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NARCISSISTIC ELEMENTS IN LERMONTOV'S WORK

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg 1985

To Oscar without whom this work would not have been written.

ABSTRACT

The present study addresses itself to three related tasks: Firstly, it sets out to introduce and critically review psychoanalysis as a method of literary criticism. Secondly, it argues for a new interpretation of Lermontov's creative work in the light of psychoanalytic theory stressing narcissistic elements present in his work; and finally it attempts to connect relevant biographical data with the symbolized material contained in Lermontov's work.

The thesis first offers a comprehensive survey of existing critical approaches to and interpretations of Lermontov's work. After defining the psychoanalytic method, it proceeds to an application of this method to major Lermontov texts. These include the Romantic poems "Mtsyri" and "The Demon", the drama "Masquerade" and the novel A Hero of Our Time. The psychoanalytic analysis of these major Lermontov texts reveals the essentially narcissistic nature of the Lermontovian protagonist. Text after text contains the pattern of the so-called narcissistic cycle. Whilst remaining essentially similar, the dynamics of the narcissistic theme

emerge in the protagonist's growing awareness of and insight into his narcissistic condition.

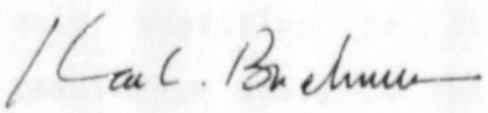
The thesis furthermore explores the links between the writer's biography and his oeuvre. Taking a cautious stance which does not claim any direct linkage, the presentation of the writer's biography emphasizes elements conducive to a narcissistic condition.

The psychoanalytic method is rarely employed by Russian critics. Western critics of Russian literature have not applied the analytic method to Lermontov. The novel perspective on Lermontov offered by the analytic method has yielded new insights into the writer's work. It reveals the basic unity of this work, previously perceived as fragmented and disconnected. It also revises the view that Lermontov's work is repetitive and derivative, demonstrating that the repetitiveness is the appropriate expression of the narcissistic theme. Above all it offers a new vision of the Lermontovian protagonist previously perceived as a frustrated rebel who lacks the opportunity to employ his energies and talents in an autocratic society, or as a metaphysical rebel against divine

authority. The analytic approach reveals a deeply divided and tormented personality, presumably largely autobiographic. It is the narcissistic syndrome of splitting, idealization and self-denigration which yields a remarkable consistency to the motivation of the Lermontovian protagonist's actions and existential attitudes. This finding fully validates the psychoanalytic approach to Lermontov's work, so often rejected by literary critics.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.



Ilan Leon Buchman

20th day of December, 1985.

PREFACE

My long-standing interest in and professional experience of psychoanalysis and my interest in Russian literature combined together yielded the idea to approach the "mysterious" protagonist of Lermontov's work psychoanalytically and to seek in psychoanalysis the key to his personality. In choosing the psychoanalytic approach I was also motivated by the fact that it was a singularly neglected one in Lermontov studies. This is the more suprising as it is the one that lends remarkable unity to the writer's entire oeuvre. To demonstrate this, all Lermontov's major texts are considered in the present thesis.

I am grateful to my supervisor Professor Irene Masing-Delic for her sympathetic attitude to my analytic approach as well as for her guidance and counselling during my research. Particularly I feel indebted to her for helping me to maintain the proper balance between the psychoanalytic and literary approach.

I also wish to acknowledge consultation with my colleagues Dr. M. Saffer, consultant for the Jewish Family and Community Council, Etta-Lana Goldman, a case supervisor of the Council and Ms. Sally N. Suttner, a social worker in private practice. They offered valuable criticism. My special thanks go to Mrs Sue Fullarton for her valuable assistance in typing this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Lermontov is recognized as one of the major poets and prose writers of Russian nineteenth century literature. Yet, despite his extraordinary popularity, he appears to be one of the least understood of Russian writers. Even today, 150 years since the publication of his first collection of poems literary critics acknowledge that there is much in Lermontov's work that is still unclear, mysterious and awaiting its interpreters.

