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Narcissistic elements in Lermontov's work

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typical narcissist and as such unable to side totally with either good or evil.

As Andrey Sinyavsky correctly perceives, Lermontov's Demon is "too inconstant in his pursuit of evil to be a fullfledged devil and too inconstant in his repentance to become reconciled with God."[5]. The ambivalent nature of the Demon and his hope for rebirth through love add a new dimension to the biblical theme both distancing the protagonist from his biblical and other literary predecessors[6] and bringing him closer to other Lermontovian heroes. In fact, the Demon's predicament constitutes a further step in the psychological progression first treated in the drama "Masquerade". Essentially he is the same Arbenin at a later stage, an Arbenin in the guise of a superhuman creature and his narcissistic

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5) Quoted from: Liberman, A, Mikhail Lermontov Major Poetical Works, London and Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983 p.538

6) There is a number of works dealing with the Demon's literary predecessors. See the articles by S.V. Shuvalov "The Influence of Russian and European poetry on Lermontov's Creative Work" and M.N. Rozanov "Byronic Motifs in Lermontov's Creative Work" in the jubilee collection Venok M.I. Lermontovu (M.,1914) and A.V. Fedorov's work "Lermontov and the literature of his time" published in Leningrad in 1967.

personality is correspondingly aggrandized[7]. Arbenin's problematics are repeated on a hyperbolic scale, but it is clear that apart from the unearthly wings and other demonic paraphernalia, as well as his self-proclaimed superhuman emotional intensity, the Demon's sufferings have a distinct human character. Significantly, he is from the outset a melancholy spirit grieving for his angelic past, yet longing for love and the passions of earthly life. The beautiful but emotionally frigid heaven frightens him but so does passionate, but engulfing earth. The Demon stands divided, belonging to neither heaven nor earth, a stranger on earth and cosmos but traumatized by entirely earthly anguish.

Давно отверженный блуждал
В пустыне мира без приюта:
Во след за веком век бежал,
Как за минутою минута,
Однообразной чередой. 2:137

His world was a gigantic cage,
And aimlessly he wandered in it;

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7) This aggrandizement is further emphasized by the choice of the entire cosmos as the setting in which the drama is enacted.

An age would chase another age,
As would a minute chase a minute-
They came and went and came again.....A.L:357

To keep his "sanity" and to protect himself from the confusion of his suspended existence the Demon chooses to supress his emotions and deny feelings. Just as in the drama "Masquerade" where Arbenin poses as a bored and uninvolved spectator, so too in "The Demon", the hero appears as a detached observer oblivious of the beauty of the surrounding world.

Презрительным окинул оком
Творенье бога своего,
И на челе его высоком
Не отразилось ничего.- 2:138

But with disdain the child of hate
His Maker's universe inspected,
It did not make him happy now,
And not a feeling was reflected
Upon his high, unruffled brow. A.L:357

His only emotions are negative. Occasionally he experiences an intense and painful envy of nature's blissful self-sufficiency.

Но кроме зависти холодной,
Природы блеск не возбудил
В груди изгнанника бесплодной
Ни новых чувств,ни новых сил;
И все,что пред собой он видел,
Он презирал,иль ненавидел. 2:138

> But nature's luxury and glitter
> Struck in the exile not a spark,
> He stayed resentful, dry, and bitter,
> Impassive, arrogant, and dark.
> And all that was unstained or sacred
> Aroused in him contempt and hatred. A.L:359

Having subjected his spontaneous emotions to the control of cool rational analysis the Demon no longer senses the contradiction of his split and divided existence. In a typically narcissistic manner he distorts reality and sees his indifference as proof of his emotional superiority. This distortion accounts for his sense of omnipotence and his delusions of grandeur. He sees himself, not as a fallen angel, rejected and banished by God, but as the king of knowledge and freedom.

Incidentally, the Demon's apparent self-control does not inspire him with self-assurance and independence. On the contrary, it contributes to his insecurity and sense of inner emptiness. To validate his self-esteem the Demon rejects the modest role of a rebel against an imperfect world, preferring to see himself as the agent of evil which moves it. Self-aggrandizement is the narcissist's typical form of compensation.

Characteristically he is contemptuous of those he manipulates and claims not to experience triumph at their downfall. However in suppressing his feelings, be it even the negative ones, the Demon falls ever deeper into the trap set by his own personality. Without a sense of self and out of touch with reality he experiences life as empty and meaningless.

