

OLD TRUTHS IN NEW SKINS: ANIMAL IMAGERY IN THE WORKS OF NIKOLAI
LESKOV

BY

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ABSTRACT

Animals complicate everything. They are implicated in science, in theology; they change the course of human development in its technological, cultural, and many other aspects. Animals have often provided material for thinking about what it means to be human, since they have been harnessed by writers to generate symbolical codes, allegories, and associations. Animal bodies are physical and figurative bodies that populate the real world and fictive worlds and in both are often unnoticed. At the same time, they enable and define continued human existence not only in a physical sense but in a figurative sense, and attention to animals inevitably yields productive consideration of a wide range of questions.

This thesis examines the multiple functions of animal imagery in the works of Leskov. In Nikolai Leskov's fiction, the animal image acts as a point of convergence for questions of scientific, religious, and social content that engaged society in mid-nineteenth century Russia; these questions form the backdrop and sometimes the substance of Leskov's literary works. Animal imagery serves multiple symbolic, interpretive, and affective functions in Leskov's texts and I trace these functions in works in which they are most conspicuous. Animal imagery invokes the authority of reality, elicits empathy in the reader, and enhances the literary riddle with which Leskov challenges his readers.

Leskov comments on the human condition, intimating his viewpoint in the context of the debates around human origins, the new reforms, the questions of modernization that involved the attitude toward the achievement of Western and Russian civilization in relation to one another, and other key questions in the decades of change in the second half of the nineteenth century. Leskov shows that the texts and the ways of thinking that have endured have done so because they remain thought-provoking in their treatment of basic questions. Leskov's message about

Russia is that there is plenty of reason for hope, but that common and moral sense, and good information, must be consulted as decisions are made. The animal code contextualizes Russia's and the individual's problems in a larger frame: the frame of history, the frame of the human community and the community of being that is shared with animals and nature.

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INTRODUCTION

As a representative of Russian realism, Nikolai Leskov expanded the borders of reality depicted in literary texts.¹ The breadth of his portrayals of Russian realia is the widest of his contemporaries, thanks to experience working in a recruiting office and travelling for his uncle's company, as well as family ties with the clergy, the civil service, the merchants, the nobility, and a childhood living in close contact with peasants, all of which gave him a heterogeneous supply of material once he turned to writing as a profession (McLean 4). Geographically, socially-economically, ethnically, religiously, and in other categories, Leskov differentiates Russian reality more than any writer before him. The variety of his characters is striking, from peasants to Jews to Old Believers, to Germans, and from priests to seamstresses to mail carriers to serf actors. In Leskov's writing, the province is not an undifferentiated sameness that merely stands in contrast to feminine Moscow and masculine and St. Petersburg, per nineteenth-century clichés. Leskov's texts are filled with place names, occupations, ethnicities, faiths; as a true storyteller, Leskov's texts are packed with accurate information that ultimately is useful for the reader/listener (Benjamin 364).

Animals are part of the specificity and diversification of Leskov's texts. A significant number of Nikolai Leskov's works feature animal imagery either in their titles, in the characterizations of their central characters, in plots whose action involves the close contact of human characters with animals, or in themes that involve aspects of the relationship between

¹ Despite his increasing popularity in recent years, Nikolai Leskov has been given less critical attention than he deserves. While outside of Russia he is considered a second tier writer, this view restricts appreciation of his part in the development of Russian literature in the nineteenth century.

humans and non-human animals.² Scholars have not systematically confronted the question of why Leskov utilizes animal imagery as extensively as he does. Observations on animal imagery have been subsumed in discussions of other textual features, such as of Leskov's usage of folkloric topoi and thematic material in A. A. Gorelov's monograph about Leskov and folk culture. I. E. Melent'eva has examined bird imagery in "Peacock" (99), but critics have not formulated an integrated explanation of the function of animal imagery in Leskov's overall poetic system.

Certain interpretive approaches that animal studies offers are useful for examining the function of animal imagery in the works of Nikolai Leskov. Animal studies seeks to rethink the interrelation of humans and animals, exploring "the precariousness of that divide we imagine separating us from other mammals" (Cohen 39). This thesis will retain the terms "human" and "animal" rather than "human animal" and "nonhuman animal" as more conveniently reflecting

² A good number of Leskov's works give the title to the animal: "The Musk Ox" («Овцебык» 1862), "The Peacock" («Павлин» 1874), "The Wild Animal" («Зверь» 1883), "Kotin the He-Cow and Platonida" («Котин доилец и Платонида» 1867), "The White Eagle" («Белый орел» 1880), "Fish Soup Without Fish" («Уха без рыбы» 1886), "Elder Gerasim's Lion" («Лев старца Герасима» 1888), "Malan'ia the Ram Head" («Маланья – голова баранья» 1894), "The Rabbit Warren" («Заячий ремиз» 1894), and "The Cattle-Pen" («Загон» 1893). Works that prominently feature animal characterizations include: "The Enchanted Wanderer" («Очарованный странник» 1873), "The Decrepit Clan" («Захудалый род» 1874), "No Way Out" («Некуда» 1871), "Sheramur" («Шерамур» 1879), "Deathless Golovan" («Несмертельный Голован» 1880), "Life of a Peasant Martyress" («Житие одной бабы» 1863), "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District" («Леди Макбет Мценского уезда» 1864), "The Trivial Things in a Bishop's Life" («Мелочи в архиерейской жизни» 1879), "Hierarchical Justice" («Владычный суд» 1877), and "The Islanders" («Островитяне» 1866). Works that portray characters in close contact with animals include: "Tupee Artist" («Тупейный художник» 1883), "Ancient Psychopaths" («Старинные психопаты» 1885), "Pamphalon the Mountebank" («Скоморох Памфалон» 1887), "The Drought" («Засуха» 1862), and "At the Edge of the World" («На краю света» 1875). Works that include discourse on the human-animal relationship include: "Lefty" («Левша» 1881), "Cathedral Folk" («Соборяне» 1873), "Pechersk Antics" («Печерские антики» 1883), "Monastery Islands" («Монашеские острова» 1873), and "The Bypassed" («Обойденные» 1865). These thirty works comprise nearly a quarter of Leskov's works of fiction (of approximately one hundred thirty-five pieces of fiction). An incomplete lists of animals to be found in Leskov's works includes: poodle, cat, bird, puppy, mouse, chick, lamb, bear, gazelle, swan, cuckoo, snail, wolf, grasshopper, boa, fish, worm, dog, swallow, sparrow, dove, lion, horse-fly, crane, elephant, canary, moth, toad, lice, raven, stork, perch, pike, freshwater cod, hare, pig, and dove.

the conceptualizations with which Leskov worked, in order to clarify the uses to which he put the image of the animal.

Animal studies points out how animals are used for teaching, based on the simultaneous similarity and dissimilarity of the animal and the human. The field of animal studies takes to task the anthropomorphizing tradition that treats animals merely as illustrations of human values and behavior. Symbolic interpretations of animals make it so that “animals teach children how to become human” (Cohen 39). Nature and animals figure as a communicative text, as Lynn White writes: “In the early Church, and always in the Greek East, nature was conceived primarily as a symbolic system through which God speaks to men” (White 4). This eastern approach differed from the western ambition to discover how God’s creation works. Similarly, however, in the European medieval era “Alan of Lille ... argued that every animal functions as *liber, pictura, speculum* (book, image, mirror)” (Cohen 43). The process of reading the animal is instructive and helps define the human.

Animal studies seeks to overthrow the anthropomorphic view that has been inherited and to see animals for themselves, “to relate to animals as animals ourselves, the way hunters do and anthropologists can only dream of” and to undo the approach to the animal as “one of the privileged terms that indexes the European subject’s relation to otherness” (Braidotti 526). In becoming aware of the relationship between animals and humans that technology rests on, animal studies uncovers the paradoxical human dependence on animals for technology and simultaneous use of technology to increase the distance with the animal. Since technology is a defining factor in the animal-human relationship, animal studies examines its implications from several angles. Sarah Kay examines the fact of medieval manuscripts being made out of animals skins and states that “the suture between the reader’s skin and that of the text means that reading

is charged with affect, and undermines the categorical demarcation between human beings and other animals insisted on by scholastic philosophy” (Kay 13). Derrida points to places in Judeo-Christian texts in which human dependence is inscribed, namely the story of Adam and Eve in which animal skins are supplied to cover the nakedness that humans experienced after disobeying God’s command. In Leskov, I trace a similar drive to reveal the dependence of the human that combines the Orthodox Christian hagiographic tradition and a de-anthropomorphizing impulse that is derives from the historical context of Leskov’s career, when Darwin’s theory disseminated the idea of overturning an “asymmetrical relation to animals” (Braidotti 526). Both strands emphasize that humans are not self-standing but share their being with the natural world.

In the theological tradition of Christianity, in which Leskov worked, while humans are to be in charge of animals and nature, at the same time animals and nature hold a certain authority and power for the fallen human, since they are God’s communicative text and because historically they were witnesses of humans’ fall from grace. Animals provided the covering for human nakedness and they provided sustenance for humans; human life is dependent on animals and nature, which in many ways give it its form: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken” (*New King James Version*, Gen. 3:19). Humans must navigate nature and animals to obtain food, so the human must be oriented towards nature’s system, which is based on deaths that enable the continuity of nature as a whole system. This theological understanding complements Walter Benjamin’s observation that nature becomes the authority of the human storyteller (Benjamin 369). Not only is nature the environment in which humans must survive, but human actions are inscribed in nature. Leskov claimed his own authority in the literary sphere as being based on his first-hand experience of Russian life in

many spheres, and his characters' encounters with the real world change them into more responsible humans, capable of participation in tasks that concern the common good.

While the hagiographic tradition in which animals such as bears and lions live harmoniously with saints the authority and stewardship of the human over the animal is affirmed, at the same time, the true human is shown to be a person who puts himself or herself on the level of the animals and communes with nature humbly, rather than as a master and exploiter. Exploitation has been the lot of the animal and human subaltern, both of which make up the "other" to the dominant human subject. Even Darwin's theory was used by some Russian radicals to justify racist and anti-abolitionist views and to hierarchize the races, which caused, however, an outcry and reaction among fellow radical thinkers (Graham 62). Animal bodies are very often objects of violence. The Old Testament usages of the animal include animal sacrifice, which becomes a central image of the New Testament, in which the Lamb of God is sacrificed for the sake of the world (John 1:29). The sacrificial victim's change from animal body to human body is an example of the leveling of the divine-human-animal hierarchy.

The sacrifice of the Lamb of God is understood as a divine act of compassion. This emotion has considerable weight in Leskov's works that feature animal imagery, which begin from a basic Christian framework. Other influences accented the importance of empathy, however; Darwin theorized the empathic reaction, as Paul Ekman describes: "When pain or distress is witnessed involuntarily, the witness experiences that person's distress. By this line of reasoning, the witness acts to reduce the other person's misery to reduce, thereby, the witness' own empathetically based misery" (Ekman 557). Human empathy is a sign of an advanced society. It is not surprising that Leskov's artistic approach incorporated the theme of empathetic viewing, since his project as a writer was to aid the progress of Russia to a more developed state,

for which he considered individual moral improvement to be necessary. In many of Leskov's animal texts, two ways of viewing are exhibited by the characters, which largely indicates their moral strength: an empathetic/responsive way of viewing, and a way of viewing that reduces the object to a spectacle to be visually enjoyed by the audience without interaction. For Darwin, empathy (which he calls sympathy) leads to morality, as Cor van der Weel summarizes:

"Sympathy is a central social instinct. Darwin characterizes it, with references to Alexander Bain and Adam Smith, as being based on our strong retentiveness for former states of pain and pleasure. Those states are reactivated when we see hunger, pain or fatigue in other persons, and this impels us to relieve the suffering of others" (C. van der Weel 587).

Another area that animal studies investigates is animal-human communication and the question of language. This area appears in Leskov's treatment of animals, colored by the hagiographic tradition in which animals understand human words, and the Aesopian tradition in which animal figures replace humans in works produced in complicated political contexts.

While Leskov does not "reconsider . . . human specificity in relation to (other) animals" (Kay 14) as animal studies endeavors to do, he questions many aspects of human existence that are taken for granted. He does so by leveraging the image of the nonhuman animal to jar his readers into a questioning of the human, which enhances his riddle-like treatment of characterization. While facile boundaries are blurred in this process, in the end the hierarchy of divine-human-animal based on Judeo-Christian conceptions is reasserted; however, the conceptions have deepened and widened and lost some of their polarity.

This thesis examines the multiple functions of animal imagery in the works of Leskov, which lead to the conclusion just stated. Animal imagery serves multiple symbolic, interpretive, and affective functions in Leskov's texts and I trace these functions in works in which they are

most conspicuous. Animal imagery invokes the authority of reality, elicits empathy in the reader, and enhances the literary riddle with which Leskov challenges his readers. Animal imagery also serves a variety of symbolic functions, drawing on a number of key contextual frames of reference that are important for Leskov.

The Reality Effect

Animals embody the authority of reality. Animals are real inhabitants of the world that Leskov describes and so their inclusion increases the verisimilitude of his texts. In Leskov's historical context, in which he proclaimed himself a practical man writing from experience, and contrasted himself to the "theorists" in Moscow and St. Petersburg, Leskov's animal imagery gives extra credence to his depiction of real life. Leskov's texts speak to Russia's historical situation and Leskov cites his authority to do so as coming from his first-hand knowledge of the country and his education in the real world (he never earned a university degree, while many of his fellow writers and journalists did). The diverse content of Leskov's fiction and non-fiction demonstrates his credentials: his characters come from various ranks of society, have various types of occupations, are of various ethnicities and nationalities, and are from various geographical locations. Leskov submerges his texts in the stream of real life by including historical events and famous people. Animal imagery increases Leskov's authority as writing about real life, and helps to argue that the text is a dispassionate and accurate depiction of what is real, vouching for the verisimilitude of the events depicted and satisfying the aesthetic demands of Realism.

Animals also connote a connection with the mythologized aspect of reality, nature. In Leskov's time, when animal bodies were still in demand for labor but had begun to be replaced

by technology, such as trains, the animal could be valued as preserving an unsevered connection with nature. Animals are imbedded in nature in a way that humans are not because their experience is connected to natural cycles and patterns in a way that is bereft of the modification and sublimation that humans manage in interacting with their environment. Animals do not step out of their environment and adjust it to their needs; they read their environment instead of writing it. In charting the development of thought about animals, Giorgio Agamben discusses the quality of the animal in terms of an inability to select cues, or carriers of significance in the environment, to which to respond (Agamben 40). Animals, as inextricable from their environment, which defines them, are the animate representatives of nature in all its irrevocability. At the same time, animals are similar enough to humans to be easily anthropomorphized so that the environment's hold over the animal fascinates the human, who follows the story of it and often places himself in the role of the animal. Fairy tales with their messages that wit and daring can overcome the terrors of a hostile world have remained a staple of human negotiating strategies. A sense of awe for nature, and a feeling of nature's closeness, is expressed by one of Leskov's characters: "Do I really live only while I eat, wear a coat and sleep? Eternal life is eternal, like this whole nature, like a thought, living in succeeding generations" («Неужто я живу только пока я ем, ношу сюртук и сплю? Жизнь вечная вечна, как эта вся природа, как мысль, живущая в сменяющих друг друга поколениях»; Leskov 1998 279). The events of nature are inscrutable; nature's intentions are indiscernible without the interpretative tool of a specific worldview, as Leskov's character remarks: "That white butterfly here, which since dusk has fallen asleep on the pink leaf and sleeps, wrapped in trembling moon light, does he really feel it exactly like I do?" («Вон тот белый мотылек, что с сумерек уснул на розовом листочке, и дремлет, облитый дрожащим, лунным светом, неужто чувствует

его точь-в-точь, как и я?»; Leskov 1998 277). The animal here helps the human to orient himself in relation to natural beauty.

Leskov himself based his authority as a writer on knowledge of the real world, on his practical experience of its details and demands (Evdokimova 37). This was what separated him from the theorists who expounded on Russia's needs from St. Petersburg and Moscow (Eikhenbaum 4). And Leskov in fact possessed practical expertise and skill, while his texts transmit useful information. Leskov began writing as a journalist, notifying the public about practical problems and this quality carried over to his fiction. Leskov himself said that he “could not think up any good stories” and he had to take from life (Evdokimova 38). Not only did he write from life, but he valued this element in his works (Evdokimova 35).

The Empathy Effect

The second function of animal imagery in Leskov's works plays on the voiceless and agent-less state of animals, which helps to elicit empathy in humans. The animal body has much in common with the human body, many species having similar family structures as humans, and basic physiological functions are common to animals and humans. Perhaps for these reasons, Cicero thought the crowd at an elephant slaughter in the arena felt that the elephants had a “fellowship with the human race” (Gilhus 25), for instance. The animal has an attraction for humans, who do not merely subsist on animal meat and products and harness animal power, but also form emotional attachments to animals. Attraction brings the human to the animal, as the similarity and simultaneous dissimilarity are a magnet that activates empathy. Animals are recipients of human emotional interaction that is ambiguous, because the animal does not provide verbal feedback, leaving animal responses open to human interpretation. This cushioned

emotional interchange (from the point of view of the human) encourages empathy. Animal suffering elicits an affective connection that encourages identification with the victim, with the object viewed. Leskov plays on the simultaneous similarity and dissimilarity of the animal in both comic and pathetic registers. Animals are effective in eliciting such empathy because they are frequently victimized and they are silent in the sense of being unable to register their objections to humans in an effectual way. Animals' responsiveness and simultaneous "muteness" stirs sympathy and empathy in humans. Empathy increases when the animal is unable to comprehend or combat its situation, as the human onlooker has an impulse to help the animal escape from its plight. The defenselessness of the subject is not limited to animals, however; this makes animals a convenient figurative body on which to depict negative human experiences. Animals can easily stand in for human victims, which allows the writer to comment on human society in a softened form. "To be of a subaltern race has been frequently represented throughout human history as to be of a lesser species," James Jeffrey Cohen writes (48). The most obvious and recurrent image of this kind in Leskov's corpus is the caged bird, which is consistently used to depict female characters whose agency is hindered or non-existent, examples of which occur in *No Way Out*, "Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District," and "The Bypassed."

In some texts, the animal suffering is presented with reference to animal sacrifice, which resonates with the Hebrew scriptures of the Jewish and Christian traditions. The central Christian New Testament image of Christ as the Lamb of God is a figuration of animal sacrifice; and imagery and texts from this tradition were important to Leskov as a writer (Evdokimova 54). In the sacrificial act, the offered body enacts an affective change in the people as a ritual body, and alters the plight of the people for the better in spite of their own immoral behavior. Thus, transformation of the communal predicament is enabled by a victim, whose death redeems the

community. Both historical usage of the animal in this rite, and qualities of certain animal species, when anthropomorphized and equated with human qualities such as passivity and obedience to nature, make animal images convenient for artistically conveying the phenomenon of sacrifice. At a deep level, sacrifice itself is a reaction to an existential uncertainty. As an image, it is useful to Leskov in bringing attention to the existential uncertainty behind challenges and problems of the world that he observed.

The Riddle Effect

The riddle carries a sociological and communal dimension. Savely Senderovich emphasizes that the folk riddle depends for its solution on shared knowledge rather than on individual deductive acumen on the part of the solver of the riddle (54). The folk riddle is a means of passing on information that is not openly discussed or explicitly named and the experience of being posed a riddle and uncovering the answer is part of actualizing membership in the community. That is, the process of effort and the application to the stock of communal experience is a necessary exercise that actualizes the new member. As Likhachev points out, Leskov's writing has an extratextual goal of shaping the readers/listeners, and this goal is achieved, as the folk riddle's is, by means of its own structure that forces its guessers/readers to rely on a larger fund of shared experience. Evdokimova shows that, more particularly, Leskov compels his readers to participate in the act of remembering, forcing readers to combine personal memory with common cultural memory (Evdokimova 62). The reader who engages with Leskov's writings by interpreting the multivalent clues becomes part of a community formed by Leskov's discussions. The riddle that Leskov constructs is: "What does it mean to be a (good) human?"

Animals embody this riddle of identity that Leskov poses because of the simultaneous similarity and dissimilarity of the animal and the human and the persistent usage of the animal as a teaching tool. In this usage, the animal image is already an artifact that has had many retellings, making it an entity that is rich in wisdom. The predisposition to read animals and nature as a communicative text gives animal imagery didactic potential. The physical appearance of human characters that are compared to animals demands interpretation, such as Vasilii Petrovich Bogoslovskii, who is called Musk Ox because his hair falls down on the sides of his face and looks like a musk ox's horns. Physical appearance in these riddles is never merely incidental or merely striking; odd physicality challenges the reader's expectations and categories, and acts as the sign of other challenges and breaches of categorizations and expectations (just as Leskov himself breaks expectations by inventing genre labels and by disrupting any stable established structural form that his work begins to take, as if removing it from the realm of serious literature (Likhachev 1989, 139)). What the relationship is between a human and an animal is the underlying question, as a human character seems to be more like an animal. The ambiguity in the characters' physical appearance demands that the readers decode them. This may involve a change in intellectual conviction or in emotional connection. Likhachev points out that many of Leskov's riddles are moral in nature and prompt the reader to apply moral sensitivity to evaluate the character and the situation. At the same time, animal images add playfulness to the text, which happens to be another quality of the riddle.

Leskov presents striking images that are both familiar and unfamiliar in order to intrigue and engage his readers, and animal imagery is perhaps the most effective means of enabling his readers to experience an estranging recognition similar to solving a riddle.

Symbolic Functions

Leskov uses animal imagery symbolically in a variety of ways. Each of the works that I will discuss feature particular symbols, even as some of the symbolic values are common to all of Leskov's animal imagery. The symbolic usage of animal imagery includes traditional interpretations of various animal species in the medieval tradition, which are largely productions of literary work. Recorded and passed on intertextually and culturally, certain connotations associate animals with moral qualities, personality types, habits, or other human characteristics. Sometimes, animals are actors in a play of virtue and vice. This traditional and transparent usage shows Leskov's propensity to draw on monuments of the past and his eclectic erudition that allowed him to incorporate the body of literature that treats animal imagery this way into his texts via references. Inscribing these references into his texts not only increases the density and reading pleasure of his stories, but vaults Leskov's own usage of them, his own scenes, his own texts, into the body of world literature, which is, as Leskov viewed it, a collection of the wisdom of past and recent eras. Symbolism is a way of dealing with reality, and reinforces the urgency of the real world while giving tools to interact with it; thus it can be seen as a literary approach to passing on wisdom, with which Leskov the practical writer was concerned.

Frames of Reference

Several frames of reference are implicated in Leskov's usage of animal imagery. In enumerating these frames of reference, some of the descriptions of the functions of animal imagery in Leskov's texts may be reiterated.

The **cultural-historical** context is very important to Leskov's poetics because Leskov began writing at the beginning of the 1860s, the time of the Great reforms and of a re-

envisioning of the Russian Empire following the disastrous Crimean War. Reforms included emancipating the serfs, establishing local government, promoting universities, and abolishing capital punishment. It was also a time of great scientific advances; and some of the most notable changes involved re-conceptualizing what it meant to be a human being, specifically in reference to the animal. Darwin's *Origin of the Species* came out in Russian in 1864 and provoked intense debate as it suggested an origin of the human without reference to a Divine Creator and presented an evolutionary continuity between humans and animals. Radical thinkers incorporated a version of Darwin's theory into their designs for social restructuring. Philosophy and other spheres of inquiry took up the theory's inferences about the nature of human beings and of animals, and introduced them into discussions on the existence of the soul. In Pisarev's article "The Bees," for example, human society was compared to animal society in order to expose the problems in human society (Pisarev 98-119).

The question of the continuum between human and non-human was central to the political Russian citizen as Darwin's publication circulated in educated circles. The comparison of human social life to animal life raised many opportunities for visions of restructuring human society. Leskov responded to expressions of this view with arguments for human morality, accentuating the additional capacity that humans and not animals possessed. In The 1864 novel of 600 pages that got him kicked out of the radical camp for good and branded as an enemy of progress, *No Way Out* («Некуда») Leskov includes a scene in which a radical's argument for living according to natural functions is responded to by a medical doctor, who compares animals' lack of inhibition in discharging bodily functions to humans' conventions of behavior and says that he prefers to retain these human prejudices. In this and other works, Leskov traces moral norms back to views about human origins. The radicals based their thinking about social

and moral questions on science (Graham 63), and envisioned a markedly different organization of sexual life based on specific interpretations of scientific discoveries. This point surfaces in the discussion of “Peacock.”

Leskov’s texts are saturated with references to discussions that include the names of politicians, scientists, officials, writers and philosophers as, for example, in “Laughter and Grief,” published just a decade into his writing career, in 1871, in which a character shares his opinions on current questions. Among the significant publications mentioned in one dialogue are *The Human Soul and the Animal Soul* by Wilhelm Vundt (St. Petersburg, 1865); *The Body and the Soul* by Herman Ulrici; *Textbook of Human Physiology*, by Carl Ludwig (Leipzig, 1861); *The Plurality of Uninhabited Worlds* by Camille Flammarion, 1862; and G. Struve’s dissertation, which was criticized by both the Slavophile Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov and the materialist Usov, who was a professor of zoology in Moscow.

Another example of such references to contemporary debates occurs in Leskov’s early short story, “Musk Ox,” which was finished within the first year of his career as a writer of fiction. The eponymous hero was modeled after one of Leskov’s acquaintances. In Leskov’s reworking of this figure, the noble but impractical seminary graduate becomes a revolutionary agitator, and is dubbed “Musk Ox” by his acquaintances. The animal image graphically illustrates a tension between the theological and the biological conceptualizations of the human, and Leskov submits his main character to scrutiny from the perspective of the welfare of human social development. Perhaps because of the proliferation of questions in which animals were freshly noticeable, animal imagery appeared early in Leskov’s fiction and remained a fruitful artistic device during the course of his career.

If animal imagery connects Leskov's texts to the grand ideological debates of his day, it also connects his texts to actual realities surrounding the reader. The presence of animals in rural Russia, as well as in the cities, is reason enough for them to appear in Leskov's writings, since he adhered to Realism in his fiction writing. But animal bodies were given a new and more prominent place as objects of viewing in the public life—and therefore also place in public discourse—just when Leskov began writing. The first zoo in Russia was opened in Moscow on February 12, 1864.³ The second zoo in Russia opened in St. Petersburg on August 1, 1865; it had very few animals but boasted a theater and two restaurants, and was visited by officers from the nearby Petropavlosk Citadel who were mainly interested in drinking and dancing, pointing to the connection to entertainment that animal viewing had. The proliferation of animals in Leskov's texts coincides with the fact of animals being presented for viewing in zoos in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the dissemination of Charles Darwin's works with their presentation of a common ancestry of humans and animals, and the fact that animal protection societies in Russian began to take shape, the first one being formed in 1866 (Nelson 96). In other words, while animals had always surrounded humans, in this period they were being seen in a new way, with a new appreciation. Leskov was concerned with Russia's good future, which he saw as depending on the ability to reform, i.e., to see things anew.