"До настоящего времени осталось много неясного в истолковании главных произведений Лермонтова... И симптоматично не то,что еще далеко не до конца разгаданная сущность "лермонтовского элемента" продолжает питать споры,возникшие при жизни поэта,... особенно симптоматичен характер споров,в которых сталкиваются между собой противоположные,взаимоисключающие крайние точки зрения." /1/

Virtually every new publication devoted to Lermontov refers to the mysterious nature of his work. In the introduction to the Lermontovskaya Entsiklopediya[2], the first personal encyclopedia devoted to any

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1) Prutskov, N. (red.) Istoriya russkoy literatury v chetyrekh tomakh, L., Izd-vo Nauka, 1981 T.2, 410-411.

2) Manuylov, V. (red.) Lermontovskaya Entsiklopediya, M., Izd-vo Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1981.

major Russian writer, the authors state that in publishing the book they aimed at bringing the reader closer to the writer's esoteric world. Elsewhere they refer to two of Lermontov's poems "The Demon" and "The Novice" as truly puzzling and contradictory poetic works. The well known Lermontov critic E. Gershteyn [3] similarly sees Lermontov's novel A Hero of Our Time as the "most mysterious work of Russian classical literature".

" Роман Лермонтова самое загадочное произведение русской классической литературы.До сих пор нет установившегося мнения об этой маленькой книге - объемом всего в семь печатных листов." /3/

Interesting in this context, if somewhat excessive is A. Pozov's view of Lermontov, his work and life as one of the greatest riddles of mankind and world history.

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3) Gershteyn, E. "Geroy nashego vremeni" M. Yu. Lermontova. M., Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1976, 5.

" Лермонтов,его личность,жизнь,творчество и судьба - одна из величайших загадок человечества,всемирной истории времен и культур." /4/

It is in the light of the acknowledged mysteriousness of Lermontov's work that this study introduces a psychoanalytic approach, a critical method never applied to his work before.

Despite its position as one of the major strands in contemporary Western literary criticism, psychoanalysis is drastically underrepresented in modern Russian critical practice. It is a matter of record that, but for a few psychoanalytic studies, the most notable of which are I. Ermakov's essays on the life and writings of Gogol and Pushkin published in the early 1920s [5], depth psychology was, and still is, firmly discouraged in the Soviet Union, where the tendency is to slight psychological

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4) Pozov, A. Metafizika Lermontova, Madrid, 1975, 9.

5) The two works in question are :
Ermakov, I. Ocherki po analizu tvorchestva N.V. Gogolya, M., 1924.

Ermakov, I. Etyudy po psikhologii A.S. Pushkina,, Gos. izd. M., 1923.

dynamics for the sake of social issues.[6] This tendency has a long tradition in Russian intellectual life and cannot be explained by state prohibition alone. The political conditions that prevailed in nineteenth century Russia generated, among the intelligentsia, a keen sense of social urgency and guilt. Consequentl the view of literature as an expression of social life or as a 'vehicle for social change' enjoyed a distinct advantage over the detached psychological inquiry and systematic concern with the writer's psyche.

Contemporary Soviet literary criticism discards psychoanalytic inquiry for its irrelevance to the class struggle and for its deterministic view of man; psychoanalysis sees man as driven by aggressive and sexual drives and often as unaware of the forces determining his behaviour, and is, as such, unacceptable to the Soviet view of man. Also this view is deterministic but sees the determining factor in socio-economic forces. Subordinated to practical and political demands, Soviet literary

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6) A recent psychoanalytic study on Dostoyevsky by B. Bursov published in 1974 elicited a negative response from Soviets critics, further condemning psychoanalysis as a tool of literary criticism.
Bursov, B. Lichnost' Dostoevskogo, M.- L., Sov. pisatel', 1974.