Мир для меня стал глух и нем.
По вольной прихоти теченья
Так поврежденная ладья
Без парусов и без руля
Плывет,не зная назначенья; 2:156

My love and pain, my strength titanic
Lost every meaning in the sky;
The world I'd wielded seemed to die.
So in the currents of the ocean
A miserable, broken boat
Will aimlessly and sadly float,
Unable to control its motion. A.L:391

Feeling emotionally dead he drifts aimlessly through the universe hoping and waiting for somebody to save him and bring him back to life and feeling. On meeting Tamara the Demon's hopes are raised, yet at the same time, the painful vulnerability of the past reemerges as a potential threat.

В бескровном сердце луч нежданый
Опять затеплился живей,
И грусть на дне старинной раны
Зашевелилася как змей. 2:154

I feel: it must be madness!
But hope is in my heart awake,
And in the ancient wound, my sadness
Is writhing like a scaly snake. A.L:389

The return to life and feeling is closely associated with the renunciation of the sense of omnipotence, but the Demon willingly sacrifices it in expectation of a miraculous rebirth.

Лишь только я тебя увидел,
И тайно вдруг возненавидел
Бессмертие и власть мою. 2:154

I saw you in your castle's portal
I do not want my strength immortal
My strife with Heaven makes me wince. A.L:387

Significantly however, the Demon's sense of having been reborn through love does not imply an understanding and reworking of the past. Instead he sees it as a new beginning and complete dissociation from the past. Having previously identified himself with

evil the Demon now goes to the other extreme splitting off his "all bad" image from the wishful "all good" one, in the hope to love and be loved in return.

И входит он,любить готовый,
С душой открытой для добра,
И мыслит он,что жизни новой
Пришла желанная пора. 2:152

And in he comes, his heart appealing
To love and truth, and - what is more! -
He has a strange and joyous feeling
That nothing will be as before. A.L:383

But the split in the Demon is far from healed, as no genuine integration has taken place and this becomes evident in the Demon's behaviour when he confronts Tamara's guardian angel who represents the past which the Demon just renounced. The angel's bright shining aura evokes anger and envy in the protagonist and he finds himself once again filled with poisonous malice. Seeing the splendour of the angel the Demon realises that he has deluded himself and that he is not in possession of all-goodness as he believed.

И вновь в душе е[illegible]оснулся
Старинной ненависти яд. 2:152

And all within him that was vicious
Suffused his poisoned heart and brain A.L:385

Having become aware of his true psychological state it becomes even more imperative to the Demon to win Tamara for himself alone. As in the drama "Masquerade" we now have an evil demonic protagonist with an angelic female counterpart who is seen as the carrier of perfect beauty and goodness by her idealizing lover. For the emotionally dead Demon Tamara's exuberance and blissful self-sufficiency present the ultimate salvation through love. There is in the poem a striking parallel between the vibrant vitality found in nature and in Tamara.

И улыбается она
Веселья детского полна.-
Но луч луны,по влаге зыбкой
Слегка играющ.. порой,
Едва ль сравнится с той улыбкой
Как жизнь,как молодость,живой. 2:140

And on her lips a childish smile
Plays full of mirth, devoid of guile
That smile is gentle and disarming
Beyond description or compare;
In its appeal of youth more charming
Than all the moonbeams of the air. A.L:361

И жизнью вечно молодою,
Прохладой, солнцем и весною
Природа тешится шутя
Как беззаботная дитя. 2:166

Great nature, as of old, rejoices
In strength, in beauty's tender voices,
In flowering spring, and colors wild -
As does a free and happy child. A.L:413

Expecting vitality and wholeness from an unspoilt child of nature, the Demon perceives Tamara as a prized and valuable object he wants to possess. The seduction of Tamara is couched in terms of exclusive possession. The Demon insists that she alone can save him, as he needs to regain his own sense of worth and value through her. The sequence of seduction follows a definite order clearly reflecting the predominant traits of narcissism. First, the Demon appeals to Tamara's nurturing instincts, stressing his dependence on and need for her support. He pleads for her compassion and declares in a self-deprecatory way that he has little to offer bringing her only his quiet prayer and first earthly tear.

Тебе принес я в умиленье
Молитву тихую любви,
Земное первое мученье,
И слезы первые мои. 2:153

I've brought my love fo· ages dormant,
My prayer, for you alone to hear,
My first, my piercing earthly torment,
My first, my scalding earthly tear. A.L:387

Unsuccessful in winning Tamara's confidence, the Demon adopts a different tactic to gain her trust. He flatters her by aggrandizing her capacity to save him, contrasting it with his own vulnerability.

Меня добру и небесам
Ты возвратить могла бы словом.
Твоей любви святым покровом
Одетый,я предстал бы там
Как новый ангел в блеске новом. 2:154

A word from you and I'll repine,
Forget my hatred, dull and sterile,
And shielded from revenge and peril
Shall, as before, 'mid angels shine -
A seraph new in new apparel. A.L:387

In a typically narcissistic manner the Demon leaves Tamara feeling emotionally responsible for his salvation. Seeing Tamara, not as a separate person, but as an extension of himself, the Demon stresses that only she can make heaven complete for him.[8]

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8) Also in purely literary terms Tamara is not a sharply delineated character and acts merely as a foil for the unfolding of the Demon's personality.