A second frame of reference to take into account in examining Leskov's usage of animal imagery the **Judeo-Christian worldview**, with its traditions, practices, and literary sources. Leskov was very interested in faith and religious phenomena and, while he adhered to a Christian perspective—he was Orthodox but increasingly responsive to Protestant approaches and

³ This zoo displayed 134 domestic specimens and 153 exotic specimens. It had grown out of two menageries, one that was opened by a Frenchman in 1855, and another that was owned by the Kreuzber family and made public in 1862 (Kisling 134).

viewpoints—he was curious about other experiences of faith. While viewing them from a Christian view, he found righteous people among all confessions in an age before this was expected.⁴

Well-read in theological, hagiographical, and other Christian literature, and an expert in Russian iconography and familiar with all the Church arts, Leskov provides his works with theological awareness. Always opposed to theorizing, especially when it manifested itself in the claims and rhetoric of the radicals but equally vehemently no matter what the source, Leskov nevertheless applies what could be called practical theology. Not only his righteous people but many of his characters reflect a theologically rigorous and hagiographically based conception of human virtue. Even before Leskov began writing his cycle of righteous portraits, his casts of characters included illustrations of righteousness defined by a worldview versed in both the Old and the New Testament, as well as an appreciation of civic virtues often identified with Protestantism. References to the Bible, and to other types of Christian and other religious literature, as well as to collections of wisdom from various religious traditions, are sprinkled throughout Leskov's texts. In the latter part of his career, Leskov devoted himself to reworking

⁴ For instance, in "At the Edge of the World," the non-Christian native saves the lives of the visiting Russian bishop and priest, while the baptized native leaves them to die in a snowstorm. The concluding reflection of the bishop who narrates this account is that the natives already have a strong moral code that must be built upon. (Leskov 1957 5: 451-517). Leskov wrote a book-length report on the situation of the Jews in Russia at the request of several Jewish leaders. This work and others shows a detailed knowledge and appreciation for Judaic ritual and a sympathy for the plight of the Jews in Russia (Safran 236). The hero of "Episcopal Justice" is the tragic figure of a Jewish father whose young son has been illegally conscripted into the army (Leskov 1957 6: 88-145). This abuse of Jewish children was widespread and accepted; Leskov touches on it in other works, such as "Musk Ox." A few other examples of Leskov's sociographic breadth as a writer are various sects of Protestants, such as the Radstocks (McLean 331). Leskov's works contain a fair amount of characters who are German and their virtues are highlighted, if sometimes laughed at as they are contrasted with Russian vices and idiosyncrasies, as in "Iron Will" (Leskov 1957 6: 5-87). A Chinese character briefly appears in "No Way Out" to debunk the radicals' utopian proselytizing, based on a practical point of view informed by Buddhism (Leskov 1957 2: 581). "The Enchanted Wanderer" deals with Tatars and while their religion is not praised, it is depicted with a significant degree of objectivity and factuality (Leskov 1973 3:44-66).

an apocryphal collection of saints' lives called the *Prolog*; while changing the emphasis, the poetic system and therefore the inherent message of these stories, he kept the basic plot and increased their moral transparency.

Beyond the topically religious references in the text, transformation is at the center of Leskov's artistic approach, both modeled within the text and in the relationship of the reader to the moral dilemmas portrayed. Dmitrii Likhachev has called his entire corpus a riddle-book requiring moral discernment to unravel. (Likhachev 140). Olga Evdokimova has shown that memory is a central element of Leskov's poetics, and memory or remembrance is a central element of eastern Christian ritual (Evdokimova). Irina Stoliarova has shown that transformation is the motivating force of his fiction (Stoliarova). The eschatological thrust of works like "The Enchanted Wanderer" reflect a sensitivity to the religious worldview of Russia's literary tradition, the disposition of which is to look forward to an overwhelming transformation.

Transformation provides a space in which identity is unknown, and in Leskov's works featuring animal imagery the animal-human divide is also obscured. The Judeo-Christian worldview with its clear distinction between God, humans, and animals supplies Leskov with his frame for viewing animals. Leskov's texts do not so much question the hierarchy of divine-human-animal in the Judeo-Christian tradition as much as highlight the significance of perceptive ambiguities that result in mis-evaluations. The ambiguity of a subject's place in the hierarchy is at the heart of the Christian story; in the New Testament and in the subsequent development of the Christian Church the central debates have been about whether Jesus was human or God, or both. In the New Testament, the ability to correctly perceive Jesus's true identity requires a virtuous life and heart, and analogously, Leskov's purpose in creating ambiguity about his characters' place on this ladder is to exercise his readers' moral discernment.

The New Testament is full of puzzling stories and parables in which the meaning is hidden in order to exercise minds and hearts of the listeners, and their ability to acknowledge Jesus' true identity develops gradually. Leskov imitates the approach, exercising the discerning capabilities of his readers in order to develop the ability to perceive the truth. Leskov wrote with the purpose of developing his readers, in order to benefit his country, and it is not surprising that later in his career he collaborated with Leo Tolstoy when the latter was in his didactic period. While Leskov's and Tolstoy's convergence of views was in the area of objection to certain practices in the Orthodox Church and policies of the Russian government that allowed social and other defects and injustices to flourish, their aesthetic approach differed. The so-called ornate prose that Leskov never fully abandoned, even in the relatively stripped down style of his retellings of apocryphal hagiographies, and which Tolstoy consistently criticized, was more than a literary verboseness; it was the aesthetic product of his persuasion that truth cannot be appreciated and received without a mental and spiritual engagement that tests the reader's assumptions of categories, order, and identity. The didactic purpose of Leskov's stories is muddled by the sheer pleasure of reading them and their appearance of being unplanned and unorganized accounts of actual events. Leskov valued how much a work of art reflected real life because real life was the ultimate authority for him; truth was concealed in real life but this truth was accessible only to the determined, educated, engaged reader/observer. Leskov's acknowledgment of the authority of real life included a respect for the developments of science and other modern branches of human endeavor, engaged in learning more about real life. While we do not know what Leskov made of Darwin's thesis, Leskov's observation of Russian society would have included the effects of Darwinism's circulation in society. Not one to dismiss something without being an authority on it, and having been part of the circles in which Darwin's thesis was taken as

confirmation of their principles—that is, the radicals—Leskov would have followed the discussions of Darwinism. Indirect references to it make their way into Leskov's texts. In one particularly memorable instance, Leskov's character disposes humorously of the radical claims that humans are not held by any higher principles or concerns than a biological nature inheres in them. This scene occurs in the anti-nihilistic novel that got Leskov kicked out of the radical camp forever and nearly written out of literature, which was controlled to a significant degree by radical thinkers. Leskov's polemical attacks on his former associates were to a large extent results of his temper and his outrage at the misunderstanding that had left him ostracized by the radicals. What Darwin's idea offered was another iteration of the ambiguity of identity because it seemed to question the Judeo-Christian distinction of divine-human-animal and possibly modify it. Without offering his view and his engagement of the material, Leskov shows a responsiveness to the implications it carried of a suspension of distinction between hard and fast categories. While the suspension for Leskov is not permanent, he does use it to challenge his readers deeply.

In many ways, Leskov's work is all about the re-assertion of the divine-human-animal hierarchy. While a sense of ambiguity remains, the concluding question is of where the character stands on the scale of moral virtue and vice (i.e., social benefit or harm). By depicting his characters as animal-like, Leskov lets his readers feel the aversion that equating human behavior with animal behavior produces, but simultaneously he shows that the aversion to the offending character is misplaced, that the animal-like characters are more human in their pursuit of the good and the beneficial than they would be if they embodied an insipid adherence to convention. This trick reflects the New Testament account of Christ, in which the disobedience

to civilized conventions is perceived by some as blasphemous and sinful, but are finally revealed to be expressions of divinity.

Animal studies questions the divine-human-animal hierarchy from a variety of positions, ranging from secular atheism to Christian progressivism. Even if these positions differ on their view of the divine component, are all interested in renewing and improving the understanding of the relationship between the second two components, human and animal, using a variety of methods and sources. Leskov too is involved in this project, though probably not consciously. Although he reveals the seemingly animal-like to be more human than the seemingly human, and reasserts the divine-human-animal hierarchy based on the moral capability of the human, the residue from the ambiguity and the blurring of identity remains in the reader's mind, not only to question the appearance of virtue and vice, but to appreciate the unknown quality of the animal and in general the "other" in relation to the sovereign self. The destabilization of distinctions that Leskov's texts achieve is accomplished in part by pointing out connections that are overlooked, especially on a bodily level: of animal bodies sustaining human life by being used for labor, for food, for war, for writing, for many technologies and human endeavors that seem to increase the distance of the human from the animal and yet in unnoticed ways rely on the close connection with the animal body and with all of nature. Certain works of animal studies begin the contemplation of the relationship between human and animal from the first chapters of the first book of the Judeo-Christian Scripture, the Book of Genesis. The return to this early sacred text is yet another affinity between Leskov's treatment of animals and of animal studies as a whole, both secularly and religiously motivated or associated: the animal-human relationship is by no means peripheral in religion and is important to understanding what is human. Animal

studies seeks to examine this relationship and, often, for a moral purpose. Leskov too incorporates animal imagery in his works for a moral purpose.

While many of the Christian texts and bodies of literature that Leskov draws from are of ancient vintage, his sources extended beyond Christian writers. Socrates was among his favorite figures, and he was familiar with Western as well as Russian medieval writings. Being self-educated, Leskov never felt that his training was on the level of his peers and so he read voraciously to make up for it. His insertion of **references to the texts of world literature and culture, many of which belong to the past rather than the contemporary literary scene**, is a basic element of Leskov's poetic effectiveness; their inclusion enhances the sophistication of his writing. Many obscure turns of phrase, nicknames, or other references are introduced into the narrative without explanation in such a way that provides color and interest. During the course of the story, however, these phrases are explicated and their meaning gradually revealed. This affects the reading experience and demands more robust readerly involvement in negotiating the meaning of the texts. Leskov compares many of his characters to figures of world history and literature. Not only does this introduce Leskov's own texts into the prestigious company of the canon of world civilization, it demands that the reader remember the richness of the heritage of the past.

This aesthetic approach accords with his political views. Leskov was for gradual change and so never saw eye to eye with either radicals or reactionaries, though he worked closely with the former in the beginning of his writing career and with the latter during the most successful period of his career. His prescription for positive change in Russia demanded a well-informed consideration of the past, accessible through the texts passed from culture to culture and generation to generation. Any change for the better that Russia could accomplish, Leskov

believed, was contingent upon a moral improvement of the people. He did not believe that peasants held the key to Russia's spiritual, economic, or political dilemmas; rather, he acknowledged their strengths and potential, but maintained that they were essentially unenlightened and must be educated. Many practical examples proved this point, such as in "The Drought," in which he depicts the barbarous practice of burning a dead body in order to end a drought, as well as the irrational rejection of well-built and newly-constructed houses by the peasants in favor of smoke-filled huts, which they erected just behind the new housing (Leskov 1996 1:103-120).

Leskov utilizes ancient and medieval archetypes of animals and thus not only dresses up his polemical themes, but links his own texts to the rich heritage of world literature. The many citations elevate the status of Leskov's own work since through Leskov the author, the reader confronts selected monuments of world culture. The animal fable is part of this exploration of long-established forms, and confers prestige not only because of classical treatment of content but because of genre associations. More recent genres that Leskov utilizes include the Christmas tale, which was popular in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. Leskov also draws from the hagiographical tradition and places animal motifs in unexpected interactions with religious content. In addition, Leskov includes folkloric material that allows the cryptic elements of his narratives to sound a more primal chord in the readers, as he attaches folkloric motifs to animal figures. Besides the animal image's potential to register greater weight and significance due to its relevance to the polemics of the day, and the conspicuous role that the animal figure plays in Leskov's riddling tactics, Leskov also takes advantage of the ancient origins of this literary tradition and its productive continuation to exploit the potential of the animal image.

Additionally, animal imagery participates in a feature of Leskov's writing style that Likhachev points out as dealing with retaining the reader's attention: **the riddle aspect of his texts**. In works that prominently feature animal imagery, the animal image is the fullest expression of the riddle. Leskov constructs the majority of his texts not on the building up of dramatic suspense via the plot, but on the withholding of evaluative authorial statements about characters from those places in the text where the reader expects them.

Suspense in Leskov's texts is tied to characterization. For example, "Musk-Ox" is narrated atemporally, the majority of the action being retold in conversation that is recorded as dialogue. The conflict is whether or not Musk Ox will ultimately find his place in human society, and transcend his animal nickname. Along the way, however, interest in the plot is generated by the nickname itself and the proliferation of the hero's eccentricities.

The riddle includes the narrator's direct address to the reader that teases the reader to solve the enigma; this is followed by many references and ambiguous facts that serve as clues. The reader must retain the possible meanings of each reference and juxtapose seeming contradictions while searching for the ultimate significance to which they lend themselves. There may be several significant conclusions, but all the meanings will be more or less congenial to Leskov's aim. Leskov values the very process of scrutinizing engagement with the stories he tells and through them with the lessons of human existence. At heart a didactic writer, in order to avoid tiring the reader, Leskov hides his message inside a guessing game. He does not conceal the improving aspect of his writing, but induces the reader to form an independent conclusion, a conclusion which is nevertheless anticipated by the rich supporting tapestry of the clues of the work. Animal imagery is especially effective in this "intriguing" of the reader, both in the problematizing of identity and in the retaining of readerly interest, thanks to the long

tradition of literary treatment of animals, and the basic paradoxes and contradictions inherent to the contemplation of the animal by the human.

As a writer of the second half of the nineteenth century who started his writing career in the 1860s, which was a time of increased optimism thanks to the reforms that aimed to address the disaster of the Crimean War, Leskov is concerned with contributing to Russia's continual forward advancement. In order to do so, he seeks to educate his readers and train and sharpen their ability to discern and consider. Leskov's own life illustrated to him the potential of self-application and self-education and, especially when he was beginning to write professionally, he was enthusiastic about contributing to the best possible outcome for his country. The most important way to accomplish good was by cultivating a moral sensitivity in the citizens of this new Russia.

Leskov's corpus is a collection of interpretive riddles in which animals are included; animal imagery lends itself to the riddle aspect. Leskov's works are about solving the riddle, perceiving the mystery. This is especially true in the works with animal imagery; animal imagery is present in those works in which Leskov wants the reader to solve the riddle and to be morally exercised. For this reason, motifs of seeing, viewing, the eye, and related thematic material, appear frequently in companionship with animal imagery. This thematic material revolving around perception involves the observation of reality, the affective connection or resulting from an apparent similarity yet persistent dissimilarity of physical form, the change resulting from witnessing the victimization of another being, and the philosophical change that results from the observing the representation of a sacrificial act. All of these are closely related to the spectacle, the icon, behavior as semiotic, to the conscience of the spectator who has the

opportunity to become a participant. Like them, Leskov's animal images are speaking images waiting to be interpreted.

CHAPTER 1: THE FOOD SACRIFICE

The story “Sheramur” (Шерамур, 1879) features animal imagery that highlights human concerns whose provenance lies in ancient texts of the Judeo-Christian tradition. As Evdokimova points out, Leskov’s poetic approach activates the reader’s memory on the level of cultural memory as well as personal memory, because the references and subtexts provide vital information to make sense of the story, the “chaste compactness” of which (Benjamin 366) does not provide psychological explanations (Evdokimova 72). The subtexts and animal imagery of “Sheramur” pose a riddle of character, presented in terms of the hero’s form. What image does the hero, who is nicknamed Sheramur, conform to, how should he be understood? Several models are offered as possibilities, including historical and fictional figures, mythological creatures, and animals: a wolf, a cat, and a dog. The reader’s task is to notice and parse the clues to discern the obfuscated moral contours of the image; all the pieces of the hero’s identity may be included in the text, but their interrelations are not explained.

The imagery associated with Sheramur’s wedding propels him onto the stage of world events when it is compared to Napoleon’s coronation. The hero himself is called a child of Cain, invoking the long history of divine-human relations, animals, and eating; and additional references to Turgenev, Pogodin, and historically significant saints who occupy a place in Russian theological culture offer a rich context of signification that repudiates the seeming meaninglessness of Sheramur’s experiences, which the narrator also gestures toward. The animal-like hero is immersed in a potpourri of significant world events and texts, belying his insignificance and joining the animal-like, the ambiguous, and the unfamiliar to the course of human history.

Leskov's riddle is both a representation of and an experience of the Realist project of discovering what reality is by becoming aware of how we look at it. Our perception of reality depends on our relationship to the object, our distance, primarily emotionally, from it. In this story, Leskov models for readers an emotional bridge that enables viewing the seemingly insignificant hero within the context of high significance he provides. The experience of the riddle is aimed at creating not only comprehension of, but empathy for, the object perceived. Empathy was a significant emotion in Darwin's theory of human origins, as I discuss in the chapter "The Sacrificial Victim." That chapter further shows how the viewer's emotional distance from the object colors the reality perceived. In "Sheramur," the presentation of the riddle is foregrounded, but the theme of empathy also arises in the scene when the narrator and a lady are having a conversation about high society while sitting on a park bench. The lady is giving her opinion about Eugène Bersier, a reform preacher: "But I do not judge him; he has talent, but he is not correct, and I say to him directly: you are not correct, you have to see the pope. You have to look at him without prejudices, because with prejudices everything can seem wrong, but without prejudices . . ." (my translation; *SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 275).⁵ The lady has an opportunity to put her own advice into practice, in the continuation of the passage:

But as soon as she had said this, in the bend of the alley as if from the earth hatched Sheramur—and what a Sheramur, with what an appearance and in what garb! Shaggy, shoddy, emaciated, covered in dust, like a cat jumping out from under dirty eaves, with a yellow leaf in his uncombed beard and holes in his blouse and on both knees.

⁵ Я и его не осуждаю - у него талант, но он не прав, и я ему прямо говорю: вы не правы; папу надо видеть; надо на него глядеть без предубеждения, потому что с предубеждением все может показаться дурно, - а без предубеждения . . .

At his appearance I simply shuddered, cut short the animated story of my lady and, availing myself of the rights of close acquaintanceship, took her by the hand and whispered:

“Look here without prejudices.”

“At whom? At that monster?”

“Yes; afterwards I will tell you, what kind of content is under that title.”

She frowned, looked, and . . . also shuddered.

“It’s horrible!” she whispered after Sheramur, when he had passed us, not vouchsafing even one glance, and with a bowed, completely fallen head. One had to think that the *sergent de ville* had not spared him much that night, and maybe several nights in a row. (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 275-6; ellipsis in original)⁶

The lady displays an empathetic response to the inhuman impression of Sheramur that here encompasses the monstrous and the feline. In her later interchanges with Sheramur, her empathetic response allows her to look beyond his table manners, which provoke comparison to an animal. While empathy unlocks the door to understanding the hero, a considerable amount of baffling information is provided to the reader.

⁶ Но только что она это высказала, - на повороте аллеи как из земли вылутился Шерамур - и какой, - в каком виде и убранстве! Шершавый, всклоченный, тощий, весь в пыли, как выскочивший из-под грязной застрехи кот, с желтым листом в своей нечесаной бороде и прорехами на блузе и на обоих коленях.

При появлении его я просто вздрогнул, перервал оживленный рассказ моей дамы и, пользуясь правами короткого знакомства, взял ее за руку и шепнул:

- А вот посмотрите-ка без предубеждения.

- На кого? Вот на этого монстра?

- Да; я после расскажу вам, какое под этим заглавием содержание.

Она прищурилась, рассмотрела и . . . тоже вздрогнула.

- Это ужасно! - прошептала она вслед Шерамуру, когда он минул нас, не удостоив не единого взгляда, с понурою, совершенно падающею головою. Надо было думать, что нынешнюю ночь, а может быть и несколько ночей кряду, его мало пожалел *sergent de ville*.

The riddle of characterization begins with the title of the work, a French term of endearment in Russian transliteration. Without a context, the grammatical, lexical, and national frame of reference of the title is incomprehensible. The first sentence does little to clarify: “For several, fairly serious reasons, the nickname displayed here must replace the given name of my hero—if he is somehow worthy of being called a hero” («По некоторым, достаточно важным причинам выставленная кличка должна заменять собственное имя моего героя - если только он годится куда-нибудь в герои»; *SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 244). The title is the nominal hero’s nickname, but its source and motivation are only explained later. In the scene in the park mentioned above, the narrator speaks about the hero in terms of a book (“what kind of content is under that title”), emphasizing that the hero is material to be consumed for the reader’s edification. Thus the opening frames the riddle of the title character.

The riddle is presented in terms of “form.” In one scene, the narrator remembers people whose status and with whom his meetings were even slightly similar to his experience with Sheramur, but he cannot recall anyone similar to Sheramur, because Sheramur has no form:

It is even pitiful and eerie to compare [him with these other people]. All of them have a form and content and their own moral profile, but this one . . . is just like something dropped by the Gypsies; some kind of eraser mark that has lost the traces of the chisel. Some kind of poor, pitiful worn-out thing, for which it remains only to be shaken up by a spindle and thrown out . . . What is it? Or is it actually a “riddle picture” thought up with even too much cleverness, one of those with which the windows of the small shops in Paris are full? Stupid pictures, and decidedly not stupid heads are diligently working on them. From these puzzles one in particular comes to mind: some kind of scroll—gray gruel with the inscription: “What is it?” It, more than all the others, intrigues and torments the

curious and confuses those who pose as the best experts at every kind of riddle. They turn it in every direction, hoping by some fortunate turn to discover what is hidden in this hieroglyph. And they do not find out, and they will not discover anything, because nothing is there—it is just a blotch, and nothing else. (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 287-8; ellipses in original)⁷

The riddle of the hero is announced as a visual puzzle. On one hand, Sheramur is a picture and a hieroglyph to be deciphered («картинка» and «гиероглиф»). On the other hand, Sheramur is like “an eraser mark,” “a worn-out something,” or “a blotch” («затерть», «морина» and «пятно») that contains no meaning beyond its purpose of baffling and teasing the riddle-guesser. These anti-images, including “gray gruel” («серый размазня»), convey what the narrator refers to as Sheramur’s formlessness. Sheramur does not have “form and content” («вид и содержание») like the other people that the narrator brings to mind. He is like the gray, worn-out thing or like the blotch in the picture riddles in Paris shop windows. This passage is Leskov’s most explicit articulation of the riddle.

Like his suggestion that his hero is “just a blotch, and nothing else” with nothing to discover, the narrator’s comparison of Sheramur to Pogodin, to Turgenev’s character Rudin, and to Rudin’s real-life prototypes Mikhail Bakunin, Timofei Granovskii, and Ivan Turgenev

⁷ Это даже жалостно и жутко сравнивать. Там у всех есть вид и содержание и свой нравственный облик, а это . . . именно что-то цыганами оброненное; какая-то затерть, потерявшая признаки чекана. Какая-то бедная, жалкая изморина, которую остается хоть веретеном встряхнуть да выбросить . . . Что это такое? Или взаправду это уже чересчур хитро задуманная «загадочная картинка», из тех, которыми полны окна мелких лавчонок Парижа? Глупые картинки, а над ними прилежно трудят головы очень неглупые люди. Из этих головоломок мне особенно припоминалась одна: какой-то завиток - серая размазня с подписью: “Quest-ce que c'est?” Она более всех других интригует и мучит любопытных и сбивает с толку тех, которые выдают себя за лучших знатоков всех загадок. Они вертят ее на все стороны, надеясь при одном счастливом обороте открыть: что такое сокрыто в этом гиероглифе? и не открывают, да и не откроют ничего - потому что там нет ничего, потому что это просто пятно - и ничего более.

himself, is provocative. In contrast to the wide-ranging cultural activity of these figures to whom the hero is compared, the life achievement of the hero is to open a diner where he can eat and regularly feed a handful of vagrants for free. Evidently something, however, prompts the comparison, and it is the reader's task to perceive what.

The narrator is not satisfied with his comparison of Sheramur to "a blotch," however, and searches further to find a form to which Sheramur is similar. In the end, the narrator realizes that the mental search is hopeless. The word "form" («форма»)⁸ has a range of meanings and associations, not least of which is Plato's discussion of forms.⁹ «Форма» denotes appearance, figure, image, shape. One of the meanings of "figure" («фигура») in Russian is "likeness" («подобие»), a word used for a category of saint. This word establishes a connection with "holy Moses the Moor" («преподобный Моисей Мурин»), a reference to whom appeared in the narrative's opening description of Sheramur's appearance. Sheramur is compared to Saint Moses because of his long beard, which is an identifying feature in iconographic depictions of the saint. This correlation with the saint emphasizes the idea of image, figure, and appearance, the coordination of visual appearance with type.

Other references deepen the enigma of Sheramur's type. When associated with Sheramur, the subtext of Napoleon III reinforces the theme of content being hidden in a misleading outer form. Napoleon III twice attempted to seize power by dressing up and pretending to be the emperor. Both of these attempts were quickly defused, but he later escaped

⁸ A dictionary with which Leskov would have been acquainted, *Словарь церковно-славянского и русского языка, составленный Вторым Отделением Императорской Академии наук*, defines «форма» as: 1) Наружный вид предмета. 2) Образец, пример. 3) Определенный образ, порядок, как что либо делать. 4) В литейном и лепном искусстве: сосуд или вещь с напечатлением предмета, который должен перейти на художественное произведение; льяло.

⁹ This connotation is not coincidental, since in "Musk Ox," which describes an eccentric who seems to meet the requirements of a righteous person except for the serious matters of his political orientation and his suicide, the hero writes out excerpts from Plato.

from exile by a similar strategy of disguising himself, this time dressed as a brick-layer, and went to England. Napoleon III is poetically attached to Sheramur because when Sheramur marries Tante Grillade, he “makes a late correction to Napoleon III’s offence,” («позднюю поправку к проступку третьего Наполеона»; *SS* 6: 298) since Tante had supposedly been an object of interest to Bonaparte before he crowned himself emperor. Napoleon III’s disguising himself as an emperor in order to accomplish a coup d’état is similar to Sheramur’s howling like a wolf in order to be fed by his landlady. More importantly, the reference to Napoleon III strengthens the theme of wearing a costume, adopting an outer appearance that conceals the inner or real identity.