criticism aims at explaining classical literary works as products of particular historical conditions and views the writer as a tool reflecting that history in his fiction. For this reason many Soviet critics interpret not only Lermontov's hero Pechorin, but his creator as well, in terms of social factors. In their opinion, Pechorin's Byronism and Lermontov's pessimistic view of man, can be explained through the analysis of political and historical conditions under Nicholas I, when "there could be no social struggle, no political activity and even the expression of social or political ideas had to be extremely cautious." [7] These critics view Lermontov's pessimistic artistic world as an aesthetic transformation of an ideological pessimism rife in his period, and his hero Pechorin, like Chatsky and Onegin, as one of the "superfluous men" presented by many great Russian writers of the nineteeth century.

This historico-social approach is clearly one sided. Without claiming that the psychoanalytic approach gives all the answers, it clearly offers a useful complement to standard Russian and Soviet interpretations and for that matter Western ones.

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7) Andrew J., Witers & Society during the rise of Russian Realism, London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1980, p. 69.

The latter are too often influenced by traditional Russian views.

The present study addresses itself to three related tasks :

First, it sets out to introduce and critically review psychoanalysis as a method of literary criticism. Secondly, it argues for a new interpretation of Lermontov's creative work in the light of psychoanalytic theory stressing narcissistic elements present in his [illegible] and finally it attempts to connect relevant [illegible]graphical data with the symbolized material contained in Lermontov's work.

Part One (chapters 1.1 - 1.4) of my thesis deals with a survey of critical approaches to Lermontov. The object of this survey is to examine the various, and often contradictory views expressed by four major schools of literary criticism, namely:

(a) Social Criticism (V. Belinsky);

(b) Existentialist Criticism (D. Merezhkovsky, V. Solovyov, L. Shestov);

(c) Formalist Criticism (B. Eykhenbaum);

(d) Marxist - Leninist Criticism.

Part Two of the thesis (chapters 2.1 - 2.3.4) deals with my psychoanalytic approach, which is to interpret Lermontov's works in the light of psychoanalytic theory, stressing specifically the so-called narcissistic syndrome. This part also analyzes those major prose and poetic works by Lermontov which, in my view, express some of the central issues of the narcissistic problem. Here I place these texts within a Freudian concept of narcissism, and point to the psychological mechanisms within which Lermontov's heroes operate. In this part reference will be made to psychoanalytic clinical literature and in particular to works by S. Freud, M. Klein, H. Kohut, O. Kernberg and M. Mahler. It will also examine works dealing with psychoanalytic literary criticism reviewing practices on which the method is based.

Finally, no psychoanalytic inquiry can ignore the biographical influences. The themes and motifs that pervade Lermontov's works must according to this approach be linked to the psychic conflicts and realities experienced by the author himself. Therefore the third part of the thesis contains an examination of the interrelationship between the biographical influences and the symbolized material apparent in Lermontov's works.

PART I

1. SURVEY OF CRITICAL APPROACHES TO LERMONTOV'S WORK

1.1. Social Criticism

In reviewing the main critical approaches to Lermontov, the Russian critic V. Belinsky (1811-1848) affords the most convenient starting point, since the tradition of social literary criticism, of which Belinsky is the major proponent exerted an important influence on the critical appreciation of Lermontov's work. Furthermore, Belinsky was the first critic to devote serious attention to Lermontov, placing the poet among the leaders of contemporary Russian literature.

In his two articles on Lermontov, one on the subject of the novel A Hero of Our Time (1837-1840), and the other on Lermontov's poetry, Belinsky stresses the importance of these works in the development of Russian literature and emphasises the poet's awareness of Russian social realities.

He applies his social theories mainly to Lermontov's novel A Hero of Our Time, as it is by this time that these had crystallized.