Во дни блаженства мне в раю
Одной тебя недоставало. 2:155

In Paradise it was the same:
It's you I missed, it's you I wanted A.L:391

Doubting the sincerity of the Demon's protestations of love and in order to dispel any remaining suspicions Tamara demands an oath of good faith and the Demon willingly accedes to her request.

Using emotional rhetoric, empty of any real feeling and commitment, the Demon skillfully overwhelms his prey.[9] He cleverly manipulates the girl and

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9) Discussing 'The Demon' Eykhenbaum critically notes that Lermontov writes in formulae in which the semantic nuances and details are often glossed over in favour of the general impression. "The general emotional effect is important to him; apparently he postulates a rapid reader who will not linger over semantic or syntactic details but will only seek an impression of the whole. The semantic basis of words and verbal combinations begins to dull, but then their declamatory coloration begins to glitter with unprecedented sparkle".
(Eykhenbaum, B. M. Lermontov, Ann Arbour: Ardis 1981 p.113)
Eykhenbaum's conclusion that Lermontov's poem lacks the simplicity and snap precision of Pushkin's verse overlooks the specifics of Lermontov's intent. It may be argued that the seduction scene, for instance, with its "declamatory glitter" creates exactly the impression Lermontov wants to achieve. Tamara could be seen in the role of "rapid reader" receptive to the fascination of vague bliss.

eventually reverses the previous balance of power. This time he places Tamara in a vulnerable and dependent position holding out a promise of supreme happiness which he alone can fulfil.

О! верь мне: я один поныне
Тебя постиг и оценил 2:159

You are my one,my holy temple,
In which I kneel and pray alone. A.L:399

This way the Demon "has his cake and eats it too", as he denies his own dependence on Tamara, previously admitted. After all, if he makes her a queen, it emerges that she depends on him for her happiness.

Already this divided attitude demonstrates that the Demon's idealization for Tamara cannot last. It leads to dependence on the idealized object and contradicts the Demon's strong need for omnipotence. As a result there emerges a paradoxical and tragic situation in which the hero's strong need for the loved person is accompanied by an equally great fear of being enslaved and engulfed. Melanie Klein [10] provides a clear exposition of this

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10) Klein, Melanie, The Writings of Melanie Klein: vol.I, Love Guilt and Reparation and other works 1921-45; volI, The Psycho-Analysis of Children; vol III, Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963; vol IV, Narrative of a Child Analysis.
London : Hogarth Press 1975

typical narcissistic process. She sees the basis of narcissistic object relationships in projective identification. Klein maintains that when parts of the self are projected and the object is identified with them there is a strong need to control the object and a constant fear of being controlled by it. The object has to be controlled because the loss of it entails the loss of a part oneself. At the same time there is a fear of being controlled since the object contains a valued part of the self. This no win situation lies at the root of the narcissistic fear of loving.

In the drama "Masquerade", Arbenin, unable to resolve this inner conflict, blames Nina for his failed happiness. So strong is his censure that he feels justified in poisoning her. The same narcissistic pattern is repeated in "The Demon". But whereas in "Masquerade" the protagonist's destructive and lethal drives, his hatred of the beloved object is projected into an external substance, the poison powder, in "The Demon" the protagonist internalizes his own evil, aware of the fact that the poison is within himself. This is why his kiss poisons his beloved Tamara.

Смертельный яд его лобзанья
Мгновенно в грудь ее проник. 2:161

His kiss, the poison of creation
Deep through his victim's bosom went; A.L:403

Tamara's death brings not only the loss of the good external object, but more importantly (in terms of the progression of the narcissistic theme in Lermontov's work), the loss of the good object in the Demon's internal world. He no longer blames Tamara for his crushed hopes of happiness, realizing that he himself is the source of evil, whereas Arbenin is still removed from this insight and unaware of his guilt. Seen from this perspective we realise that Lermontov's narcissistic protagonist is not so much in love with himself as full of self-hatred. Love reflected reverts namely to the self as self-destructive hatred. The Demon's rage and despair at the end of the poem illustrate this process. He is no longer the self-loving attractive seducer, but an angry and disillusioned being. He dwells in a world which is unable to sustain him and provide him with the absolute happiness he seeks. Furthermore, there is a more or less conscious awareness that the root cause of his unhappiness lies within himself. The narcissistic cycle is completed. Feeling led astray by the lure of empty

passions and his own futile desires the Demon curses his dreams of love and drifts away unloved, envious and hating, attempting in vain to forget the past.