Although Sheramur has no form and cannot be compared with figures such as Pogodin, Bakunin, Granovskii, Turgenev, and the fictional Rudin, Sheramur is juxtaposed with other historical figures and, after a moral comparison, he emerges as being more virtuous. When sharing her experiences of high society, the society lady mentions Garibaldi and Herzen, but subjects them to withering criticism. Both these figures fall short in areas in which Sheramur is also evaluated: Garibaldi fails to avoid casual intimate relations with women, while Herzen behaves tyrannically in a restaurant with a napkin tied under his chin, an escapade that lowers the dignity of this international celebrity. Sheramur acquits himself more virtuously than Garibaldi in his relationships with women, and his habit of gnawing bones at the dining table is judged with condescension by the society lady, while Herzen’s infantile despotism in a Parisian café is not. The image of Sheramur is deployed to critique famous people and to expose the deficiencies of celebrities who enjoy public respect. This destabilizes the representation of the social hierarchy, and induces a reconsideration of Sheramur’s relative position in relation to human values.

Further details hint that Sheramur is actually an edifying example, such as details of the language in the following passage, in which Sheramur first appears in action:

In the summer of 187—, a literary Nobody [Nemo] arrived in Petersburg. He settled in a small room opposite the railing of the Luxembourg Garden and lived quietly and humbly for several days, when one day the concierge suddenly entered his room and said that “someone” had arrived and was demanding that monsieur come out to him on the staircase.

(*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 244)¹⁰

The “someone” who has arrived is Sheramur, who asks Nemo for a small loan in order to buy a meal. The eccentric behavior of this “someone” will prove to be not only intriguing but will be offered to the reader as an example of human virtue. In contrast, Nobody is a writer who merely propagates conventionalities without having a positive impact on society, as becomes clear when Sheramur criticizes writers’ choice of subjects. Sheramur’s impact is more significant than the Nobody’s and his entrance as “someone” (this scene occurs on the second page of the first chapter) signals his significance in contrast to the Nemo.

Other subtexts of the work unsettle the hero’s identity as a human. The ambiguity of the hero’s appearance is marked from his first entrance when a servant has difficulty answering a question about him: “‘Is it a man or a woman?’ ‘At any rate it seems to me that it is more likely a man.’” (- Это мужчина или женщина?- Во всяком случае мне кажется, что это скорее мужчина; *SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 245). As the passage continues, Sheramur lacks readable age markings as well as gender markings:

¹⁰ Летом 187* года в Париж прибыл из Петербурга литературный Немо. Он поселился в небольшой комнатке, против решетки Люксембургского сада, и жил тут тихо и смирно несколько дней, как вдруг однажды входит к нему консьерж и говорит, что пришел «некто» и требует, чтобы monsieur вышел к нему - на лестницу.

At first it seemed that it was a costumed thirteen or fourteen year old boy, but when he turned around just a little, the view changed; in front of you first of all are two bright, dark eyes, which are burning with a wild, as if hungry fire, a black beard of remarkable size and arrangement. It had grown over his whole face almost up to his very eyes and below it covered his chest to the belt. Such a beard, according to Stroganovskii's pattern book, is prescribed only for painting Saint Moses the Moor . . ." (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 245).¹¹

The ambiguity of age due to the "half-childish shoulders" («полудетские плечи»), the ravenous eyes, and the lengthy black beard gives him an elemental or animalistic aspect, not only in the physical features, but in the way that the narrator perceives him. The description is written as if the hero metamorphoses from a costumed teenager into an elemental creature, while mention of Saint Moses the Moor in the conclusion takes him from nearly a diabolical status to a saintly one in the next sentence.

Sheramur's description crosses borders between the recognizable and the enigmatic. This description invites a fantastic perception of the hero. The word «оборотился» ("turned around") is morphologically and etymologically linked to the word for "werewolf" («оборотень», from «оборотить», to turn, to reverse¹²) and the verb "to change" («изменяется») fortifies the impression. The adjective "costumed" («костюмированный») adds to the sense of concealed

¹¹ Сначала казалось, что это костюмированный тринадцати- или четырнадцатилетний мальчик, но чуть он оборотился, вид изменяется: перед вами прежде всего два яркие, черные глаза, которые горят диким, как бы голодным огнем, и черная борода замечательной величины и расположения. Она заросла по всему лицу почти под самые глаза и вниз закрывает грудь до пояса. Такую бороду, по строгановскому лицевому подлиннику, указано писать только преподобному Моисею.

¹² A dictionary contemporary to Leskov defines «оборотиться» as the perfective aspect of «оборачиваться», the meaning of which is given as: 1) Поворачиваться в какую-либо сторону; 2) Переходить из известного вида в другой, превращаться (*Slovar' tserkovno-slavianskogo i russkogo iazyka* 27).

identity though clothing that compounds with the comparison to Napoleon III, who attempted two coups by dressing as if he were already the emperor. The natural and animalistic are invoked by the word “wild” («дикий»). The hairy covering seems like the fur of an animal: “[his beard] had grown over his whole face almost up to his very eyes” («[борода] заросла по всему лицу почти под самые глаза»). Additionally, the phrase “with a hungry fire” («ГОЛОДНЫМ ОГНЕМ») reinforces the sense of a nonhuman being, whether animal or mythological.

This impression of the nonhuman is also conveyed in the scene discussed above when the society lady observes Sheramur for the first time. In this scene the animal and the elemental are suggested by the uncanny way that Sheramur appears: “But as soon as she had said this, in the bend of the alley as if from the earth hatched Sheramur” («Но только что она это высказала, - на повороте аллеи как из земли вылунился Шерамур»; *SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 275). He enters suddenly, as if in response to the lady’s words, in order to test her ability to look at people without prejudice. The earth is considered gnomes’ native region and, although the word “gnome” («ГНОМ») does not appear until a subsequent scene with the Englishwoman, the tone is indicated here as the narrator paints Sheramur’s portrait in bits and pieces without chronological consistency. Both the narrator and the lady shudder at the sight of the hero, while animal identity is connoted by the word “hatch.” This description links the hero to animals in a biological sense and to the folkloric realm in which the connection with the earth is intimate. The passage destabilizes the divide between humans and non-humans.

The representations of identity disguised or concealed in a costume, the images of the puzzles in Paris shop windows, and the search for a type to characterize Sheramur, for a form that he satisfies, as well as the arcane qualifications of him such as “hero of the belly,” already

make the reader's task of evaluating the hero clear. To these we can now add the additional complicating factor of animal references. When animal imagery is used in reference to the hero, his human identity is destabilized and the animal-human distinction is blurred. Several behaviors place him in the realm of the animal. Sheramur's mastery of human forms of communication is incomplete. He composes one piece of writing with much effort and resorts to cryptic abbreviations which cannot be deciphered by the narrator, who instead has to deduce the answer. This is yet another representation of the riddle within the text. In addition, Sheramur's conversational style contains animalistic features. He is compared to a quail: "Like a quail, he wailed: 'Vuuy, vuuy, madam, vuuy, vuuy'" («он как перепел забил: "Вуй, вуй, мадам, вуй, вуй, вуй"»); *SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 297). He uses physical contact to express emotion more than words:

He noticed me himself and at first nodded his head, then immediately after jumped down from the imperial and, grabbing me by the hand, squeezed it and not only held it in his hand, but for some reason waved it from side to side and even lowed:

"Well!" [the sound in Russian is "Nu"]

"Yes," I said, "I am going away now, Sheramur."

He again squeezed my hand and waved it, again mooed something and began to eat a steak, which I had ordered for him the very minute that I caught sight of him. (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 281-2)¹³

¹³ Он и сам меня заметил и сначала закивал головою, а потом скоро соскочил с империяла и, взяв меня за руку, сжал ее и не только подержал в своей руке, но для чего-то поводил из стороны в сторону и даже промычал:

- Ну!

- Да, - говорю, - вот я и уезжаю, Шерамур.

Он опять пожал и поводил мою руку, опять что-то промычал и стал есть бифштекс, который я велел подать для него в ту минуту, когда только его завидел.

Sheramur ignores civilized conventions, such as the need to wear a standard set of clothes. He gnaws bones and howls like a wolf. Sheramur has an explanation for his howling, and counts it as a skill because, thanks to it, he and three fellow students kept themselves alive when they were hungry and cold. Howling for them was a means of communication that was crucial to survival because it scared their landlady into giving them some firewood and bread. Like wolves, the students howled in a pack. Sheramur is called “black-muzzled” by the guard who is summoned to address the situation. When Sheramur tells the narrator about this period of his life, he sings a song that he and the other students sang as they were hopping around the fire to keep warm:

But the frogs along the road

Jump, stretching their legs,

Ribbit, ribbit,

Ribbit, ribbit. (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 254)¹⁴

A similar animalization had been forced on St. Moses the Moor, to whom Sheramur is compared because of his long beard. As his standard saint’s Life recounts, the saint undergoes racial ostracism that merges the animal with the human subaltern when the abbot tests his virtue and tells the monastic clergy to chase Moses out when he first approaches the altar after being ordained a priest. “Moor” («Мурин») refers to a black man or a Moor, and “Moor” is itself an unspecific term applied indiscriminately. St. Moses was a former robber as well as a Moor; analogously, Sheramur is a homeless misfit as well as a representative of the backward nation of Russia. The parallel continues on a figurative level. When Moses is driven out of the altar, he

¹⁴ А лягушки по дорожке
Скачут, вытянувши ножки,
Ква-ква-ква-ква,
Ква-ква-ква-ква.

responds with saintly humility as he addresses himself: “They have treated you well, dog, they have treated you well, dark-faced Ethiopian; for you are unworthy, and how do you dare to enter the holy place; you are not a man: how do you dare to approach people and the servants of God?” (- Хорошо поступили с тобою, пес, хорошо поступили с тобою, мракообразный эфиоп; ибо ты недостойн, и как ты осмеливаешься войти в святое место; ты не человек: как же осмеливаешься ты подходить к людям и служителям Божиим?; Dimitrii, “Murina”). In this animalized position, Moses shows his humility and becomes an instructive model of virtue to his fellow monks. Similarly, Sheramur is ascribed animal characteristics, such as gnawing bones, a beard that covers his face almost to his eyes, wandering around Paris in search of food and a place to sleep, and howling like a wolf. One of Sheramur’s nicknames, “black-muzzled, («черномордый») combines his animal persona (“muzzle, snout, mug,” «морд-») with his dark color (“black,” «черно») in a work that presents him as a righteous example, similar to the passage above in which the saint’s voluntary self-animalizing based on being black is an expression of his extreme holiness.

Another passing similarity with Moses the Moor is of interest. While still an unrepentant bandit, Moses crosses a flooded river to avenge himself on a shepherd who had interfered with a robbery. The shepherd has already fled but Moses kills four sheep and, after taking them across the river, eats them. In the Life this episode demonstrates Moses’ physical prowess and his ruthlessness. However, this story brings to mind the predation of wolves on flock animals, as Moses’s rapaciousness is no less inexorable. Sheramur’s wolf-like howling is frightening to the narrator, but Sheramur lacks the predatory behavior that would complete his likeness to a wolf. But the wolf persona of Sheramur parallels Moses the Moor’s wolf-like preying on a flock of sheep as recorded in Dimitrii’s Life. Critically, as we shall see, this predatory connotation is

reversed by the end of the work, when Sheramur makes a sacrifice of himself in order to feed his fellows.

While Sheramur has some similarities but also crucial disparities with Moses the Moor, other subtexts combine to suggest a solution to the riddle of Sheramur's type. The transition from feeding his own belly to feeding others qualifies him to be considered an example of a righteous person. The invocation of saints' lives and their similarities with certain events of Sheramur's life, specifically the adherence to rigorous standards of sexual morality, also hint that Sheramur is a positive example. Leskov wants his readers to decode Sheramur's virtue rather than to simply accept it from a straightforward presentation, and one of the ways he achieves this goal is to give his hero nicknames that suggest that he is sexually voracious and promiscuous: "Sheramur" ("cher amour") and Chernomor (the name of the evil dwarf who abducts a Kievan princess on her wedding night). A comparison of Sheramur to Cain suggests murderous, even fratricidal instincts and possibly a criminal history. Some of these hints are misleading because they impute Sheramur with the vice opposed to the virtue that he actually exemplifies, but the clues can be decoded to paradoxically describe a morally exemplary figure. The conflicting clues engage the reader in the process of solving the riddle. They also move Sheramur's story from being an account of an idiosyncratic figure into being a depiction, even a canonization, of a type of righteous person.

The question of positioning on the human–non-human spectrum affects the way that sexual life is arranged. If human society has no other guide than natural inclinations, as is the case with animals that live the natural life, then there is no obligation to take others' feelings into account. The nickname in the title may refer to the hero's beginnings. «Шурымур» ("romantic adventures") is the explanation for the hero's appearance on earth; his father's

licentious “shurymury” («шуримурь»), rather than any more forward-looking considerations, brought Sheramur into being (his father was a nobleman, his mother was one of his serfs). Sheramur’s own sexual activity is the opposite of his father’s: he avoids it and perceives it as an ordeal, and only undertakes it for the sake of helping others. Sheramur thus reverses his own amoral beginnings, the animalistic and morally uninformed motivation of his parents’ union. His father’s sexual activity would not be amiss in the animal world, where it is merely a physiological function, but it is a degradation of the ethical and moral tenets of the human culture in which he lives.

Sex and food are related in the work, as women attract Sheramur with food. The differences of Sheramur’s behavior with the Englishwoman and with Tante Grillade indicates his growth. Both women are physically bigger than Sheramur, both are not Russian, and they both attract Sheramur by offering him sweets. But Sheramur undergoes the Englishwoman’s ministrations for the sake of his own belly, while he undertakes marriage with Tante Grillade in order to realize his ideal of feeding others, which is propelled by empathy. While the Englishwoman offers him sweets and sex, Tante Grillade adds to sex the capability to regularly feed destitute people in Paris. This is the source of the fondness for Tante Grillade that he feels: “Here, in this hole, heaven descended to him on earth; here he experienced the highest pleasure for which his soul longed: here he, a perpetually hungry and cold indigent, once gave a feast—a feast that could be called ‘the feast of Lazarus’” (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 248).¹⁵

¹⁵ Здесь, в этой труппе, к нему раз спускалось небо на землю; здесь он испытал самое высокое удовольствие, к которому стремилась его душа; тут он, вечно голодный и холодный нищий, один раз давал пир - такой пир, который можно было бы назвать «пиром Лазаря». The reference to Lazarus also contributes another animal appearance to the collection of clues. Lazarus was sick and poor and ignored by a rich man outside of whose house he begged, but dogs licked Lazarus’ sores; after they both died, Lazarus was in the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man was in Hades. This story overturns the social hierarchy of rich and poor, and while mention of the dogs indicates the degree to which the

References to two saints develop the theme of sexual restraint and work toward the ultimate conclusion that Sheramur follows a high moral standard despite animal-like characteristics. Sheramur's life shows commonalities with the Lives of both Moses the Moor and Moses the Hungarian, foremost being the victory over sexual lust. The Lives of the two saints are implicated by a reference in which it appears that Leskov conflates two saints by mistake, as the notes to the collected works suggest: "Both names sound similar, and the iconographic depictions of both saints are similar" (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 647). It seems unlikely, however, that Leskov, who was well versed in hagiography and iconography, would confuse two saints, because of the similarity of their names—"Murin" and "Ugrin" («Мурин» from Latin "maurus" and «Угрин» from «угорский» [Fasmer])—and the similarity of their iconographic specifications as given in the book of originals. The possible oversight, whether by Leskov or by the editors of the complete works, highlights the visual element of the riddle of the hero. It is the more unlikely that the similarity of the names confused Leskov, since the names refer to ethnicities and Leskov specifically includes ethnicity as a deciding factor in the saint's canonical image when he mentions "the peculiarity of the Hungarian extraction and of the agonizingly impetuous temperament of this saint" («вероятно ради особенности его мадьярского происхождения и мучительной пылкости темперамента этого святого»; *SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6:245). Leskov was aware of the ethnic identification of this saint and it is unlikely that he would have unintentionally substituted "Moor" («Мурин»). It is more plausible that Leskov wanted both hagiographies to figure in his life of Sheramur and so allowed the narrator to inadvertently collapse them into one. Leskov's average reader would have been able to differentiate between "Moor" and "Magyarian extraction" («Мурин» and «мадьярского

poor man was destitute; it also shows animals commiserating with the hungry man and a virtuous person sharing more with animals than humans.

происхождения»), even if they attributed the slip to the author's inattention or ignorance. In any case, the result is an intricate riddle within Sheramur's characterization.

The invocation of both saints' Lives emphasizes the theme of overcoming sexual lust for the sake of higher goals. This arc is traced in Sheramur's story beginning with his father as sexually immoral. Moses the Moor's life has a similar trajectory from an instinctive to a charitable mode of life. According to the version of *Moses the Moor's Life* written by Dimitrii of Rostov at the end of the 17th century, Moses was an Ethiopian slave who committed murder and was subsequently expelled and became a robber captain because of his strength and his ruthlessness. Later he repented and became a monk in the desert, where he struggled against bodily lust, eventually overcoming it by fasting, prayer, and voluntarily carrying water to his brother monks from a distant well during the night. At the end of his life he was made aware that robbers were coming to attack the monks and told the other monks to escape, but decided to stay and fulfill the words of the New Testament that "all who live by the sword shall die by the sword." Not only the overcoming of sexual passion but the sacrificing of himself for the sake of peers is echoed in Sheramur's story, albeit in a comical register.

Moses the Hungarian's Life features the overcoming of sexual lust even more centrally. Moses enters the service of Prince Boris and, when Boris is killed in 1015, Moses hides at the court of Predislava, the sister of Yaroslav. Three years later, when the Polish king Boleslav seizes Kiev, Moses ends up in Poland as a captive. Tall and handsome, he attracts the attention of a rich Polish widow, who wants to make him her husband. Moses refuses, having made a vow that if he is granted to return to Kiev, he will become a monk. The Polish widow tries to seduce him with food, the offer of wealth and power, then resorts to beatings and gives orders to forcefully put him in a bed with her. But she is unable to shake Moses' resolution, who tells her,

“Your effort is in vain; only from the fear of God I loathe you as impure.” For this statement he is given a hundred lashes each day and finally castrated. This echoes the phallic connotations of the long beard of the unsuccessful Chernomor, one of Sheramur’s other nicknames and another subtext to the work, who also imprisons the object of his sexual interest and enters the room to seduce the prisoner. Eventually the Polish king dies and a revolt ensues in which the Polish lady is killed. Moses returns home and becomes a monk in the Kiev Caves Monastery where he counsels other monks who are struggling with bodily lust (Dimitrii, “Ugrina”).

Sheramur is not subjected to torture, but some of the visual elements from Moses the Hungarian’s Life are present: a wound, a lascivious woman smothering with her breasts and offering him sweets, wine, and food, and a male victim of foreign nationality who resists the sexual advances of the powerful female. While Saint Moses remains sexually abstinent and eventually supports his fellows with spiritual counsel, Leskov’s hero escapes the Englishwoman’s hedonistic advances in order to eventually make a marriage arrangement with Tante Grillade that enables him to support his fellows by feeding them.

The progression from being seduced as a result of his concern to his own belly to becoming Tante’s husband in order to feed other people is memorialized by the hero’s nicknames, which are reminders of events or periods. “Sheramur” is a reminder of the potential romantic relationship with the Englishwoman. Because of Sheramur’s comic resistance to the Englishwoman’s seduction and the absence of a love affair («шурьмуре»), he flees Russia and ends up in Paris, living like a stray dog, working as he can and wandering from bench to bench at night and without a place to stay. This act of abstinence determines the future course of his life. The phrase “Cher amour” with its connotation of «шурьмуре» comically recalls this string of events, as it was bestowed on him by the Englishwoman. The final nickname signals his

marriage to Tante Grillade, heralding the succeeding stage in his spiritual evolution: his sacrifice in order to feed his brother vagrants. Sheramur receives this nickname when he takes Tante Grillade's name, becoming "bon oncle Grillade" or "Auntie's husband" («теткин муж»). Over the course of the work, the reader never learns the hero's given name, and this absence also dehumanizes the character.

While possible matches for Sheramur's type are offered in the saint's lives, the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis provides a matrix for a network of issues that problematize the hero's life. The subtitle of "Sheramur" in its first publication in December 1879 in "New Time" («Новое время») was: "Children of Cain. Typical Varieties. First Sketch. Sheramur. Episodic Excerpts of a Fatal History" («Дети Каина. Типические разновидности. Очерк первый. Шерамур. Эпизодические отрывки фатальной истории»; *SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 645). "Sheramur" charts how the hero moves from living under the mark of the criminal, in whose transgression the animal theme appears, to arranging his life so that he can feed his brother vagrants. This subtext offers the theme of food and of wandering, of being an outcast and being marked, as well as the question of brotherly love, which are enduring themes in the Christian context of the story of Cain and Abel. By the end of Leskov's work, the same Cain-like flaws that make the hero less than human are the material by which he makes up for his former deficiencies and becomes fully human in a theological sense.

The reference to Cain is yet another subtext that involves animals. Cain had responded to God's question "Where is Abel thy brother?" with "Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Holy Bible* Gen. 4:9). Cain's response convicts him because his phrase refers to keeping sheep. Unlike his brother who had the right to kill the sheep that he kept, Cain does not have the authority of life and death over his brother, since their relationship is not of shepherd to sheep, or human to

animal (Carmichael 57, 63). In this sense, Cain is not his brother's keeper. Cain does not observe the distinction between human and animal, and as a result, he becomes less human. Cain came to be regarded as a beastlike man, with legends propounding his life as ending in being killed by Lamech, who mistakes Cain for a wild beast (Mellinkoff 59, 61). His mark has been interpreted as trembling and groaning, a physical manifestation of his disordered mind (Mellinkoff 46). His own degradation illustrates the blurring of the distinction between human and animal. The reference to Cain projects the hero's obsession with food into a human history shared with animals in the search for food, in using animals for food while at the same time having committed crimes against other humans because of transgressions where food was valued differently and herd animals were equated with grain crops.

The connection between food and animals established by the subtext of Cain and Abel is developed by Leskov. The writer named Nemo establishes a relationship with the hero, Sheramur, a "son of Cain," via the act of eating: "With this Nemo and Sheramur's acquaintance began, which was kept up by the grub at Aunt Grillade's and with each day brought into the open more new oddities of this son of Cain" (*SS v odinnadtsati tomakh* 6: 249).¹⁶ The hero's moniker "son of Cain" connects him to Cain's crime, a crime in the genesis of which animals appear peripherally but not insignificantly. Animals are the stumbling block for Cain who transgresses the bounds of the relationship between himself and his brother. Animals are valued here as food, as Cain's offering of grains was rejected by God while, on the other hand, his brother Abel's offering of animals was accepted (Gen. 4: 4-5). In anger, Cain killed his brother and, as a result, he was cursed by God to walk the earth, protected by a mark so that other people would not kill him.

¹⁶ «С этого у Немо и Шерамура завязалось знакомство, которое поддерживалось «жратвою» у Tante Grillade и с каждым днем выводило наружу все новые странности этого Каинова сына».

Called a “child of Cain,” Leskov’s hero demonstrates characteristics that, similar to his namesake, blur the boundary between human and animal lifestyles: he has a wild appearance, he is an itinerant, he is preoccupied with finding food, and he is suspected of having committed a crime. The narrator wonders if he has fled Russia because of falling afoul of the law: “We need to find out if he is a criminal or not” (*SS* 6: 276).

Leskov’s resolution to his hero’s story is that he develops, on the level of poetic imagery, from a “Cain,” who is a vagabond and wanderer, to an “Abel,” who offers an acceptable sacrifice. The hero stops wandering, and he cares for his fellow vagabonds by figuratively sacrificing himself—with his appearance and behavior oddly like an animal’s (although not the kind that was kept for food)—in Tante’s “holy of holies.” Sheramur refers to his marriage with Tante Grillade as a sacrifice “I must honestly carry out my sacrifice” («Надо же честно нести свой сакрифис» (*SS* 6: 300). Sheramur perceives Tante Grillade’s small room as the place where he offers his “sacrifice” and the narrator describes it as her “holy of holies” («святая святых»; *SS* 6: 295). The new nomenclature suggests the marriage to Tante Grillade is a symbolic confinement behind bars (“grillade” means “grilled” and conjures up bars). The desire to charitably take care of his fellows has led him from the immoral behavior of his father and his own amoral obsession with feeding himself to figuratively being caged, or offering his “sacrifice” in Tante’s “holy of holies.”

Further associations of Sheramur with non-human figures destabilize his human identity. Later in the text the hero seems like a gnome to the Englishwoman: “He presented himself to her as a little gnome, who had quit the dark depths of the mountains in order to learn the meaning of attachment” (*SS* 6: 269). Although she has chosen him with amorous designs, he also has an unsettling effect on her, characteristic of an elemental creature: “The strong, round torso of the

small Sheramur, his antique little hands, fiery black eyes and incredibly strong growth, apparent in his black curls and wavy beard, produced an impression on her as languishing as it was disturbing” (SS 6: 269).¹⁷

The *Nastol’nyi slovar’ dlia spravok po vsiem otrasliam znaniia* by Feliks Toll’ published in 1863 states that gnomes are “spirits dwelling in the depths of the earth and guarding treasure; they are of both sexes, sometimes beautiful, sometimes ugly. They have fun with people, but do them more good than evil; the latter they do only when they are teased” (681). The inclusion of the non-human but human-like gnome provides a false clue that points the reader toward regarding Sheramur as representing an elemental, legendary creature that relates to the human race as an outsider and that is intent on amassing treasure for his own purposes. The opposite is true: the money that Sheramur accumulates by working in a hospital is used to fund his feeding of poor Parisians.

The nickname “Chernomor” further unsettles the hero’s human identity. The name “Chernomor” is given by the countess and will introduce romantic pursuits that dominate the succeeding section of the narrative. The countess’ comparison of Sheramur to the terrible sorcerer-dwarf of Pushkin’s *Ruslan and Liudmila* is comical, because Chernomor uses his magic powers to abduct the beautiful Liudmila, while Sheramur is the object of a bosomy older women’s romantic pursuits. While Sheramur looks like a gnome with his long beard and short stature, it is not he who kidnaps, as in *Ruslan and Liudmila* where Chernomor kidnaps Liudmila, but the Englishwoman who coaxes him into a room with treats and nearly stifles him with her

¹⁷ Крепкий, кругленький, точно выточенный торс маленького Шерамура, его античные ручки, огневые черные глаза и неимоверно сильная растительность, выражавшаяся смолевыми кудрями и волнистою бородою, производили на нее впечатление сколько томное, столько же и беспокоящее.

bosom. Further, instead of the powerful dwarf-sorcerer abducting the princess to his cave, the Englishwoman pulls the gnome-like man into her room after he climbs up the side of the house.