He received the novel in most positive and enthusiastic terms praising the author for his "penetrating characterization of Pechorin" and "the marvelous unity of feeling" throughout the novel. Belinsky gives this characterization of Lermontov's hero:

"As for the hero of the novel he appears here as a man of powerful will, courageous, unflinching before any danger, thrusting himself into storms and alarms, in order to occupy himself with something and to fill the bottomless void of his spirit, even though with aimless activity."[1]

The critic thus perceives Pechorin as a man who has not succeeded in coming to terms with an unacceptable contemporary reality, and who therefore is compelled to live in a world of illusory appearances.

Interestingly enough he perceives a split in Pechorin's character :

"Pechorin is a man who is divided into two men, one of whom lives while the other coldly observes and coldly analyzes into nothingness every spontaneous movement of his heart and mind."[2]

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1) Belinsky, V. Selected Philosophical Works, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, p. 312

2) op. cit., 315

Viewing the hero as a spiritually divided man of reflection the critic claims, that this stage of reflection is a painful but nevertheless necessary stage between "spontaneity" and "rational consciousness" dictated by the age. He sees Pechorin as the representative of "his times".

"Our time", Belinsky writes "is par excellence an age of reflection and it is in this respect that Pechorin is the true hero of our time."[3]

It is interesting to note that, although Belinsky throughout his article points to the divided nature of Pechorin, he seldom attributes it to psychological factors. Having recognized in Pechorin the tormented hero of his time, he does not deal with the psychological contradictions in Pechorin, but proceeds to establish the direct links between social reality and the disharmonious and unpredictable character of the hero. In this context it is also interesting to note that Belinsky criticises Lermontov for failing to maintain proper objectivity in presenting Pechorin, who emerges as too much of a subjective projection of the author himself.

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3) op.cit.,317

"In the matter of form, the portrayal of Pechorin is not completely artistic. The cause of this however is not in the lack of talent in the author but in the fact that the character whom he has depicted is too close to himself that he was unable to separate himself from it and objectify it."[4]

Clearly the critic felt that subjective psychological factors were stressed at the expense of social ones. He maintains that an artist must "resolutely attempt to break out of his own subjective world and thereby perceive the wonders of the objective world."[5]

In concluding his article, Belinsky, faithful to his vision of ultimate progress, feels obliged to pronounce a final word of hope for Pechorin, stating that the latter might some day resolve his quarrel with life :

"Perhaps Lermontov will require him to recognize the rationality and beautitude of life ... or perhaps he

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4) op.cit.,316.

5) Quoted from Bowman,H. Vissarion Belinski 1811-1848, New York: Russell & Russell,1954,p.125.

will permit him to partake of the joys of living by triumphing over the evil genius of his life."[6]

Belinsky's second article, the one on Lermontov's poetry, was written at a time when the critic was undergoing an ideological crisis and clearly reveals an approval of the rebellious spirit of Lermontov's lyrics. He accepts the poet's spirit of protest, praising even his most negative lyrics such as "Meditation" and "It is boring and sad" as truthful expressions of the age.

"These verses are written in blood. They come from the depths of an outraged spirit. This is the wail, the groan of a man for whom the absence of inner life is an evil a thousand times more fearful than physical death!"[7]

As in the analysis of Pechorin, so here, Belinsky bypasses any acknowledgement of psychological complexities in the poet "for whom the absence of

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6) H. Bowman correctly observes that Belinsky's conclusion of the articles "marks the first eminent example of that critical method which was later to be called "utilitarian" : the method whereby a work of art is used as a set of materials for making judgments about actuality."
(Bowman, Herbert E. A Study in the Origins of Social Criticism in Russia, Russel & Russel, New York 1954 p. 126).

7) Belinsky, V.G. : Selected Philosphical Works, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1948, p.328

inner life is an evil a thousand times more fearful than physical death" and proceeds with his discussion in terms of social factors.