Любовь забыл он навсегда
Коварство,ненависть,вражда
Над ним владычествуют ныне-
В нем пусто,пусто: как в пустыне.
Смертельный след напечатлен
На том,к чему он прикоснется.

Love he forgot for ever
Perfidy,hate,enmity
Hold power over him now-
In him is nothing,nothi a desert
A deadly trace is imprin
On all that he touches. I.B.

[11]

The "rocky empire" full of spiders, lizards and snakes which appears at the end of the poem represents the Demon's internal world, his "landscape of the soul". The cold and dead castle of the final scene, once full of joy and hope stands as a witness to a "crude and sore" memory of happiness destroyed by the Demon's own hand.

1') The above quotation is taken from an early draft of the poem.It is quoted here as it expresses particularly well the feeling of outer despair and hopelessness.

2.3.3. The novel A Hero of Our Time

2.3.3.1. "Bela"

"When I saw Bela in my home, when for the first time I held her in my lap and kissed her black curls, I - fool that I was - imagined she was an angel sent me by compassionate fate ... I was wrong again." V.N:34.

This confession made by Pechorin to Maksim Maksimych in the opening story of the novel A Hero of Our Time once more demonstrates the thematic continuity of Lermontov's work. The processes of idealization and disillusionment present in the drama "Masquerade" and the poem "The Demon" continue to operate in the story "Bela", and as the previous works, this story also ends with the death of a female love object. Bela's death can be seen as yet another murder, like Nina's and Tamara's, this time a murder by proxy. Naturally it is not Pechorin who actually kills Bela. He fires a shot at Kazbich who, threatened by Pechorin, kills Bela. Nevertheless, the protagonist's shot is a timely bid to escape the bonds of a constricting relationship. The persistent need of the Lermontovian hero to destroy his love object reflects this hero's inability to come to terms with angry and destructive feelings. It also expresses his need to separate aspects in the object which he

cannot integrate. On meeting Bela, Pechorin is infatuated with the girl. He imagines that she is sent to him as a prize from heaven providing a novel and strange object for his affections. Disillusioned with the mundane coquetry of Petersburg society women, Pechorin hopes that simple and naive Bela will bring a radical change into his unsatisfactory existence. The seduction of Bela animates Pechorin and stirs his imagination and vanity. He is from the outset determined to possess the girl and uses every means, from bribery to manipulative suicidal gestures, in order to win her affections. However, no sooner does Pechorin notice that Bela truly loves him than he loses all interest in her. He demands a gratuitous love of no emotional involvement on his part. Therefore he cannot allow Bela a concrete and separate existence as, by doing so, he would acknowledge her right to put emotional demands on him. Sensing Bela's growing involvement Pechorin distances himself, as he cannot cope with the reciprocal expectations of love. Yet by denying Bela a wholeness and identity of her own, Pechorin falls into the trap set by his own personality. The narcissistic splitting is namely both defensive and destructive. It allows the protagonist to maintain an idealized vision of the object, but at the same time it is the major reason why aggression cannot be neutralized and

detoxified. Therefore Pechorin cannot reject Bela as she remains his needed idealized object, but at the same time he feels increasingly angry with her. Eventually her unacceptable aspect becomes so hateful to Pechorin that the need to disown and destroy the unacceptable part becomes so compelling and overpowering that Pechorin "seizes the fortuitous opportunity" to dispose of his burdensome idol. As mentioned before, Bela's death may be regarded as a murder by proxy. One may note that Maksim Maksimych explicitly warns Pechorin against shooting Kazbich. Ignoring his warning, Pechorin nevertheless fires the shot, becoming at least indirectly the cause of Bela's death.[1] Whatever Pechorin's conscious or unconscious intentions, Bela's death offers him the only solution. On her death Maksim Maksimych observes that "it was right

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1) The Soviet critic Emma Gershteyn observes, that Bela dies as a result of Pechorin's inappropriate judgment. She states that seized by the reckless chase, Pechorin becomes the culprit of Bela's death.

"Решающую роль в смерти черкешенки сыграл не случай и не судьба, а оплошность Печорина."

Э.Герштейн "Герой нашего времени" М.Ю.Лермонтова, М.,Худ.лит.,1976,54.

The critic reiterates this idea adding, that Bela dies as a result of Pechorin's egocentricity. Thus we can see that Gershteyn to some extent blames Pechorin for the killing.

"Это тоже результат эгоцентризма: в эту минуту Печорин совсем не думал, какой опасности подвергается женщина, за которой он гонится". Там же стр.58.

and proper that she should die", for he realizes that once out of love with Bela, Pechorin would sooner or later abandon the girl.