The heroic Ruslan seizes the sorcerer's long beard and Chernomor magically flies for days with Ruslan holding on as a dead weight. Ruslan does not let go, and finally Chernomor tires and is forced to surrender. Back at the castle, Ruslan cuts off Chernomor's beard, and removes his power. This is the beard to which Sheramur's beard is compared, as if to suggest that it is key to the meaning of Sheramur for the reader: "Sheramur appeared at my place exactly the same as I described him above: small, thickset, with a tiny nose and the enormous beard of Chernomor" (SS 6: 252).¹⁸ The nickname "Chernomor" compares the hero to a creature that inhabits the border between animal and human, biological and mythological. This nickname invokes an untamed being of unbridled passions and demarcates an era in the hero's life when he was obsessed with his own need to fill his belly. His alleged sexual rapacity is domesticated by the succeeding nickname, "Cher amour" or "Sheramur," which is given by the Englishwoman who takes a fancy to him. The final stage is when the hero's sexual activity is transmogrified into philanthropic activity and the formerly migratory life is circumscribed in the domestic space of Auntie Grillade's small quarters and he becomes identified with his new "owner" as "Auntie's husband" or "Good uncle Grillade."

Furthermore, in the beginning of the work the narrator indicates the centrality of eating: "Sheramur is a hero of the belly; his motto is to eat [жрать]; his ideal is to feed others" (SS 6: 244). The word for "to eat" («жрать») is preferably used for animals. Animal characteristics blur the boundaries between animal and human behavior and, combined with explicit references to puzzles and enigmas, they question what acceptable behavior is, suggesting that the outer form

¹⁸ Шерамур ко мне явился, совершенно таким, каким я его описал выше: маленький, коренастый, с крошечным носиком и огромной бородой Черномора.

conceals a more substantial inner or moral content. The profusion of subtexts gives ample material for interpreting the hero in order to solve the riddle that the narrator advances, beginning with the ambiguous title and later explicitly asking if his hero is a “riddle picture” («загадочная картинка»). Animal imagery destabilizes the hero’s human identity, as do references to mythological creatures. References to saints whose feats were extreme also probe the conventions of human social life, especially in the area of sexual activity, with which the hero is connected through the nickname that is used in the title. The animal-like hero’s history joins the ambiguous and the unfamiliar to human cultural memory and consciousness in order to re-assert the imperative of pursuing the highest human potential. In fact, the unfamiliar and apparently non-human is used to propel the human towards the divine and to produce the hero’s holiness, as the narrator cites saintly examples of self-animalization that is a way toward and an expression of humility. In the picture that emerges, the animal is part of the human who is moving toward the divine. In this way Sheramur paradoxically appears as less than human and closer to an animal in several key aspects, but his choices ultimately elevate him from a Cain figure to a saintly figure, which is depicted with the help of a rich hagiographic corpus.

CHAPTER 2: THE PEACOCK'S MISTAKE

In “Peacock” (Павлин, 1874), the animal image illustrates the recovery of the divine image by a human being. Initially, the main character is associated with an animal through his name, but he evolves from living in the image of the animal to living in the image of the divine. The animal as a teaching tool is directed at the readers, and the characters are as if unaware of their comparisons to animals, which is not the case in other of the works discussed. In other words, learning from the animal is not modeled inside the text but takes place only in the interchange between the reader and the text. Leskov is propelled by polemics with a former fellow thinker, Chernyshevsky, and Leskov’s traditionalist extrapolation of human meaning from representations of animals is a rhetorical tool. Leskov engages with Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* in which the author coopts a term from the New Testament to describe a radical utopian vision of the heroic citizens who would bring about a new Russia. By resorting to what is fundamentally a medieval approach in his use of animal imagery, Leskov maintains that the past cannot and should not be discounted when envisioning Russia’s future.

To describe the end product of the recovery of living in the divine image, Leskov retrieves the term “new man” from Chernyshevsky, who used it to describe the heroes and heroines of his 1864 novel *What is to be Done?*, which he wrote while imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress and which came to be popularly referred to as a handbook of radicalism. Chernyshevsky had borrowed the term from the Apostle Paul, who had originally employed it in his Letters to the Romans, to the Ephesians, and to the Colossians, to refer to a person who has begun living in the image of God: “That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your

mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4.22-24). Chernyshevsky uses “new people” to refer to the young people who are dedicated to improving society and who, while espousing materialistic principles, live a life of self-denial for the sake of their cause. Sexual life is organized on rational principles that minimize its interference with the work that the new people are engaged in; the institution of marriage is dealt with as a formality that should be manipulated so it does not interfere. Leskov’s treatment contextualizes sexual life in a more turbulent conception of human nature, in which irrationality often controls behavior in ways that are detrimental to spiritual potential. Leskov’s depiction of becoming a “new man” makes liberal and traditional usage of animal imagery, both to describe the “old man” and the “new man.”

In Chernyshevsky’s novel, one of the heroes, who is a “new man,” marries a young woman in order to save her from being married off against her will by her speculating and philistine mother. Even though gradually he falls in love with his legal wife, when she later falls in love with another man, he feigns his own death in order to enable her to re-marry. With a new identity, after some time he marries another woman and the two couples live in the same house and continue their common work to bring Russia to the future they envision. Incorporating this plot twist from Chernyshevsky, Leskov has his hero simulate his own death in order to enable his wife to marry the man with whom she is having an affair. While the feigned death serves in both works to illustrate the high moral sensitivity of the main character, the ideals and ideologies that the two characters represent are different. Leskov considered Chernyshevsky’s “new people” to be good people (McLean 127), and he considered Chernyshevsky’s work to be extremely helpful for Russia (Evdokimova 36). The “new man” that Leskov’s hero becomes, however, recoups the

theological meaning that Paul gives and invokes a long-established preoccupation with human nature.

Leskov makes substantial use of subtexts to chart the upward progress of the hero from living in the image of the animal to living in the divine image, intertwining the cultural meaning of the peacock, the mythological story of Argus, and the life of the apostle Paul. Leskov relies on interpretations of the hero's name, Peacock, which as Melent'eva shows are found in the *Physiologus*, which was popular in the medieval period and describes various animals and provides moral interpretations of each animal (Melent'eva 102). A peacock is used to represent a person who is boastful and haughty, especially when masquerading in other people's clothes. Following by this interpretation of the peacock, an obvious reason for the hero's name is his outward appearance:

. . . Peacock, in the opinion of many, was handsome . . . he was a tall man, solid and very slim, a light blond with large, very pleasant gray eyes, a beautiful intelligent brow, with remarkable severity in his face and with dignity in his movements and in his meaningful posture that arrested one's attention. One could bet anything one wanted that in no European capital was to be found a concierge who was more imposing than Peacock. I think that he would be even grander in any other livery that was grander than a concierge's; however, even this motley dress suited him extraordinarily well. In the long, bright blue frock coat embroidered with braiding and with a hood, in the wide shoulder strap gathered with lace, in his three-cornered hat and with a brilliantly gilded staff in his hands, Peacock was a genuine peacock, and the most dandy peacock, capable of competing

with the very best examples of the dapper bird, refashioned from Argus by Juno. (my translation; SS 5: 217)¹⁹

The vanity that comes from splendid physical appearance is important to the plot because it allows Peacock to be flattered. Leskov utilizes the meaning for peacock from the *Physiologus*. When the peacock, satisfied with its grand appearance, looks at the ground and sees its ugly feet, it cries out; which is interpreted as representing a worldly man who sees his sins and cries out to God (Melent'eva 101). Peacock's behavior fits this plot in his explanation of what happened after he discovered that his young wife had been having an affair:

I have just been to see my spiritual father; he comforted me, saying: "You have observed the law, and she is an unfaithful wife." Permit me! . . . It's all a fig leaf: I will not cover myself with them. Does God see where I was when I hitched her youth to my age? I am a rapist: I see that I have fallen like a heap and been scattered . . . Do you suppose that I am the same person as I was yesterday and the day before? No sir, now in the day of grief the Lord has shown me his mercy: I have taken in the fact that I am dust, that I am formed from dirt and that the leaders of my passions can plow and sow on my back: passion, pride, uncleanness and voluptuousness and jealousy, and . . . and . . . inclination to murder . . .

Ach! Ach! Ach! . . . (SS 5: 263; ellipses in original)²⁰

¹⁹ . . . Павлин, по мнению многих, был красавец . . . он был мужчина высокий, плотный и очень стройный; светлый блондин, с большими, очень приятными серыми глазами, прекрасным умным лбом, замечательною строгостию в лице и достоинством в движениях и во всей его в глаза бросающейся многозначительной позитуре. Можно держать какое угодно пари, что ни в одной из столиц Европы не было и нет швейцара импозантнее Павлина. Я думаю, что он был бы еще важнее в какой-нибудь другой, более важной, не швейцарской ливрее; но, однако, и этот пестрый убор шел к нему чрезвычайно. В расшитом галунами длинном ярко-синем сюртуке с капюшоном, в широкой, убранной галуном перевязи, в трехугольной шляпе и с блестящею вызолоченною булавою в руках, Павлин был настоящий павлин, и притом самый нарядный павлин, способный поспорить с наилучшим экземпляром щеголеватой птицы, переделанной Юноною из Аргуса.

²⁰ Я сейчас ходил к духовному отцу, он меня утешал, говорит: «Ты закон сохранил, а она жена неверная». Позвольте! . . . Это все смоковничье листья: ими я себя не закрою. Бог видит, где был

Peacock's exclamations are like the repentant cries that the sinner makes when he sees his sin. Initially, Peacock's vanity allows him to think that Liuba, when she is still his ward, is affected by his beauty and loved him romantically, but the revelation that the marriage was always a ploy to enable her affair with Dodo allows him to see his own passions that blinded him to the truth. In this enactment of the medieval interpretation of peacock as a worldly man who repents, the theme of sight is of central importance. In Peacock's words, God had seen what kind of man he was, and now Peacock sees himself as well. In the medieval interpretation of the peacock, the bird transitions from vanity to mortification, when it views its uncovered and unsightly body parts. Animal studies has also taken up questions of covering and shame and in some key texts turns to the account in Genesis.²¹ In the Genesis narrative of humans' first repentance, the ability to see clearly after sinning reveals the lack of spiritual covering. This story is in the background of Peacock's animal and clothes-riddled repentance.

The theme of sight also features in the Apostle Paul's biography, and it figures in the story of Argus, along with the peacock. The passage quoted above that describes Peacock's splendid physical appearance ends with mention of Argus from Greek mythology, and this furthers the theme of vigilance, awareness, and seeing. The definition of Argus in the dictionary of Vladimir Dal' is "a person, sharp-sighted in all directions" («человек, зоркий во все стороны»), which suggests that the ancient story of Argus did not lose its immediacy (Dal' 21). In Roman mythology, Argus is assigned by the jealous wife of Jupiter, Juno, to guard a beautiful

я, когда к годам своим сопрягал ее юность? Я насильник: я вижу, что я пал, как гора, и рассыпался . . . Вы полагаете, что я тот, какой был вчера и третьего дня? Нет-с: ныне в день скорби господь мне явил свою милость: я внял, что я прах, что я весь образован из брения и что все вожди страстей могут орать и сеять на хребте моем: страсть, гордость, нечистота, и сластолюбие, и ревность, и . . . и . . . склонность к убийству . . . Ах! ах! ах! . . .

²¹ Derrida does both (Derrida 3, 15); Kay discusses animals skins and the question of covering (Kay 30); Agamben discusses bodies before the fall from Paradise (Agamben 17, 21).

cow who is actually Io, Jupiter's most recent romantic conquest. However, Jupiter sends Mercury to kill Argus as he is guarding Io. This is not so easy because Argus has eyes all over his body and he never closes them all at the same time, even when he sleeps. But Mercury charms Argus to sleep by playing and singing music and then kills him. Juno takes the dead Argus' eyes and strews them over the peacock. This not only makes the peacock's tail more beautiful and gives the peacock reason to be vainer, but also memorializes the death of the guard who was lulled to sleep and therefore memorializes the loss of sight. Argus dies because his renowned powers of vision are charmed into disuse.

Mention of Argus conveys the extent to which Peacock fulfills his duties of seeing and guarding: "Peacock was auntie's Argus; with his assistance, she was able to know anything she wished. It seems that he saw through the stone walls of the building and knew what was happening in its innermost nooks . . ." (SS 5: 217).²² As Liuba's guardian, Peacock had guarded her against ravishment, like Argus guarded Io against being ravished by Jupiter (although Io was in favor of being ravished and, as it turns out, Liuba is similarly in favor) but the guard is overpowered by words and fails to guard. While initially Peacock sees everything and guards well, he is lulled by his landlady's flattery and closes his eyes to reality, allowing Liuba to marry her very much older guardian (Peacock himself) in order for her to become a mistress of the landlady's socially ambitious son. Peacock loses his extraordinary powers of sight: "Stung by passion, Peacock went completely blind, as they say..." («Уязвленный страстью, Павлин совсем, что называется ослеп»...; SS 5: 252). The blindness that is caused by vanity allows the guarded woman to be stolen from him. Liuba's name is not accidental; it means "love," from

²² Павлин был тетушкин Аргус; при его содействии она могла знать все, что только желала. Он, кажется, видел весь дом сквозь его каменные стены и знал, что делается в самых сокровенных его закоулках . . .

“Liubov” (⟪Любовь⟫), and therefore the loss of Love due to vanity and self-indulgence is consistent with the theological understanding of the spiritual life in the frame in which Leskov was working. The subtexts complement each other: the failure of Peacock as Argus the guardian results in a loss of his sight (and his life), after which the extraordinary organs of sight, his eyes, are strewn on the peacock. The peacock is made vainer by this decoration yet the vanity eventually gives way, in the interpretation of the bestiary, to ardent repentance. In these subtexts, the peacock contains the idea of sight and blindness (seeing accurately or not seeing) which are fruits of and causes for repentance (Argus does not have the chance to repent of closing his eyes, but he would have). The growth from blindness that results from vanity into sight that results from repentance brings the hero from the level of the animal (the vain peacock) to the level of the human (the repentant sinner).

The subtext of the apostle Paul further raises the hero to living in the divine image, as he begins to “put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Peacock’s name in Russian, “Pavlin” (⟪Павлин⟫), is morphologically similar to “Paul” (⟪Павел⟫). Parallels between the apostle and the hero extend not only to their names but to similarities in biography. Paul prosecuted fellow Jews who transgressed the law until he was converted while on the road to Damascus. After seeing a bright light and hearing the voice of Christ, he became blind until he was received into the Christian community three days later (Acts 9.1-22). Peacock too is initially a stringent prosecutor of the law that his landlady initiates, but becoming blind reveals the truth of things to him. He realizes his misguidedness, and this awareness convinces him to live by mercy rather than by legalism.

Reference to the apostle Paul emphasizes that Peacock is changing drastically. The narrator compares Peacock’s letters to Liuba, in which he calls her by her full name meaning

“love,” to epistles (послания), making a reference to the letters which Paul sent to various Christian communities:

These letters, written “from the sinful slave to the co-suffering Love,” have somewhat of the character of epistles. In them the author speaks as if he has already endured his own lot, suffered it out and, having been tempted, can now help those who are being tempted . . . delving more closely into subsequent letters, you see that with his pen their composer introduces another feeling, a feeling of a kind of perfectly special, you could even frankly say unearthly love—and love that is the most considerate and self-renouncing, but austere. Peacock teaches Liuba to suffer for the good of others and for the expiation of her own errors and, persuading her of this with arguments that are fairly old and long since known from a book of spiritual content, expounds these arguments with such vividness and a spontaneous gift of convincing eloquence, that he gives them new, vivid force. Without a doubt he is troubled about one thing: to revive the perishing Liuba in spirit. And evidently seeing from her return letters that the rebirth which preoccupies him is possible, he adopts an altogether fatherly tone and even when he addresses her he uses the words “my daughter.” (SS 5: 276)²³

²³ Эти письма, писанные «от грешного раба к состраждающей Любви», имеют немножко характер посланий: в них автор говорит, как бы уже он свое все вынес, отстрадал и, был искушен, сам теперь может помогать искушаемым . . . ближе вникая в дальнейшие письма, вы видите, что пером их сочинителя водит иное чувство, чувство какой-то совершенно особенной, прямо можно сказать, неземной любви - и притом любви самой заботливой и самоотреченной, но строгой. Павлин учит Любу терпеть для блага других и для искупления своих заблуждений и, убеждая в этом доводами довольно старыми, издавна известными из книг духовного содержания, излагает эти доводы с такою живостью и непосредственным даром убедительного красноречия, что как бы придает им новую живую силу. Он несомненно заботится об одном: возродить духом погибающую Любу - и, вероятно, видя из ее ответных писем, что это озабочивающее его возрождение возможно, он принимает совсем отеческий тон и даже в самом обращении к ней употребляет слова «дочь моя».

The task that Peacock undertakes, “to revive the perishing Liuba in spirit,” is a reprisal of his own revival when he reappeared after feigning his death and resumed his parental role. The Russian word “to revive,” («возродить») contains the root “to give birth to,” («родить»). Like the apostle Paul, Peacock addresses himself as a father to a child, returning to his parental role from which he had started as Liuba’s guardian from the false role of husband he had been flattered into playing. Elsewhere Peacock himself mentions the apostle Paul: “Don’t lose heart: not to us, the weak ones, but to the holy apostle Paul an angel of Satan was given in his flesh, but he conquered it, and you will conquer with his strength . . .” (SS 5: 276).²⁴

This subtext also involves the theme of seeing. In the beginning of the story, Peacock carries out the orders of his heartless landlady and employer. He enters every apartment with a large book in which the tenants’ payments are recorded and if the tenants cannot pay their rent, the windows of their apartment are removed by Peacock’s assistants. Analogously, before his conversion, Paul—then Saul—had persecuted Christians by means of the law: “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8.3). Additionally, Peacock’s assistants bring to mind the soldiers who crucified Jesus, and the narrator is appalled by “. . . these servants with their tools, resembling the crucifiers of Jesus Christ in the picture by Steuben, the rapid removal and replacing of windows, and the complete indifference of everyone to this arbitrariness . . .” (SS 5: 227).²⁵ The similarity of the word “window” («окно») to the word “eye” («око») and the analogous function of conducting light, windows rendering what is outside visible on the inside and serving as the

²⁴ Не унывай: не нам, слабым, а святому апостолу Павлу ангел сатаны был дан в плоть его, но он его победил, и ты победишь его силою . . .

²⁵ . . . эти дворники с инструментами, напоминающие распинателей Иисуса Христа на картине Штейбена, и это быстрое выставление и вставление окон и полное равнодушие всех к этому самоуправству . . .

house's eyes, is particularly suggestive given the subtext of Paul's blindness and recovery of sight (Toporov 169). The windows of a house allow for the safety of its inhabitants because dangers can be observed beforehand from inside, while the absence of windows means increased vulnerability (Toporov 169). This metaphor is realized in the homes where Peacock and his assistants carry out their orders, since the harsh winter air that enters after the windows have been removed is likely to cause the illness or death of the tenants.

Death plays a significant role in this story, as it does in many of Leskov's works, as is not surprising if one accepts Walter Benjamin's premise about Leskov being a consummate storyteller and the story being rooted in natural history and the cycles of death (Benjamin 369). Peacock's story is framed by a scene on Valaam Island in which the narrator of "Peacock" and some fellow travelers are conjecturing about the monks who live on this remote island. The telling of Peacock's story by one of these pilgrims/tourists is provoked by curiosity about the metaphorical death ascribed to life in such a severe island community. They wonder who would "bury themselves alive" on this severe island («погребсти себя здесь заживо»; Leskov 213); this formulation echoes the monastic motto of "dying to the world" («люди, умершие миру»; SS 5: 212). Peacock is mentioned as an example of such "titans and heroes of the spirit" («титаны и богатыри духа»; SS 5: 213) who live in the severe monastic and natural setting. In Greek mythology, Titans warred against the gods and were confined in Tartarus, part of the underworld. This detail associates death with the figure of Peacock. Another appearance of death is when one of the characters in the story has a dream in which Peacock is holding his own head. This figure is an image of St. John the Forerunner who was beheaded for speaking against the king's liaison with his own sister-in-law; the figure of this saint is not coincidental since St. John the Forerunner is retroactively considered the founder of monasticism (Bulgakov vii).

Additionally, he is the last of the Old Testament prophets and his death acts as a boundary marker between the Old and the New (Bulgakov 4); this theme of the old giving way through death to the new is also at work in “Peacock.” Peacock’s appearing in a dream in the pose of St. John the Forerunner foreshadows his symbolic death and subsequent monastic life. In the first paragraph of the framing of the story, the narrator mentions the skete of St. John the Forerunner specifically: “the skete of the Forerunner is especially striking” («особенно поражает скит Предтечи»; SS 5: 212), foreshadowing the importance of a transition from old to new that is marked by death. Peacock’s faked death and figurative new identity are also the result of an unlawful sexual relationship as is St. John the Forerunner’s; but his faked death enables the lovers in this case to correct the status of their relationship in a reassertion of accepted cultural norms based on spiritual principles. The mythological Argus similarly dies because he stands in the way of an unlawful sexual liaison, and the many eyes that beautify the peacock’s tale are reminders of his death.

Peacock’s faked death enables his new moral identity as he resurrects after his faked death and this bodily enactment solidifies his status as a “new man.” This contrasts with Chernyshevsky’s characters, who remain in their original level of moral awareness and do not change for the better (Morris 139). No longer answering to the name of a bird, Leskov’s hero now calls himself Spyridon Androsovii. This surname is formed from the Greek for “man” (Woodhouse 510) and suggests that Peacock has transitioned to the human world from the animal world. Spyridon is the name of a well-known saint commemorated from the eleventh century in Russia, who was familiar to Russians through the Life in the *Great Menaion Reader* (*Великие Четьи-Минеи*), written by Metropolitan Makarius of Moscow in the sixteenth century (Kuskov 10). The original Life was written by Triphilii, a contemporary of Spyridon, but was

lost except for excerpts that appeared in the Life written by Theodore Pafskii in the seventh century; and in the seventeenth century the Life was rewritten by Dimitrii Rostovskii (Vinogradov 1-8). St. Spyridon opposed the Arian heresy, which maintained that Christ did not have a divine nature, and was therefore not fully God; this heresy reduced the possibility of man becoming like God (Dimitrii 158). The movement from “Peacock” to “Spyridon Androsovii” is a statement of the human potential to communicate with God and moves Leskov’s hero to living in the divine image.

The interweaving subtexts emphasize the progression from a flawed state through death to a restored and higher state. This theme engages with Chernyshevsky’s ideal of a new and improved society accomplished by dispensing with the old ways of doing things and established by heroic self-sacrifice for the sake of the people and the future of humanity. Leskov began his writing career in the circles of the democratic radicals and, while he always retained his own views, had much in common with them, Chernyshevsky being no exception (Evdokimova 36). Leskov’s falling out with the radicals was a painful miscommunication that in many ways shaped his tempestuous subsequent career and life (McLean 81, 85). Politically, Leskov believed in gradual change enabled by conscientious and thorough education (and self-education) and enlightenment (McLean 65-6). Leskov saw the spiritual tradition of the country as vital to this development and saw it as the duty of art to preserve it (McLean 351). Writing was Leskov’s own means of contributing to Russia’s transformation along these lines (McLean 94).

A theme in common between Chernyshevsky’s vision and Leskov’s stories is the transition of the individual to the community; from a survivalist mode of living to a sacrificing mode of living (Morris 143). Peacock becomes a goat; this is a literalization of the Russian idiom meaning that one’s wife is having an affair (*Slovar’*). Peacock becomes the bearer of the

sins of his wife and Dodo and, figuratively, of erring society as he embraces the meaning of “being a goat” (to have an unfaithful wife) and his physical appearance takes on the attributes of a goat when he appears in the window of Dodo’s room: “. . . a shaggy gray old man with a huge beard and wearing an unnatural deerskin coat, at least according to Doda’s ideas . . . at first glance he seemed to Doda more like an old goat than a human being . . .” (*SS* 5: 271).²⁶ In this scene, Peacock prevents his rival Dodo from abandoning Liuba and intercepts a transgression that also involves seeing, and is a further elaboration of the theme of vigilance and vision. The context is a relaxed journey to the destination of his exile, when Doda sees a woman in a window across the street and tries to sin with her but his line of vision is blocked:

he had already had time to exchange winks a la Khlestakov with a neighbor woman from the house across the street, whose face, by the way, he did not properly make out because as soon as she had barely appeared in the window of the room, suddenly in front of it from the outside, a tall, shaggy gray old man with an enormous beard and in an unnatural, according to Doda’s ideas, deerskin coat suddenly stood up and began to wipe the glass with his sleeve. And the devil knows him, where did he come from? Dodichka had, it is true, in passing noticed him sitting by the window on a heap of snow, but at first glance he seemed more like an old goat than a person—and suddenly this stuffed animal jumps up and rides on the glass with his paws, exactly as if on purpose to deprive the good youth of the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the neighbor woman. (*SS* 5: 271)²⁷

²⁶ . . . лохматый седой старик с огромною бороною и в неестественной, по понятиям Доди, оленьей шубе . . . он [Доде] с первого взгляда показался более похожим на старого козла, чем на человека .

²⁷ . . . уже успел а la Хлестаков перемигнуться с какою-то соседкою из противоположного дома, - соседкою, лица которой он, к слову сказать, надлежащим образом не рассмотрел, потому что чуть она появилась у окна в комнате, снаружи, перед этим окном вдруг встал и начал протирать рукавом стекла высокий, лохматый седой старик с огромною бороною и в неестественной, по понятиям Доди, оленьей шубе. И черт его знает, откуда он взялся? Додичка его, правда, слегка

While Doda perceives the interfering Peacock as a lecherous old man, an old goat, his perception is appropriate only for the old Peacock, who married his much younger ward, not for the new Peacock, who has repented of his error. The term “old goat” can also be understood as a concretization of the idiom “to wear horns,” which coincides with the fact that the goat has strong connotations from the Old Testament of an offering for the sin of the people, as seen in Leviticus, Chapter 16, where two goats are brought to the altar and one is sacrificed to the Lord, while the other becomes the scapegoat:

Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (Lev. 16.21-22)

Like the scapegoat, Peacock disappears from society; at the same time, he enacts his original duty of vigilantly guarding. After frightening Doda into marriage, he lives quietly nearby the couple and, when Doda dies, joins a monastery. The twist of disappearing from society re-frames Chernyshevsky’s memorable plot twist in the long-standing concept of sacrifice, changing the context from radical thought to religious tradition and from modern to ancient vintage. On the other hand, the difference in the artistic approaches of the two writers may not be as great as it appears, since Chernyshevsky incorporated features of genres of medieval Russian religious writing, though replacing its terminology with secular terms (Morris 136-47).

