a way that has not been properly explored or discussed by scholars.
Because the fourteen students bonded together during their act of revolt by petitioning the
Academy as a group and because the Artel was an artists’ cooperative, we must address the collectivized nature of the efforts of these men.

Recall Kramskoy’s words cited at the beginning of this chapter: “…in order not to perish we must hang on to one another [emphasis added]. We wished to form an artists’ association, that is, to work together and live together. United […] we would accumulate capital.” 499 The formation of the Salon des Refusés was very different in this regard, despite its occurrence in the same year and its fundamentally anti-Academy nature. The 1863 Refusés exhibition in Paris was marked not by any sort of collective spirit among the artists who participated, but much more so by the strength of their individual personalities and single works. Any collectivity among those who whose works were put into the Refusés Salon happened incidentally or as a result of their personal friendships. It resulted more from solidarity at their inferior status as essentially official Salon rejects than anything else. Manet’s “Dejeuner sur l’Herbe,” exhibited in the Refusés Salon of this year, drew sharp criticism from both the general public and the critics and made the artist notorious rather than simply well-known.

In many ways the intense focus on individual personalities and works had been true of French art for several decades. Delacroix was described by the French poet and critic Théodore de Banville (1823-91) as “the most individual master of our age” 500 and artists from Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) on had found the format of charging audiences to view their works in individual exhibitions both profitable and useful for public relations. In 1855 Courbet staged his own exhibition outside of the “Exposition

500 Clark, Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution (Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1982), 131.
Universelle” and Manet held a similar independent exhibition in 1867.\textsuperscript{501} These activities find no parallel in the 1850s and 60s in Russia. Artists in the Artel and in the Peredvizhniki organization formed in the following decade would exhibit their works in a consistently collective manner.

Cartoons and art criticism from the time further underscore the difference between the two countries in this regard. In France the emphasis fell squarely on mocking individual artists and works in the print media. Courbet was an especially frequent target of this kind of travesty (Figure \textsuperscript{107}). Cartoons of the leader of the Realist movement feature the artist as an overweight and grotesque painter-giant. In Russia, Repin served as the equivalent “father” of Realism in the 1880s, but caricatures of the artist do not show him as some lone, beer-belly sporting Goliath of painting like Courbet (Figure \textsuperscript{108}). Instead it is the very nature of collectivity which is emphasized in the cartoon by Valentin Serov (1865-1911) from the turn of the century. Whereas Courbet is figured time and again as a singular colossus with his oversize palette and stylized beard, Repin is pictured sweating profusely as he drags the members of the Peredvizhniki in a cart behind him. T.J. Clark described Courbet as making individuality central to Realist practice: “as Courbet put it in his 1855 Manifesto, the artistic tradition is the very material of individual expression. ‘To know in order to be able to do, that was my idea’.”\textsuperscript{502} The satirical press picked up on and utilized exactly this element of Courbet’s nature, while in Russia the shared responsibility of artists was what came under sardonic attack.

Russia’s increased emphasis on collectivity in the artistic realm – be that seeking commissions together as in the case of the Artel or reading the works of leading critics

\textsuperscript{502} Clark, \textit{Image of the People}, 13.
and thinkers in the open evenings – would deeply effect the art its practitioners produced in the decade to come. In the next chapter I will explore the unfolding of this dynamic further, but I believe that from this moment of change in 1863, Russian artists began to develop a brand of “total realism” which is centered around empathy and is different from the more objective brand of Realism which emerged so strongly with Courbet in France and would continue with Manet and Degas in the decades which followed. In part, the dynamic individualism which typifies art making in France is a vestige of the Romantic past with its emphasis on the alienated individual as the great solitary hero of progress. But the French continued to operate through this model of creative isolation and solitary genius even after Romanticism loses dominance in art and literature.

The painter Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904), whose group portraits provide a fascinating case for studying issues of social boundaries and the bonds among men in the latter half of the nineteenth century, wrote quite ironically of the benefits of isolation for the artist. In a letter 1875 he wrote: “you're right about Artist gatherings; nothing measures up to one's interior; I don't see anyone anymore; I find that, at our age, none of that is interesting anymore. I prefer les purs bourgeois, and solitude is good for work.”

Even later, the French writer Jacques Rivière (1886-1925) would describe Impressionism as a further exaggeration of the focus on the individual. According to the art historian Bridget Alsdorf, he viewed the movement as one “of a depressing and exasperating

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503 It is interesting in regard to this notion of individualism vs. collectivity to think too about figures like Degas who were perceived in their own time as individuals with an outsider status. See Carol Armstrong, Odd Man Out: Readings of the Work and Reputation of Edgar Degas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

narcissism, an art of inwardness that prized difference and separateness above all." Riviére himself wrote in 1912 of Impressionism that: “Each artist then began to represent what was most personal, most private, most desperately lonely about his sensations.” The equivalent simply cannot be said for Russian artists in the second half of the century.

Let me be clear – I am not arguing that they were not social bonds and personal connections among artists in France. That would be untrue. Many artists had strong bonds with each other in these years – Monet and Bazille, Manet and Berthe Morisot, Degas and Mary Cassatt, James McNeill Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (to name but a few). And in one different, but important sense both countries did share one very influential “collectivity” – the interrelation of artists and writers. But one simply does not find the same kind of intensive bonding together of resources, exhibition opportunities, learning, and discussion as there was among the Russian Realist artists in France in the 1860s.

Ironically, painters like Fantin-Latour did seek to carve out a space for depicting artists as members of a group in the 1860s and 70s (Figure 109). But these serve as largely idealized and fictional renderings of factions that did not exist so strongly in reality. It is interesting to note that despite the collaborative nature of the Artel and the Peredvizhniki, this kind of painted group portraiture does not have a visual equivalent to Fantin’s in Russia. But there are numerous graphic renderings of the Artel’s cooperative efforts which emerge in the 1860s (Figure 110). Unlike Fantin’s rather formal group portraits of

505 Alsdorf, Fellow Men, 206.
artists, the pencil drawings of Kramskoy and Nikolai Dmitiev-Orenburgsky (1838-98) have a sense of natural communication and relaxed familiarity. The relative isolation and alienation of the figures in Fantin’s groups is startling in comparison. Each artist is rendered as if he occupies his own space. Viewers at the time were struck by this quality and wondered “who these sad men are.”

But while the individual and isolated genius was prized in France, Russian writers and artists saw it as a tremendous danger to society and something to be actively suppressed. I opened this chapter with an epigraph from Dostoevsky’s “Notes from Underground,” and in closing I would like to return to this work and use it to underscore the anti-individualism prevalent in Russia in this time. This novella, first published in 1864, only a year after the revolt of the fourteen from the Academy, highlighted what was perceived by leading thinkers as the very real and growing danger of narcissistic self-absorption in Russian society. Dostoevsky opened the novel with the words: “I am a sick man…I am a spiteful man. I am an unattractive man. I believe my liver is diseased. However, […] I don't consult a doctor for it, and […] I know better than anyone that by all this I am only injuring myself […] well—let it get worse!”

Over the course of the story Dostoevsky develops this main character, the titular “underground man,” the chief characteristic which emerges is that he is a man who has pitted himself against society in every way. An outgrowth of the “superfluous men” of Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev and Goncharov, Dostoevsky’s hero is even more bitter, alienated, and disillusioned than any of his previous literary counterparts. What he demonstrates, however, is not just the deepening of the resignation and apathy we have been tracking since Napoleon’s

invasion of Russia in the second decade of the century, but also the growing fear of the outsider, the extraneous, the “superfluous.”

Thus on one hand, the “underground man” as the latest version of the type is evidence of his continuing presence among the masculine Russian social order. He also serves as confirmation of the pain associated with the social chasm itself, one we know was felt by artists deeply in this moment. Later in the novella, Dostoevsky describes what Herzen had grappled with fifteen years before as he conjured the despair of possessing knowledge without the ability to act:

…that hell of unsatisfied desires turned inward, that [...] silent impotence to sink into luxurious inertia, brooding on the fact that there is no one even for you to feel vindictive against, that you have not, and perhaps never will have, an object for your spite, [...] but still there is an ache in you, and the more you do not know, the worse the ache.509

Part of artists’ desire to bridge the social chasm and belong to the intelligentsia can be viewed as their aspiration to be folded as individuals into an established collective, rather than becoming extraneous as Russia’s traditional class system began to rupture after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861.

Dobrolyubov described the problem of the kinds of men which arise from these changes in society in his 1859 essay “What is Oblomovism?” He posited that superfluous men like Oblomov were the result of certain segments of society failing to understand their relation to those around them.510 This failure of the collective mentality, what he described as the inability to “rationally define his own relations to others”511 is

509 Ibid.
511 Ibid., 348.
according to Dobrolyubov an all too real feature of his time.\footnote{He sees Oblomovs at all levels of society – from the “country squire” and “government official” to “army officer” and “educated people. Ibid., 352-53.} In Russia to be an individual meant to be at risk of being superfluous at a time of great progress and long-sought after change. And the end point of this kind of solitary egoism was the fate of Oblomov and the “underground man” – to be estranged not only from one’s class and from society, but from the fate of Russia itself. Thus the act of secession carried out by the Artel members was one that went a great deal beyond the desire to paint whatever subject they might choose. It was in a deep sense a means of finding a place in the collective of Russian society, even as the very social structures which had for so long been in place were dissolving as the century progressed onward.
Chapter Five – Flâneurs and Wanderers:
‘Total Realism’ and the Antihero of Modern Life, 1870-1881

…a novel needs a hero, and all the traits for an antihero are EXPRESSLY gathered together here, […] for we are all divorced from life, we are all cripples, every one of us, more or less. We are so divorced from it that we feel at once a sort of loathing for real life, and so cannot bear to be reminded of it. Why, we have come almost to looking upon real life as an effort, almost as hard work…

– Fyodor Dostoevsky, “Notes from the Underground” (1864)

How dull and stupid it all is! It is not because I go nowhere; I go nowhere simply because I don't want to. […] Why should I think of the future when I know it so well? Why think of the past when there was nothing in it which could replace my present life? […] I want to stop, to take hold of something, if only a straw, but there is nothing, not even a straw.

– Vsevolod Garshin, “An Incident” (1878)

…he felt incapable of stirring a finger; a soothing feeling of warmth and lassitude was seeping into every limb, so that he could not even lift his hand to light a cigar. ‘Get up, man, and go’ he kept telling himself, but these orders were no sooner given than countermanded. After all, what was the good of moving […] What could he expect to find over there, save fresh disappointments?

– Joris-Karl Huysmans, “Against Nature” (1884)

The Wanderers – ‘Art ceases to be a secret’

On 28 November 1871 the inaugural exhibition of the Association of Traveling Art Exhibitions (Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnykh vystavok proizvedenii russkikh khudozhhnikov) opened its doors to the public. This first exhibition was held in St. Petersburg and showed 47 paintings in the halls of the Imperial Academy of Arts before traveling to Moscow, Kharkov, and Kiev. The new organization which organized the

516 Jackson, The Wanderers, 6.
517 Ibid., 6, 28 and Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier and Wendy Salmond, eds. Russian Realist Painting. The Peredvizhnniki: An Anthology, Experiment Journal 14 (2008), 87. It might also be noted here that the showing of 47 paintings was quite modest compared to the more than 400 works shown at the Russian Academy’s exhibition for that same year. See Jackson, The Wanderers, 6. The statistics for the first exhibitions in each city are fascinating. The St. Petersburg exhibition was held from November 29 to
exhibitions came to be known as the Wanderers and was distinct from the Artel which had preceded it. The Wanderers’ aim was “to establish traveling art exhibitions, with appropriate permission, in all cities of the Empire, in order a) to provide the inhabitants of the provinces with the opportunity to acquaint themselves with Russian art […]; b) to foster a love of art among the citizenry; and c) to enable artists to market their artwork.”

The establishment of the group fulfilled Ivan Kramskoy’s original dream of establishing an independent organization that would become professionally successful through widespread popularity (Figure 111). Indeed the group had such success, that it lasted until 1923 (Figure 112) and ultimately held 48 total exhibitions over its almost fifty year existence.