The unfolding of the story highlights the narcissistic features of its main protagonist. Already at the beginning of the story Pechorin appears as a highly egocentric character incapable of showing concern for people and their feelings. He manipulates Bela's brother Azamat and conspires with the boy to abduct Bela and bring her to the fort against her will. Unconcerned by the consequences of the kidnap, he causes the death of innocent people showing neither remorse nor guilt. It should be noted that empathy, the ability to sense and respond to the feelings of other people, is a function of resonance and the narcissistic individual, himself deprived and emotionally blunt, has no ability to feel the pain of others or see others as real people. To take one more example, Pechorin unfeelingly flogs his own horse to death (cf. "Princess Mary"), and similarly, he feels no sympathy for Kazbich's loss of his horse. The reader will remember that Kazbich, Bela's suitor loved his horse more than anything else in the world, including Bela. In Pechorin's eyes, others exist only as objects to be used, and he treats

them in a correspondingly depersonalised and inhuman fashion. Even in relation to Bela, whom he initially professes to love, Pechorin shows an emotionally exploitative and unfeeling attitude. This attitude is clearly demonstrated by his staking a bet with Maksim Maksimych that he will possess the girl regardless of her will. In his typically narcissistic excess of self-reference, Pechorin cannot understand that Bela may have wishes of her own but feels that a simple Circassian girl should be happy and flattered to have a suitor such as himself. Similarly, he finds it frustrating to tolerate her resistance and sees her refusal in terms of his own hurt and disappointment alone.

"Listen to me, my peri", he was saying "You know very well that sooner or later you must be mine - so why torment me?" (italics mine) N.V: [21]

To Pechorin the love affair is comparable to a chase with him as the hunter and Bela as the game. Once the game has been trapped, the hunter looses interest in the chase. Significantly, once the chase for Bela's affections is over Pechorin compulsively turns to game hunting. The activity of hunting has a deep symbolic meaning for the

narcissistic personality. It provides a safe escape from emotional entrapment while holding out the excitement of entrapping the prey. As in gambling, hunting however brings no real reward as even winning is fraught with defeat and loss. The pursuit of a victim gratifies the narcissistic self, but leads the hero onto an inescapable path of destruction. Just as at the end of the hunt the hunter is left with a dead prey, so Pechorin is left with nothing more "to do" once Bela has been captured. The tragic absurdity of this situation comes to light in Pechorin's journal, to be dealt with below. There he clearly states "My life is like a book I have read before", recognizing his compulsion to re-enact the script of self-defeat. Clearly the experience with Bela is but one of many similar ones. It is generally recognized that the Bela incident occurs towards the end of Pechorin's life. By this time Pechorin feels like a bored actor forced to play a tedious and well known part and unable to escape the resulting emptiness and inauthenticity. Pechorin's inept laughter in response to Maksim Maksimych's words of condolence after Bela's death expresses not only the protagonist's indifference to convention but above all his bitter appreciation of the absurd

joke life has played on him[2]; he begins to realize the predictability of his existence. He may well at this stage understand that he himself is to be blamed for the inauthenticity of his life.

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2) Christopher Lasch in his book "The Culture of Narcissism" focusses on the affinity between the theatre of the absurd and the narcissistic pathology. He notes that "whereas the 'classical' drama of Sophocles, Shakespeare and Ibsen turned on conflicts associated with classical neuroses, the absurdist theater of Albee, Beckett, Ionesco and Genet centres on the emptiness, isolation loneliness and despair experienced by the narcissistic personality" (p.89). The fragmented and divided heroes of Lermontov's work show a remarkable resemblance to the alienated personages of the absurdist theater sharing a common uncertainty about what is real and experiencing the same feelings of inauthenticity and disillusion.
Lasch, Christopher, The Culture of Narcissism, London: Abacus, 1980

2.3.3.2. "Maksim Maksimych"

Emptiness and disillusionment are also the shaping emotions of "Maksim Maksimych", the second of the five stories comprising A Hero of Our Time. As opposed to the indirect vision of Pechorin in "Bela", the story "Maksim Maksimych" places the protagonist centre stage. It is a brief appearance, yet one that leaves behind a trail of emotional destruction and hurt. Pechorin's snub of Maksim Maksimych deeply wounds "the naively poetical"[1] captain "killing" the sensitive side of him and transforming him into an old and grumpy war veteran. Thus also this story deals with a "murder". Significantly, the most hurtful aspect of the snub is not the rejection itself but the form it takes. Richard Gregg [2] observes that it is precisely Pechorin's mildness of manner, his "Laodicean lukewarmness" that demonstrates the depth of his indifference. It is the same indifference that turned Bela into a wilting and lifeless being (... his treatment of her had become cold ... and she began to wilt noticeably; her little face became thinner, her big eyes lost

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1) Foreword to M. Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time by V. Nabokov, Oxford University Press: 1984 p.vii.