Lermontov's poetry in Belinsky's view shows an overriding concern with social questions and the problems of contemporary society. In this respect his poetry even though, according to Belinsky, artistically inferior to Pushkin's, is more typical of his generation, as in its ideological content it has a much more direct relationship with the contemporary world.

Belinsky's concluding declaration of esteem for Lermontov is interesting in several respects. Singing Lermontov's praises he abandons all criteria of aesthetic criticism and approaches the lyrics in terms of extra-literary evaluation. The problem of Lermontov's "artistic inferiority", to use Belinsky's own words, appears now only as of minor importance and the ideological bias as well as the overriding interest in the problems of contemporary society assume a predominant role.

Although Belinsky did not deal with Lermontov's work during his last, radical period,[8] his immediate

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8) The critic planned to publish a comprehensive study of Lermontov but this never eventuated.

successors, the "revolutionary democrats" of the 1860s, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov did, evaluating the poet's works in the light of radical thought. Analyzing the pre-revolutionary critical literature on Lermontov, Y. Lavrin notes that both Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov saw the main task of literary criticism in the classification of characters into social types. Consequently, they often disregarded the textual evidence present in the work itself. [9] This observation has special validity for their criticism of Lermontov's work. Dobrolyubov's remark :

" Мы видим в Печорине да и в самом Лермонтове семена глубокой веры в достоинство человека и жизни."

highlights this tendency to view literature as an ideological-moral tract.[10] Extracting from Lermontov's novel A Hero of Our Time lessons for human enlightment and social progress, both Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov emphasized the "restless spirit" of the novel's hero, viewing him as the embodiment of Lermontov's protest against the political oppression of his times.

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9) Lavrin, Y. Lermontov, London: Bowes, 1959 p. 18.

10) Dobrolubov, N. Sobranie sochinenij M., 1962 t.2, 263.

1.2. Existentialist Criticism

A very different evaluation of Lermontov's work comes with the existential and religious critics comprising Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900), Dmitry Merezhkovsky (1866-1941) and Lev Shestov (1866-1938). Although they too are constrained by an ideological framework, in their case a religious-philosophical one, their criticism nevertheless displays a greater awareness of psychological complexities than that of their materialist predecessors.

During the religious-philosophical revival of the late 1890s, Lermontov's search for a higher existential purpose and his "proud enmity against God" produced a variety of conflicting opinions, ranging from Merezhkovsky's positive view of him as the " поэт сверхчеловечества " to Solovyov's description of the poet as the "Cain of Russian Letters." These conflicting opinions about the character and essence of Lermontov's poetry demonstrate not only extremes of critical judgment, but also point to the multifaceted and elusive personality of the poet himself, torn between the Angel and the Demon, the two opposite forces in his poetry.

Analyzing Lermontov's works from a religious viewpoint, Solovyov sees Lermontov as a Russian precursor of Nietzscheanism, who by extolling demonism failed to respond to the divine origin of his talent and thence perished without understanding the true essence of Christianity.

" Я вижу в Лермонтове прямого родоначальника того направления чувств и мыслей,а отчасти и действий,которое для краткости можно назвать "ницшеанством".Лермонтов не понял своего призвания быть могучим вождем людей на пути сверхчеловечеству истинному т.е к богочеловечеству,к христианству,и поэтому погиб.Христианства же не понял потому что не захотел смириться.А кто не может подняться и не хочет смириться тот сам себя обрекает на неизбежную гибель." /11/

Emphasizing that humility and submission are the true virtues of Christian superhumanity, Solovyov accuses Lermontov of substituting these ideals with false pride and a morally reprehensive vision of a superman. It is, in order to expose Lermontov's "demonic deception" that Solovyov's criticism

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11) Solovyov, V. Sobranie sochinenij S.Pb. 1901, t.6, 477.

concentrates on the writer's demonism and enmity against God. He feels that whereas in the early works, the poet's struggle with God still was of a childish nature, the revolt in the "Demon" is of archetypal proportions. The hero of this poem is, in Solovyov's view, the same demon who ruled Lermontov's soul also - the demon of pride, who holds the Creator responsible for his incompleteness. The critic maintains that Lermontov's self-centeredness, made him believe that his genius gave him the right to demand everything of people and God, without owing them anything in return. This self-centeredness is, in Solovyov's view, most evident in Lermontov's love poetry where the poet's main interest is not concentrated on love nor the beloved, but on the loving "I".