заметил сидящим у окна на замеченной снегом завалине, но он ему с первого взгляда показался более похожим на старого козла, чем на человека, - и вдруг это чучело вскакивает и ездит по стеклам своими лапами, точно нарочно для того, чтобы лишить доброго юношу возможности наслаждаться красотой соседки . . .

Leskov's use of animals as symbols, which accords with the anthropomorphic medieval tradition, plays a role in engaging Chernyshevsky's representation of how to improve society. Leskov's heroes respond to their predicaments with similar lack of self-pity as do Chernyshevsky's, but their actions are contextualized in a wealthy heritage of literary, religious, mythological, and other cultural bodies of texts that connect the past to the present, unlike in *What is to be Done?* Peacock's seeing his sin and turning toward God is emphasized by the meaning of the peacock as articulated in medieval Russian sources. Another source for this theme is his being the namesake of St. Paul, as is clear not only from the similarity of his name but from the mention of epistles and Peacock's own mention of the apostle. His role as the aunt's Argus highlights the vulnerability of his position, although spiritually rather than physically. The motif on which all three of these rely, in various degrees, is vision and blindness. The peacock looks at the ground and when he sees his ugly feet he cries out, like a worldly man who sees his sinfulness and cries out to God. This image reiterates the sense of crisis that motivates Leskov's writing, and suggests a source to turn to in solving the dilemma of human interaction.

"Peacock" is about the recovery of the image of God in the human through spiritual reorientation. The image of the peacock is juxtaposed to Chernyshevsky's characters or "new people" and Leskov suggests a "new man" that reinvigorates in pageant fashion the original meaning of the term that Chernyshevsky took. Leskov invokes the source of this term, the Apostle Paul, in the text. The animal illustrates the process of change and calls up centuries of Christian thought and approach to human virtue and vice. Leskov's work also points out that the reality of evil that must be added to the equation that Chernyshevsky proposes to solve. With this correction, Leskov offers his own solutions to the needs facing Russian society and the

means of bringing about necessary alterations: Leskov thinks that personal moral change must come first.

CHAPTER 3: CONVERSION THROUGH ANIMAL ENCOUNTER

While “The Wild Animal” (Зверь, 1883) is in one sense a straightforward story of reconciliation inspired by the Christmas message, Leskov’s treatment opens up areas in which to appreciate the human-animal relationship. First, the blending of human-animal identity is foregrounded and is what makes the work intriguing. Second, the encounter with the animal, as well as with the natural world, on its own terms, makes the human a better human. This chapter will also examine how empathy works in Leskov’s oeuvre, as the animal and the human distinction is blurred.

This work’s resolution hinges on the hierarchy of divine-human-animal. Initially, the animal is human-like and the human is bestial, until the human responds to the divine calling and becomes truly human. The temporary subversion of the divine-human-animal hierarchy is delineated by two means: the Christmas setting with a statement of the message of the birth of God as a human, and the righteous hero (Ferafont) living in equality with the bear he is in charge of—even to the point of risking his life to save the bear. The tyrant uncle’s transformation is catalyzed by his observing the animal image: he is affected when the animal that he is persecuting seems more human than himself. Seeing himself in the bear, he vicariously experiences the righteous hero’s brotherly love. In this drama, Leskov accentuates the realization of human dependence on the animal and in general, the human’s lack of self-standing power.

The blending of human and animal identity is encapsulated cryptically in the epigraph, from the life of Saint Seraphim of Sarov (1754-1833): “And the wild animals attended to the holy word” («И звери внимаху святое слово»; SS 7: 260). The climactic scene of the story

recalls this epigraph. The uncle heeds the words of the priest's impromptu sermon about Christmas, while the peasants joke that the bear also listened to the holy words: "It has happened with us now that the wild animal has gone into the holy quiet to praise Christ" («У нас ноне так стало, что и зверь пошел во святой тишине Христа славить»; *SS* 7: 279). But who the "wild animal" that is attending to the word is ambiguous, for the peasants may equally be referring to the uncle. The uncle is thus equated with the beast, but a beast who goes "to the holy quiet to praise Christ." While the bear's return to the forest re-asserts the distinction of animal and human, nevertheless some blurring of the human and the animal carries over as the uncle visits "the burrows and dens of Moscow" to carry out his charitable deeds. The story's final line reiterates this play of reference, thus closing the interpretive frame that links the epigraph to the climactic scene. The uncle refers to the righteous hero, who had been the bear's caretaker and who then became the uncle's assistant on his charitable missions, as "the tamer of the wild animal" («укротитель зверя»; *SS* 7: 279). From the story it is clear that the uncle is the one who has been tamed.

Before conflation of the bear and the uncle in this scene, other details contribute to aligning the two. Initially, the uncle and the bear are recognized for their ability to inspire fear. The fear that sets the tone of the story up to the uncle's change of heart implicates both the uncle and the bear. All of the six instances of the word "dreadful" («страшн-») in the text refer to something caused by the uncle or the bear. Of the seven times that "fear" («страх-») is used, four times the fear is caused by the uncle, once by the bear, once by thunder, and once by an unknown force that makes the "crowd of spirits," which are strangely connected to the uncle, pass through the Aeolian harp. Considered together, the bear and the uncle are responsible for

almost all of the fear in the story, but are affected by fear as well. This suggests that, symbolically, the uncle is just as much an unwitting and instinctive beast as is the bear.

Other details of the text further the conflation of the uncle and the bear. The reader has come to see Ferapont (also known as Khrapon or Khraposhka) as a friend of the bear, who is named Sganarelle the resolution of the plot, the uncle takes over the bear's place, and Ferapont treats the uncle very similarly to how he treated the bear, towards whom his attitude was of service. Ferapont feeds and looks after the bear cubs, and even sleeps with them, allowing them to make use of him as a pillow. When the bear's death sentence is handed down by the uncle, Ferapont does not treat the bear like a brute, but like a friend:

At the leading of Sganarelle to the pit, in which he must await the death sentence, there was a greatly touching occurrence. Khrapon did not run "hurters," nor a ring, through Sganarelle's lip, and did not use the slightest coercion against him, but only said:

"Come on, beast, with me."

The bear got up and went, and moreover what was funny—he took his hat with the straw plume and walked the whole way to the pit hugging Hrapon, like two friends.

They really were friends. (*SS 7: 265*)²⁸

The exchange between the righteous hero and the bear is a moment of human-animal communication that reflects the tradition found in the Life of St. Seraphim of Sarov. Ferapont is the righteous hero in this story, although his righteousness is not the focus but rather the

²⁸ . . . при отводе Сганареля в яму, в которой он должен был ожидать смертной казни, произошли очень большие трогательности. Храпон не продергивал в губу Сганареля «больнички», или кольца, и не употреблял против него ни малейшего насилия, а только сказал:

- Пойдем, зверь, со мною.

Медведь встал и пошел, да еще что было смешно – взял свою шляпу с соломенным султаном и всю дорогу до ямы шел с Храпоном обнявшись, точно два друга.

Они таки и были друзьями.

transformation of the tyrant. Ferapont embodies the meaning of his Greek-derived name of “attendant, servant, companion” (θεράπων) in relation to both the bear and the uncle (Beekes). Ferapont’s subsequent relationship with the uncle has this same tone of service and devotion: “He closed uncle’s eyes with his own hands, and buried him in Moscow in the Vagankovskii cemetery, where to this day his monument remains intact. And there, at his feet, lies Sherapont” («Он закрыл своими руками глаза дяди, и он же схоронил его в Москве на Ваганьковском кладбище, где и по сию пору цел его памятник. Там же, в ногах у него, лежит и Шерапонт»; SS 7: 279). The words he speaks to the bear, “Come on, beast, with me” could figuratively be addressed to the uncle, who eventually follows Ferapont and dedicates himself to serving those less fortunate, while Ferapont remains the uncle’s servant despite his emancipation.

The paradigm of the saint who tames wild animals is applicable on a figurative level to Ferapont’s relationship to the uncle. When Ferapont leads the bear to the pit, they embrace as they walk (a bear hug); after the uncle unexpectedly pardons Ferapont, he embraces him. Ferapont refuses to leave the uncle’s service even after being granted his freedom, and in the climactic scene, he risks his life for the bear by not plunging his knife into the bear and then being shot at by the other marksman. He approaches the bear instead and:

Sganarelle instantly recognized him, breathed on him with his hot mouth, wanted to lick with his tongue, but suddenly from the other side, from Flegont, a shot rang out and . . . the bear escaped to the forest, while Khraposhka . . . fell unconscious.

They picked him up and examined him: he was wounded by a bullet through his hand, but in in his wound there was also some bear fur. (SS 7: 275; ellipses in original)²⁹

²⁹ Сганарель его моментально узнал, дохнул на него своей горячей пастью, хотел лизнуть языком, но вдруг с другой стороны, от Флегонта, грянул выстрел, и . . . медведь убежал в лес, а Храпошка . . . упал без чувств.

Ferapont's dedication to the bear results in a wound in which bear hair is stuck, and which is an index of their friendship. The second marksman, Flegont, misses the bear because he could not distinguish the bear from Ferapont: "Moreover it was already gray in the yard, and the bear and Khraposhka were too tightly joined . . ." (Притом же на дворе уже было серо, и медведь с Храпошкою были слишком тесно скручены . . . ; *SS* 7: 275; ellipsis in original).

The name used by the people for Ferapont is "Khrapon" or "Khraposhka." The name "Khrapon" comes from the verb "to snore" or, when referring to animals, "to snort." Thus, his nickname places him in the lower realm of animal or naturalistic processes. It also connects him to the bear cubs, among whom he sleeps.³⁰ Thus, even while he echoes the saint whose holiness renders wild animals docile, Ferapont also is associated with the sharing of experiences with animals. The relationship between Ferapont and the bear follows the hagiographical tradition, in which the love of the saint minimizes boundaries and opens communication. The conflation of the uncle with the bear is in the didactic tradition, in which human vices are compared to animal traits in order to accent human immorality and to reflect back to the human the unattractive image that he is producing. The blending of the animal and the human on the level of the image results in the human seeing himself in the animal and changing his behavior. Thus the blending of the animal and the human produces a poetic conflation of the bear and the uncle, which will be further investigated below.

Leskov considered himself a master of the Christmas story, numbering himself with Gogol and Dickens as having this distinction. Dickens had enormous influence on Russian

Его подняли и осмотрели: он был ранен пулею в руку навывлет, но в ране его было также несколько медвежьей шерсти.

³⁰ The two instances where «храпя» appears in the text refer to the horse that pulls the cart with the hay to be lit on fire and thrown into the pit, and to the hunting dogs who see the bear when he emerges from the pit and begin howling.

writers when it came to writing for the Christmas season. To a certain extent, Leskov's "The Wild Animal" is a retelling of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," but with changes that reflect both Leskov's artistic approach and the Russian setting. During the nocturnal vision in which Scrooge witnesses scenes from the future, Scrooge sees a himself as a corpse graced only by the presence of an elderly thief, as well as a cat and some hungry rats that are gnawing their way into the room where his body lays, showing him reduced to the animal realm at the moment of his death. During the vision when he views moments from past Christmases, Scrooge is figuratively referred to as an animal:

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister, falling into a similar state, cried out:

"I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!"

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though some objected that the reply to “Is it a bear?” ought to have been “Yes;” inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, supposing they had ever had any tendency that way. (Dickens 69-70)

Like Scrooge, Leskov’s uncle is figuratively a bear who regains his human status. Scrooge becomes known for his generosity instead of his former miserliness, while the uncle’s pitilessness towards his serfs and animals changes to charity to the poor and mercy to the bear.

In “Inventing with Animals in the Middle Ages” Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes that “From Aesop’s fables in the classical period to Marie de France’s *Le Dit d’Esop* in the medieval . . . animals served well as creatures from whose actions human lessons might be extracted” (Cohen 42). Cohen characterizes medieval treatment of animal images as “looking at what in fact is a combination of difference and similarity but comprehending only ourselves” (Cohen 43). He points out that “Alan of Lille similarly argued that every animal functions as *liber*, *pictura*, *speculum* (book, image, mirror)” (Cohen 42). In Leskov’s work, the bear affects the uncle like a book, an image, and a mirror. As when Scrooge perceives an image of himself that is both different and similar to his present self, the uncle’s viewing of the bear induces a change in his own self-conception. The bear in Russian culture, made familiar by bear performances in which the bear executes tricks such as wearing a hat, dancing, and walking on two legs, is ideal for teaching the tyrant a lesson. On the level of the poetics of the text, when the uncle sees the bear emerge from the pit, the fact that he is wearing animal skins enhances the sense of empathy aroused by the bear’s human appearance, and the uncle sees “a combination of difference and similarity” and comprehends himself.

The change of heart that the uncle undergoes, as does Scrooge, is caused by being compared to a bear and deciding to act more human. Another way in which Leskov presents this change is as a chasing away of the malignant component, a perspective that emerges from the links to the traditions of mummary (пряжанье) in the bear-baiting scene. Mummary, as well as the closely related forms of entertainment, bear performances and bear-baiting, exploited the simultaneous similarity and dissimilarity of the bear and the human. A popular amusement at Christmastime in Russia that originated in rituals of pagan times, mummary used bear masks, as well as horse, bull, and goat masks and other clothing and accessories in a ritual impersonation of these animals (Warner 6). The person dressed as a bear wore two black goatskins inside out, a hat, and was smeared with soot.³¹

Furthermore, actors in mummary events were chosen not for their dramatic talent but rather based on their social and economic identifiers, and there was no strict division between audience and actor (Warner 33).³² Elizabeth Warner writes: “The purpose for which each of these rites was performed was important not only to the few people playing the major roles, but to all of the villagers who were emotionally involved in the evolution of the ‘plot’ and its successful outcome” (Warner 33). Additionally, entertainment was not originally the aim of these events; rather, the aim was to achieve specific results in the community.

³¹ It is believed that the purpose of masking was “to hide or protect one’s person by disguise from the attention of the evil spirits,” which explains “some of the most popular Russian forms of masking such as the customary exchange of clothing between men and women and the habit of wearing clothes inside out, shoes upon the hands, boots upon the head and like absurdities” (Warner 6).

³² Additionally, the village rituals were not staged in any particular location but instead wherever most conveniently reflected the setting of the plot, such as a forest, meadow, or river. Animal games that belonged to the winter cycle were usually enacted indoors where there was more of a stage that the audience could gather around. If the baiting of the bear is like an outdoor village ritual, the conversion scene when the uncle sits in his chair is like a second act relocated to an indoor stage (Warner 32).

In Leskov's scene, the entire community is involved in the confrontation with the bear. The uncle's conversion is not only a personal experience, but affects the lives of everyone, rehabilitating both the permanent community of his serfs and the temporary community of his guests. Both groups pray for the uncle to be touched by remorse and to forgive Ferapont, who is the heroic representative not only of the people but of human virtue who defies the tyrannical decrees. The sense of an overall cohesion in the actions despite the chaos reinforces the sense of ritual, at least before the bear swings the plank: ". . . in all this, disorder was apparent, and yet had its own harmony . . ." (« . . . во всем этом виднелось нестроение и был, однако, свой лад . . . »; SS 7: 271). At the conclusion of the event, the bear is chased away to the forest, leaving the human to pursue an ascending course of good works. The animal returns to the forest, while the beast-like tyrant transforms into a charitable human being. Both the human and the bear regain their natural form. Thus, the event is rehabilitative for the community.

Additionally, in Leskov's scene, the uncle is dressed in animal skins for the bear-baiting, as are the children (his young son and his young nephew, who is the narrator), the horses that pull the people in sleds, and presumably the people in sleds as well, are also bundled in fur coats: "They put our rabbit-skin coats on us and shaggy boots, with round soles, woven from goat hair, and ordered us to sit in the sled. And at the drives on this side and the other side of the house already stood a great number of large, long sleighs covered in figured carpets («Надели наши заячьи шубки и лохматые, с круглыми подошвами, сапоги, вязанные из козьей шерсти, и повели усаживать в сани. А у подъездов с той и с другой стороны дома уже стояло множество длинных больших троечных саней, покрытых узорчатыми коврами »; SS 7: 268). And: "Uncle came out in a fox-hair *arkhaluk* and in a pointed fox-hair hat and, as soon as he had sat in the saddle, which was covered with a black bear skin with cruppers and breast-

collars, and gathered with a turquoise and cowry shells, all of our huge train started to move . . .

(«Дядя вышел в лисьем архалуке и в лисьей остроконечной шапке, и, как только он сел на седло, покрытое черною медвежьей шкурою с пахвами и паперсями, убранными бирюзой и «змеиными головками» и весь наш огромный поезд тронулся» . . . ; SS 7: 269).

Symbolically posing as animals in the spirit of mummery, the uncle and the onlookers succeed in chasing out the alien element from the community. Wearing animal skins, including bear skins, the onlookers are symbolically identified with the hunted animal, predisposing them toward an empathetic response to the bear's suffering and poetically identifying them with the animal in the spirit of mummery.

Besides the subtext of mummery, a literary subtext highlights the performed nature of the event and adds to the blending of animal and human in the poetic conflation of the uncle and the bear, which facilitates the uncle seeing himself in the bear. The bear is compared to Shakespeare's King Lear (while the uncle, an absolute tyrant on his estate, is much more like a king):

The bear was out of sorts and did not have an attractive appearance. Having suffered and exhausted, apparently not so much from physical suffering as from a severe moral shock, he strongly resembled King Lear. He glared sullenly with bloodshot eyes full of anger and indignation. Like King Lear, he was disheveled, scorched in places, and in places pieces of straw stuck to him. Moreover, like that unfortunate crown-bearer, Sganarelle had, surprisingly, saved for himself something in the nature of a crown. Maybe loving Sherapont, and perhaps by chance, under his arm he squeezed a hat, which Khraposhka had supplied him with and with which, against his will, he had pushed Sganarelle into the pit. The bear had saved this friendly gift and...now, when his heart found momentary

calm in the embrace of his friend, as soon as he had stood on the ground, he immediately took the violently rumpled hat from under his arm and placed it on the top of his head . . . (SS 7: 272; ellipses in original)³³

The Lear that the bear is compared to is specifically King Lear on the heath, wandering with a companion, on the boundary of sanity, disempowered and betrayed. The uncle is more like King Lear than the bear is, however. The uncle's estate has a building that looks like a castle, and the uncle exercises autocratic power over his subjects as completely as a king (McLean 388). The narrator even refers to the uncle's serfs as "his numerous slaves" («его многочисленны[е] раб[ы]»; SS 7: 261). Further, King Lear's sanity becomes questionable, while the uncle's father was insane,³⁴ and their insanity is pictured in association with a storm. During a tempest on the heath, King Lear goes mad, while the uncle becomes troubled during storms when a harp affixed to the roof of the tower where the uncle's mad father had lived makes a humming noise. Another coincidence is that both King Lear and the uncle are described as having white hair, perhaps as a result of the stress. And the goggle-eyed appearance of the loyal Ferapont, who after the conversion accompanies the uncle into "burrows and dens," suggest King Lear's fool who accompanies him on the heath when the king descends to the level of his subjects by entering the hovel in the storm.

³³ Медведь был не в духе и не в аванажном виде. Пострадавший и изнуренный, по-видимому не столько от телесного страдания, сколько от тяжкого морального потрясения, он сильно напоминал короля Лира. Он сверкал исподлобья налитыми кровью и полными гнева и негодования глазами. Так же, как Лир, он был и взъерошен, и местами опален, а местами к нему пристали будылья соломы. Вдобавок же, как тот несчастный венценосец, Сганарель, по удивительному случаю, сберег себе и нечто вроде венца. Может быть, любя Шерапонта, а может быть, случайно, он зажал у себя под мышкой шляпу, которою Храпощка его снабдил и с которою он же поневоле столкнулся Сганареля в яму. Медведь сберег этот дружеский дар, и . . . теперь, когда сердце его нашло мгновенное успокоение в объятиях друга, он, как только стал на землю, сейчас же вынул из-под мышки жестоко измятую шляпу и положил ее себе на макушку . . .

³⁴ "There once lived the insane father of the present landlord . . ." («Там когда-то жил сумасшедший отец нынешнего помещика» . . . ; SS 7: 261).

However, the bear rather than the uncle is compared to King Lear, which contributes to the conflation of the bear and the uncle. As mentioned, the comparison at the moment when the bear emerges from the pit is a reference to Lear on the heath, when he demonstrates his realization of his own frailty and his dependence on animals (Heilman 71):

Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer
with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.
Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou
owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep
no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on
's are sophisticated! Thou art the thing itself:
unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor bare,
forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings!
come unbutton here. (3.4.102-110)

King Lear sees man as a “poor bare” animal as he gazes at the naked lunatic, is immersed in Nature, and approaches animality (Clody 661). In the Biblical tradition that informed Shakespeare’s creations, frailty is a result of the human fall from paradise that resulted in having to “eat bread by the sweat of the brow” (Gen. 3.19). Animals were created before humans but were subject to the corruption caused by the human fall (Alfeyev 188). Therefore, when Lear acknowledges human (and particularly his own) dependence on animals, he recognizes the animal as a continuous co-actor in human experience. King Lear enacts his acknowledgment by addressing human dependence on animals in regard to clothing. Since God made coverings for Adam and Eve out of animal skins after they realized they were naked, animal products can be seen as garments that replace the garment of God’s Spirit, and so are makeshift at best.

Garments make the human form more beautiful by hiding its imperfections and its frailty and susceptibility to the elements and to animal predators and symbolically hiding basic human incompleteness (Heilman 71).

This spectacle makes him empathetic towards the plights of others, which is a stage in his becoming less self-centered and humbler as the play progresses. He accepts that image as his own, enlarging his self-image. In both works, the hero meets the animal on its own as the action unfolds. The physical nature of the encounter is also important. The bodily injury that the uncle sustains and the greater danger that he and his guests are exposed to are crucial in changing his point of view. The uncle's limping, which necessitates his use of the cane, is a bodily inscription of the violent encounter. The uncle's leg is injured when his horse bolts and runs up against a tree. This occurs during the mayhem that ensues when the bear begins swinging a plank of wood that had accidentally become attached by a rope to his arm. By unwittingly swinging a plank attached to his paw, the bear endangers the circle of spectators watching from the safety of their sleds and escapes into the forest. Analogously, King Lear comes to a realization when he is shut out in the cold during a storm, deciding that, in order to better manifest justice, he must experience the harsh conditions of his destitute subjects:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,

That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just. (3.4.32-40)

The uncle actually puts into action this impulse to go to the needy in their poverty, out of a newly acquired compassionate sense of justice:

. . . in the burrows and dens of Moscow there are people who remember the white-haired, tall old man, who knew as if miraculously how to find out where the real grief was, and could get there in time or would send his own kind goggle-eyed servant not empty-handed.
(SS 7: 279)³⁵

Leskov's tyrant changes similarly to Shakespeare's who, in an act of humble realism, disrobes on the heath, revealing his inglorious human form and seeing himself as he really is and naming the animals upon which he depends for covering. The rejection, if symbolical, of king-like privilege is enacted through a removal of physical tokens of power and privilege. When the uncle transforms, he evinces a disregard for the accessories that demonstrate his wealth and power. As he sits kinglike in his "Voltairian armchair," the uncle is dressed in impressive robe-like garment with a gem, and a fine cane. Significantly, his dogs lay at his feet.

The Voltairian armchair was placed for uncle on a small Persian rug in front of the fir tree, in the middle of the room. He sat in this armchair without a word and without a word took from Justin his foulard and his snuffbox. At his feet lay both dogs and stretched out their long muzzles.

³⁵ . . . в московских норах и трющах есть люди, которые помнят белоголового длинного старика, который словно чудом умел узнавать, где есть истинное горе, и умел поспевать туда вовремя сам или посылал не с пустыми руками своего доброго пучеглазого слугу.

The uncle was wearing a blue silk arkhaluk with satin stich clasps, richly decorated with white filigree buckles with a large turquoise. In his hands he had his slender, but strong stick made from natural Caucasian cherry. (*SS* 7: 277)³⁶

This contrasts Ferapont's position alongside the bear cubs as they sleep, or even acting as their pillow. The uncle's walking stick and the jewel fastening his robe connote royal power, but he drops first his cane then the turquoise that fastens his caftan in the climactic moment of the Christmas sermon. Symbolically, the accessories are vain accoutrements that, like fine clothes, disguise the true form and weakness of the human. These symbols are abandoned just when they could disarm the intrusion upon the hermetic integrity of the uncle's utter distinction from the other being, i.e. the bear. That is, the bear-baiting involves the uncle's metaphorical descent to the realm of the animal, but the next morning the uncle's grand entrance promises the reaffirmation of his king-like ascendancy. The uncle had worn a robe and hat made out of fox skin to the bear-baiting, and the next day he wears a silk robe. But his dropping of the gem that fastens his robe is a symbolical divesting reminiscent of King Lear's taking off his clothes on the heath. Symbolically, the uncle's acceptance of the message of Christmas, of forgiveness and love, reaffirms his divine connection and sets him apart from the animal.

The uncle's disrobing is far more subtle. After the stick falls, the people look and see the uncle leaning to the side, the jewel resting on his hand seemingly forgotten. The jewel is one of the fasteners on the front of the uncle's fancy indoor robe with satin-stitched clasps and buckles. Apparently the jewel had come off in his hand and he had held it forgetfully while he listened to

³⁶ Вольтеровское кресло для дяди было поставлено на небольшом персидском ковре перед елкою, посреди комнаты. Он молча сел в это кресло и молча же взял у Жюстина свой фуляр и свою табакерку. У ног его тотчас легли и вытянули свои длинные морды обе собаки.

Дядя был в синем шелковом архалуке с вышитыми гладью застежками, богато украшенными белыми филограневыми пряжками с крупной бирюзой. В руках у него была его тонкая, но крепкая палка из натуральной кавказской черешни.

the homily, and eventually dropped it. This motion, though slowed considerably, is of removing the fastener on his robe, a preparatory movement to taking off the robe permanently, since the gesture is of throwing away the buckle. Leskov's wording makes the uncle grammatically the active doer of the action, strengthening the sense that this action is symbolic. This symbolical disrobing has a finality imparted by the last phrase "and nobody hurried to pick it up:"

Suddenly something fell . . . It was uncle's cane . . . Someone handed it to him, but he did not touch it. He sat leaning to the side, and in his hand, which was hanging over the side of the armchair, there was lying, as if forgotten, a large jewel from his clasp. But then he dropped it . . . and no one hurried to pick it up. (SS 7: 278; ellipses in original)³⁷

These movements signal the uncle's acknowledgment of his inhumane behavior, for which all his guests and people are praying fervently. The symbolic unclothing becomes a tacit confession of fault. Both King Lear's and the uncle's symbolic renunciation of coverings, which comes from animals, reveal the man in his lack, and shows that he is aware of his existential shame and remembers his unadorned identity. Scrooge, whose presence can be felt influencing the text, is dressed in nothing but a nightgown and cap when he encounters his ghosts, which for the Victorian Dickens is enough of a state of undress to be meaningful. Like the uncle, Scrooge is an old man who has wrapped himself in layers of distance between himself and his neighbor and dissociated from others, but is shamed into remembering himself as a member of a community.