2) Gregg, Richard "The Cooling of Pechorin: The Skull Beneath the Skin", Slavic Review Fall 1984 vol.43 number 43.

lustre." V.N:33) and now, similarly, turns Maksim Maksimych into a "living corpse". The latter realizes that he no longer has any reality, or "life" in his idealized hero's existence. Viewed from this angle, Maksim Maksimych's parting with Pechorin implies the parting with his most cherished hopes and illusions. Therefore he no longer wants to carry Pechorin's notes and after having planned to use them for cartridges(!), he later just throws the notes away in a symbolic act of disowning and separating himself from his past hero.

"... muttering something through his teeth he began to rummage in a suitcase; presently he took out a notebook and threw it on the ground with contempt; a second, a third and up to a tenth book received the same treatment". V.N: 50

The break with any illusion is painful at the best of times, but devastating in the case of Maksim Maksimych as, at his age, there is nothing with which to replace the delusion and to fill the resulting emptiness. This the narrator of the story rightly perceives:

"It is sad to see a youth lose his fondest hopes and dreams, when the rosy tulle through which he had looked upon the acts and feelings of men is torn

aside before him, even though there is hope that he will replace his old delusions by new ones ... But by what can one replace them at Maksim Maksimych's age? No wonder that the heart hardens and the soul folds up". V.N: 52

It is noteworthy that the story ends with Maksim Maksimych remaining behind at the postal station. His life's journey comes to an end at this point and what follows is a regressive journey into his inner closed world.

"The captain entered the room when I had already put on my cap; it seemed that he was not getting ready to go; there was something cold and constrained about his appearance". V.N: 51

It is against this personal tragedy of Maksim M· ·imych that the destructive character of Pechorin, the Romantic Homme Fatal is delineated. Pechorin's portrait at the beginning of the story with his seductive feminine tenderness and his "phosphorescent eyes" clearly suggests a "split" and egocentric personality. Particularly revealing are his eyes as their steely cold gleam indicates the impenetrable wall which exists between him and

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other people[3]. It is this blank glance which expresses Pechorin's total indifference toward others and reduces them to insignificance, "killing" them by rendering them inauthentic.

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3) It should be noted that the motif of the steely penetrating eyes recurrs throughout Lermontov's work. It functions both as a cold weapon and as a defence. In "The Demon" for example it is the glittering dagger like glance that burns Tamara and simultaneously defensively distances the hero.

2.3.3.3. "Taman'"

"Taman'", the first story in Pechorin's journal has yielded much conflicting criticism. Disagreement pertains both to the artistic merit of the story and its significance for the novel as a whole. In regard to artistic merit, evaluations range from total acclaim as expressed by Chekhov[1] to Nabokov's view of "Taman'" as "the worst story in the book" [2]. As far as the function of the story within the novel is concerned, we have similarly divergent views. According to J. Garrard for example "Taman'" forms the axis upon which the narrative pivots[3] while many other critics, among them, B. Tomashevsky[4] and B Eykhenbaum[5] go as far as questioning the inclusion of the story in the novel. The controversy around "Taman'", which has

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1) Chekhov characterized "Taman'" as the perfect short story and regarded it as a classic model for future writers

2) Foreword to Mikhail Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time, by Vladimir Nabokov Oxford University Press, 1984 p.xvii.

3) Garrard, J. Mikhail Lermontov Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982 p.132.

4) Tomashevsky maintained that both "Taman'" and "Fatalist" are"неорганические новеллы" in the structure of the novel.

5) Eikhenbaum feels that "Taman'" and "Fatalist" do not fully correspond with the personality of Pechorin presented in the journal itself.

been far from resolved, points to the chronological and narrative complexity of the novel. As is well-known, the chronological order of the stories does not follow the sequence of events on a fabula level. It has often been noted that Lermontov by breaking with the chronological sequence succeeds in presenting Pechorin in stages of increasing intimacy. This in my view is the relevant aspect of the order of the stories. Critics who concentrate on reconstructing only the "real" order of events often miss vital aspects of Pechorin's psychological development. Garrard's discussion of "Taman'" is a case in point. The critic places the events in "Taman'" as occuring before the "Bela" episode which of course is perfectly correct, but concludes that '"Taman'" does not help us understand how he (Pechorin) got that way (selfish) for he is not reflective in this section of his journal'[6].