" Во всех его любовных произведениях остается нерастворенный осадок торжествующего,хотя бы и бессознательного эгоизма." /12/

In this egotism and self-idolization Solovyov sees the determining factor in Lermontov's existential

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12) op.cit., p.480.

outlook which led him to his cosmic despair and professed contempt for mankind.

Dmitry Merezhkovsky offers an opposite interpretation of Lermontov. His philosophy is based on the principle of juxtaposing antitheses, and he therefore, postulates a polarity in earthly life within which a constant struggle between two conflicting truths - those of spirit and flesh, or heaven and earth - occurs. The first truth, in Merezhkovsky's view, manifests itself in the spirit's striving to renunciation and negation of self, the second - in the strivings of the individual to self-affirmation and the idolization of his own "I". In the course of history these two conflicting streams separate, but the spirit continues to aspire to an ultimate supreme unity, which according to Merezhkovsky shall become "the crown" of all historical accomplishment. The critic views Lermontov's poetry as reflecting this universal process and stresses that the poet's rebellion and his idolization of self are not indicative of " превратное сверхчеловечество ", but of his striving for a higher synthesis.

"Ведь уже из того,как Лермонтов начал свой бунт видно

что есть в нем какая-то религиозная святыня,от которой не отречется бунтующий даже под угрозой вечной погибели." /13/

Merezhkovsky feels that contemporary critics, especially Solovyov, failed to perceive this duality in Lermontov's poetry and that by focussing on the demonic aspects alone they distorted the essence of his work.

" Чтобы хоть сколько нибудь уменьшить ужас на который он /Лермонтов/ был обречен мы должны обличить ложь "воспетого им демонизма",то есть ложь всей лермонтовской поэзии,чья сущность по мнению Соловьева и есть не что инное как демонизм." /14/

In an attempt to denounce "the demonic deception", Merezhkovsky returns to his previously outlined scheme pointing to the dialectical forces of

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13) Merezhkovsky, D. Lermontov S.Pb.,: Prosveshchenie, 1911, 13.

14) op.cit., p.14.

humility and pride operating in Russian literature. He maintains that all Russian writers, with the exception of Lermontov, followed the path of humility, and that therefore in straying from this path, Lermontov evoked the condemnation of his contemporaries who saw this as an act of defiance and demonism. The critic sets out to correct this misconception by interpreting Lermontov's pride as a struggle with God rather than as defiance of God. He feels that through this struggle, the poet aspires to attain a real harmony (within himself and with the universe) and to become part of the "жизнь божеско-всемирная". He views the tragedy of Lermontov not in his denial of faith but in his inability to accept the Christian idea of paradise. He sees Lermontov as unable to accept the separation of flesh and spirit and maintains that the writer intuitively feels that there exists some higher harmony in which heavenly truth unites with earthly truth and the flesh reunites with the spirit.

" В этом соединении правды небесной с правдой земной и окажется что есть настоящий рай,где со "звуками небес сольются песни земли." /15/

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15. idib., p.14

In the light of his philosophical - aesthetic principles Merezhkovsky views the Demon (in the poem "The Demon") as a projection into eternity of the tragedy experienced by its author. The Demon realizes that human happiness is incomplete, as his predicament demonstrates. He is filled with contempt for people, doomed in his view to an imperfect existence, but at the same time he longs for human love which he feels will return him to the primeval state of bliss and goodness. Translated into the language of psychology, Merezhkovsky's philosophical approach shows a striking similarity to the psychoanalytic explanation of idealization and splitting. Associated with a basic inability to accept both sides of reality i.e. to accept that there is no ideal life or a heavenly state of bliss, a tendency to idealization arises and this tendency is one of the main characteristics of a narcissistic condition. As such it will be dealt with in greater detail in the discussion of narcissistic elements present in Lermontov's work.