The origins of the Wanderers go back to November of 1869, when the St. Petersburg Artists’ Cooperative known as the Artel was contacted by a group of artists from Moscow. These Muscovite artists, including Vasily Perov and Nikolai Ge (1831-94), proposed the formation of an association which would hold traveling exhibitions. Later in that same month, draft statues for the Association were finalized and signed, but

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519 Jackson, The Wanderers, 27.


members of the Artel responded with only lukewarm interest. Different from most of his colleagues, Kramskoy was enthusiastic about the group’s formation and believed that the union of artists in the two major cultural centers of Russia would only strengthen their resolve as a force against the Academy. But in the end only four Artel artists joined as founding members of the Wanderers in 1870.

The inception of the group and its first showing were not without tensions. Nikolai Ge recognized the precariousness of the newly-formed group’s position in what was still a largely restrictive and censorious Tsarist Russia. He wrote of the formation of the Association and its opening: “It was a frightening thing for many. Each of us must have sensed that what was happening was not at all simple: each must have wondered, in his conscience, ‘can I see this through?’ On the day of the opening, several members withdrew. The position of those remaining was risky.” It was not just the authorities that members of the Association had to fear. Like the Artel before them, there were great concerns about artists’ ability to make an income outside the assurance of the Academy’s commission and patronage system. Another founding member of the Association, Grigory Miasoedov (1834-1911), wrote of the Wanderers’ early days:

In 1870, when our Statute was ratified, our concerns were quite clearly defined. We needed paintings and we needed money. The Association, launched without a cent to its name, had few of the former and none of the latter. Each participant had to pay for its initial expenses out of his own pocket, each according to his means.

The records from the earliest years clearly show the financial difficulties which plagued the organization at its inception. The exhibition in St. Petersburg made just enough

523 Ibid., 28.
525 The quoted lines are from a report Miasoedov read in 1888 summing up the Association’s first fifteen exhibitions. See Goldshetin et al., eds. Tovarishchestvo, 1: 334-37. Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology, 98.
money to allow the further showings in the provinces to take place. It must have indeed been as Ge called it “a frightening thing.”

Reviews of the first exhibition, however, reveal the public success and popular support which the first exhibition seems to have drawn. Vladimir Stasov, whose championing of the Wanderers and support of their Realist works will play a prominent role throughout this chapter, described the exhibition in 1871 as “the biggest art news in St. Petersburg at the present moment […] Whichever way one looks at it, it seems special and fantastic: the original idea; its goal […] all of this is unheard of and unprecedented.” Another critic at the time, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826-1889) also remarked on the exhibition’s successful reception, calling it a “remarkable phenomenon” and stating that it “created a most pleasing impression.” He went on in the same article to praise the larger intentions of the newly-formed group in bringing art to the masses:

…works of art that have till now been locked away exclusively in Petersburg […] are now accessible to the inhabitants of the entire Russian empire. Art ceases to be a secret that separates the elite from the masses: it addresses itself to everyone and grants everyone the right to judge its achievements. From whatever vantage point we view this undertaking, its usefulness is beyond question.

Modern critics too have focused largely on the positive developments in art-making and dissemination which were brought about by the Wanderers in the 1870s. In 1937 the Soviet painter and art historian Igor Grabar (1871-1960) contextualized the

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526 Miasoedov describes the earnings as 2,303 rubles earned in St. Petersburg, then 6,328 rubles in the other locations. The sale of paintings themselves resulted in an additional 22,910 rubles – all of which formed the basis of the organization’s financial future. See Goldshetin et al., eds. Tovarishchestvo, 1: 334-37. Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology, 98.
529 Ibid., 235.
movement as part of the larger populist tendency alive in Russia in these years. He credited the Wanderers, and Kramskoy in particular, with having done “an enormous amount to popularize art in the population at large.”\footnote{Grabar, “The Association of Traveling Exhibitions,” in I. E. Repin (Moscow: Izogiz, 1937), 1:225-40. Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology, 344.} Grabar also highlighted this period in Russian art history as the one in which Realism came to full fruition. He described the time as the one when Russian painters “worked out their own realist language […] and revealed new methods for the psychological treatment of the hero.”\footnote{Ibid. Translated in Ibid., 353.} And Grabar is not alone in his linking of the Wanderers with the maturation of Realism in Russia.

Another important Soviet painter and art historian, Aleksandr Gerasimov (1881-1963) wrote: “The art of the Peredvizhniki can be seen as a notable new stage in the development of realism in the world’s art.”\footnote{Gerasimov, “A Great Legacy,” (1947). Translated in Ibid., 354.}\footnote{Ibid., 354.} He further analyzed the artists in the movement as having proceeded directly from the aesthetic principles of Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov, stating that: “In their art they put into practice the fundamental principles formulated by Chernyshevsky in his celebrated dissertation...”\footnote{Ibid., 354.} Critics at the time too recognized that the Wanderers were not just disseminating art to the provinces and establishing new audiences, but also speaking in a “new language”,\footnote{“Na svoikh nogakh,” Delo 12 (December 1871), 106-08. Quoted in Valkenier, Russian Realist Art, 40.} one that in Russia had heretofore been mostly associated with poets and writers. Modern
art historians too designate the formation of the Wanderers as of central importance for the final phase of growth for Realism in Russia.

Gerasimov and Grabar’s assessments, and similar analyses by other Soviet scholars, have long been understood to reflect the need to create an ideology for Realism as an “authentic” Russian movement so as to justify the style of Socialist Realism which grew out of it in the communist era. This scholarship is further tainted by the Soviet desire to designate Russian art as free of all European (and therefore bourgeois and materialist) influence in the years leading up to the Russian revolution. While this is a fascinating topic, and one which has received attention by other notable art historians, I would like to bypass these issues and use Grabar here only as a launching point for discussing what the relationship between French and Russian Realism was in the 1870s.535

Grabar also notably designated the Wanderers movement as one which highlights a change in the relationship between Russian artists and their Western counterparts. He described how Russian artists studied in France, Italy, and Germany in this time and became familiar with European painting as it was being practiced in these centers, but he ultimately saw this time as most significant because of its break away from foreign influence. Grabar stated that: “Russian realists subordinated their mastery of the experience of West European art to the solution of their own tasks for developing a national painting, with its clearly expressed progressive social content.”536 Grabar

535 Most notable in regards to this scholarship has been Elizabeth Valkenier’s Russian Realist Art (1977) which traces the Peredvizhnik movement from its origins in the Artel in 1863 through its cooptation by Soviet authorities.
536 Grabar, ed. Istoriia russkogo iskusstva (Moscow: AN SSSR. Institut istorii iskusstv, 1967), vol. IX. Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhnik: An Anthology, 353. This kind of statement, with its emphasis on how Russians had “mastered” Western practices is typical of Soviet writing on Peredvizhnik art.
believed that in part the accomplishment of the Wanderers was that they transposed the traditions of the West and used “what was best and most familiar in the art practice of Western Europe.”

The decade of the 1870s is of fundamental importance for understanding not only the final stage of development for Realism in Russia, but the ultimate connection between the movements as they were practiced in the East and West in the second half of the nineteenth century. My task in this chapter will be twofold. On one hand, I will track Realism’s maturity in Russia in the 1870s and 80s. But I will also draw on the paintings produced by Russian Realist painters within the Wanderers to understand how the relationship between France and Russia changed in this time and how moments of travel and exchange allowed for a new kind of understanding between the two.

**The Siege of Paris – ‘enforced egotism’**

While Russian artists were forming their new exhibitionary association between 1869 and 1871, life for French artists working in Paris and its environs in this same time was a starkly different experience. On 15 July 1870, war was declared between France and Prussia and in its wake came the invasion and siege of Paris. For more than four months between September and January, Paris and its citizens were held in a state of complete suspension. This time, known as the “Terrible Year” of 1870-71 put an enormous strain on the people of Paris and transformed almost overnight the daily lives of those who lived there. Many fled the city, others enrolled in the National Guard, still others went

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537 Ibid.
into self-imposed hiding. During the siege, almost all basic services came to a halt. Mail and newspaper could only enter if smuggled in and basic necessities such as heat and food became scarce by December. Thus while Kramskoy and the other Wanderers were enjoying the success of their newly formed group in Russia, Parisian artists were largely deprived of their ability to work and even of the most basic inspiration they had found in strolling the streets. Holed up in their homes, without full access to supplies or the support of their social networks, this period was one of loneliness and alienation for those artists who had come to the fore of the avant-garde in the 1860s.

Edouard Manet wrote in letters to his wife from October of 1870, just a few months before the Wanderers’ Association would be officially ratified, of his isolation: “The people who have stayed in Paris see each other rarely. One becomes enormously self-centered […] all personal relations are cut off. It is boring and sad. […] In this enforced egotism one sees no one.” Edmond de Goncourt wrote of similar isolation and boredom in the same month:

To live within one’s self, to have no other exchange of ideas besides your own unvarying one […] to be driven from the boulevards […] to be deprived of everything of which the intellectual life of a Parisian consisted: to lack the new and the renewed; to vegetate in this brutal, monotone condition: war—the Parisian is overcome with boredom…

539 Manet and Degas both enlisted and served in Paris; Monet and Pisarro fled to London so as not to have to fight, and Fantin-Latour spent the year in hiding in Paris. See Alsdorf, Fellow Men, 163.
540 Ibid.
Ultimately, Paris was forced to surrender in late January and the citizenry largely felt they had endured all the months of hardship and sacrifice for nothing.\textsuperscript{543}

Out of this discontent arose the Paris Commune, an independent city government which was to last but three short months. The Commune would be brought to an end by terrible violence which ensued at the end of May in 1871. Known as “The Bloody Week,” in just eight days some 20,000 people were killed, and countless others arrested or exiled.\textsuperscript{544} Courbet in his role as president of the Artists’ Commission, had looked after the treasures of the Louvre during the war and was named a member of the Commune – an act which would result in his imprisonment for six months later that same year.\textsuperscript{545} The artist executed a number of self-portraits while imprisoned (Figure\textsuperscript{113}) which provide a stark contrast to the self-depictions painted by the artist at the very outset of his career.

This two year period between 1869 and 1871 was thus very different in terms of the experience of artists in Paris versus those in St. Petersburg. Tsar Alexander II did nothing to prevent Bismarck’s defeats of Austria in 1866 and then France in 1870, and in so doing he allowed the emergence of a unified Germany.\textsuperscript{546} These years also mark an important moment in tracking the development I discussed at the end of the last chapter regarding individualism and collectivity as two distinctive modes of artistic operation in France versus Russia at this time. I have already discussed the ways that the formation of the Salon des Réfuses created a greater degree of autonomy and independence among French artists than their Russia counterparts. The cooperative nature of the Petersburg

\textsuperscript{543} Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{544} Alsdorf, \textit{Fellow Men}, 164-65.
\textsuperscript{546} This has been called by some the worst mistake the tsarist diplomacy ever made. It allowed Germany to emerge as the new continental giant, an event that would have dramatic consequences in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. See Riasanovsky, \textit{A History of Russia}, 385.
Artel, with its reliance on shared income, communal studio space for working, and evenings of group reading and discussion, meant that artists in Russia developed a sense of collectivity that was not the same in Paris. Bridget Alsdorf discusses the vacillation among Parisian artists in the second half of the nineteenth century – between artists’ (and writers’) amiable homosocial circles on one hand and a radical kind of narcissistic withdrawal from society on the other. She posits male artists’ lives as individual and exclusionary, but also strikingly relational at the same time and tracks the changing group dynamics and social networks in the dramatic period of change that was life in France between 1864 and 1885.

For our purposes, what is most important is the change that the siege of Paris and the Commune which followed it brought for French artists. Alsdorf describes the disaffectation brought on by the war, that artists became increasingly isolated, bored, and self-centered as Parisian life came to a halt, but these feelings also seem to have lingered even after the war ended and the siege was lifted. According to both Alsdorf and the historian Robert Nye, the shock of military defeat and the “corrosive effects of the gender evolution” ushered in a new attention on the body and on virulent masculine qualities in France. From the 1860s on, masculinity was no longer seen as centered on male bonding relationships, but the emphasis was instead placed on a bourgeois notion of virility and an individualistic ideal of success.