It may, on the contrary, well be argued that "Taman's" appearance in the novel after "Maksim Maksimych" is sequentially singularly appropriate, as there is a thematic correspondence between the stories. The

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6) Garrard, J. Mikhail Lermontov, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982 p.136.

themes of hero worship and the eventual disillusionment with the hero are common to both, as illustrated by Maksim Maksimych's worship of Pechorin and the blind boy's worship of Yanko in "Taman'".

There are in fact a number of similarities between the stories which have not previously been examined and which merit consideration.

The story "Maksim Maksimych" centers on the expected meeting between Pechorin and the old captain. "Taman'" too deals with an anticipated meeting and conveys a similar mood of anticipation. This mood is furthermore emphasized in both stories by the motif of dissuasion. In "Maksim Maksimych" the narrator attempts to persuade the old captain to abandon his watch and in "Taman'", the heroine by Pechorin called "undine", likewise attempts to convince the blind boy to abandon his vigil.

'Well, blind one?' said a woman's voice. 'The storm is heavy; Yanko will not come'. 'Yanko does not fear the storm' the other replied. There followed a silence; V.N:58.

Compare in the previous story:
"It was late and dark when I opened the window again and started to call Maksim Maksimych, saying that it

was time to go to bed; he muttered something between his teeth; I repeated the invitation: he did not answer." V.N:45

The blind boy's and Maksim Maksimych's persistence reflects the same deep emotional attachment which both have to their idealized heroes. It also reflects their inability to accept the fallibility of their respective idols.

The emotional involvement has in both cases a corresponding concrete manifestation. Maksim Maksimych, as has been pointed out, carries Pechorin's notes with him and the blind boy carries Yanko's possessions. Significantly their disillusionment is paralleled by their disposing of the burden which can be seen as a symbolic act of separation; the physical unloading symbolizes an emotional break.

The meeting with their false "heroes", and the confrontation with brutal reality prove a shattering experience for the naive Maksim Maksimych and the blind boy, both ill-equipped to cope with their ruthless and uncaring idols.

Yanko's indifference to the blind boy ("What use are you to me?") parallels the indifference shown to

Maksim Maksimych by Pechorin. Both are discarded and come to realize their insignificance in the lives of their worshipped heroes. Maksim Maksimych is dismissed by a cold handshake and the blind boy with a coin. Their faith in friendship and belonging is shattered with this perfunctory gesture. The break with illusion connected with the motif of departure (Yanko's and Pechorin's) is described in a similar emotional tonality. The images of the disappearing heroes are all that the blind boy and Maksim Maksimych retain. A mood of silent dejection pervades the final scene with both Maksim Maksimych and the boy remaining behind, left with their painful memories:

"The jingling of the shaft bell and the clatter of the wheels on the flinty road had long ceased to be heard. But the poor old fellow stood in the same place, deep in thought." V.N:50 (Maksim Maksimych)

"For a long time the white sail glanced in the moonlight amid the dark waves, the blind lad kept sitting on the shore, ..." V.N:66 (Taman')

In terms of the hero's psychological progression in the novel, the story "Taman'" marks a significant step in Pechorin's deepening self-awareness. This

process is reflected on both a narrative and a psychological level. On a narrative level the protagonist's growing awareness is indicated by the exclusion of the author-narrator and the method of "observing" employed in the previous stories, and their replacement by "telling". This new narrative mode serves a dual psychological function. First it gives the hero the opportunity to record his insights into the behaviour of others and secondly it helps him to gain insight into his own personality. On a psychological level the drama of the "honest smugglers" provides Pechorin with an awareness of the destructive nature of blind worship and the role he himself plays in other people's lives. It illuminates his own need for idealization as well as the trap idealization poses.

Viewed along these dimensions "Tamam'" can be properly described as a tale of blindness and illumination. Thus the boy's blindness assumes a metaphorical meaning. It is a realized metaphor. The boy is blind in his worship of Yanko. This metaphorical reading of the boy's blindness is reinforced by Pechorin's observation that the blind boy deftly negotiates the steep shore despite his affliction. In other words, the boy's blindness applies to the emotional sphere, whereas in

practical life he is unhampered by his blindness. The impression that the boy's blindness is of a symbolic nature is further emphasized by Pechorin's unease when meeting the boy for the first time. Pechorin's reaction to his encounter with the boy is this one:

"There was born in my mind the suspicion that this blind lad was not as blind as it seemed; in vain did I try to persuade myself that those white eyes could not be faked - But I could not help wondering" V.N:56.

Similarly, the Cossack travelling with Pechorin questions the nature of the boy's blindness.

"And, true enough, what kind of a blindman is this? Goes alone everywhere .... seems all are used to it around here ..." V.N:59.