The Russian existential critic Lev Shestov sees Lermontov as the first of Russian "idealist" writers whose work reflects the "philosophy of tragedy."

In his work " Достоевский и Ницше " [16] Shestov notes that literary criticism often looks for nothing else in a literary text but so-called positive ideals. Le montov's wo.k in Shestov's view lacks any such po itive ideals.

" Творчество Лермонтова служит примером отсутствия каких бы то ни было положительных идеалов;напротив этот писатель не воспевал добро,истину и красоту-, а был началоположником забвения красоты,насмешки над истиной, пренебрежения добром." /17/

Shestov polemicizes with Belinsky questioning the critic's "passionate" praise of the hero in the latter's article A Hero of Our Time (compare above). He disagrees with Belinsky's main proposition that Pechorin was doomed to superfluity through lack of opportunity for self-fulfillment and meaningful goals to which he could have devote his energies. Shestov draws particular attention to Lermontov's introduction to his novel in which the writer himself evaluates his hero. He argues that Lermontov does not in fact want to rem dy the malady he has diagnosed in Pechorin.

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16) Shestov, L. Dostoevsky i Nitsshe, YMCA Press Reprint, original St.P., 1903.

17) op.cit., p.11.

" Если Печорин и болезнь то эта одна из тех болезней которые дороже автору всякого здоровья". /18/

It is for this reason that, in Shestov's view, Pechorin is depicted as triumphant in the novel. He feels that the "sick" Pechorin is dearer to Lermontov than the healthy Maxim Maximych, Princess Mary or Grushnitsky. The critic characterizes Pechorin in the following manner :

" У Печорина нет других недостатков кроме жестокости но и она становится прекрасным качеством". /19/

Shestov maintains that Pechorin's so-called "malady" is more valuable than any spiritual health and that Lermontov never would sacrifice his hero to mediocrity and normality.

" Как бы ни было трудно с Печоринымн-он не отдаст их в жертву середине,норме". /20/

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18) op.cit., p.12.

19) op.cit., p.13.

20) ibid., p.13.

Lermontov would not allow his hero to be healed. The difference between Lermontov and his critics is that while the latter do all in their power to "heal" the hero, to bring him to normality and health, Lermontov himself refuses to do so. In this refusal Shestov sees the beginning of Russian existentialism, or as he calls it, "the philosophy of tragedy" and he places Lermontov on a par with Nietzsche and Dostoyevsky.

1.3. Formalist Criticism

The emergence of the Russian Formalist School in the 1910s marked a sharp turn from traditional Russian criticism with its emphasis on content and social meaning, to a view of literature as a construct of purely linguistic elements and artistic devices. In its attempt to divorce literature from both the social and the religious-philosophical approaches, the Formalist method focussed on the text itself, stressing the autonomy of all forms of art in general and literature in particular. The Formalist concern with literary devices introduced a radically new approach to literary criticism, and many of its studies, based upon a detailed inquiry into literary technique, rank amongst the most important achievements of Russian literary criticism. However, the Formalist tendency to exclude all other considerations accounts for its often oversimplified and one sided approach.