King Lear sees differently after seeing himself as a "bare, forked animal" without the covering of animal skins, while the uncle does the same by renouncing the dignity that his silk

³⁷ Вдруг что-то упало . . . Это была дядина палка . . . Ее ему подали, но он до нее не коснулся: он сидел, склонясь набок, с опущенною с кресла рукою, в которой, как позабытая, лежала большая бирюза от застёжки . . . Но вот он уронил ее, и . . . ее никто не спешил поднимать.

robe confers on him; they both acknowledge their true image. To highlight this fact, the bear's name is a speaking name; "Sganarelle" is formed from the Italian word "sgannare" that means "to undecieve" (Hoare 564). Sganarelle's function of giving the uncle new sight fits with the Christmas theme and the priest's homily on the hymn "Christ is born" («Христос рождается»; SS 7: 277), since both are about beginnings: Christmas celebrates a birth, while the uncle begins to see in a new way.

Sganarelle's name signals another subtext that blurs the boundary between subject and object—which is how human-animal relationships have been characterized. Sganarelle, a role in Moliere's oeuvre that the playwright himself often enacted (Gaines 426), appeared in *Dom Juan*, *L'Ecole des maris*, *Le Mariage force*, *Le Medecin malgre lui*, *Le Medecin volant*, and *Sganarelle, ou le Cocu imaginaire*. Sganarelle is most often a bourgeois character, but in *Le Medecin volant* he is a valet. In *Dom Juan*, he is a servant to a nobleman and, while acting like a buffoon, brings up the serious issues of the play and "stands in for both Moliere himself and the spectator" (Gaines 427-8). The name "Sganarelle" refers to a character that was in some sense part of an autobiographical impulse of its creator, because Moliere the playwright and Moliere the actor both gave substance to the character of Sganarelle the clownish bourgeois. By referencing Moliere's Sganarelle, the narrator references the conflation of a scripted role and a scripting creator. The uncle's role is analogous to Moliere's: like a playwright, he arranges the bear-baiting like a theatrical performance, designing a scripted event with a fixed time designed for spectators, where people sit in a semi-circle, similar to the loge in a theater, and observe from a distance. The narrator's language explicitly suggests a theatrical performance: "All the rest of the audience, that is, the guests and the family uncles who had come to this amusement in the capacity of spectators, did not find further amusement in what had happened" («Вся остальная

публика, то есть все гости и семейные дяди, приехавшие на эту потеху в качестве зрителей, не находили более в случившемся ни малейшей потехи»; SS 7: 274). Similarly, the separation between audience and actors is negated when the bear swings the plank, threatening to injure the audience.

The type of comedy that Sganarelle stands for also resonates with Leskov's work. A contemporary wrote of Moliere's performance of the role of Sganarelle, "No one was ever better at making and unmaking his face, and it is safe to say that in the course of this play he transforms his features more than twenty times...his pantomime gives rise to endless bursts of applause" (Moliere 88). This comic convention followed Descartes' *Passions de l'ame* of 1649 in which the author "sought to establish a close correlation between the appearance and movements of the eyes, changes in complexion, the various expressions of the mouth, the attitudes and gestures of the body and the nature of the particular passions affecting the soul." "From *Les Precieuses ridicules*" (1659) onwards, Moliere often combined laughter at the absurd appearance of men and women with censure of the poor judgment and flawed understanding which lay behind their comic exterior" (Moliere 7). This approach can describe Leskov's treatment of the uncle's cruelty, for which the bear is the target in the bear-baiting, but of which the spectators are also subject, in greater or lesser degrees. The comic, human appearance of the bear as he puts his hat on his head after coming out of the pit is a reproach not to the bear's flawed judgment, but to the uncle's, who is forcing the heart-rending scene between the hunted bear and the loyal Ferapont.

The subtext of Sganarelle blurs the boundaries between the object and the viewer, and contributes to the work's blurring of the boundaries between the animal and the human in the bodies of the bear and the uncle. And the continual presence of the name "Sganarelle" in Leskov's text invokes the misalignment between appearance and reality, the easy disguise of

identity (though in Moliere's play the disguise is composed of words rather than clothing), and the vast potential of shifts in self-identity.

The same projection of self occurs on an extratextual level: Leskov projects himself and his own uncle into the plot he narrates. Moliere's relationship to the character he created would have to be one of convergent and yet ultimately divergent identities, one real, and the other an alternate version of himself. If Moliere, who created Sganarelle, is also in some sense Sganarelle himself, Leskov, who created Sganarelle the bear also wants to show that in some sense he himself is Sganarelle, the opener of his uncle's moral and spiritual eyes. Hugh McLean argues convincingly that Leskov included autobiographical information in this work, and others, not in order to increase the believability of the fiction but out of some psychological need. Leskov's actual uncle never changed his tyrannical attitude, never transformed, as Leskov admitted with chagrin. Hugh McLean argues that Leskov included autobiographical information in this work, and others, not in order to increase the believability of the fiction but out of some psychological need: "It is as if Leskov were finally able to exorcize this demon by having him, in a literary reincarnation, undergo the classic metamorphosis of Scrooge" (McLean 385). What McLean calls natural sympathy between children and animals (McLean 386) verges on shared identity. The bear cubs are kept in a dungeon-like building, while the narrator's stay at his uncle's is prison-like: ". . . my wishes were not taken into consideration on account of the circumstances, to which it was necessary to submit" («. . . мои желания не принимались в расчет при соображении обстоятельств, которым приходилось подчиняться»; *SS* 7: 261). The five year old boy lives unwillingly and fearfully at his uncle's house, which is like a castle, a likely place for a dungeon prison:

On my uncle's estate was a huge stone house, resembling a castle. It was a pretentious but unsightly and even ugly two-story building with a round cupola with a tower, about which terrible horrors were told. (SS 7: 261)³⁸

This terrifying place is where the narrator has to live. The place where the bear cubs whose parents have been killed or chased off are also unwilling captives in the uncle's domain:

They were usually kept in a large stone shed with small windows made just under the roof. These windows did not have glass but only fat iron grating. The bear cubs, it would happen, would scramble up to them on each other and would hang, holding onto the iron with their tenacious, sharp-clawed paws. Only in this way could they look out the window of their confinement onto God's free world. (SS 7: 262)³⁹

The cubs' parents have been killed and the narrator's parents are protecting him from the cold and the strain of the road, but in some sense both the cubs' parents and the narrators' parents have abandoned their young. The bear cubs are prisoners behind iron bars, placed there by the uncle similarly to how the narrator is locked on the balcony during a storm by the uncle in order to teach him not to fear thunder. The narrator and his cousin save part of their meals to give to their tutor, Kohlberg, to feed the cubs. And Sganarelle, although a full grown and powerful bear, is the same age as the narrator. The ages are mentioned twice each: "In the instance that I am now going to tell you about, I was only five years old" («При том случае, о котором я теперь хочу рассказать, - мне было всего только пять лет»; SS 7: 260). In the last paragraph of

³⁸ В имении дяди был огромный каменный дом, похожий на замок. Это было претенциозное, но некрасивое и даже уродливое двухэтажное здание с круглым куполом и с башней, о которой рассказывали страшные ужасы.

³⁹ Их обыкновенно держали в большом каменном сарае с маленькими окнами, проделанными под самой крышей. Окна эти были без стекол, с одними толстыми, железными решетками. Медвежата, бывало, до них вскарабкивались друг по дружке и висели, держась за железо своими цепкими, когтистыми лапами. Только таким образом они и могли выглядывать из своего заключения на вольный свет Божий.

Chapter 1: “It was understandable that in the house of such a master I visited unwillingly and with not a little fear but, I repeat, I was then only five years old . . .” («Понятно, что я в доме такого хозяина гостил неохотно и с немалым страхом, но мне, повторяю, тогда было пять лет . . .»; *SS* 7: 261). About Sganarelle: “He had already lived in freedom for five years and had not committed even one “antic” («Он уже пять лет прожил на свободе и не сделал еще ни одной «шалости»; *SS* 7: 264) and: “The intelligence and reliability of Sganarelle made it so that the amusement described, or the bear execution, had not happened for five years” («Ум и солидность Сганареля сделали то, что описанной потехи, или медвежьей казни, не было уже целые пять лет»; *SS* 7: 264).

In this way, Leskov figures himself in the network of relationships in his text, casting himself as the young cub who upsets the tyranny of his uncle. More clearly, however, Leskov casts himself in the role of the bear cub who grows up to shake the tyrant to his core and bring about repentance and a change of life. Leskov subconsciously or consciously exorcises the demon of his uncle’s terrifying effect on him by having his fictive incarnation undergo a spiritual metamorphosis.

In “The Wild Animal,” the animal image works as a mirror that has the effect of transforming a human tyrant. The recognition of the self in the image of the bear is both comical and consonant with hagiographical treatment of animals, as exemplified in the Life of Seraphim of Sarov. Additionally, the animal illustrates the message of Christmas, as the mixing of animal and human nature is analogous to the mixing of divine and human nature that the feast celebrates. Leskov situates the transformation in the center of traditional Russian culture, as a Christmas tale complete with the disappearing Russian pastime of bear-baiting, with mention of the Christmas hymn, suggestion of mummary, and an epigraph from the life of Russia’s most

revered saint of the eighteenth century. Some traditional forms of Russian culture are reworked into a more educated, Christian, and human form for the reader; the story is not a private incident but a microcosm of national transformation based on enlightened principles. The animal appears on center stage during the exploration of what it means to be human.

CHAPTER 4: SEEING THE HORSE

In this work, the hero is Leskov himself, since “Monastic Islands” (Монашеские острова, 1873) is not a work of fiction. However, its similarity to his works of fiction is striking, especially as regards the narrative persona. The pilgrimage described is the same trip that inspired the writing of “Peacock” and “The Enchanted Wanderer.” The impulse of the imagination that unfurls in “The Enchanted Wanderer” is visible here as an understated kernel; its structure of describing episodic movement through space and time is also echoed in “Monastic Island.” Additionally, the semantic value of pilgrimage in Russian culture is similar to that of wandering.

The genre of this non-fictional work is presented in Leskov’s riddle-like way, and animal imagery is involved in offering a resolution. The theme of empathy plays a role as well, in the themes of perception, expectation, and transformation that are part of the drama. At the end of this travelogue, Leskov offers a more explicit stratification of ways of viewing than he does in his works of fiction. Leskov’s unmediated contact with nature, with unalleviated reality, rewards him as an artist and adds to his reputation as a practical man who speaks from the authority of experience in the real world. Animal sacrifice appears in a historical, realistic context. At the same time, the horses that Leskov sees on this journey make their way into other works, as realistic details that have accrued cultural weight.

At the onset of the narration, Leskov raises a question that he frequently raises in his fiction: is it worth the time to read the given work? The question is whether or not the pilgrimage will edify Leskov, and it is posed in terms of genre. Leskov adduces a framework of literature about the monasteries on the islands, and positions himself between the apologetic

point of view, which would present the pilgrimage as edifying and instructive, and the criticizing point of view, which would favor the genre of the exposé. This non-fictional account, he implies, will provide a neutral alternative that is absent in the literature and be neither too naïve and simple nor merely a pretext for voicing preconceived negative opinions. It will be neutral and detached. From the start, however, emotional objectivity is challenged when the conditions of the trip seem unmodern and uncivilized and threaten Leskov's equanimity. This challenges his detached objectivity and pulls his own body into the experience, complicating the detachment of the observer as his separateness is disregarded and he becomes part of the phenomenon that he is observing.

The text itself also models the exertion of interpretation. The problem of interpreting the pilgrimage is an inner drama of the narrator, of Leskov. The question is whether Leskov will “gain something” from the trip, will he discover something, either positive or negative? The reader must decide whether the pilgrimage genre or the exposé genre is appropriate. Everything that Leskov describes can be construed either as uncivilized or as imparting a kind of wisdom, the interpretation corresponding to the genre of the exposé or of the apologia. In the terms of Walter Benjamin, Leskov is a seeker of wisdom and his question is whether or any wisdom is left to be found in the world, or if it is depleted (Benjamin 364). An encounter with Nature and specifically with horses provides Leskov an answer.

From before the journey starts, Leskov's self-claimed position of objective onlooker who neutrally assesses what he sees is thwarted. In typical Leskovian fashion, the story opens with a description of convention being disregarded, as “German or Swedish order” is deemed inapplicable to Russian piety, tickets cannot be obtained at a specific time, the boat is delayed by the arrival of a renowned passenger, and the human back is employed as a seat. Leskov's initial

frustrations are caused by expectations of how things will be done, and his acquaintance, an experienced pilgrim to Valaam, points out this mistake: “‘Understand’ again! My God, please forget that word! Why do you need to understand something when it is beyond our understanding?” (- Опять понять! Ах боже мой, да позабудьте вы, пожалуйста, это слово! На что вам что-нибудь понимать, когда это выше нашего понимания?; “Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 3).⁴⁰ The human need to logically understand is to be suspended. Leskov’s acquaintance tells how he once boarded the steamboat going to Valaam for the feast day, could not find a place to sit and began complaining, was chided by other passengers for undertaking the pilgrimage in such a spirit, until a man offered to stretch out on his stomach and act as a chair. That way, the volunteer could rest lying down and Leskov’s complaining acquaintance would have a place to sit. When they finally arrived at the island, the man refused to be paid for acting as a seat, only accepting a few coins to pay for candles and pray for Leskov’s acquaintance:

“See what kind of dear people go to Valaam,” my acquaintance concluded, “for twenty-four hours you squeeze him under your indolent body, and he even lights a candle to God for your health. How can your German and Swedish order be suitable with them here? No, don’t make a fuss, don’t get offended, but rejoice that you are going on such a trip, the likes of which in terms of originality cannot be found far or near. (“Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 3)⁴¹

⁴⁰ This work is not included in Leskov’s standard works in 11 volumes, so is cited here from an online edition without pagination, by chapter number.

⁴¹ Вот ведь какие милые люди на Валаам ездят, - заключил мой знакомый, - вы его целые сутки пожмете под тяжестью вашего обленившегося тела, а он еще Богу свечи за ваше здоровье ставит. Куда же тут с ними могут быть годны ваши немецкие или шведские порядки? Нет, не капризничайте, не обижайтесь, а радуйтесь, что собрались совершить такую путинку, которой ни вблизи, ни вдали не найти ничего подобного по оригинальности.

At the inception of the action, the question of what it means to be human has been raised, as the human is used as a chair; or, in a way that is similar to a horse. The question of what it means to be human continues to be developed when Leskov regards a scene that is at first indecipherable because it contravenes his expectations and paints the human in relationship with both the animal and the machine.⁴² Leskov chooses the word “spectacle,” which emphasizes his own role as an onlooker, as he compares an unusual scene to a depiction of the prophet Ezekiel’s vision in the Old Testament:

... a strange spectacle presented itself to our eyes, in part reminding of an engraving that depicted the vision of the prophet Ezekiel; two wheels were rolling along the road and constantly winking, touching first one side then the other, and while they were rolling straight, above them could be seen a human face, but as soon as they winked and touched the side, between them floundered some kind of wild animal . . . And later again it is rolling and again a human image is visible, and again it falls to the side—and again a beastly number . . . (“Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 8; 2nd and 3rd ellipses in original)⁴³

⁴² Viewing is referred to explicitly, such as when an officious pilgrim makes a comment to Leskov: “Truly, it doesn’t just happen the way you are thinking, . . . You have to attain it, whoever God has vouchsafed it. I didn’t understand what he was talking about: that God has not vouchsafed everyone to live in the monastery, or to look at the monastery in the way I was looking at it” (- А ведь это так, как вы думаете, просто не делается . . . Этого надо достичь, кого Бог сподобил. Я не понял, о чем он говорил: о том ли, что не всякого Бог сподобил жить в монастыре, или глядеть на него, как гляжу теперь я).

⁴³ . . . глазам нашим представилось странное зрелище, отчасти напоминающее гравюры, изображающие видение пророка Иезекииля; по дороге катились два колеса и постоянно мигали, косясь то в одну, то в другую сторону, и над ними, пока они катились прямо, виднелось человеческое лицо, но чуть они мигали и косились на сторону, между ними барахтался какой-то зверь . . . И потом опять катится, и опять виден образ человеческий, и опять верть в сторону - и снова число зверино . . .

The source for the vision referred to is the Book of Ezekiel. “Ezekiel beheld a shining cloud, with fire flashing continually, and in the midst of the fire, gleaming bronze. He also saw four living creatures in the shape of men, but with four faces” (Ezek. 1.6) “Each had the face of a man in front, the face of a lion on the right, the face of an ox on the left, and the face of an eagle at the back.” (Ezek. 1.10) “There was a wheel intersecting a wheel resting on the ground beside each creature, and the rim of each wheel was full of eyes. “And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice

In this visual riddle, the extraordinary rider is unable to separate the inanimate from the animate and therefore unable to learn how to ride his bicycle because he insists on treating it like a horse. Besides the fact that this scene is a comic mirror of Ivan Fliagin's contest with the "man-eating" horse in "The Enchanted Wanderer," it theatricalizes the tendency to treat objects as living beings, as sharing emotions and motivations with humans. The rider does not give up his struggle with the bicycle, but eventually acknowledges being defeated by the bicycle and decides to sell it to the Tatars, who happen to be horse experts; this further shows that he thinks of the bicycle as a wayward horse: "Well, now it's the end; if he's such rubbish, the villain, I'll sell him to the Tatars as soon as I get back" («Ну, да теперь конец, если он такая дрянь, я его, мерзавца, как вернусь, непременно татарам продам»; "Monasheskie ostrova" ch 13.).⁴⁴ The fact that Leskov is accompanied by his friend the artist, whose profession is to observe and capture images, highlights the concern with viewing and recording, as well as with decoding.

In characterizing the literature reprehending the monastery islands, Leskov compares this literature to a school of painting that portrays every muscle of the subject but fails to convey the character of the person. Leskov says that writers who produce this denunciatory literature are unable to observe anything that "does not conform to their standards" («не подходит под их мерку»; "Monasheskie ostrova" ch. 2). Leskov includes himself among those who see only what they expect or want to see, however. The visual riddle of the footman struggling with the bicycle is an instance of Leskov being confronted with things that do not conform to expectations and that force him to adjust his vision. A less striking example involves food, when

of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings" (Ezek. 1.24). "Over the heads of the creatures there seemed to be a firmament, shining like crystal. Above the firmament was the likeness of a throne, like glittering sapphire in appearance. Above this throne was the likeness of a human form, and around Him was a rainbow" (Ezek. 1.4-28).

⁴⁴ Grammatically, the sentence could be translated as "I'll sell it to the Tatars" or "I'll sell him to the Tatars," but the speaker is referring to the object as if it were animate.

having tea with the superior reminds Leskov that he does not know to interpret everyday experiences on the monastic island: “The tea was wonderful, and with it was served hard, very dry baked wheat traces, which lacked only whiteness and taste. However, that might be the way it is supposed to be for some reason” («Чай был прекрасный, и к нему был подан крутой, очень сухо выпеченный пшеничный след, которому недоставало только белизны и вкуса. Впрочем, может быть, это почему-нибудь даже так следует»; “Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 12). This travelogue constantly raises the question of interpretation itself.

In fact, excessively detailed observation is not allowed for by the pilgrimage schedule. By viewing the parts of the island that are usually not seen, Leskov and his fellow travelers break the genre expectations of the pilgrimage, bypassing the constrictions of the schedule set up by the steamboats that carry the passengers, and by the monastery routine. Leskov is determined to bring the outside eye into the guarded environs of the island, to view the island not in its self-presentation, but from an ambivalent viewpoint. Leskov’s comment about the iconography in a famous chapel that they visit reflects his critical objectivity: “it is unsuitable, except for God” («кроме Божества, все не годится»; “Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 13). As a result, the excursion to see other parts of the island is like an intrusion on a remote scene. Like the iconography, the island itself may not withstand disengaged viewing from close range, and the viewing of the monastic island constitutes a permitted violation. The horse emerges at the center of Leskov’s morning viewing of the island:

But all this was not finished: the picture needed to come to life . . . And how it came to life! From the forest was heard a merry overflow of pure and resonant children’s voices, then some kind of deep rhythmic stamping and finally the pleasant sound of small melodic ringing bells . . . All this, carrying through the forest, comes closer and closer to us. Just

like a scene from the ballad “Twelve Sleeping Maidens.” And no matter how firmly you remember that there is no place for magic or visions, the heart sweetly thrills from the desire to know what kind of merry chase is rushing about and skipping. Now the stamping is even closer and louder; voices are yelling, and one can hear the roar of sounds even more, and from the forest a good, small, but very fat brown little horse with a copper bell on its cheek leaps out onto the meadow. He ran out, stood and fluffed, like a brush. What a glorious little horse! Just like a spinning top; short hair, glossy as if oiled; a brand on his face, tail spread wide and a light mane . . . He should carry the bogatyr Peresveta, the bogatyr in the black klobuk with curls and in the warrior’s ringing chain mail! But this horse was not here alone; right after him from the bushes appear a few more heads, like his, trimmed horse heads . . . And they all had the same half-wild, freedom-loving and resonant, merry eyes! They all stood, you could draw them! . . . It is a pity that Sverchkov never saw them in this position. (“Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 13; 2nd, 3rd and 4th ellipses in original)⁴⁵

The horse brings the scene to life, and is the high point of Leskov’s visit: “I do not recall another morning in my life that could have brought to my soul so many good impressions” («я

⁴⁵ Но все это было еще не кончено; картине надо было оживиться . . . Да как ожило! Из лесу слышались веселый перелив чистых и звонких детских голосов, потом какой-то густой ритмический топот и, наконец, приятный звук мелодических звенящих маленьких колокольчиков . . . Все это, разносясь по лесу, идет к нам все ближе и ближе. Точно сцена из баллады «Двенадцать спящих дев», и как ни твердо помнишь, что нет места ни волшебству, ни привидениям, а сердце сладко трепещет от желания знать, что это за веселая охота несется и скачет. Вот топот все ближе, громче; кричат голоса, и рокот звонков все слышнее, и из лесу на поляну выскакивает один добрый, маленький, но очень толстый бурый конек с медным колокольчиком на шее.

Он выбежал, стал и опынился, как ершик. Какой славный конек! Весь как кубарь, короткая шерстка, точно смазана маслом, лоснится; морда с обрубом, разметистый хвост и светлая грива капротом на крутой шее . . . Вот это ему бы и носить на себе богатыря Пересвета, богатыря в черном клобуке с воскрылиями и в ратной звенящей кольчуге! Но этот конь здесь не один; вон за ним из кустов выставляется еще несколько таких же, как у него, обрубистых конских голов... И какие у всех у них полудикие, вольнолюбивые и резвые, веселые глазки! Все стали, хоть их рисуй! . . . Жаль, что не видал их в этой позиции Свечков.

не припомню в моей жизни другого утра, которое вносило бы в душу мою столько хороших впечатлений»; “Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 13). In this passage, Leskov mentions Nikolai Sverchkov, an artist who was celebrated for his pictures of animals, especially of horses (Chapochnikova and Gourievitch). Sverchkov’s father worked as a head coachman and Sverchkov’s success as an artist was due to his natural talent rather than early opportunities. In 1852 and 1855, two paintings earned Sverchkov the position of an academician and a professor, respectively; both of these paintings included horses. Sverchkov was a celebrity in French salons and applauded by French critics, and his painting “Return from a Bear Hunt” was purchased by Napoleon III. He fulfilled a commission from Alexander II to paint “The Departure of Tsar’ Aleksei Mikhailovich to Inspect the Troops in 1664,” which features war horses. Sverchkov’s paintings were thus a part of international cultural exchange and spotlighted Russian history on the world stage. Leskov’s mention of Sverchkov accords the horse the gravitas of cultural prestige.

Horses are inscribed into the history of the island, and in fact give the island their name, Konevets (from “kon’,” “horse”), and give their name to the island's tourist attraction, Horse-Rock. Leskov discusses the interplay of expectation, perception, and imagination when he visits this large rock named after a horse, supposedly because of its horse-like shape. One of the explanations for the name “Horse-Rock” is that, in pre-Christian times, locals sacrificed a horse from the herd that roamed the island. Thus, this is another work in which animals appear in the role of sacrificial bodies.

An alternative explanation to the story of horse sacrifice is that the rock’s shape suggests a horse. Leskov tries this theory on for size and cannot make it fit:

According to other assertions, the granite is called a Horse because supposedly this block possesses the figure of a horse; but this is very strange and even completely unjust. No fantasizing can ascribe to this rock the slightest semblance of a horse: it is simply a block the size of the granite lying under the monument of Peter the First on Senate Square—maybe a little bigger. By eye it is hard to determine because a lot depends on the surroundings. Peter's rock lies on a spacious, blank square, and Konevets' Horse-Rock is closely surrounded by forest. This affects the eye. One half of Horse-Rock is lower, the other is higher, and if one intensively looks for resemblance in this rock with any kind of animal then, possibly, it only just, from only one side, can in somehow sooner bear a resemblance to a huge legless elephant, on whose back a palanquin has been placed. The palanquin is replaced by the wooden chapel in which, besides a few, quite wretched and strongly chipped off icons hung without symmetry and order on the walls, there is nothing to look at. ("Monasheskie ostrova" ch. 13)⁴⁶

The juxtaposition of the stone in St. Petersburg and the stone on Konevets Island purportedly helps the reader conceive the respective sizes of the stones, but it implies that Horse-Rock on the isolated monastery island is also historically significant. Leskov mentions the boulder that supports the statue of Peter the Great. What is directly supported by the rock,

⁴⁶ По другим заверениям, этот гранит называется Конем потому, что будто бы сама эта глыба имеет фигуру лошади; но это очень странно и даже совсем несправедливо: никакая фантазия не может приписать этому камню ни малейшего сходства с конем: это просто глыба, величиною с гранит, лежащий под монументом Петра Первого на Сенатской площади, - может быть, немножечко побольше. На глазомер это трудно решить, потому что тут много зависит от окружающего: петровский камень лежит на просторной, чистой площади, а коневский Конь-Камень тесно окружен лесом. Это влияет на глаз. Одна половина Коня-Камня ниже, другая выше, и если уже усиленно доискиваться в этом камне сходства с каким бы то ни было животным, то он еще, пожалуй, с грехом пополам, и то только с одной стороны, скорее может как-нибудь напомнить огромного безногого слона, на спине которого поставлен паланкин. Вид паланкина заменяет деревянная часовенка, в которой, кроме нескольких, из рук вон плохих, сильно облупившихся и без симметрии и порядка развешанных по стенам икон, смотреть не на что.

however—the selection and transport of which was a dramatic and colorful episode in Russian history—is not actually the statue of Peter the Great, but a statue of his horse (Kaganovich 109). Leskov does not remember the horse that stands on top of the rock of the monument to Peter the Great as he tries to see the shape of the horse in Horse-Rock. On Konevets Island, the bicyclist sees a horse where there is only a mechanical bicycle, and the people who named the rock see a horse that is not discernible to the uninitiated viewer. Leskov’s narration of his own viewing of the monument illustrates an aspect of his approach as a writer. As he looks at the rock, he recalls its history in two possible versions, as well as the statue of Peter that embodies so much historically and culturally, and he incorporates all of these into his consideration of the rock’s significance. In this way, Leskov models the intended work of his reader. This illustrates the collaborative work between the reader and the text, as Toporov states about viewing the statue of Peter the Great:

. . . [the creator-maker’s] work has already been completed and, in a certain sense, everything else no longer depends on the creator (in creating the monument, however, he did not depend only on his own capabilities), while “the viewer’s” work is in the process of development and, as long as the monument exists, it will continue, revealing new and deeper meanings since now it is this “viewer” that determines the further life of the monument in the space of its semantic growth and deepening . . . (my trans.; *Peterburgskii tekst* 778)⁴⁷

⁴⁷ . . . дело [творца-создателя] уже завершено и в известном смысле все остальное более не зависит от творца (впрочем, и создавая памятник, он в своем творении зависел не только от своих собственных возможностей), тогда дело «зрителя» находится в процессе своего развития, и пока памятник существует, оно будет продолжаться, открывая в нем все новые и более глубокие смыслы, поскольку теперь именно такой «зритель» определяет дальнейшую жизнь памятника в пространстве его смыслового возрастания и углубления . . .