The metaphorical implications of blindness versus insight have further ramifications on the psychological level in the opposition of infirmity and physical strength. Thus, as in the case of Pechorin, Yanko's athletic build and physical prowess is deflated by his emotional impotence. Interesting within the context of this opposition is

Pechorin's reaction to the boy's infirmity when he first sees him:

"I confess I have a strong prejudice against those who are blind, one-eyed, deaf, mute, legless, armless, hunchbacked, and so forth. I have observed that there always exists some strange relationship between the appearance of a man and his soul, as if with the loss of a limb, the soul lost one of its senses." V.N:56

One irony escapes observant Pechorin however, namely the fact that there also exists an inner infirmity without corresponding physical loss of limbs.[7] Pechorin's actions throughout the novel show him to be at least as crippled as the blind boy, invisible as his defects may be. In the relation between Yanko and Pechorin on one side, and the blind boy on the other, a subtle irony manifests itself. Physically crippled as the boy is, he emerges as a man of loyalty and emotional commitment (although he misplaces his affections). Pechorin and Yanko, in their turn, appear as emotional cripples and their "blindness" is not redeemed by sincerity of feeling.

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7) Pechorin's prejudice is perhaps symbolic of his own fear of emotional potency and mutilation. He does not consider that he too may suffer similar infirmity in his emotional life.

True, Pechorin's blindness is for a moment replaced by insight. Sitting on the cliff and watching the drama between Yanko and the boy below Pechorin understands that he himself has played the role of Yanko more than once. He also realizes that he has been in the position of the blind boy on more than one occasion, wavering between idealization and disillusionment. Pechorin gains an insight into the entrapment of narcissism, realizing his own confinement between role playing and his need for idealization. He is seized by sadness as he becomes aware of the parallels between his life and that of the "honest smugglers" Yanko and the blind boy. But insight is immediately replaced by self-deception. Pechorin cannot confront his predicament and escapes into a defensive rationalization.

"... what do I care about human joys and sorrows - I, a military man on the move, and holder moreover, of a road-pass issued to those on official business!"

V.N:67

Pechorin once more dons his unfeeling mask and pursues the path of deceiving others as well as himself. This repression of emotion explains why in the "Bela" story he once more repeats the narcissistic cycle, but as has already been stated, this attempt is marked by a despair which indicates a

subconscious awareness of the futility of the pattern. Returning once more to the symbolism of illumination versus spiritual blindness, it may be noted that moon symbolism plays a significant role in "Taman'". From the very outset the mysterious and ambivalent light of the moon accompanies events. It changes constantly but is always present and watchful. Just as Pechorin watches the human drama below, the moon observes Pechorin from above. The moonlight represents the ambivalent nature of Pechorin's insight; like the deceptive light of the moon which illuminates darkness but cannot overcome it, so the hero's insight leaves no lasting trace. Because of its fleeting nature it merely draws him deeper into the world of "lunar illusions", to use an expression by E. Gershteyn.[8]

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8) Gershteyn, E. "Geroy nashego vremeni" M. Yu. Lermontova. M., Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1976, 17.

2.3.3.4. "Princess Mary"

"Princess Mary" gives the most intimate perspective on Pechorin. It forms a centre piece of his triptyche structured diary which goes from the outer to the inner and again to the outer perspective. Here we meet with the only attempt on Pechorin's part at self analysis proper; as usual however, he avoids the final confrontation with the self. This is only to be expected in view of the fact that Pechorin cannot reconcile his emotional and intellectual insights.

Analytic theory distinguishes between intellectual insight which is the capacity to analyze one's own psychological functioning and emotional insight which refers to the capacity to feel and accept the conflicting sides of oneself. This distinction is particularly relevant in Pechorin's case as he is unable to integrate these two operational modes. This becomes apparent in the self reflective passages of Pechorin's diary. Pechorin admits in reflecting upon his life that:

"... (his) entire life has been nothing but a chain of sad and frustrating contradictions to heart or reason" V.N:75)

Intellectual insight in Pechorin's case functions as a defensive act which allows him to control the unwanted expression of emotion.

"Out of life's storm I carried only a few ideas - and not one feeling. For a long time now, I have been living not with the heart but with the head" V.N:133.

This intellectual self-control however alienates the protagonist from himself, as it places him in the position of a detached observer of his own behaviour.

"... I weigh and analyze my own passions and actions with stern curiosity, but without participation" he observes in "Princess Mary" commenting on the strange split in himself: "There are within me two persons one of them lives in the full sense of the word, while the other cogitates and judges him" V.N:133.

Significantly, this splitting prohibits self-awareness for the more Pechorin objectifies himself the more reality assumes an appearance of illusion.

"... I merely satisfied a bizarre need of my heart avidly consuming their sentiments, their tenderness, their joys and sufferings - and never could I have my fill. Thus a man, tormented by hunger and fatigue,

Author Buchman Ilan Leon
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