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547 David Jackson remarks too on this quality, though he does not pursue it in his book. He states: “The Russian realist school resulted in a partial “death of the author,” whereby personal interests were frequently subsumed by communal aspirations and where engagement with innovative subject matter overshadowed questions of formal development.” See The Wanderers, 4.

548 Alsdorf, Fellow Men, 176.


550 Alsdorf, Fellow Men, 166.
In this context, group portraits composed by French painters like Fantin-Latour and Edgar Degas (1834-1917) during and after the siege take on new meaning. Degas composed his “Jeantaud, Linet, Lainé” (Figure 114) in 1871, a work he seems to have finished in March of that year (the work is inscribed “Degas, mars 1871”), just after the siege had ended and as the Commune was forming. What is so striking about the three men depicted in the portrait is their isolation from one another despite their intense bodily proximity. Each of them seems isolated in their respective private thoughts. The black costume of all three men further underscores the somberness of the scene. The bodies of Jeantaud, Linet, and Lainé morph into one another as the inky black of their dress coats fail to designate the physical limits of each man’s individual body. One might again recall the words of Manet written but a few months before: “In this enforced egotism one sees no one.” Indeed none of these men depicted together seems to see the others; their separateness despite propinquity is startling.

A similar quality can be found in Fantin-Latour’s “The Corner of the Table” (Figure 115), a group portrait the artist began in December of 1871, which is characterized as much by the lack of communication or connection between the men portrayed as by their alienation and resignation from the activity supposedly being shared among them. Viewers of the work at the time also commented on this lack of mutual awareness among the group. Castagnary wrote in 1872: “This is not a picture, it is a collection of poorly grouped, poorly laid out portraits, a radical fault in a composition of this kind.”551 Others described it as “accumulative”552 and wrote that “the figures are clumsily grouped, if they

can be said to be grouped at all.”  Alsdorf summarizes the tension of these group portraits: “Fantin departs from the harmonization of individual and group achieved […] in the past, making the relationship more fraught, more ambivalent, if not to say more modern.”  Works like these epitomize Alsdorf’s idea that men in Paris after the war continued to operate to a large extent under the isolation and egoism which had characterized the years before.

This striking individuality – a lack of ultimate compositional or interpersonal cohesion is especially striking when viewed in comparison with Russian works from the same period. While it has already been discussed that Russia lacked a tradition for canonical group portraiture akin to that practiced by Fantin, several artists did experiment with varying degrees of group representation in the nineteenth century. Pavel Fedotov’s “Fedotov and his Comrades in the Life-Guards Regiment of Finland” (Figure 116), a work discussed in chapter two, can now be viewed in comparison with Degas’ and Fantin’s paintings. Fedotov’s study of himself and about seven of his fellow soldiers demonstrates an altogether different narrative cohesion in its portrayal of a group. While Fedotov’s work is a genre painting as opposed to a formal portrait, the men he depicts nevertheless interact with one another, responding emotionally and physically to each other’s bodies in space and to the card game that unfolds before them in a way altogether missing from Fantin’s depiction of men gathered to hear a poetry reading.

Another scene of card playing which is closer in time to the representations of Fantin and Degas, Viktor Vasnetsov’s (1848-1926) “A Game of Preference” from 1879

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553 “Society of French Artists,” *Pall Mall Gazette* (Nov. 1872). Quoted in Ibid.
554 Ibid., 172-73.
555 We might also analyze the tendency towards group photography in Russia which was strong (see Figures 1 and 2), even when paintings of the kind were not.
(Figure 117), also demonstrates a quality of cohesion among figures that contrasts with portrayals by French artists. Even while two of the figures are not a part of the game that is the central narrative theme of the scene, they still possess a sense of belonging within the larger whole. One gentleman yawns as the card-playing drags on into the wee hours of the night, while another has stood up from the table and turns away as he finishes his drink. But as opposed to seeming dislocated from the central group, we imagine them as still aware, listening, and interacting with the other men.

The figures seem unified too in terms of the space they occupy in a way absent from the works by Fantin and Degas under discussion. Fantin’s men cast hardly any shadows in the space they occupy. Only a few areas of shading indicate the cast of light upon hands and objects on the table. But the bodies of Vasnetsov’s card players cast dramatic dark silhouettes across the floors and walls. The shadow forms serve to further underscore the interactions of the men within the space they all share. The French group portraits of the early 1870s possess a stifling closeness and interiority which also seems to reflect the period of siege Fantin and Degas had just endured. But Vasnetsov’s room, despite its darkness and the profusion of decorative elements, has an openness and airy freedom about it. The artist even includes a view out into another room which recedes from the one currently occupied, and from there we have a view out of a large window to the outside. Despite the similarity of color palette, Vasnetsov’s open interior could not be more different from Degas’ closed-off room, the latter a claustrophobic space which seems to close in on the three men it can barely contain.

This effect of separateness can be extrapolated towards an examination of depictions of artists’ studios in the 1870s and 80s. Bazille’s “The Artist's Studio, Rue de
la Condamine” of 1870 (Figure 118) depicts the studio space the artist occupied until mid-April 1870, just a few short months before the outbreak of the war. Bazille worked on the painting over two months (December 1869 to January 1870) and it stands in contrast to the stifling interiority of Degas’ and Fantin’s works from this period.  But even while Bazille’s pseudo-group portrait has a greater lightness and sociability about it, there is still an ultimate sense of separateness and disparity among the figures. The central three figures are engaged in a discussion of the work of art before them, as are the two figures to the left, but the other man is separate from these interactions, absorbed in playing the piano in the far corner. Despite these interactions, the vast emptiness of the space in the foreground and the central presence of two uninhabited seats – the green armchair in the center of the room and the sofa facing the viewer in the rear – both serve as markers of emptiness and alienation, almost as indicators of the ultimate individuality of every artist as he works to create paintings in his atelier.

This stands in contrast to the nearest works we have depicting the studios of artists in Russia at the time. Ilya Repin produced a sketch of a gathering of artists in his studio in 1882 (Figure 119) which stands in stark contrast to Bazille’s highly mediated conception of the same theme in painted form. The artists in Repin’s drawing are represented as separate individuals as they each work on their sketches, but the group nonetheless still possesses a sense of amiability and unified togetherness. Alsdorf describes the opposite effect in the painting of the Parisian studio: “Bazille seems to

556 According to Alsdorf, Bazille first mentioned the painting in a letter to his father written in late December 1869. See Alsdorf, Fellow Men, note 87, p. 278.
557 There is some dispute over the identification of the men in Bazille’s painting. See Alsdorf, Fellow Men, note 91, p. 279.
558 On one hand it may be somewhat unfair to compare a drawing to a painting. Bazille worked on his picture of the studio for two months whereas Repin’s work is most certainly a quickly produced study. But they are revealing even despite their different relationships to time and medium.
deliberately refuse [a] sense of togetherness, creating self-sufficient subgroups that exist more or less independently. He crisply divides his subjects… Repin arranges the artists in his drawing so they form an interconnected chain – one that interestingly is linked also to the viewer in proximity to the bounds of the picture plane – we read the artists from near to far and left to right, creating a sense of intimate sociability between them and us and allowing us to view them as a symbolic whole.

While depictions of shared studio space are nearly as rare in Russian art of the nineteenth century as formal group portraits, one other form of sketch-making might be read as indicative of Russian notions of collectivity among artists as opposed to the French emphasis on individualism. Both Repin and some of his fellow Academy graduates composed painted sketches of figures which incorporate numerous figures in one compressed space. Vasily Maksimov painted one such work, a series of portrait studies of his friends which also includes a rendering of himself from 1864 (Figure 120). This unusual work possesses a kind of egalitarian unity too, one which is striking compared to the formal portraits of Fantin-Latour. It is difficult to tell here which of the figures is the artist himself, so interconnected is he with his group of friends. Several of the figures possess the typical gaze out at the viewer that is often a signal of self-portraiture. Further, the figures depicted possess a kind of emotional harmony which strengthens their unity and the uncanny quality of collectivity. Repin too painted a series of figure head sketches (Figure 121) which is startling both for what it reveals about the

559 Alsdorf, Fellow Men, 146. We might of course compare these works also to Courbet’s ultimate depiction of the artist’s studio space, his “The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory of a Seven Year Phase in my Artistic (and Moral) Life” of 1855. This work too demonstrates the kind of connected alienation or shared individualism I am positing for the other French paintings, but would be difficult to fairly access in connection with the later works because it is composed as an “allegory” and thus subject to strange disjunctions and manipulations that don’t characterize the other works in quite the same way.
artist’s working method and for the strange connectivity of the figures. At first glance, these men look as though they might all be listening to a lecture or someone reading aloud so carefully has Repin arranged them to share the space of the sketched picture plane.

What all of these images demonstrate is a core qualitative difference between artists’ experience of creative production in France versus Russia in the period of the 1860s-80s. Baudelaire wrote of this turn to the emphasis on the individual: “The present state of painting is the result of an anarchic freedom that glorifies the individual, however feeble he may be, to the detriment of associations…” And in these years what had already been a system which prized and rewarded the individual genius in France, became further entrenched by the very real isolation artists felt as a result of the war and the siege and period of the Commune which followed it. While bonds of sociability were important for artists in Paris in the 1860s, these circles of networking and exchange became increasingly tense and strained after the war. In Russia, on the other hand, collectivity among artists only increased after 1863. The Artel marked one period of interdependence and unity among artists in Petersburg and the formation of the Wanderers would mark a second. Artists in these groups in Russia depended on each other for more than social amiability, but were bonded together by financial necessity and in their mutual desires for freedom from the Academy and the Tsarist system of oppression.

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560 Repin and Kramskoy both seem to have worked on their portraits by first fully tackling the face and head, bringing this element to a high level of finish before even marking out in sketch the remainder of the body. Linda Nochlin was the first to flag the uniqueness of this method among the Russians when I showed her Kramskoy’s final painting – his portrait of the Doctor Karl Rauchfus (which he collapsed and died while painting).

Russian Artists in Paris – ‘the French disease seems to have infected their eyes’

The Franco-Prussian War and Paris Commune which followed it set the stage for my exploration of the most prominent period of artistic contact between French and Russian artists in the nineteenth century.\footnote{It is also interesting to think about the parallel that exists between the German siege of Paris in 1870-71 and the French invasion of Moscow in 1812 and the varying ways the citizens of each city dealt with foreign invasion, especially since these two events bracket my period of examination.} These events are important to keep in mind not only in terms of the discussion already underway in chapters two and three regarding the rise of disillusionment among the French as a result of failed revolutions and uprisings, but also for the fact that they would mark the artists of this generation deeply. The 1860s and 70s, essentially the years immediately preceding and following these political events, also saw an influx of Russian artists studying in Paris.\footnote{For discussions of Russian artists working in Paris, see Tatiana Mojenok, *Les peintres realistes russes en France (1860-1900)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2003) and Elena V. Nesterova, “Pensionery Peterburgskoi Akademii khudozhestv vo Frantsii,” *Isskustvo* 12 (1981), 47-51.} The art they saw there would have a lasting effect on not only the art produced by the Wanderers group, but Russia’s particular brand of Realism as it emerged out of the ideology of the 1850s and 60s as well.

Vasily Perov was the first among the artists who were both founding members of the Artel and the Wanderers to travel to Germany and France in 1862-64.\footnote{Rosalind Blakesley, “‘There is Something There…’: The Peredvizhniki and West European Art,” in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. *The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology*, 43.} In fact, Perov was in Paris when the fourteen students seceded from the Petersburg Academy, only joining the Artel upon his return to Russia. While in Europe, he focused on visiting studios and galleries, but also on observing everyday life in some of the poorest neighborhoods.\footnote{Apparently Perov spent his first three months abroad touring the studios of the Düsseldorf artists and galleries in Berlin, Dresden, and Paris. See Perov’s letter to the Academy of 14/2 May 1863 in A.A. Fedorov-Davidov et al. (eds.), *V. Perov: dokumenty, pis’ma I rasskazy, catalog proizvedenii, bibliografiya*} Perov reached France in the spring of 1863 and his letters home to the
Academy indicate that he found his new environment stimulating, writing that: “from an artistic point of view, Paris has much to offer; there are varied, entertaining scenes at every step.” Perov became frustrated, however, by his lack of knowledge of French customs and his inability to finish works in the foreign city. While working on “The Song-Sheet Seller in Paris” (Figure 122), he wrote of his difficulties: “I found it was completely impossible to paint the picture as, in knowing neither the people, nor their way of life and character […] I was unable to complete a single figure in the picture.”