As it turns out, not only do horses figure as the most striking and memorable of all that Leskov sees on the island, but they effectively hinder his invasive viewing of the island:

The monastery horses on Konevets, as I have already said, are excellent. They harnessed for us by far not the best pair of the herd that we had seen, but these constantly caught us up and carried us so swiftly along the clumpy road, that the monk sitting on the coach box, who was pulling back on the reins, lay back so far that his back was on my head and the head of the artist sitting next to me.

Such a fast ride through the forest on a fine early morning, of course, could in itself provide a very great pleasure, if the tree roots tangling the road in all directions had not made it so disturbing and bumpy that we did not have time to enjoy Nature. The artist and I especially suffered, sitting on the front bench: we caught it so badly that we were only concerned with not flying out and crashing against some root.

I will not describe all the scenes that we saw but, I admit, I did not have time to enjoy and to notice them, sitting on my insecure seat—I will mention only the desolate skete built in the forest, and the famous Horse-Rock. (“Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 13)⁴⁸

The animals on this island demonstrate their autonomy: the horses cannot be restrained as they race home, and some of them cannot be harnessed because they are too frisky. Similarly,

⁴⁸ Монастырские лошадки на Коневце, как я уже сказал, превосходны. Нам, очевидно, запрягли далеко не лучшую пару из того табуна, который мы видели, но и эти беспрестанно нас подхватывали и так резво несли по кочковатой дороге, что сидевший на козлах монах, натягивая вожжи, совсем ложился спиной на головы мне и сидевшему рядом со мною художнику.

Такая быстрая езда по лесу ранним погожим утром, конечно, могла бы доставить сама по себе очень большое удовольствие, если бы часто и во всех направлениях перепутывающие дорогу древесные корни не делали ее столь беспокойною и тряскою, что нам стало не до наслаждения природой. Особенно страдали от нее мы с художником, сидевшие на передней лавочке: нам так доставалось, что мы только и блюлись, как бы не вылететь вон и не треснуться о какой-нибудь корень.

Описывать всех виденных нами картин острова я не стану, да и, признаюсь, мне, на моем небезопасном сиденье, было не до того, чтобы ими любоваться и замечать их, - упомяну лишь только об устроенном в лесу пустынном ските и о знаменитом Коне-Камне.

since the time that a new bull was installed on the island, the cows have produced offspring that mysteriously grows horns, despite the fact that the bull had “neither horns nor rank” («рогов у него и звания не было»; *Monasheskie ostrova* ch.13). This unexpected result does not have an explanation, as far as Leskov can learn from the vaguely informed monk. Leskov’s and the others’ intention of viewing the island is hampered by the wildness of the horses, who race at such a speed over roots in the pathway that the passengers have to give all their attention to not falling out of the carriage. The monk has no control over this; the horses prevent the visitors from admiring the monastic island’s sights.

Leskov’s initial intention of viewing the island in its entirety seems to have proved an overly detached approach, and he acknowledges the limitations of his way of viewing. Leskov reproaches himself for having a narrow-minded point of view when he reacts to a silversmith’s personal confession of struggling against the urge to go on drinking binges. Leskov adopts the discourse of the spiritual life as he recognizes his fault:

“These are the fruits of openness and pure-heartedness with people,” I thought to myself, “if that person had not revealed to me his ailment with such sincerity, I would not have had such indecent ideas about him, but meanwhile now I know that he suffers and struggles with a repulsive ailment that degrades a person but would such a squeamish feeling toward him have been born in me against my will? Is it not the ‘enemy’ that has stirred this and me up in this holy place?” (*“Monasheskie ostrova”* ch. 11)⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Вот плоды откровенности и чистосердечия пред людьми! - подумал я себе, - не открой мне этот человек с такою искренностью своего недуга, разве бы я имел на его счет такие непристойные мысли, а между тем теперь я знаю, что он страждет и борется с отвратительнейшим, унижающим человека недугом, а у меня, против воли моей, зародилось к нему какое-то гадливое чувство? Уж не «враг» ли это замутил и меня в этом святом месте?

Leskov's self-reproach expresses sensitivity to the moral danger of being an outside observer who is given access to the inner content of subjects. This self-censure suggests that a neutral and detached viewpoint is undesirable. Artistically, Leskov favors the people who are undeclared apologists, because these people observe the most. This lengthy quotation is provided in full; the italics are mine:

Pilgrims *look at* the island of Konevets and its holy places as at the threshold of Valaam's holy places: on Konevets it is as if one can only have a foretaste of the sweetness of those religious delights that Valaam is able to give the pilgrim; "Konevets forces the first tears of the recognition of sins—on Valaam are shed repentant sobbing rising to heaven with sweet cries of prayer." This is how the visitors of these isolated monastic islands talk about Konevets and Valaam, people who are *observant and who have imagination and faith*. People with such gifts make up the most pleasant and most interesting class of pilgrimage. Impatient, dull fanatics, just like dry analysts, are worthless in comparison to them. These last, forming two extreme opposite ends, are fully alike in regard to the fact that they *see everything the way they want to* and cannot speak about anything in such a way as to give the story some real notion, even to the slightest degree, of the place and its inhabitants. I repeat: *they see only how they want to see*. It is completely different with people who have faith and even some degree of poetic feeling, which are always more or less happily compatible. With these people, dissatisfaction itself is friendly and doubt itself, if it can be said, is religious, and because of this they *observe a lot and sometimes very well*. Their comparisons, of which all are great enthusiasts, are always more or less filled with facts, often juxtaposed with great mastery and talent, and the generalizations and conclusions that they have the habit of making from their observations and comparisons always bear

the stamp of a particular warm religious romanticism, showing that their doubt itself is very doubtful and that they are not only believing people *but even desire to see everybody as believing*. Every rough and rude expression, and especially ignorant disbelief, draws them out of their role of doubters, and they become fiery defenders of religious idealism. They do not hide their dissatisfaction with people, in one way or another profaning the calling of the monk, but reveal unalterable certainty that the ideal of a hermit is still a very exalted ideal and that it is whole and is perfectly embodied somewhere by some lofty souls, to whom they always with the deepest sympathy and respect direct their own ecstatic souls. (“Monasheskie ostrova” ch. 10)⁵⁰

Leskov displays his own imaginative prowess that enables him to appreciate the experience of the trip to the island monastery. His objection to either the denunciatory or the

⁵⁰ На остров Коневец и на его святыни паломники смотрят как бы на преддверие к святыням валаамским: на Коневце как бы только можно предвкусить сладость тех религиозных восторгов, которые способен дать богомольцу Валаам; «Коневец исторгает первые слезы сознания грехов, - на Валааме льются восходящие до неба покаянные рыдания со сладостными воплями молитвы». Так говорят о Коневце и Валааме посетители этих уединенных монашеских островов, имеющие наблюдательность, воображение и веру. Люди с подобными дарами составляют самый приятный и самый интересный разряд паломничества. Нетерпимые, тупые фанатики, точно так же как и сухие аналитики, не стоят ничего в сравнении с ними. Эти последние, составляя две крайние друг другу противоположности, вполне сходны в том отношении, что всё видят так, как хотят, и не могут ни о чем рассказать, чтобы этот рассказ дал хотя мало-мальски какое-нибудь живое понятие о месте и его обитателях. Повторяю: они видят только так, как хотят видеть. Совсем иное дело люди с верою и хоть с некоторою долей поэтического чувства, что почти всегда сходится в более или менее счастливых сочетаниях: у этих самое недовольство дружественно, и самое сомнение, если так можно выразиться, религиозно, и от этого они наблюдают много и иногда очень хорошо. Сравнения их, до которых все такие люди большие охотники, всегда более или менее обильны фактами, сопоставляемыми нередко с большим мастерством и даже талантом, а обобщения и выводы, которые они имеют обыкновение делать из своих наблюдений и сравнений, всегда имеют на себе печать особого теплого религиозного романтизма, свидетельствующего, что самое сомнение их весьма сомнительно и что они люди не только верующие, но даже желающие всех видеть верующими. Всякое резкое выражение грубого, а тем более невежественного неверия выводит их из их роли сомневающихся, и они становятся пламенными защитниками религиозного идеализма. Они не скрывают своего недовольства людьми, так или иначе профанирующими призвание инока, но обнаруживают бесповоротную уверенность в том, что идеал отшельничества все-таки идеал очень возвышенный и что он цел и где-то в совершенстве воплощается какими-то высокими душами, к которым всегда с глубочайшим сочувствием и почтением обращаются их собственные восторженные души.

endorsing genre is productive because it makes him more observant. Leskov's account of his trip and especially his encounter with the horses on Konevets Island throws his own viewing habits into question. Neither a completely detached approach nor an intransigent set of expectations is desirable, and neither will yield aesthetically satisfying results.

The horse takes center stage as an inhabitant of a monastic locale in this work about the Russian counterpart to Mount Athos, the renowned spiritual center of Eastern Orthodoxy (Ware 39). Horses and cows confront Leskov and inspire a change in his attitude, a recognition of his own involvement as a viewer, privy to personal confessions of pilgrims and to the features that the island has to offer. Encounters with animals affect Leskov's artistic perception. Because Leskov sees animals, the monastery island is transformed from incomprehensible realia into an inspiring and memorable scene, worthy to be depicted by internationally acclaimed Russian artists and to be compared to monuments to historical figures such as Peter the Great. Animal imagery vaults this modest travel piece into significance on the stage of world literature. The transformation of perception is achieved through physical encounter with horses, as the animals impress Leskov with their spirit and endanger his physical person, as he experiences reality without any buffer. Horses make his trip worthwhile and are central actors in the drama of his journey. Leskov privileges animal bodies and draws lessons from the horses who meet him.

As a pilgrim, however nonchalant, Leskov has positioned himself to recognize his own shortcomings, and his most powerful experience is when he reads God's communicative text, animals and nature, up close. Animals affect Leskov's experience of the island, contravening expectations. This sights that Leskov sees conjure a prelapsarian period before humans' fall from grace strained the relations between humans, animals, and nature. Leskov recognizes the common experience of shared time and space that makes fellows of animals and humans.

Leskov's encounter with the real world changes him into a more responsible human, more capable of empathetic participation than before he went on the pilgrimage.

CHAPTER 5: THE SACRIFICIAL VICTIM

In this chapter I discuss a work, “Musk-Ox,” (Овцебык, 1863), whose hero is nicknamed after an animal and lives in the animal’s image, that is, his life reflects several traits of the musk-ox and, more importantly, the symbolic potential imbedded in the musk-ox is realized. Animal imagery adds nuance to the depiction of a revolutionary agitator, who can be admired for bravery and selflessness but whose approach Leskov considers to have wasteful and tragic consequences. The revolutionary agitator’s solution is not accepted or even comprehended by the peasants whom he seeks to serve, but who do not acknowledge their exploitation. The hero, however, cannot watch abuses go uncorrected and remain a bystander, and his empathetic behavior signals his desire to help the peasants to improve their condition, in spite of their obduracy and passivity. He hangs himself, and in this way makes himself a representative victim, but Leskov implies that the people who will appreciate the symbolism of the hero’s self-destruction are not Musk-Ox’s target audience, but rather Leskov himself and people like him. The significance of his death remains uncomprehended by the local community of peasants, and so becomes an echo of similar failed Russian sacrifices, such as the self-immolations of Avvakum’s followers in the seventeenth century.

In the figure of Musk-Ox, Leskov presents his audience with a revolutionary agitator. The hero, a character drawn from real life, in many ways resembles Leskov’s long-time acquaintance Iakushkin.⁵¹ Leskov’s enshrouding of this figure in the ultimately wasteful and tragic act of his death, an act that is simultaneously noble and galvanizingly sacrificial—that is, if the symbolic

⁵¹ In the article “Friendly Recollections about P. I. Iakushkin” («Товарищеские воспоминания о П. И. Якушкине»), Leskov recalls eccentricities and character traits of his long-time acquaintance that resemble the hero of this story but do not coincide in all aspects (SS 11: 71-89).

kernels of the textual images are appreciated—can be interpreted as Leskov’s commentary on the people who give themselves to the revolutionary cause. This portrayal looks forward to the righteous portraits that much of Leskov’s later work would feature, with the disapproval of the main character in this case registered more palpably than admiration. The animal image helps Leskov direct his readers beyond the level of politics toward questions of identity as humans, citizens, and Russians.

In developing the empathetic effect, this work presents a reference to animals as sacrificial bodies. The allusions to animal sacrifice and to Christ’s sacrifice aid in eliciting an empathetic response from the readers. Two ways of viewing are exhibited by the characters, which largely indicates their moral strength: an empathetic/responsive way of viewing, and a way of viewing that reduces the object to a spectacle to be visually enjoyed by the audience without interaction. The hero’s empathic responses are a sign of his morality, which is tested against the conventional morality of other characters. He is a model of moral sensitivity; he “see[s] hunger, pain or fatigue in other persons, [which] impels [him] to relieve the suffering of others” (C. van der Weel 587). In the story’s finale, the riddle of the sacrifice that is elaborated through a variety of references and subtexts is further deepened by an invocation of the compassionate sacrifice of the Lamb of God, in which God appears on the level of humans. The hero’s goal is to undo exploitation of the peasants, and he puts himself on their level; the imagery suggests that he also puts himself on the level of animals as he identifies and sympathizes with the human subaltern, who in this work is an object of violence. Leskov artistically treats key questions of empathy and self-sacrifice in this early work of fiction that preceded the sprawling novel, *No Way Out* («Некуда», 1864), that would make his contention with the radical approach clear and change the course of his career.

Bestowing the name

The title “Musk-Ox” puts the animal in the center of attention and highlights the re-naming of the main character. The hero’s original, given name, Vasilii Petrovich Bogoslovskii, is rich in theological connotations, since Vasilii is the name of a prominent saint of the Orthodox Church, Peter is the name of a leading apostle, and Bogoslovskii means “Theological” (Ware 23, 27). “Musk-Ox” charts a movement from human to animal and, given the historical context in which Darwin’s theory was being discussed, can be seen as a counterexample of devolution from the higher to the lower. A comment on Leskov’s giving of names is provided by S. A. Shul’ts: “Leskov describes a lofty, mythical nickname, which does not need ‘to be ennobled’ and which lays on its bearer the responsibility, the obligation to conform to it” (Shul’ts 43). While not lofty, the nickname “Musk-Ox” is similarly functional and artistically fertile.

Leskov harnesses the understanding of the name as powerful. The nickname “Musk-Ox” indicates Bogoslovskii’s new identity and serves to explain him. The hero accepts the implications of his nickname. Shul’ts comments on the significance of nicknames: “The nickname and the name in general always carry in themselves a strong mark of dialogicity and intersubjectivity: they are not chosen by the individual, but are given by others. From this comes an element of lack of freedom in a name” (Shul’ts 43).⁵²

In Russian, the word “musk-ox” («овцебык») is a compound of “sheep” and “bull” («овец» and «бык»). Some of the characteristics of these animals are ascribed to the hero. Musk-oxen live in herds of usually 15-20 in the winter and, when threatened, form a circle or

⁵² Прозвище и имя вообще всегда несут на себе сильный отпечаток диалогичности, intersubjectивности: они не выбираются индивидом, а даются другими. Отсюда элемент несвободы в имени.

semicircle with their horned heads facing out and the young and weak guarded inside the circle (Nowak 1481). The bull musk-ox may charge unexpectedly from its ranks and surprise a potential attacker (Lent 39). Their ram-like horns and weight ranging from 400-900 pounds are a formidable defense (Nowak 1480). The bull is also associated with strength, courage, and defense but also, like the sheep, has a history as a sacrificial animal from the Old Testament.

Chelnovskii re-names Vasilii Petrovich in the presence of the narrator (this is a repetition of the original re-naming, which is not described):

“... I’m afraid I don’t know your patronymic?”

“It used to be Petrovich,” replied Bogoslovskii.

“That’s what it used to be, but now you can simply call him ‘Musk-Ox.’”

“You can call me what you like, for all I care.”

“Oh no, old chap! Musk-Ox you are by name, and Musk-Ox you are by nature” (McDuff 35; SS 1: 36)⁵³

Here Bogoslovskii mentions his patronymic only in the past tense, as if it were no longer applicable. What does the hero’s new identity imply, what is the content of the new name? Both the “sheep” aspect and the “bull” aspect of Musk-Ox are important to characterization.

Bogoslovskii receives his nickname from his friends, but he accepts it and in so doing implicitly accepts the potential of its meaning in the tradition of biblical naming, which establishes relationships (Magonet 40). A relevant text from the Christian tradition that the naming of Musk-Ox distantly echoes and reverses and which, as mentioned, has been considered

⁵³- ... я не имею чести знать, как по батюшке?

- Петров был, - отвечал Богословский.

- Это он был, а теперь зови его просто «Овцебык».

- Мне все равно, как ни зовите.

- Э, нет, брат! Ты Овцебык есть, так тебе Овцебыком и быть.

by thinkers in the field of animal studies, is Adam naming the animals in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible. The re-naming in this work also echoes the monastic tradition, with which the narrator (as well as Leskov) was familiar from frequently visiting monasteries with his grandmother, as he describes in chapter four. One of the purposes of being given a new name in this tradition is to establish a special relationship with the namesake. Therefore, names are usually given based on a congruity of some kind between the named and the namesake, with the idea that the newly named monastic will follow the patron's example of holiness. Considered in this light, Vasilii Petrovich's nickname in some sense assumes the musk-ox as a model.

Musk-Ox is emotionally attached to his young pupils and expresses regret at leaving them in order to go to Perm, knowing that they will not follow what he has taught them. His solicitude is tied to his desire to impart his own way of thinking to them as a way of protecting them and guiding them. The conversation with Chelnovskii and the narrator ends with Musk-Ox defending his point of view, which reflects a protective instinct, and expresses sympathy for the boys, even as he uses the metaphor of sheep and wolves:

"That's a complicated kind of compassion he has," Chelnovsky said.

"No, it's you who're the complicated ones. With me, old chap, everything's simple, peasant-like. I can't make head nor tail of all your la-de-da's. The way you want it is for the sheep to be unharmed and the wolves to be fed—but that's not possible. Things just aren't like that." (McDuff 52; SS 1: 51)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ - Экое у него и сострадание-то мудреное, - сказал Челновский.

- Нет, у меня, брат, все простое, мужицкое. Я ваших чох-мох не разумею. У вас все такое в голове, чтоб и овцы были целы и волки сыты, а этого нельзя. Этак не бывает.

This moment gives the text an even greater orientation toward the animal kingdom, as Musk-Ox seems to draw from comrade animals to illustrate his point. In this passage, Musk-Ox converts the New Testament image of the sheep being attacked by wolves into contemporary social and economic commentary. This animal metaphor continues when Sviridov, a former serf turned prosperous landlord, tells the narrator that his peasant employees have reported Musk-Ox's revolutionary agitating to him. In this conversation, Sviridov refers to his workers as wolves. These peasant employees ostensibly do not understand the purport of Musk-Ox's speeches, or they pretend that they do not, while they enjoy the amusement of his addresses.

Empathy

The sensitivity that Musk-Ox exhibits toward the "sheep" is an example of an empathetic way of seeing others' difficult situations. The work displays two ways of viewing: the narrator's detached, objective viewing and the revolutionary agitator's responsive, participatory viewing. Each one vies for the reader's trust, and Leskov's artistic mastery complicates what might seem like an easy choice.

It is not surprising that Leskov's artistic approach incorporated the theme of empathetic viewing, since his project as a writer was to aid the progress of Russia to a more developed state, for which he considered individual moral improvement to be necessary. Likely sources of Leskov's attention to the dynamics of viewing are Darwin's consideration of empathy as a component of organic evolution and, from the Christian tradition, the variety of responses to the spectacle of the crucifixion in the New Testament account, which is distantly invoked in Leskov's treatment of his hero. In many of Leskov's animal texts, two ways of viewing are exhibited by the characters, which largely indicates their moral caliber: an empathetic/responsive

way of viewing, and a way of viewing that reduces the object to a spectacle to be visually enjoyed by the audience without interaction.

The characters in “Musk-Ox” can be grouped into those being looked at and those watching. The function of watching, as well as of drawing, is ascribed to the narrator, who visits his old haunts in the role of viewer. The monks living by the lake are also watchers: they “were fulfilling a ‘tutelary obedience’ on the monastery lake” (my translation; *SS* 1: 58). And Fr. Vavila “was willing to remain looking out on the lake for hours on end in a contemplative position observing the flight of the wild duck and the wading of the portly heron, which from time to time pulled from the water the frogs who had managed to persuade Zeus to make the heron their king” (McDuff 60; *SS* 1: 58). The reference to Aesop’s fable, a genre that conveys human messages by using animal characters, comments negatively on the ability of the common people to choose how to organize society, which is the goal of Musk-Ox’s agitating activity. To these monastic viewers, joined by the narrator, Musk-Ox appears framed by the window as he gazes at a tree that was struck by lightning.

This scene is the culmination of the narrator’s presentation of Musk-Ox attracting curiosity by his appearance and behavior. Musk-Ox is accustomed to being viewed and the text presents him as a kind of finished product, a picture to be enjoyed and also, possibly, to edify. This is the riddle that the reader must solve: is the hero a positive example or a cautionary tale? Leskov includes an ancient image of the solving of the riddle of truth. In the monastery when the monks and the narrator are woken up by the rainless storm in the middle of the night and see Musk-Ox outside as he stands next to a tree and contemplates it as it burns, the fire creates a reflection on the wall inside the monks’ cell “burning like a colossal taper” («словно колоссальная свечка»; McDuff 79; *SS* 1: 73). After his death, the narrator finds that Musk-Ox had written out a passage

from Plato in the last entries of his journal; the similarity of the shadow of the burning tree to the shadows in Plato's allegory of the cave is more than a coincidence. Standing in front of the burning tree and producing a contour on the wall inside, Musk-Ox is like the group of real people in the cave whose shadows the prisoners see without understanding what causes them. At the same time, the artistic image that Musk-Ox presents could be interpreted as being only a shadow of truth, meager and stingy in form. Leskov strikes an ambivalent balance in drawing the figure of the eccentric agitator. By invoking Plato's allegory of the cave, Leskov highlights his readers' dilemma of solving the riddle of whether the hero's eccentricity is a more truthful reflection of reality than the conventional mode of behavior and should be consulted in seeking out Russia's way forward, or if his eccentricity only reflects the contours of truth while lacking any of its substance.

The scene during the storm offers another angle from which Musk-Ox can be read or interpreted. Framed by the window and viewed from the interior space of the monastic hut, Musk-Ox is transformed into an artistic object; the narrator specifies that Musk-Ox appears in a silhouette form. The silhouette was associated with the Minister of France whose austere measures relieved the country of its financial impasse, but so frugally that the silhouette came to connote stinginess (Lister v). This is consistent with Musk-Ox's frugal and bare mode of living. Figuratively, it suggests that Musk-Ox's spiritual arsenal is inadequate and his ideology is incomplete. At the same time, the silhouette is a symbol of egalitarian conditions, for which Musk-Ox is a champion. Silhouettes were affordable and accessible, not just to the wealthy, and enabled the general population to acquire portraits of themselves (Kuznetsova 6). Silhouettes gave more worth to the average human experience by memorializing the features of those who were not well-placed or famous. Additionally, this form of art gave significance to the facial

features of the human person. In Musk-Ox's case however, his profile resembles an animal's: "People had given him this sobriquet because he really did look uncommonly like the musk-ox that is to be seen in the illustrated treatise on zoology by Yulian Simashko," (McDuff 30; *SS* 1: 31). The silhouette produces an animal visage in place of a human-looking profile, yet gives the visage democratic attention; at the same time, the medium of the image connotes a frugal yet successful policy in regard to the country's problems. The silhouette does not elucidate much, but it continues the riddle of the story that is told by means of the animal image.

While Musk-Ox becomes as if a finished and framed product for viewing, he himself as an active agent views in an empathetic way and for this reason he is identified with the victims, who are figuratively the sheep, because he thinks that they are being exploited, drawing on the connotations of the compound etymology of his nickname. Musk-Ox sympathizes with Jewish boys who are conscripted into the army. Leskov himself had worked in the recruiting office and witnessed this abuse of justice, and was dedicated to and confidant of removing the blight from Russia (Gorelov 54). Accompanying the narrator who "wanted to go and watch" the boy recruits' arrival in town («пойти посмотреть»; *SS* 1: 43), Musk-Ox does not watch so much as participate in the scene. His body language is connective and participatory as he empathizes with the boy:

"Where's your mother?" Musk-Ox asked him suddenly, giving the lad's overcoat a slight tug.

The lad trembled, looked at Vasily Petrovich, then at the people standing round, then at the NCO, and again at Vasily Petrovich.

"Your mother, your mother—where is she?" Musk-Ox repeated.

"Mama?"

“Yes, your mama, your mama?”

“Mama”—the boy waved his hand towards the distance.

“At home?”