B. Eykhenbaum's monography Lermontov, A Study in Literary-Historical Evaluation[21], clearly exemplifies the merits and shortcomings of Formalist criticism. Written by one of the main exponents of the Formalist School it offers a clear textual analysis

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21) Eykhenbaum, B.M. Lermontov, A Study in Literary-Historical Evaluation Michigan Ill.: Ardis, 1981.

of Lermontov's work. However, the critic's obvious bias and his tendency to regard the critical approach of the Formalist School as the only legitimate frame of reference lend an unduly dogmatic quality to his comprehensive treatment of Lermontov. Eykhenbaum's insistence on studying the poetry rather than the poet, the objective structure of the literary work, rather than the artist's personality resulted in a scholarly but sceptical and cold work, which ignores the complexity and elusiveness of Lermontov's poetic genius. Approaching Lermontov's work from the angle of Formalist determinism, Eykhenbaum points to the historical inevitability of Lermontov's emergence as a poet and regards his appearance as a necessary fact prepared by the previous movement of poetry.

"It was necessary to sum up the classical period of Russian poetry and to prepare the transition to the creation of new prose. History demanded it - and it was accomplished by Lermontov."[22]

As can be seen from the above quotation, the critic's main interest lies in assessing the function

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22) op.cit., p.171.

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Lermontov fulfills in the scheme of literary evolution. Significant in this regard is his presentation of "history" as the active agent and "Lermontov" as the passive. Eykhenbaum feels that the creation of new artistic forms is not an act of invention, but an act of historical - literary self-awareness; therefore the poet's creative output is determined, in the last analysis, not by his sensibility or temperament but by the character of the literary tradition within which he operates.

"This, of course, is not a peculiarity of his soul, of his temperament, or finally, of his individual "verbal consciousness", but an historical fact characteristic of him as an historical individuality who was fulfilling a specific mission required by history."[23]

Eykhenbaum views Lermontov's contribution to the literary evolution in a blurring of the borderlines of poetic genres in order to increase the expressive-emotional character of poetry. But even here, in discussing the emotional aspect of Lermontov's poetry, the critic views "emotionalism"

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23) op.cit., p.20.

as a specific stylistic method prompted by artistic and not psychological considerations.[24]

Tracing the development of literary evolution Eykhenbaum denies any relevance to psychological factors even when analysing Lermontov's intensely personal poems. He reiterates his previously stated view that the concern of a literary scholar should be solely with intrinsic literary analysis and not with "debatable and contradictory psychological interpretations."

Eykhenbaum's criticism of Lermontov's prose is in keeping with his anti-psychological orientation. The critic rejects any relationship between narrative fiction and psychological reality and postulates that Lermontov's elaborate psychologization is directed not at revealing the hero's character and situation, but is aimed at the motivation of narrative devices. It should perhaps be kept in mind that Eykhenbaum's Lermontov study is the product of his most doctrinaire period.

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24) The critic employs a similar procedure in his study of the young Tolstoy by suggesting that Tolstoy's passion for psychological analysis and introspection was fundamentally a matter of his struggle for a new narrative manner and his challenge to the clichés of romantic literature.
See Erlich, V. Russian Formalism 3rd ed. Yale University Press 1981, p.196

1.4. Marxist-Leninist Criticism

Unlike idealist aesthetics which separates art from the domaine of political ideology, the main concern of Marxist-Leninist aesthetics lies with examining the ideological functions of art. Viewing literature as a potent means of "organizing the social psyche" [25], Soviet critics assign ideological considerations a predominant role, and rank literary works according to the degree to which they correspond to the model of social vision proposed by Marxist-Leninist theory. This tendency to subordinate criticism to ideological considerations is clearly reflected in Soviet approaches to Lermontov's work. Interpreting his artistic creation in the light of the aspirations dictated by Marxist-Leninist dialectics and even pure party politics, Soviet theoreticians often disregard the textual evidence present in the work itself, stressing instead those aspects, which are seen as politically relevant. Thus one Soviet critic, for example, declares:

" В натуре Лермонтова ярко выражена склонность к осмысле-

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25) Term coined by V. Friche, Sociologiya iskusstva, Moscow, 1929, p.13.

Author Buchman Ilan Leon
Name of thesis Narcissistic Elements In Lermontov's Work. 1985

PUBLISHER:
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
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