He petitioned the Academy to return before the expiration of his three-year fellowship, but his time abroad left an indelible mark on his work thereafter. In the 1860s, Perov was the preeminent genre painter in Russia, leading the Artel members along with Kramskoy. At his funeral in 1882, he was hailed as being the first Russian artist to accurately depict everyday life. Perov’s engagement with European culture and Parisian artistic developments in particular should not be underestimated. From the documentary evidence which exists, it seems that whatever problems Perov had with France, it was not French art that bothered him, but the foreignness of the culture and its customs. At one point he seems even to have frustrated his Russian contemporaries in his favor for French art (a recurring motif among Russians writing home as we shall see).


Letter to the Academy, 15/27 August 1863: Ibid., 93, quoted in Ibid., 165. One must be careful in analyzing these letters, however, and remember the continuing omnipresence of the censor in Russia at this time. Artists like Perov were aware that their letters to the Academy were subject to scrutiny and thus they may have been careful about what they said about France and which French artists they praised and aligned themselves with, so as to not jeopardize their own chances for commissions upon return. This is discussed by Rosalind Blakesley as well, see “‘There is Something There…’,” in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. *The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology*, 36.

This was apparently remarked by Dmitry Grigorovich. See Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 176.

Perov seems to have made a small, but positive impression on French critics as well. Théophile Thoré enthused about Perov’s work at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1867. See Ibid., 44. For Russia’s participation at international exhibitions more generally, see David C. Fisher, “Exhibiting Russia at the World’s Fairs, 1851-1900,” doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 2003.
The landscape artist Lev Kamenev (1833-86) expressed his frustration with Perov and another Russian painter, Valery Yakobi (1834-1902), writing: “Perov and Yakobi are complete asses, as in fact are our entire Parisian fraternity. The French disease seems to have infected their eyes.”

What this “French disease” was and the fears it inspired are important for understanding the effects Western European art had on Russian artists in this time. Ivan Kramskoy forfeited his chance at an Academy scholarship to travel in 1863, focusing on the formation of the Artel instead of joining Perov in Paris, but he went to Germany and France once he had raised enough money in 1869. Very few works emerge from the years he was there, but Kramskoy seems to have been deeply impressed by his time in Paris, even if he did not have great admiration for the art he saw there. To a large extent, one might wonder how much artists like Kramskoy and Perov were impeded in their ability to appreciate Western art by their lack of language skills and deficiency in terms of cultural sophistication. At the same time, however, Russians had long been aware of and influenced by trends in the West. Lermontov recognized this fact and described the Russian’s particular ability to blend with other cultures:

I was involuntarily struck by the aptitude which the Russian displays for accommodating himself to the customs of the people in whose midst he happens to be

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571 Interestingly, a similar terminology was used by the artist Vasily Surikov (1848-1916) to describe what he believed was the pernicious influence of Western art on Russia’s youth. He cautioned Russian artists to arm themselves against “this contagion.” See Repin’s essay “In Defense of the New Academy of Arts,” Nedelia (October 1897) reprinted in N.V. Nordman, ed. Vospominaniiia, stat’i i pis’ma iz zagranitsy I.E. Repina (St. Petersburg: Skoropech. Evgeni Tile, 1901), 212-45. Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology, 142.

572 This problematic is also raised by Blakesley in “‘There is Something There…’,” in Ibid., 20.

573 This problematic is also raised by Blakesley in “‘There is Something There…’,” in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology, 23. See also Elizabeth Valkenier, “Opening up to Europe: the Peredvizhniki and the Miriskussniki Respond to the West,” in Rosalind Blakesley and Susan Reid, eds., Russian Art and the West: A Century of Dialogue in Painting, Architecture and the Decorative Arts (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).
living. I know not whether this mental quality is deserving of censure or commendation, but it proves the incredible pliancy of his mind…

But Kramskoy vacillates between a kind of adversity to the trends in France and also an admiration. Kramskoy was considered the philosopher of the Wanderers and the Artel before it, a kind of unofficial leader and mouthpiece for Russian art in the 1860s and 70s, and his writings on French art are an invaluable resource to scholars today. In a letter to Ilya Repin from 1873 he wrote of the merits of contemporary French painting, even calling Paris “the most lively of all artistic centers.”

He went on to describe the excitement he felt French art produced: “There is something there which we need to take note of in all sincerity – a certain trembling, a vagueness, something immaterial […] when you don’t think […] and, just for a moment, stop trying to be a specialist, you see and feel everything overflowing, and moving, and alive.”

Kramskoy ultimately concludes this letter by criticizing the French for what he perceives to be their ultimate inability to depict the face’s complex and variable emotional range. But this one letter alone shows the ambivalence Kramskoy seems to have felt about the West.

In one way, what seems to have posed the biggest problem for the artist was not the art itself, but his fear of that art’s strength of influence on Russian artists just as they were gaining a nascent independence. He wrote in the years after his return from Paris on the force of just that Western pull: “…everything is susceptible to the imposing artistic status of Paris. True, it paves the way for artists, it lends luster, luxury, and jubilation,

575 Ibid., 202.
let’s assume, except that there are much more important things facing mankind.”

These lines also highlight what seems to have been another concern for Kramskoy – that Russians were simply different from the French in a fundamental way. Kramskoy seems to have believed that there was simply no way to bridge the divide between the two cultures and their most basic outlooks, and that Russian artists only limited, or worse injured, themselves by trying to do so. He described the West as seeming to be “inside out” and underscored the basic difference between the two peoples: “Fortunately or not, we are not Frenchmen. We should never forget this. […] a thing that garners good reviews over there in Paris, abroad, arouses entirely different reactions in Russia.”

These mixed feelings about the French reach their height when Kramskoy was discussing some of the leading painters of the French avant-garde in the 1870s. On one hand, his letters about the “impressionalists” as he called them provide important evidence for which works he may have seen during his time in Paris and they demonstrate an awareness about the latest trends in French art, but they also underscore Kramskoy’s concerns about the inherent differences between Russia and the West. A letter he wrote to Stasov in 1876 deserves to be quoted at length:

I had no idea that these “impressionalists” [sic] were such a burning question here, I just assumed that it was one of those fashionable and eccentric escapades for which the French have such a gift, and of course that’s largely what it is, except that it’s become a burning issue thanks to the genius of France. After all, everyone here is a genius. Corot’s a genius, Courbet’s a genius, Manet too, in short there are geniuses everywhere. Forgive me if I express my humble and barbaric opinion, that not one of them is a genius […] the public is sated, capricious, and wants everything to be new. Whatever it is must be new. […] there’s a huge amount of poetry and talent in all these things, only, you know, for us it’s a bit too soon.

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578 Letter to Repin, May 16, 1875, Ibid., 300.
579 Letter to Stasov, July 21, 1876 in Ibid., 1:341-42.
Thus, it cannot be argued that Kramskoy was not aware of the major players in Paris in this moment, but he was firm in his resolve that what was “fashionable” and “new” and “genius” in France, was not for the Russians – at least not yet.

The other major Wanderers figure who also spent time in Paris in the 1870s is Ilya Repin, who studied there from 1873-76. Repin postponed his foreign scholarship, which had originally been awarded with the Gold Medal he received from the Academy in 1871, but he was able to spend three of the six years conferred with the Medal at home instead of abroad and only left for Paris in 1873. Repin is widely acknowledged as the preeminent practitioner of mature Russian Realism and he also happens to be the artist who was the most taken with what he saw while studying in Paris. Even before he travelled to Europe, Repin was excited at the possibilities there. He wrote Stasov just before embarking in 1872: “As soon as I can, I must get to Europe somewhere, Paris, Rome… it doesn’t matter where […] to Europe, to Europe, where we’re needed more than here…”

Once there, Repin, like Kramskoy before him, became quickly aware that French representations of the world had a qualitative difference from those made by Russian Realists. But Repin’s reaction was different; he began to enjoy the freedom afforded by

580 It is noteworthy to mention that Repin also spent eight days in England during this trip (in 1875). He would return again to London after visiting the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889. See Blakesley, “‘There is Something There…’,” in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology, 39.
581 Jackson, The Wanderers, 32. He spent the time before leaving for Paris on a study-trip to observe the lives of barge haulers on the Volga River. The time he spent sketching on the river and getting to know the men personally resulted in the now famous canvas Barge Haulers on the Volga (completed in 1873).
the Europeans’ lack of “bitterness” and “arrière pensée.” In an oft-cited letter to Kramskoy written in 1874 from Paris, Repin stated:

I have now completely forgotten how to reflect and pass judgment and I do not regret the loss of this faculty, which used to consume me; on the contrary, I would rather it never return. […] May God save Russian art from its corrosive analysis. When will it force its way out of this fog? It is a misfortune which terribly binds it to barren, technical accuracy and rational concepts in ideas, drawn from political economy. How far removed from poetry is such a situation! But this is a transitional period; a lively reaction is taking place among the young generation producing things full of life, force and harmony.

Statements like this one led Kramskoy to have grave concerns about the course his friend was on. When Repin began painting the French banlieues (Figure 123) and Parisian demimondaines (Figure 124), Kramskoy barraged him with exhortations not to forget his native Russia and the demands required of artists there. We might recall Kramskoy’s refrain that “we are not Frenchmen. We should never forget this.”

It is significant that Repin was in Paris just as the Impressionists were rising to the fore, he even visited their first exhibition in 1874. Of the works he saw there he wrote: “so far they are refused and not to be found at the Salon but only in other small exhibitions. But they have a positive future, and now the best things can definitely be associated with the realist school.” This is in stark contrast to Kramskoy’s conception of the “impressionalists” as simply “one of those fashionable and eccentric escapades for which the French have such a gift.” While in France, Repin also seems to have been more involved with writers and other artists than his Russian compatriots (Figure 125). He

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583 These qualities were described by another artists, Grigory Miasoedov (1834-1911), who was abroad in 1863-69. He noted how “our [social] genre differs from the foreign.” See G.G. Miasoedov, Pis’ma, dokumenty, vospominaniia (Moscow, 1972), 33-34. Quoted in Valkenier, “The Peredvizhniks and the Spirit of the 1860s,” 258.
met Emile Zola as a result of his friendship with Turgenev and may even have been aware of Zola’s writings in defense of Manet and the Impressionists.\textsuperscript{586}

He also travelled beyond the bounds of Paris, visiting Etretat and Veulles on the Normandy coast and experimenting with making “plein air” studies there.\textsuperscript{587} All of this was met with grave concern by Kramskoy and Stasov, who took it as a sign that Repin had lost his “convictions regarding the main conditions of art, its means and especially its national strain.”\textsuperscript{588} But Repin avidly disputed these charges and claimed that he was simply imitating the foreign style in order to grow personally and develop further as an artist.\textsuperscript{589} Despite his defense of French art and his greater emergence in the general artistic scene in Paris, Repin did make mistakes that showed his true outsider status. In his letters, he makes reference to the Impressionist group variously as the “emпрессионисты,”\textsuperscript{590} “Impressionists,”\textsuperscript{591} and “expressionists.”\textsuperscript{592} But the work he produces while there shows more than any other piece of documentary evidence, the effect French art and culture had on him in the 1870s.

**Flâneurs and Wanderers – Repin’s “A Parisian Café”**

While Repin was in Paris, he produced one major work, the canvas now known as “A Parisian Café” (Figure \textsuperscript{125}) which was shown in the official Parisian Salon under the title

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\textsuperscript{587} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{591} Letter to Kramskoy, 12 May 1875, *Repin: Pis’ma* 1:154, cited in Ibid., 402. The original Russian is: “импрессионисты”.

\textsuperscript{592} Letter to N.A. Aleksandrov, 16 March 1876, *Repin: Pis’ma* 1:175, cited in Ibid., 404. The original Russian is: “экспрессиониалисты”.
“Un café du boulevard” in April – May 1875. Repin had been refused permission to exhibit a work at the Salon by the Academy in Petersburg which was funding his trip, but the artist did so in violation of the order anyway.\(^{593}\) The painting represents the culmination of Repin’s experiments with the French Realist style, what he designated as painting “à la Manet,” and also his absorption of the observation of life on the streets of Paris, essentially the subject matter of flânerie. Repin was not the first Russian artist to experiment with being a spectator of modern life, roaming the streets in search of the subject matter that would form paintings dedicated to the representation of everyday life.

In the 1840s, Pavel Fedotov had wandered the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg searching for models or details for his canvases. He wrote of how: “very little of my work – about a tenth – takes place in the studio. My most important work is on the streets and in strange houses. I study life.”\(^{594}\) Fedotov’s “The Vasilievsky Island Embankment in Winter” (Figure 127) and his “Moscow Street Scene” (Figure 128) are two such examples of a kind of early flânerie on the part of the Russian artist. These works in particular, according to Rosalind Blakesley, prefigure later French Realist developments, such as the “snap-shot approach of Pisarro and Caillebotte, or the cut-off figures of Manet.”\(^{595}\) But Repin’s painting attempts to bridge the gap between French and Russian culture. He is studying not just real life on the streets, but a kind of real life which has a perpetually foreign aspect to it.

In order to do so, Repin made study of works in French galleries and in the Louvre. On two occasions in 1875 Repin went to see the work of Manet at the Durand-

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\(^{593}\) Repin further violated the dictates of the Academy by exhibiting four works at the Peredvizhnik exhibition of 1874. See David Jackson, “Western Art and Russian Ethics: Repin in Paris, 1873-76,” *Russian Review* 57, no. 3 (July 1998), 396.

\(^{594}\) Quoted in Gray, *Russian Genre Painting*, 137.

\(^{595}\) Ibid.
Ruel gallery, and these visits inspired him to attempt works in that artist’s style. Soon after the experience, he remarked to Stasov in a letter that: “I have done a portrait of Vera (à la Manet) in the space of two hours.” This portrait of the artist’s wife (Figure) shows little of Manet’s style of paint handling or use of color, but it is significant for what it shows about Repin’s attempts to co-opt what he perceives to be the French mode of fast-paced work.

In a larger sense, “A Parisian Café” demonstrates Repin’s desire to embed himself in the Parisian scene, to develop the kind of understanding of local customs, of “the people” and “their way of life” – those elements which Perov had found so elusive a decade before. Repin himself described his canvas to Tretyakov as “the main types of Paris in their most typical places,” and in so doing, he aligned himself with a value Belinsky had espoused for art nearly three decades before. In 1847, Belinsky had expressed a concern for the creation of types or symbolic characters that would be both specifically individual and of general or universal significance. He cited the importance of types for Realism: “[for] the representation of reality in all its fidelity […] the crux of the matter is types, the ideal being understood not as adornment (consequently a falsehood) but as the relations in which the author places the types he creates in

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598 Victor Terras ed., Handbook of Russian Literature (Yale University Press, 1985), 43. Interestingly, Belinsky cited Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” as an example of a perfect example of a type.
conformity with the idea which his work is intended to develop.”

Belinsky’s ideas on the central importance of types and Repin’s desire to produce a work showing “types” in their most “typical places” also aligns with an earlier idea about the goal of Realism from the French standpoint. In a letter of 1854, Gustave Flaubert (1821-80) had described the central thrust of the Realist endeavor as “the ironic acceptance of existence and its plastic and complete recasting through art.” It is exactly this blend of types and the “ironic acceptance of existence” which Repin’s work demonstrates. The acceptance of reality as it was, without recourse to idealization or beautification, without the need to falsify or glorify, had become the driving force behind works by French artists Repin was seeing in France. The important change made by Realism was, at least ostensibly, the acceptance of life as it was; the goal was to transcribe reality as objectively as possible. Seen in this light, Repin’s writing back to Russia that he felt that he had “completely forgotten how to reflect and pass judgment” aligns with what he was seeing and interpreting in the works of Manet and others as a strange kind of “acceptance of existence” – one at odds with the “corrosive analysis” Repin felt was the task of Russian Realist works.

“A Parisian Café,” as the example of Repin’s most fully realized attempt at the French mode of Realism, also possesses what Flaubert called the “ironic acceptance of existence.” In preparation for it, Repin made numerous intensive studies as he grappled with the recording of Parisian types and their locale (Figure 130) without the “fog” of the

usual reflection and “judgment.” Repin even used one of Manet’s models, perhaps believing it would heighten the Frenchness of the scene. The seated figure on the extreme right has been identified as Bellot, the professional model Manet was also using at this time for his “Le Bon Bock” (Figure 131). But in attempting to produce a work which would allow him to align himself with “the young generation producing things full of life, force and harmony,” Repin produced an odd pastiche of strange and disjointed figures. His tableau resembles a more dynamic version of one of the group portraits by Fantin-Latour, but with an even greater degree of alienation and uncanny estrangement.

The figures – in their connections to one another and in their overall relationship to the space they inhabit – fail to register in a way that is convincing or familiar. Rather, the viewer is endlessly forced to attempt a reading of the outdoor space, especially the electric light Repin represents reflectively across the back wall, but coherency is ultimately elusive. And related to the overall problem with the space is the problem Repin seems to have had with making a depiction that looks like it was made “en plein air.” The café scene is clearly meant to be an outdoor depiction, but the color and play of light on bodies and surfaces reads much more like an interior. The figures themselves also fail to cohere into spacial groups, even though Repin has arranged them in small clusters and pairings to encourage this visual reading. The figures seem weirdly isolated from one another in terms of their interactions.

On one hand, this might be Repin’s attempt to recreate the alienation and

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601 Jackson reports that at least 20 studies for the work are recorded. See Jackson, “Western Art and Russian Ethics,” 396.
602 This might also be read against the way Manet was formulating space by the 1870s. Whereas Repin organized the tableau such that the figures can generally be read in a fairly traditional way from left to right, Manet was making use of daring and radical croppings and much more random compositional arrangements.
absorption of Manet’s figures (Figure 132), but the perceptive absence of these individuals is handled differently by Repin compared to his French counterparts. Repin’s bored café-dwellers still register as oddly emotional – the man in the top-hat does not just look as though he has lost attention in the conversation with his top-hated companion, his face seems resigned and sad – especially when compared with the bizarre smile of the female figure immediately behind him. Likewise, the female figure at the table with Bellot doesn’t have quite the same emptiness or resignation as Manet or Degas’s women often do. Her face registers as slightly angry.

Part of what seems to be on view in Repin’s attempt at a Parisian scene of flânerie and leisure is a wider range of emotionality, a kind of varied affective repertoire, that is not characteristic of the French Realists whose works he would have been seeing in Paris in the 1870s. The face of the female figure in the blue dress near the center of the composition (Figure 133) even breaches standard European decorum by showing her teeth in such a large smile. But Repin seems neither concerned with these breaks from the French style for depicting urban everyday life, nor even aware of them. Repin’s transgressions in this regard may have been at the most basic level his attempt at the kind of “ironic acceptance of existence” that Flaubert had called for. But the result is not the kind of apathetic resignation or acknowledgement and acquiescence demonstrated by Manet and Degas, rather it is a kind of self-assertion and accidental travesty – a charade of French types.\(^{603}\) The poster at the center of the composition takes on new meaning in this context. The top advertisement is for a “Bal” and the bottom for the “Folies-

\(^{603}\) Jackson argues along similar lines: “Of contemporary “modern” painters Repin is most often linked with the name of Manet […]. But where Manet attempted to observe impassively, objectively, Repin had neither the inclination nor desire to put aside his subjective and emotional faculties.” See “Western Art and Russian Ethics,” 406.
Bergère” nightclub – together a kind of metaphorical referent to the scene of the café before us. Repin seems to be conflating the two, underscoring their connection and making a statement about the theatricality of French life – its vapidity and hollowness – all show, all demonstrative affect, with no substance underneath.

But Repin has attempted to insert himself within the French visual discourse here, even though both his Russianness (with all that accrues in terms of “barbaric” habits and customs) and his origin in the lower classes (recall that Repin was the son of a state peasant) should limit his ability to assimilate. Nonetheless, there are two areas in the painting where Repin seems to envision himself within the scene. The empty chair in the foreground on the far left side provides alternatively a space for the viewer to imaginatively enter and occupy the scene, but also a kind of doppelgänger for the original position of the painter as he sat working before the canvas. The chair being turned at an angle away from us as beholders of the image also underscores its ontological unavailability and further mimics the original chair of the painter as it sat for months facing into and towards the canvas – the same direction as the empty chair before the table does.

We might also imagine Repin’s metaphorical presence embedded within the painting on the opposite side – in the figure near his own signature (Figure 134). The gentleman who turns his head to take in the scene and stares in disbelief as his companion turns away mimics what it must have been like for Repin on the streets of Paris. The top-hated gentleman, with his slightly gaping mouth and pince-nez reflects the artist’s own sense of wonderment at the great foreign city. He said of the painting: “This picture
reflects my own situation. In Europe, with all its wonders, […] I am dazzled."604 This figure too, stands in stark contrast to his gentleman companion, whose yawn seems to indicate that he is a native to the city quite immune to its “wonders.”

Repin’s attempt at French Realism, with its marked acceptance of visual reality and recording of that which was immediately given to the eye elicited a heated reaction from Russia. The landscape painter Arkhip Kuindzhi (1841-1910) brought news home to Russia of Repin’s new picture, describing it as a mistake and a “scandal.”605 Greatly concerned at hearing this, Kramskoy wrote to Repin almost in a frenzy:

You did not talk to me about the subject of your painting, I only heard about it. Fine. But one thing I do not understand; how could you come to paint this? …I thought you had firmer convictions regarding the chief conditions of art, its means, and especially its national strain. […] I do not say that this is not a subject, what else would it be! Only it is not for us. We should have heard chansons from the cradle. …In a word we should need to be French.606

Repin replied that he did not understand what all the uproar was about, concluding further that: “on the question of language you are mistaken.”607

**Total Realism – ‘creativity that comes from the soul’**

What both the collective understanding of the artistic process and the experiences of Russian artists in France indicate is a fundamentally different kind of Realism in the East versus that practiced in the West when the movement had reached its maturity in the 1870s. The literary and philosophical ideologies which had grown around the Realist movements in both countries also served to produce these variations and entrench their

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607 Letter to Kramskoy, August 29, 1875 in Ibid., 2: 343-46.
differences. Put most simply, French Realism can be understood as the attempt to create objective and impartial representations of the real world, whereas Russian Realists allowed, in fact even sometimes encouraged, a level of subjectivity and tendentiousness to enter into their representations of reality. Russian Realism allows a space for the artist’s emotional judgment (in the words of Chernyshevsky) to enter into the image, that the French were concerned to evacuate out of their depictions. It is in this sense that I bring the idea of the works created in Russia by artists like Kramskoy and Repin as possessing a kind of “total realism” different from what we see produced by their French counterparts.

This term needs qualification. The idea of “total realism” was one raised in the period under discussion, but it was used as an insulting derogation rather than in any laudatory sense. Upon viewing Repin’s “Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan. 16 November, 1581” (Figure 135) in 1885, an advisor to Tsar Alexander III was disgusted and wrote of the painting as representative of the larger artistic trends: “the art of today is remarkable: without the slightest ideals, only a sense of naked realism, critical tendentiousness and denunciations. […] It is hard to understand what thought induced the artist to describe in such total realism these particular moments.”608 This work shall play a large role in my discussion of Repin’s paintings in the final section of this chapter, but the advisor Konstantin Pobedonostsev’s words about it are central to understanding what Russian Realism had become. Repin’s “naked” or “total” Realism, what Pobedonostsev

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608 Konstantin Pobedonostsev in a letter to Alexander III, February 15, 1885 in K.P. Pobedonostsev i ego korrespondentii (Moscow, 1923), 1: 498. Quoted in Jackson, The Wanderers, 107. The original Russian for “a sense of naked Realism” in Pobedonostsev’s text is: “с чувством голого реализма” and for “in such total realism” the original reads: “во всей реальности”. In the original Russian, “critical tendentiousness” is rendered “с тенденцией критики.”
saw in not just this painting, but in Repin’s larger oeuvre as a whole, was a kind of unremitting representation of reality at particular moments when the real would be most apparent.\textsuperscript{609}

This bare reality had as its counterpart or admixture “critical tendentiousness” and indeed these were the buzzwords for Realist art in Russia at the time. Kramskoy provides a useful definition of the way tendentiousness was being used in 1885:

I say that Russian art is tendentious, by which I mean the following attitude by the artist to reality. As both a citizen and a man, and not just an artist who belongs to a particular era, he certainly has something he loves and something he hates. […] Love and hate are not essentially logical conclusions, but feelings. The artist need only be sincere to be tendentious.\textsuperscript{610}

Tendentiousness thus builds on the ideas of Chernyshevsky and Belinsky and their idea that art is inherently infused with the natural judgments of the man who created it, a kind of incidental, but profoundly important admixture of feeling. But what Russian artists like Kramskoy and Repin had done in their works is not just accept, but foster the “feelings” they have as men, as citizens, and as artists, such that their Realist works have a sincerity that grows from their fostering of tendentiousness and allowing it to come through. In a letter to Repin soon after hearing about A Parisian Café, Kramskoy wrote to Paris: “You have made a complete recovery from the thoroughly demoralizing habit of analysis … and I envy you, Lord how I envy you […] but I will only say to the artist: for

\textsuperscript{609} My formulation of these ideas is informed by the work of Molly Brunson, in particular a talk she gave at Yale University on March 25, 2011 entitled “Painting History, Realistically”.

\textsuperscript{610} Letter to Aleksei Suvorin, February 26, 1885 in Kramskoi. Pis’ma, 2: 188-89. Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniks: An Anthology, 179-80. The Russian Kramkoy uses for the opening line: “Russian art is tendentious” reads in the original: “русское искусство тенденциозно”. In all of these quotes, tendentiousness is some variable of the adjective “тенденциозный” or the noun form “тенденциозность”.}
God’s sake, feel! […] Sing like a bird in the air! Only, for God’s sake, sing in your own voice! Surely that’s not such a bad theory?”

Thus in displaying their author’s tendentious point of view – his feelings, his judgments, his reality – Russian Realist paintings are “total” in a way their French counterparts are not. French Realist works in this same time prized the attempt to evacuate the image of any tendentious qualities it might accrue in the process of its inception and creation. French Realism is above all defined by the apparent withdrawal of the author from the work such that the art produced could claim to objectivity and a dispassionate style which marked it as separate from the Romanticism which had preceded it and a part of the burgeoning avant-garde. In their account of Realism, Rosen and Zerner describe the movement as centered on the absence of moral comment, allowing the “brute facts” to speak for themselves, and an overall “belief in the aesthetic indifference of subject matter.”

In direct opposition to this, Russian artists saw their task as Realists to be one of tendentiousness, feeling, and sympathy. They believed that neither the artist nor his subjects were or ever could be indifferent in the way of the French and this leads to the development not only of a varying ideology for Russian Realism, but works that look and affect the viewer in subtly different ways. And this difference was perceived at the time. Kramskoy remarked on the lack of emotionality in French art: “Where has genuine feeling gone? […] I see that the French are all happy, because no one has dared lift the curtain from reality. Why? We all know that that’s not the way we live…”

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611 Letter to Repin, October 29, 1874 in Kramskoi. Pis’ma, 1: 276. Translated in Ibid., 171.
612 Rosen and Zerner, Romanticism and Realism, 145-50.
known sculptor of the Realist school, Mark Antokolsky (1843-1902) also remarked on Russia’s distinctively emotive art:

I have great hopes for our sweet but cruel Russia. She has made a good beginning in her art and I profoundly believe that she will have something special and fresh of her own to contribute to international art. But I’ll go further: I believe she will have a revitalizing effect on others. I cherish her, not because she is a realist, an ethnographer, but because she tries to understand the human soul, the spirit of the people, its joys and sorrows, its joys and aspirations, everywhere she seeks creativity that comes from the soul, and how dear and great this is in art!614

We see in these lines an echo of Chaadaev’s prophecy in the inflammatory “First Philosophical Letter” from 1836, when he wrote of Russia that “Isolated in the world, we have given nothing to the world […] We belong to those who are not an integral part of humanity but exist only to teach the world some type of great lesson.”615 And Repin serves to further reverberate these sentiments. In reminiscing back over the first three decades of his career, Repin described how: “In the past fifty years art has been freed from its bonds and has moved swiftly forward towards perfection. It has no need of our pointers. It needs sympathy, understanding and study.”616 It was specifically sympathy which Dostoevsky also believed was the distinguishing mark of the Russian people and he wrote that this was the characteristic demonstrated in both their art and literature. He wrote in 1880 that: “Our people does truly contain within its soul this tendency to

universal sympathy and reconciliation” and that “this faculty is a completely Russian
faculty, a national faculty.”

Dostoevsky goes on to relate this particular faculty of “sympathy” to Russia’s
interactions with Western Europe, in another passage that deserves to be quoted at length:

…our aspiration after Europe, in spite of all its infatuations and extremes, was not
only right and necessary in its basis, but […] fully coincided with the aspirations of
the national spirit itself […]. Perhaps our poor country will at the end say the new
word to the world. […] I say only that the Russian soul, the genius of the Russian
people, is perhaps among all nations the most capable of upholding the ideal of a
universal union of mankind, […] beyond all doubt, the destiny of a Russian is pan-
European and universal. To become a true Russian, to become a Russian fully, […]
means only to become the brother of all men, to become, if you will, a universe man.
[…] In art at least, in artistic creation, he undeniably revealed this universality of the
aspiration of the Russian spirit, and therein is a great promise.

I quote these lines because they bring together so much of the writing done by both artists
and the Realist ideologues of the 1840s-60s. Dostoevsky’s idea that what Russia stands
to contribute to the West its sympathy and universality – traits which underlie both her
art-making and essentially all her interactions – this lies at the core of what I mean by
describing the Russian Realist movement in art as a kind of “total realism.” It also runs
parallel with my earlier discussion of the ways Russian artists related to one another in a
much more collective sense than the French, who consistently emphasized their
individualism.

Dostoevsky described his attempts: “With full realism to find the man in man…I
am called a psychologist: this is not true. I am only a realist in the higher sense, that is, I
portray all the depths of the human soul.” And this aligns with what Russian Realist

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617 Pages from the Journal of an Author, Fyodor Dostoevsky, trans. S. Koteliansky and J. Middleton Murry
(Boston, J. W. Luce & Co., 1916), 36.
618 Ibid., 36-68.
619 Quoted in Appendix I (Three Fragments from the 1929 Edition 'Problems of Dostoevsky's Art') in
Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 277.
artists claimed for their art. Repin would describe the struggle of trying to portray these depths of the soul while he was in France: “Generally speaking the French have a completely different principle in art […]. As for me, […] I’m facing such a struggle with my work, that is, in my art, to make it express clearly and faithfully the truth I want to express.” Repin produced an odd and stilted scene of flânerie while in Paris, but his return to Russia in 1876 would see him once again allow the spirit of Russian sympathy and tendentiousness to come to the fore.

**The Return of the Wound – ‘above everything else stands truth to life’**

“Full realism,” “naked realism,” “total realism,”—each of these monikers underscores what makes Russian Realism at a profound level a different endeavor from that practiced in France. The objective, quasi-scientific, and detached observation of life’s phenomena pursued by French Realists, was directly opposed to the desire to create an empathetic representation of the world, while at the same time avoiding any form of idealization. Russian Realists refused to sacrifice their subjectivity to achieve a kind of artificial reality, instead they forced viewers to confront their subjects emotively. Repin and Kramskoy created works grounded in what Chernyshevsky had called for when he asked that art reproduce man’s “inner life” and his “emotions” so as to “explain life.”

But this was by no means an easy or straightforward task. Repin described the difficulty of the Realist endeavor: “A picture is a highly complicated and very difficult thing. You can perceive it only through the concentration of all of your inner powers into

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one feeling, and only at such moments will you sense that above everything else stands truth to life." In this endeavor to create “truth to life,” portraiture held a special place for Russian Realists. The portrait presented the viewer with an unremittingly specific individual, but also a commentary on the general via the use of the particular. At its most basic level, every portrait is a representation of the individuality of the sitter in that the artist seeks to present an accurate likeness. But by definition a good portrait also seeks to give insight into the inner being of the sitter, and in this sense the portrait is both the encapsulation of one man and also a kind of designation for larger ideas about the nature of mankind.

The pressure was great for Wanderers who worked in portraiture because their task as “total realists” required that they also infuse the individuals they portrayed with larger social meanings. In trying to use portraiture to embody both the individual and his or her relevance in the broader sense of the problems facing Russia, it became not only of central importance who was portrayed but in what way their embodiment on the canvas could serve to illuminate more fundamental problems. Portraits in Russia thus became deeply concerned with finding ways to represent the tormented generation of thinkers as they sought answers to Russia’s “accursed problems.” Portraiture circulated around a series of signs for the troubled intellect and for introspection itself. And in this sense we can understand many of the portraits of the 1870s as relating to the images of wounded men from midcentury.

In chapter three I discussed images in France and Russia which demonstrated the rise of a new perceptive acuity more invested in the emotional elements of perceptive consciousness evinced in works depicting men in states of either injury or profound dishabille. This trend would continue into the 1870s and 80s and produce paintings which grapple with the translation of states of consciousness and the slippage between them which can ensue. Ilya Repin’s graphic study of the Russian landscape painter Arkhip Kuinji (Figure 136) displays much of the same ambiguity which characterized Courbet’s self-portrait as the wounded man and Carlous-Duran’s images of men sleeping and convalescing. We cannot determine whether the figure is asleep, awake but meditatively dozing, or dying because we cannot know how much Kuinji is holding himself up without the aid of more visual material than the artist gives.

But as the century progressed this trend became even more pronounced when both Repin and Kramskoy worked on portraits of prominent cultural figures while they were sick and nearing the end of their lives. These works serve as profound encapsulations of what is meant by “total realism;” they seek through sympathy and Russian tendentiousness, to provide insight into not just the men represented, but the torments and disillusions of their generation as well. Repin’s celebrated portrait of Modest Mussorgsky (1839-81) (Figure 137) was carried out over quickly in early March of 1881—only days before the composer’s death from complications associated with chronic alcoholism. Similarly, Kramskoy painted the writer Nikolai Nekrasov (1821-78) (Figure 138) as he was writing his last poems while dying of intestinal cancer. We have in them the ultimate woundless wounds – tremendous physical (and probably psychical)

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pain, but here only hinted at by the vacancy of their gazes, by their self-immersion.

Nekrasov looks as though he is being absorbed into the bed he is propped up on much the way Bazille had figured Monet in 1865, though Kramskoy depicts the poet as still-inspired and productive, even while he becomes a mummy before our very eyes. But all of this becomes complicated if we consider Repin’s portrait of the Mikhail Glinka (1804-57) (Figure 139) – the composer reclines in a state of musing as he works on the opera Ruslan and Lyudmila. This figure seems to occupy a space somewhere between the other two representations of men in states of debility, but in actuality Glinka is not sick or convalescing or wounded at all.

This slippage between states of health and consciousness culminates in what is perhaps the most ambiguous of these works. Kramskoy completed a graphic study of the writer Dostoevsky the day he died in 1881 (Figure 140). In it he deliberately figures the corpse as oddly upright, as opposed to the more typical prone format appropriate for the depiction of a dead body (Figure 141). Again we might, without title and upon first look, mistake the figure depicted here for a sleeping or daydreaming man. These works gives vivid force to what Vissarion Belinsky had written in the 1840s about the conflation of states of being for men of the intelligentsia. He posited that, “to think, to feel, to understand and to suffer are one and the same thing” and in so doing, underscored the notion that to be a thinker in this time meant suffering under the burden of inevitable truths.

In this sense this phenomenon of slippage between wounded-dying-convalescing-sleeping-musing-dead serves as the extreme end point of the tendency among Russian

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artists to infuse their subjects with tendentious judgment and emotional sympathy. But
the difficulty of this project and the growing sense of its perhaps ultimate impossibility
are evinced in the subject of a kind of sickness itself. Kramskoy described the Realist
project in just these terms in 1878:

Russian art has been born – that is beyond all doubt. Like any newborn, it required
and requires still a limited degree of care […]. The child was sickly, but was never
close to dying, at least no one thought so. It – the art – is now already a boy […] and
he is ill again, and in my view, seriously. […] But who will provide a bed for the sick
boy? …What must be done? What steps should Russian art take, what are the most
urgent tasks that we are historically facing next?"626

Antokolsky too described a similar growing sickness or disillusion among Russian artists:

In our Russian life I notice a degree of impatience and hastiness; everyone grabs
quickly at everything, and just as quickly loses interest. […] This is why we start
many things but finish few of them – almost none. As a result we feel dissatisfied,
impatient, irritated, even intolerant. And thanks to this we become more and more
gloomy, introverted, turned in on our own “I.”627

All of this has an affinity with what writers and literary critics were describing as
the crisis presented in the enduring figure of the “superfluous man.” Dobrolyubov
described how “even today there are people who seem to be copies of Onegin, Pechorin,
Rudin and the others […]. He knows that he has a great goal before him […] But how
does he spend his life? In beginning everything and finishing nothing, attending to
everything at once, […] but unable to devote himself to anything.”628 Thus Russian
artists depicting men in states of death and debility serve as signs of the perception that
theirs was a generation of men grown disenchanted. And Realism in its efforts to explain

626 Letter to Tretyakov, April 15, 1878 in S.N. Goldshetin et al., eds. Tovarishchestvo peredvizhnikh
Translated in Valkenier and Salmond, eds. The Peredvizhniki: An Anthology, 127.
627 Letter to Stasov, January 6, 1883 in M.M. Antokol’skii, 484, 487-88. Translated in Ibid., 162-63.
628 Dobrolyubov, “What is Oblomovism?” 350-51. PDF accessed September 2, 2013 at
https://www.amherst.edu/media/view/297815/
life, to incorporate the emotional, proved the vehicle for picturing even the pain of everyday life.

And on a larger level, the evocation of disillusionment in paintings of men in both Russia and France is demonstrative of their parallel experiences of modernity, despite the differences in the ideological underpinnings of their Realisms. In neither culture was the movement of Realism just about novel subject matter, or even about depicting the new way modernity made life look, but it was to a large degree about the new emotional life that all of these changes brought about for the men who were experiencing it at the time. Where the Russians broke with the French was in their emphasis on sympathy and judgment over commitment to objectivity. Both groups of Realists wanted truth, but what each believed constituted it was different.

The Antihero of Modern Life

All of these discussions of sickness and disillusionment came to an apex when Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881. Repin was in St. Petersburg for the opening of the Wanderers’ Ninth Traveling Exhibition on March 1, 1881, the day that a group of terrorists armed with homemade bombs attacked and killed the “Tsar Liberator” as he had come to be known after freeing the serfs in 1861.629 Repin was again in the city when the regicides were tried and executed. He described it as a dark period: “What a time of nightmare that was, pure horror…I remember the condemned with placards hung on their chests bearing the inscription ‘regicide.’”630 Russians were stunned by this murder of their Tsar-father. In the words of the American diplomat and historian Andrew

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Dickinson White: “The murder of Alexander II threw Russia back into the hands of a reaction worse than any ever before known, which has now lasted nearly a generation [...] Therein appears not only a deep sense of justice and humanity, but that melancholy, so truly Russian, which was deepest in him and in his uncle, the first Alexander...”

As a reaction to these events, Repin turned for a period away from contemporary subjects, but still continued to operate through the central tenets of emotional truth and tendentiousness that had characterized his Realism even while portraying a scene from Russia’s historical past in his “Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan. 16 November, 1581.” Repin wrote of this canvas: “My feelings were overwhelmed by the horrors of the present. This was the general mood of life then. Such pictures stood before our eyes but no one dared to paint them. It was natural to seek escape into the painful tragedy of history…” For this canvas, Repin used his friends as models – both the artist Vladimir Menk (1856-1920) and the writer Vsevolod Garshin (1855-88) posed for the figure of the murdered Tsarevich (Figure 142). Garshin was described as an ideal model for the murdered son both physically and philosophically; Repin highlighted above all his “meekness, dovelike purity,” citing them as aspects well-suited for the painting.

By the time Repin met Garshin in 1882 he was already a well-established writer. His short stories based on his experiences as a soldier in the Russo-Turkish Wars (1877-

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631 Andrew Dickinson White, Works of Andrew Dickinson White (Mobile reference, 2010).
633 Hilton incorrectly states that along with Garshin the artist Miasoedov was also a model. I have found no other evidence of this.
Garshin had considered it his moral duty to take an active share in the campaign and had enlisted as a private in the infantry regiment. But he was wounded in the leg and suffered thereafter from an increasingly unstable mind. He had apparently shown an abnormal nervousness since his youth, however, even having suffered a breakdown in 1872 which forced him to be placed under restraint when he was seventeen years old.

At the same time as he was using Garshin for the “Ivan the Terrible” canvas, Repin was also working on a portrait of the writer which is now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s collection (Figure 143). Repin believed Garshin was the incarnation of goodness, a kind of ideal man, and that his physiognomy expressed this sanctity of inner spirit. He wrote that his kindness seemed to be concentrated especially in Garshin’s pensive eyes, which were often misted by tears out of concern for some injustice he was contemplating. The Metropolitan Museum portrait encapsulates more than any other the Russian Realist dedication to creating works of art which not only possess a remarkable likeness, but also capture through sympathy and “inner feeling” larger truths about the generation of men who created them. It possesses the kind of “total realism” which had been the dream of Belinsky and Chernyshevsky. In it is Baudelaire’s idea of the “heroism of modern life” – Garshin is a prominent example of a fellow splenetic writer “celebrating some funeral.” But he is also more – he is the symbol of his

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635 Valkenier, “The Writer as Artist’s Model,” 210. Garshin also had a correspondence with Kramskoy. The writer had taken a keen interest in the meaning of a work depicting Christ which the artist had completed after his return from Paris.
638 Valkenier also points out that his depression seems to have been hereditary as two of his three brothers committed suicide.
639 Ibid., 212.
640 For Repin’s views on Garshin see his letter to Tretyakov, August 10, 1884 and to P.N. Asian, March 16, 1903 in I. A. Brodsky, ed. I. Repin. Izbrannye pis’ma (Moscow, 1969), I: 298 and II: 174-77.
generation and their disillusionment, he is yet another iteration of the pain of the “superfluous man.”

Garshin may also have been the model for yet one more work by Repin from the years following Alexander’s assassination. At the same time as the artist was working on the “Portrait of Garshin” and “Ivan the Terrible,” he was painting “They Did Not Expect Him” (Figure 144). Initial sketches for the returning revolutionary who is the protagonist in the work show a self-assured and confident hero. But over the four years he worked on the canvas, Repin gradually introduced signs of doubt and hesitation in the exile’s face. Tretyakov saw a similarity between Garshin’s physiognomy and the exile’s countenance and asked the artist to alter it after he purchased it. Repin obliged, but then went into the gallery in 1887 when Tretyakov was away and altered it back to be closer to the original. Tretyakov was furious, so Repin re-painted it yet again. That same year, Garshin committed suicide. He was being watched by friends who were concerned about his mental state, but succeeded in eluding them, throwing himself down a flight of stone steps outside of his apartment. He survived, but succumbed to what were grave injuries a few months later. He was thirty-three.

Garshin became for the artist in this moment, after the Tsar had been murdered, when Russia and her sons were in a state of shock, a new kind of antihero. Repin, as a Russian Realist, sought to create works which would elicit a reaction from viewers. He sought ways to make the particular and typical speak on a larger and more universal level – to embody his ideas so that they were true to life. His portrait of Garshin, his use of the

641 Valkenier, “The Writer as Artist’s Model,” 213. This is also Igor Grabar’s argument, see Repin (Moscow, 1963), 255-60.
643 Ibid.
writer’s face for his revolutionary hero, even his embodiment of the son in the historical
“Ivan the Terrible” – all emphasize a profound kind of truth and communication, what
the critic Saltykov-Shchedrin called the ability to “arose in us a sense of participation.”

Between these three heroes – a son killed by his father, a writer who committed suicide,
and an exiled revolutionary returning to a world where he is now superfluous – Repin
envisioned one man. And somewhere between and among all three of these are artists
themselves.

In France the Realists were flâneurs – seeking escape from the fast-paced
capitalism of modern life and the culture of spectacle that it produced. In Russia they
were wanderers – seeking to bring truth and new purpose to all classes of life. But both
groups and the men within them were fundamentally alienated beings, seeking escape
from their own disillusionment with modern life. In 1880, just before the Tsar was
assassinated, Dostoevsky described the search for truth as a kind of wandering that calls
to mind both French flâneurs and the Russian Peredvizhniki:

…the Russian wanderer can find his own peace only in the happiness of all men; […]
he has only a yearning after […] truth, which someone has somewhere lost, and he can
by no means find. […] Truth is as it were somewhere outside himself, perhaps in some
other European land […] he will never understand that the truth is first of all within
himself.

In these two countries and in these men – the flâneur, the wanderer, the revolutionary, the
son, the artist, the writer, and the superfluous man – we find the new antihero of modern
life as he searched for truth. Without the hero’s traditional valiant courage or intrepid

645 Saltykov-Shchedrin, “Nasha obshchestvennaia zhizn’,” (1863) in V.V. Vanslov, ed. Russkaia
progressivnaia khudozhhestvennaia kritika vtoroi poloviny XIX-nachala XX veka, (Moscow, 1977), 125.
Quoted in Carol Adlam, “Realist Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Russian Art Writing,” The Slavonic and
East European Review 83, no. 4 (Oct. 2005), 662
646 Pages from the Journal of an Author, Fyodor Dostoevsky, trans. S. Kotelyansky and J. Middleton Murry
(Boston, J. W. Luce & Co., 1916), 49-50.
idealism, the latest masculine models were instead marked by a new modern melancholy.

But in them was also real life.
Conclusion –

The history of a man's soul, even the pettiest soul, is hardly less interesting and useful than the history of a whole people…

– Mikhail Yurevich Lermontov, “A Hero of Our Time” (1839-41)\textsuperscript{647}

I know only too well that nothing ever comes to anything, and that our most certain pleasures remain those we dream about.

– Joris-Karl Huysmans, “Là-Bas” (1891)\textsuperscript{648}

Modern Man

After witnessing the events of the 1848 revolution, Alexander Herzen wrote: “Modern Man, that melancholy Pontifex Maximus, only builds a bridge—it will be for the unknown man of the future to pass over it.”\textsuperscript{649} This dissertation, as a study of Russian Realism in the period from approximately 1812-1881 sought to reveal the melancholy of modern man that Herzen describes – its visual forms, the words written to describe it, and the circumstances out of which it grew. The years of which my dissertation is inclusive designate on one side the invasion of Russia by a Western tyrant who was doomed to fail and on the other the murder of the man who had set the Russian people free, but who still could not escape his melancholy fate. The period under study can also be understood as a kind of bridge from past to future as Herzen wrote. The nineteenth century has served as the connection point and conduit for the modernity and post-modernity which has been our present. This time ushered in a period of remarkable development and achievement, one that to a large extent has been unprecedented in human history. And the modernity which both constituted and brought it about transformed the human condition, ushering in

\begin{footnotes}
\item Huysmans, \textit{Là-Bas: A Journey into the Self}, trans. Brendan King (Dedalus, 2001), 96.
\end{footnotes}
a period of previously unheard of levels of opportunity for man to turn his hopes into reality, but also one marred by apathy in the face of that very hope.

It has been my task to explore Realism as a means of understanding human life in two distinctive cultures at one particular historical moment. My objective was largely to investigate as much as possible the way life felt in the nineteenth century – how men in France and Russia made sense of their lives and what kind of purpose they sought to ascribe to their experiences. What I found was a great deal of sadness. The nineteenth century was a period of rapid and continual change, and in one sense, Realism can be understood as a movement in art seeking coherence and consistency in the face of its very impossibility. The project of Realist artists was an attempt to create a modicum of universal knowledge, one that would ground human experience in an understanding of their inextricable connection through perception itself. But as the agenda for Realism ultimately failed, or worse, became absorbed into ideological systems bent on the politicization and fragmentation of everyday life, the world only grew in resignation and melancholy.

At the most basic level my investigation of the superfluous man and his various manifestations has been an effort to reexamine assumptions about the past in order to better approach the future. Just as Herzen believed modern man would build a bridge for generations of unknown men to pass over, so too does the work of the historian carve a path for the future. My study has not sought to make an orderly chronological account of the changes art underwent in the nineteenth century, but rather to put in motion an interpretation of the development of modernity as vitally complicated and fluctuating. At
the same time, my account of modernism nevertheless possesses elements that demonstrate the interrelatedness of various peoples’ experiences of it as it unfolded.

**Toward a New Definition**

In the introduction to this dissertation I quoted the definition of Realism that opens Linda Nochlin’s book on the subject and explored the possibilities it might have for understanding the rise of Realism in Russia in the nineteenth century. In closing this work, I would like to provide my own definition of the term that incorporates Russia’s unique though parallel cultural experience. Realism denotes a historical movement in the figurative arts and in literature which existed in several major European and American cultural centers in the nineteenth century. Preceded by Romanticism, Realism was both a reaction to the movement which came before it and intimately related to its predecessor. As a mode of art-making, it dominated in slightly different periods in each of the cultures in which it had a substantive variation. It was the dominant movement from about 1840 until 1870-80 in France, and slightly later in Russia, achieving widespread dominance in Moscow and St. Petersburg from roughly 1863-81.

The major formulations of this movement in France, Russia, Germany, England and the United States each have their own distinctive qualities and emphases, but they are linked by Realist artists’ desire in each location to represent the real world through meticulous observation and contemplation of contemporary life. Perhaps most importantly, Realism unlike other movements in art history which possess the designatory suffix “-ism”, is not simply a stylistic category or a way of designating a trend in subject matter. Realism is in each of its permutations also closely connected
with central philosophical, social, and/or political issues directly related to the geographic location and time the artists lived and worked in. As such the various formulations of Realism in different locations might be better served by discussing Realisms in the plural, as a means of designating the variable quality of what is over-simplified if it is thought of only as the objective rendering of reality. What made Russian Realism so distinctive from especially the French version is that it never espoused a system for representing everyday life that was objective, unbiased, or in any way scientific. Instead, Russian Realists cultivated their tendentiousness, representing reality while still valuing subjectivity and empathic judgment.

**Future Developments**

There are several areas of development which would follow logically from the work I have undertaken in this dissertation. In an expanded book-length study I would develop the core subject of understanding the multivalent experiences of modernity by bringing German Realist art into my study. Examining the philosophical underpinnings of this theme from Kant, Hegel, Goethe and Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, Benjamin, and Simmel would enhance my inquiry by accounting for further parallel models of depicting contemporary life. German thought from the eighteenth century on was tremendously influential in Russia and France and it would be of central importance for a larger study. Examining depictions by Realist painters like Adolf Menzel in proxy with those already under discussion such as Courbet and Repin, would further expand scholarly conceptions of global modernisms as well as our understanding of Realism in different cultures. The complex stew of aesthetic change, political upheaval, and abandonment of rural life
would be further illuminated by bringing in the German case and studying its parallels and variances through the art of the time.

In addition, I would pursue themes of religion which ultimately fell outside the bounds of the dissertation, but would be important for a larger study. Throughout the period under discussion, images of Christ played a central role in Russian art and in the development of individual artists’ practices. In a larger sense as well, discourses on religion from a philosophical and social point of view run parallel to the rise of disillusionment which I studied especially in chapters three and five. In developing the dissertation beyond the scope under which it is currently presented, I would investigate paintings in both France and Russia which demonstrate a breakdown in religious belief and the ideals of Christianity. Realist depictions of religious subjects, especially paintings of Christ, underscore in a different but profound way the melancholy of modern life, one that also highlights a further parallel between Russian and French art in this period.

**Realism and Truth**

In the end, can there be such a thing as truth in representation? And would we recognize it if we saw it? In 1849, a Russian art critic said that in Fedotov’s works, “idealization was replaced by the representation of real phenomena in their entire fullness and truth.”  

650 It was said of Courbet around that same time that he “loved truth too much” and that this adoration was evident in his paintings.  

651 Artists too have spoken of their
desire to find a kind of truth for their works – Repin sought to embody his ideas “in truth”⁶⁵² and believed that “above everything else stands truth to life.”⁶⁵³ Proudhon said it perhaps with the most force when he wrote that art simply cannot exist apart from truth and justice.⁶⁵⁴

More than a question of what art is or what art can do, discussing ideas about truth and the real allows us to ask deep questions about the relationship between art and experience, and about the connections between viewers and paintings. My intention in examining Realism as the movement in art most concerned with truth in representation has been to highlight the problems that these questions about honesty and validity raise. Finding meaning and purpose in one’s life can lead to a kind of melancholic despair if it ends in the conclusion that there is no truth, or that nothing can be meaningfully represented as such. Ascribing truth to reality was important to French and Russian artists alike in the nineteenth century and it is still important in the post-modern world today. In examining the melancholy of the superfluous man in that time, I sought the life held captive in pictures and the truth that can be drawn from images and texts as fragments of humanity. In searching back, I crossed the bridge and sought the truth that lies in history – in wounds, at funerals, in graveyards – and in paintings of the people who witnessed them.

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APPENDIX: IMAGES


Bottom left: Edouard Manet, *A Masked Ball at the Opera* (detail), 1873, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

An 1817 Map of Moscow shows the fire damage from 1812 in dark shade. Printed for the public in the 1831 edition of Moscow or the Historical Guide to the Famous Capital of the Russian State.

Illarion Pryanishnikov, *In 1812*, 1874, oil on canvas.


Orest Kiprensky, *Portrait of a Man*, undated (1810-20s).


Gustave Courbet, *The Desperate Man* (Self-Portrait), 1843-1845.

Caravaggio, *Boy with a Basket of Fruit*, 1593, oil on canvas, Galleria Borghese, Rome.


Orest Kiprensky *Neapolitan Fisherboys*, 1829.


Michel van Loo, *Portrait of Denis Diderot*, 1767.


Left: Gustave Courbet, *The Artist at his Easel*, 1848.


Kapiton Zelentsov, *Interior*, 1820s, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Kapiton Zelentsov, *Interior: Reception Room with Columns on the Mezzanine*, 1820s-30s, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Fedor Slavyansky, *In the Rooms of A. Semenov in Tverskoy*, end of the 1830s-40s, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Unidentified Artist, *Interior with Smoking Figure*, 1820-30s, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Edgar Degas, *The Interior*, 1868, oil on canvas.

Pavel Fedotov, Study for *Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich Visiting the Camp of the Finland Regiment of Imperial Guards on July 8, 1837*, 1837.

Left: Pavel Fedotov, *Young Man with a Sandwich*, 1849.


Right: Pavel Fedotov, *Artist, Having Put Hope in His Talent, Married Without a Dowry*, 1844.

Pavel Fedotov, *A Newly Decorated Knight: The Morning After The Official Has Received His First Decoration*, 1846, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Pavel Fedotov, Studies, undated.

Pavel Fedotov, *Fedotov and his Comrades in the Life-Guards Regiment of Finland*, 1840.


Right: Raphael, *School of Athens* (detail), 1509, fresco.


Left: Daumier, *Dejeuner frugal*, 1839.

Pavel Fedotov, Studies for *Untimely Guest (Aristocrat's Breakfast)*, 1849-50.

Pavel Fedotov, *Encore! Once More Encore!* 1850, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Pavel Fedotov, Study for *Encore! Once More Encore!* 1850.

Pavel Fedotov, *Officer and his Orderly*, 1850-51, oil on canvas, Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.
Courbet, *After Dinner at Ornans*, 1849, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille.

Pavel Fedotov, Studies for *The Gamblers*, 1852.


Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait (Man with a Pipe)*, 1848-49.
Left: Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait (The Desperate Man)*, 1845.


Courbet, *Portrait of the Artist called The Wounded Man* (detail), 1844-54, oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.


Frédéric Bazille, *The Improvised Field Hospital, Monet Wounded*, 1865, oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

Bazille, *The Improvised Field Hospital, Monet Wounded* (detail), 1865.
Bazille, *The Improvised Field Hospital, Monet Wounded* (detail), 1865.

Bazille, *The Improvised Field Hospital, Monet Wounded* (detail), 1865.


Ribot, *St. Vincent*, undated

Left: Ribot, *Cimabue Teaching Giotto to Draw*, undated.

Right: Ribot, *The Cook Accountant*, undated, oil on Canvas.


Jacques-Louis David, *The Lictors bringing Brutus the bodies of his sons* (detail), 1789.

Left: Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830.

Right: Jean-Louis Ernest Meissonier, *Memory of Civil War, or Barricade in the Rue de la Mortellerie, June 1848*, 1848, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.


Jacques-Raymond Brascassat’s *The Head of Fieschi at Bicêtre, February 2, 1836*, oil, Musée Carnavalet, Paris.

Jacques-Raymond Brascassat’s *The Head of Fieschi at Bicêtre, February 2, 1836* (detail), oil, Musée Carnavalet, Paris.
Courbet, *Portrait of the Artist called The Wounded Man* (detail), 1844-54, oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay, Paris.

Fedor Slavyansky, *In the Rooms of A. Semenov in Tverskoy*, end of the 1830s-40s, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Left: Courbet, *Portrait of the Artist called The Wounded Man*, 1844-54.


Ilya Repin, *Ivan the Terrible and his Son*, 1885, oil on canvas, State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Unidentified Artist, *Interior with Smoking Figure*, 1820-30s, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.


Right: Frédéric Bazille, *The Improvised Field Hospital, Monet Wounded*, 1865.
Manet, *Dead Torreador*, 1864.


Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Baudelaire*, 1848.


Courbet, *Funeral at Ornans*, 1849, preparatory drawing, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Besançon.
Saint Petersburg Artel of Artists, 1863-64, photograph.


Fedor Chumakov, *Self-Portrait*, 1850s, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.


Ivan Kramskoy, *Self-Portrait*, 1850s, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Ivan Kramskoy, *Kramskoy Painting a Portrait of His Daughter*, 1884, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Valentin Serov, Cartoon “Repin and Peredvizhinki,” 1900, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.


The Peredvizhniki in 1885, photograph.

The Wanderers in 1894, photograph in an exhibit dedicated to the history of the Association at the Tretyakov Gallery (Summer 2012).
Left to right: Courbet, *Courbet in his Cell at Sainte-Pelagie*, 1871, Louvre; Courbet, *Self-Portrait at Sainte-Pelagie*, 1872, Musée Courbet, Ornans.

Henri Fantin-Latour, *The Corner of the Table*, 1872, oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay.

Pavel Fedotov, *Fedotov and his Comrades in the Life-Guards Regiment of Finland*, 1840.

Frédéric Bazille, *The Artist's Studio, Rue de la Condamine*, 1870, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay.


Repin and his circle of friends in Paris, 1870s, photograph.

Pavel Fedotov, *The Vasilievsky Island Embankment in Winter*, 1840s, Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

Pavel Fedotov, *Moscow Street Scene* (detail), 1837, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Ilya Repin, *A French Soldier (Study for A Parisian Café)*, 1873.
Left to right: Repin, *Man in a Hat*, 1875; Repin, *Woman Playing with an Umbrella*, 1874; Repin, *Gentleman Standing and Jean Leon* (all studies for *A Parisian Café*).


Ilya Repin, *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan*. 16 November, 1581, 1885, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.


Ivan Kramskoy, *Fyodor Dostoyevsky on his Bier*, 1881

Ilya Repin, *The Historian Nikolai Kostomarov on his Bier*, 1885.
Top left: Ilya Repin, *Ivan the Terrible and His Son Ivan. 16 November, 1581*, 1885, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Top right: Repin, *Portrait of V. M. Garshin (Study for Ivan the Terrible)*, 1883.

Bottom left: Repin. *Portrait of Garshin (Study for Ivan the Terrible)*, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Bottom right: Repin, *Portrait of Vladimir Menk (Study for Ivan the Terrible)*, 1884, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

Ilya Repin, *They Did Not Expect Him*, 1884-88, oil on canvas, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.