The recruit thought for a bit and then nodded his head in agreement. (McDuff 44; SS 1: 44)⁵⁵

In this dialogue, Musk-Ox addresses the boy’s survival, realizing that the absence of a protective maternal presence is fatal. This passage emphasizes Musk-Ox’s “sheep” aspect as victim. He poetically shares with the boys the motif of a son being far from his mother, since Musk-Ox was previously described by the narrator as being separated from his mother by roads stretching great distances. The Jewish boys are sacrificed to society, since Russian authorities and members of society look on without objecting, as individuals push their military obligation onto boys whose families do not have the means to protect them (McLean 37). Musk-Ox later says about the boys: “They’ll croak along the road, the snivelers” («Подохнут, сопатые, дорогой»; my translation; SS 1: 51). The verb «ПОДОХНУТЬ» is used for animals, which repeats the frequent rhetorical conflation of the human subaltern with the animal. This and Musk-Ox’s empathy with the boys brings them into his own figuratively animal world. The child conscripts are viewed by the other onlookers as curiosities that do not speak the language of civilization, and their separation from their mother and weak condition does not inspire pity in their spectators. Musk-

⁵⁵ - Где твоя мать? - неожиданно спросил Овцебык, дернув слегка ребенка за шинель.
Дитя вздрогнуло, взглянуло на Василия Петровича, потом на окружающих, потом на ундера и опять на Василия Петровича.
- Мать, мать где? - повторил Овцебык.
- Мама?
- Да, мама, мама?
- Мама . . . - ребенок махнул рукой вдаль.
- Дома?
Рекрут подумал и кивнул головою в знак согласия.

Ox communicates with them efficiently with very few words.⁵⁶ In contrast, the spectators distance themselves from the victim by means of language as the priest illustrates his linguistic knowledge:

“He still has his wits about him,” the priest interjected, and asked, “You have brothers?”

The child made a barely perceptible sign of negation.

“Boy lying, you lying—they no take only sons for recruits. Lying nicht gut, nein,” the priest continued, imagining that his pidgin Russian was making his side of the conversation more easily understood.

“I vagrantsir.”

“Wha-at?”

“Vagrantsir,” the boy said, more distinctly this time.

“Aha, a vagrantsir! In plain Russian that means he’s a vagrant, given to a life of vagrancy.” (McDuff 45; SS 1: 44-5)⁵⁷

In another episode, Musk-Ox’s bull aspect is prominent when his empathy is displayed as he defends a peasant woman who is being sexually harassed. While he is working as a tutor to a

⁵⁶ Vasilii Petrovich is spare with words; except for two letters that he writes and the conversation the last evening before he goes to Perm: “Vasilii Petrovich spoke for a long time. He never spoke so much or expressed himself so clearly” (SS 1: 53), most of his conversations are composed of short responses. His way of speaking is gruff, even animal-like: “We lay down, and Vasilii Petrovich continued his story, with short, abrupt expressions, as usual (SS 1: 76). These short phrases are especially noticeable in the dialogue.

⁵⁷ - Памятует еще, - вставил священник и спросил: - Брудеры есть?

Дитя сделало едва заметный отрицательный знак.

- Врешь, врешь, один не берут в рекрут. Врать нихт гут, нейя, - продолжал священник, думая употреблением именительных падежей придать более понятности своему разговору.

- Я бродягес, - проговорил мальчик.

- Что-о?

- Бродягес, - яснее высказал ребенок.

- А, бродягес! Это по-русски значит - он бродяга, за бродяжество отдан!

landowner's son, his pupil begins molesting a recently married female peasant. Musk-Ox hears yelling and finds the son threatening to take away the ladder from the hayloft and waiting in voyeuristic expectation for her to come down so that he can see under her dress, the only clothing she has on because peasants do not wear underwear. Musk-Ox gives the boy a cuff, which makes his ear bleed. Musk-Ox's action is figuratively the sudden charge of a bull, provoked out of the defensive circling of Musk-Oxen. Leskov calls on animal language to show Musk-Ox defending the weak. This sort of behavior is characterized by the narrator, Chelnovskii, and Musk-Ox as being expressed by his nickname. Musk-Ox agrees that his lack of success in finding good employment is because he is a "Musk-Ox":

“Well, what of it? I'll tell you, brother, that isn't the reason [that his conduct is recorded as “fairish”]—it's because...”

“You are the Musk-Ox,” Chelnovsky completed for him.

“Yes, the Musk-Ox, maybe.” (Norman 9; *SS* 1: 39)⁵⁸

Musk-Ox's appearance invites the curious gaze. Additionally, his appearance becomes more effective than his words at expressing his desire to impact society; his appearance in and of itself registers his objection to the status quo as also his disposition to empathize with victimized subjects. An example of Musk-Ox being viewed is when he speaks at length about his political views and then says goodbye to Chelnovsky and the narrator:

Chelnovsky rose to his feet and lit a candle. Vasilii Petrovich remained seated; in his face one could read calm, and even happiness.

⁵⁸ - Ну так что ж? Я, брат, скажу тебе, что это все не оттого, а оттого что . . .
- Ты - Овцебык, - подсказал Челновский.
- Да, Овцебык, пожалуй.

I make use of different translations, including my own in places, in order to best represent the aspects of Leskov's original that I am analyzing.

“Let me take a look at you,” Chelnovsky said.

“By all means,” Musk-Ox replied, smiling his awkward smile.” (McDuff 49; SS

1: 48-9)⁵⁹

Chelnovskii’s reaction to the unexpected news of the departure is to turn on a light so that he can better view Musk-Ox. Verbs of viewing are used constantly by various characters, directed at Musk-Ox. While the viewing is not necessarily injurious, the text casts into doubt the morality of viewing the animal-inflected hero, while it heightens the significance of the hero’s animal-like appearance. When Musk-Ox’s target audience of Svidirov’s workers laugh in incredulity or incomprehension when he talks to them about how society should be re-organized, Musk-Ox appears to be a clown.

Musk-Ox is referred to as a clown by Chelnovskii when he first introduces Musk-Ox to the narrator, and the same word appears when a couple of Svidirov’s peasants explain to the narrator how Musk-Ox talked to them:

“...A lot of the lads used to listen to what he had to say.”

“And did they like what they heard?”

“They liked it, all right. Sometimes he could even make them laugh.”

“What did he say that was so comical?”

“... Well, of course the lads used to hoot with laughter. ‘Let’s see that show again,’ they’d say.”

“That was him, always playing the fool,” the other man muttered.

We felt obliged to be silent for awhile.

⁵⁹ Челновский встал и зажег свечу. Василий Петрович сидел, и на лице его выражалось спокойствие и даже счастье.

- Дай-ка мне на тебя посмотреть, - сказал Челновский.

- Посмотри, посмотри, - отвечал Овцебык, улыбаясь своей нескладной улыбкой.

“What is he, anyway?” the second cooper asked. “Is he an actor?” (McDuff 98; SS 1: 87-8).⁶⁰

Even the narrator, whose persona is close to that of Leskov himself, thinks of Musk-Ox as a clown as he watches him in the storm at the monastery: “As he stood there beside the burning tree like the knight of the sad countenance, he seemed to me a clown” (my translation; SS 1: 74). The invocation of Cervantes’ hero here is significant. A leading philologist of Leskov’s era, Fyodor Buslaev, dubbed the impulse for rapid political changes “Don-Quixotism” (донкишотствовать), an opinion of which Leskov approved (Gorelov 77). While the image of Don Quixote enjoys a long history in Russian culture, Turgenev’s speech “Hamlet and Don Quixote” («Гамлет и Дон Кихот») printed in “The Contemporary” in 1860 redefined the image in Russian culture as representing a hero, a fighter, a revolutionary, a bearer of new ideas (Bagno 62). Thus, the motif of the clown develops the riddle of Musk-Ox: it confers heroism on him but it also converts him into an object of ridicule and profitless entertainment.

Musk Ox’s appearance is as if frozen in time, by its striking unconformity constantly witnessing to the need for change that he advocates. The text contrasts the propensity to enjoy Musk-Ox’s unconventionality of appearance and behavior, both when elicited by friendship and by incomprehension, with the narrator’s conventional quality in this regard. At the lake in the monastery, the old monk’s slow recognition of the narrator is quite different from the narrator’s instant recognition of Musk-Ox, whom he meets unexpectedly in the monastery: “Musk-Ox’s

⁶⁰ Ребята его много, которые слушали.

- И что же: нравилось им?
- Ничего. Тоже другой раз и смешно сделает.
- А что же бывает смешно?
- . . . Ну, ребята, известно, смеются. Покажи, просят, опять эту комедию.
- Это он так, известно, дурашен, - подсказал другой. Оставалось молчать.
- А из каких он будет? Не из комедиантов? - спросил второй бондарь.

appearance had changed so little, despite his rather strange dress, that I recognized him at first glance” (my translation; *SS* 1: 66). In contrast, the monk needs to hear the narrator’s name in order to recognize him and then has to view him from close range. The narrator’s name, which is not given in the text, with its connection to past and future human generations contrasts with Musk-Ox’s acceptance of his non-human appellation. The fact that the hero looks “uncommonly like the musk-ox that is to be seen in the illustrated treatise on zoology by Yulian Simashko” reflects the expansion of zoological knowledge that coincided with the opening of zoos in Russia. Fascination with the viewed animal was current thanks to interest in the areas of natural science, collecting, measuring, and the debates around the origin of humans and animals.

This tendency to view Musk-Ox as a vaguely dangerous curiosity implicates the narrator. As a child, the narrator had loved to draw robbers and wanderers and to hear robber stories by the lake at the monastery. This may partly explain the narrator’s interest in Musk-Ox: in one of his last journal entries, Musk-Ox accuses himself of being a robber: “I am a thief, and the further I go, the more I will steal” (Pevear and Volokhonsky 107; *SS* 1: 94). Musk-Ox fits the characteristics of the figure on the outside of society that represents danger and an alternative to the conventional life.

In the important scene of the storm at the monastery, Fr. Vavila sees Musk-Ox outside the monastery cell in the symbolically outside space of the forest where a thunder storm has been in full swing and exclaims to the other monk and the narrator: “Look! Look!” suddenly cried Father Vavila, who was still staring out of the window. “Why, that’s our daft one!” (Norman 49; *SS* 1: 73). This scene with the burning tree connotes the sacrificial body, which is a salient function of animal imagery in Leskov and which works here in conjunction with other poetic devices. The scene of the burning tree poetically pre-figures Musk-Ox’s death, when he hangs

himself on a tree and creates a spectacle that is viewed by a few people. The burning tree relates to the concept of sacrifice because some animal offerings in the Old Testament were burned (Gilders 62). The fire creates a reflection on the wall inside the monks' cell and resembles a candle lit for prayer. A burning candle is a representation of sacrifice, not only because it is a paid offering of the worshipper but because it recalls the animal sacrifices burned on the altar. Musk-Ox contemplates a representation of a purifying immolation as he watches the burning tree. Additionally, when describing Musk-Ox's failure in starting his own community, the narrator chooses a word that reinforces this association: the verb translated as "to fall on hard times" literally means "to burn through": "My propagandist had, however, fallen on hard times" («Но пропагандист мой уже прогорел»; SS 1: 79).⁶¹

Leskov exploits the associations with sacrifice of both the sheep and the bull, which also invokes the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, in the semantically marked final scene of the work:

That poor head! Now, at last, it was at rest. Its forelocks still protruded like ram's horns, and the turbid, stupefied eyes surveyed the moon with the same expression that remains in the eyes of a bull that has been struck several times on the forehead with the butt of a butcher's knife, and which has then, immediately after, had the blade drawn across its throat. (McDuff 108; SS 1: 95)⁶²

The invocation of the animal as the sacrificial body has obvious resonances with the hero's intentions and is a culmination of the semantic possibilities contained in his nickname, including

⁶¹ A dictionary that was contemporary to Leskov has this definition of «прогорать», which is listed as under «прогорѣть» as synonymous: 1) горѣть в продолжении извѣстнаго или неопредѣленнаго времени, 2) выгорать насквозь ("1) to burn for a known or an unknown period of time, 2) to burn all the way through"; *Slovar' tserkovno-slavianskogo i russkogo iazyka* 521).

⁶² Бедная это голова! Теперь она была уже покойна. Косицы на ней торчали так же вверх, бараньими рогами, и помутившиеся, остолбенелые глаза смотрели на луну с тем самым выражением, которое остается в глазах быка, которого несколько раз ударили обухом по лбу, а потом уже сразу проехали ножом по горлу.

the possibility of being understood as a victim for the sake of the people. This scene is part of a multilayered riddle spun by Leskov throughout the text. A more transparent interpolation of the animal body as a representative of the people whose death restores health to the community and removes imminent danger (of an angered God, of a vigilant police force) occurs in an artistically less successful novel Leskov published a year later. The animal as a body that symbolizes the revolutionary movement and is killed in a symbolic destruction of the movement appears in *No Way Out*, a sprawling novel that precipitated Leskov's irremediable rift with the radicals. In this story, the revolutionaries keep a badger in the basement where they store an illegal printing press and when they are warned that the police are preparing to raid the location, a participant in the secret revolutionary group named Arapov removes all evidence. Lastly, he takes out the badger and shoots it. The police do not discover anything, but after this event the radical group dissolves and most of the members abandon their involvement. The badger thus acts as a mascot for the group and its unnecessary death symbolically eradicates the group's existence: "The badger was killed on the spot and, recovering towards evening, Arapov himself did not understand why he had killed the poor beast" (my translation; *SS* 2: 413). A similar result of Musk-Ox's death is suggested by the sacrificial connotations of his name, a name that was given to him by others. The description of the suicide gives the feeling of an end; Musk-Ox's aspirations die with him, and his death, about which only a few people know, will not give impetus to his cause. Nature continues its life unaffected, in the very last lines of the work: "It felt airless in this dark corner of the forest which Musk-Ox had chosen as the place in which his

torments should cease. But in the clearing it was light and cheerful. The moon bathed in the azure of the heavens, and the pines and fir-trees slumbered” (McDuff 108; SS 1: 95).⁶³

Musk-Ox seems to be ignored by nature, rather than communing with nature or acting as master and exploiter. Leskov uses the animal image to represent the revolutionary movement, and by killing the mascot (the figurative musk-ox, the badger), figuratively expunges the danger from society.

The riddle of identity

In “Musk-Ox,” the animal body as a sacrifice complicates the deciphering of the hero’s character. The narrator’s suggestion that the hero’s death is a martyrdom, although more likely expressing Musk-Ox’s own attitude than the narrator’s, realizes the hagiographic implications of being given a new name as a sign of a new, higher identity: “It felt airless in this dark corner of the forest which Musk-Ox had chosen as the place in which his torments should cease” (McDuff 108; SS 1: 95). The scene of Musk-Ox’s death displays will power, since he is in a kneeling position with his legs just slightly raised off the ground and his hands are in his pockets in his characteristic, ruminative pose. His image in death is of the thoughtful revolutionary, dissatisfied with real conditions and unable to change them, but leaving his body as a witness to the incompatibility of his convictions and the order of the world.

The second to last chapter, approximately a page in length, tells how the narrator and Nastasia Petrovna went to the theater to see *Esmeralda* and records part of their conversation following the event. This chapter again couples the narrator and Nastasia Petrovna as they

⁶³ Душно тут было, в этом темном лесном куточке, избранном Овцебыком для конца своих мучений. А на поляне было так светло и отрадно. Месяц купался в лазури небес, а сосны и ели дремали.

perceive Musk Ox's obsession with his unrealizable goals, as a result of which his life does not live up to human norms and is disrupted?:

“... That's the real misfortune: to be the kind of person no one can love. And you feel sorry for him, you'd like to be able to take his pain away, but it is impossible ... Ah! Thank God that people like that don't really exist.”

“People like what? Quasimodo?”

“Yes.”

“What about Musk-Ox?”

Nastasia Petrovna slapped the table with the palm of her hand, and said quietly:

“You know, you're right!”

She moved the candle closer to her and began to look intently into its flame, slightly narrowing her beautiful eyes. (McDuff 100-01; SS 1: 89)⁶⁴

Musk-Ox's association with *Esmeralda* further paints him as empathizing with the person who is merely viewed for enjoyment. The name of the play invokes the outsider, because the Gypsy girl *Esmeralda* is viewed by the bourgeois population of Paris, as the people watch her exotic singing and dancing. As Aimee Kilbane states about the novel by Victor Hugo upon which *Esmeralda* was based, it “is concerned with boundary crossing and its relationship to the spectacle” (Kilbane 222). Kilbane sees the characters of *Esmeralda*, a Gypsy woman, and Pierre

⁶⁴ - Э! Еще слава богу, что в самом деле на свете таких людей не бывает.

- Каких? Как Квазимодо?

- Да.

- А Овцебык?

Настасья Петровна ударила ладонью по столу и сначала рассмеялась, но потом как бы застыдилась своего смеха и проговорила тихо:

- А ведь в самом деле!

Она придвинула свечку и пристально стала смотреть в огонь, прищуривая слегка свои прекрасные глаза.

Gringoire, a Romantic artist, as an embodiment of the bohemian, which “is unsuccessfully relegated to the confines of theater, as an exotic spectacle to be gazed upon and consequently rendered unthreatening” (Kilbane 218). Kilbane states that Hugo’s work “shows that theater is based on divisions, and when its borders are revealed as vulnerable, panic ensues.” Kilbane quotes Stallybrass and White who write that “[the bourgeoisie] uses the whole world as its theatre in a particularly instrumental fashion, the very subjects which it politically excludes becoming exotic costumes which it assumes in order to play out the disorders of its own identity” (Kilbane 221). This “play[ing] out of the disorders of its own identity” is what occurs when the peasant workers laugh at Musk-Ox’s attempts to stir them up to attempt social change. Although the clown has a historical function of overturning the established order or speaking the truth to the person who wields power, Musk-Ox turns into a clown whose actions and words are futile. Leskov does not allow his hero the role of the critically functional clown, even though his agitation is aimed, like the mocking jester’s, at the building of a better social arrangement. While Musk-Ox is reduced to a spectacle as his peasant listeners maintain a division between him and them in order to guard the established order and to ensure their continued employment, at the same time the form of this spectacle iconicizes Musk-Ox’s physical appearance with its mute enactment of egalitarian reordering. Musk-Ox’s death momentarily memorializes his uncomprehended behavior that was intended to improve impact social conditions. Musk-Ox’s suicidal fate is an acceptance of the inevitability of the dangerous outsider being made an object of spectacle as long as he holds his threatening views. Because the objectification of the person is a sure means of alienation, the narrator and by extension the reader may be implicated in the death of Musk-Ox. At the beginning of his career, Leskov questions his own moral position as a viewer of other people’s problems.

Musk-Ox is also compared to the tragic figure of Quasimodo, who is a physically striking and ineffective person. The quotation from Plato that Musk-Ox copies not long before his death, “It is not the ox that is made a leader of oxen, but a human being” (McDuff 107; *SS* 1: 94) contradicts Musk-Ox’s own vehement words to Chelnovskii and the narrator: “if you feel not the strength of oxen in your backs, accept not the yoke upon them” (McDuff 54; *SS* 1: 53). Musk Ox equates his own kind with these strong, active, and prepared people: “‘for . . . us Musk-Oxen,’ he said, striking his breast, ‘that is not enough’” (McDuff 54; *SS* 1: 53). Musk-Ox resembles Rakhmetev from Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* Rakhmetev’s feats are presented as heroic and resemble ascetic feats; Bogoslovskii reduces himself and his kind to animals, with all the connotations that the rich image contains.

Historical significance

Leskov’s treatment of the revolutionary figure polemicizes with writers such as Pisarev and Chernyshevsky, whom he criticized for lack of historical depth in their viewpoints (Gorelov 94). Leskov believed that progress occurs by cultivating the positive developments in society rather than overturning everything in order to build again from the beginning (Gorelov 90). At the same time, Leskov acknowledged the heroism of the radicals in opposing injustice (McLean 128). Always a moderate, Leskov’s opposition to radical viewpoints emerged gradually (Gorelov 80). Leskov himself was concerned with correcting social wrongs, beginning his writing career with articles that addressed practical problems, such as “A Note on Buildings,” “On the Working Class,” and a “A Sketch of the Distilling Industry” (Gorelov 47). However, he rejected radical approaches and sympathized with the philologist F. I. Buslaev, who declared that the radicals “had made the simple people into an object, and had related to them as to a wild

animal” («уравняла простой люд с вещью и относилась к нему, как к зверю»; qtd. in Gorelov 77). Intentionally or intuitively, Leskov transforms the figure of the eccentric radical himself into the likeness a wild animal. At the same time that Leskov gives his own position on the radical movement, he portrays an artistic version of his good acquaintance Iakushkin, whose dedication inspires his respect. The re-naming of the hero and the neutral observation of his eccentricity impute the narrator, Chelnovskii, and by extension the reader in contributing to Musk-Ox’s demise by not responding to the national problems he sees and which he ardently attempted to remedy.

Not only are social and political concerns addressed with the aid of the animal figure, Leskov’s work expresses a basic sense of crisis, which the reference to animal sacrifice reinforces. The animal helps question human identity, on the level of what it means to be a conscientious Russian citizen and, more implicitly, what it means to be a human. The story continually reduces behavior to reaction to visual encounter. By showing the fragility of the truthfulness of appearance, the spectacle of Bogoslovskii shows that change needs to occur in the viewer. Only by reducing the distance between the viewer and the viewed can the problem be solved. While rejecting the radical approach, which through the character of Musk-Ox he depicts as a tragic but ineffective sacrifice, Leskov communicates his appreciation for the zeal that the agitators exhibited in their efforts to bring about a positive change in the situation in Russia.

Leskov uses the sacrificial animal to communicate the erroneousness of the radical approach and at the same time to elicit pity for misguided but heroic martyrs of the radical cause. The hero’s problem is that he cannot watch abuses continue uncorrected, and rather than be a bystander, since he has no solution that the people accept, he enacts the victimization of the

peasants that he sees by taking his own life—and in this way, it seems, thinks to get rid of their ongoing victimization, if only symbolically. Leskov shows, however, that those who will appreciate the symbolism of his self-destruction are not his target audience; only people such as Leskov himself are able to understand the symbolism of the hero's actions. His suicide places himself outside the larger community, however, and becomes an echo of such Russian failed sacrifices as the self-immolations of Avvakum's followers in the seventeenth century.

Depicting the hero as a sacrificial offering, Leskov implies that the hero is on a lower level, like a beast. At the same time, the association with martyr's deaths that are endured for a greater purpose than earthly welfare tinges the hero with heroic colors in the spirit of Don Quixote. Additionally, the hero's protective response to vulnerable people challenges what seems like the text's easy condemnation of him. This empathetic response is encouraged by the New Testament's account of the Lamb of God Who healed sicknesses and defended the weak. Additionally, the question of empathy was of central concern for Darwin and his predecessors as they studied the development of human and all animal life. By giving his hero a capacity for empathy, Leskov not only encourages a positive evaluation of the hero, but allows the hero to model the empathy that the reader's/narrator's/author's abrupt dismissal would contradict. The task of grappling with the riddle is intended to create empathy for the hero, as well as comprehension of him in all his ambiguity.

CHAPTER 6: BECOMING HUMAN THROUGH ANIMAL BEAUTY

Leskov's own life experience provides the material for "The Enchanted Wanderer" (Очарованный странник, 1873), which was inspired by the trip to the monastic islands in Lake Ladoga north of St. Petersburg treated non-fictionally in "Monastic Islands" (chapter 4). The life story of Leskov's fictional hero is not a private and isolated history; Leskov contextualizes the story within a larger Russian context, a remarkably large swathe of which is inscribed in this work. In the opening of "Peacock" (discussed in chapter 2), which was written following the same trip, Leskov notes that the monastic islands are referred to as the Russian equivalent to Mount Athos, a Greek peninsula regarded as the heart of Orthodox monasticism, which exercised a strong influence on Russia's religious and cultural identity from nearly the beginning of Christianity in Russia. The comparison to Mount Athos in Leskov's text invests the physical location of the storytelling with historical and cultural weight. Into this significant historical setting Leskov introduces horses as prominent participants and sharers of the heroes' experiences, so that horses play a central role in this story as they did in his non-fictional account. In "The Enchanted Wanderer," the hero recounts his life story to fellow passengers while en route from the small island of Korela, where many passengers had disembarked and ridden the local Finnish horses. Horses thus unobtrusively appear at the very outset, furnishing the listeners with a common experience and preparing them to be united as a community of listeners, because the real-life experience of riding the local horses connects them to the horse-saturated experiences that Leskov's hero recounts. The experience with horses enables the elision of individual differences among the passengers that would hinder communication. Before either the frame narration or the hero's narration has begun, horses have become a

common experience among the passengers. Horses continue to be present in the narrated life of the hero and provide a common thread to the episodes of the hero's life.

The following functions of animal imagery are at work in "Enchanted Wanderer." First, as Fliagin is associated with horses, the authority of reality and its epitome, nature, speaks for Fliagin, making out of this unlikely spokesman a voice that the reader is interested in hearing. Animal imagery invokes the authority of reality and of nature. Leskov's unlikely work of endlessly linked episodes that features a hero whose saintly qualities contrast with unenlightened brutality becomes meaningful because the hero's immersion into unmediated reality and his affinity with nature give him words and wisdom to share. Horses are a nearly constant presence in the story of Fliagin, who calls himself a horse-handler despite the fact that he holds many different jobs. Horse bodies dominate Fliagin's physical formation, and horse aesthetics shape his understanding of beauty, which is connected to the motif of flight and the possibility of transcendence.

Second, empathy for horse defines Fliagin's self-perception and his perception of the world. Fliagin's experiences of violence and being captured are filled with confrontation with death, elements also forefront in the horses' existence, and this evokes empathy for Fliagin from the reader, which is encouraged by seeing Fliagin's empathy for the horses.

Third, the horse as a symbol emphasizes Fliagin's heroic side, in the style of medieval prince-saints, of bogatyr of Russian folklore, and of contemporary military figures. This use of the horse as a symbol garners meaning from the historical context and from works of world literature. Simultaneously, however, the horse contrasts with the human hero, who begins to transcend natural cycles and survival instincts and to see his life by means of human concepts

such as self-sacrifice, so the horse also functions as being dissimilar to Fliagin. Sacrifice is a central theme of the work, and the horse image contributes to its development.

Fourth, the deciphering of the riddle is modeled inside this text, or rather, the collecting of clues toward decipherment. Readers and scholars decipher the riddle from outside the text, but inside it, the hero's rapt listeners pose questions intermittently throughout his narration of his life story that reveal their incomprehension of his motives and his emotional and intellectual experiences. Despite the ambiguity of the hero's disposition, the enchanted wanderer has become a representative of the Russian national character, a fact recorded both in the scholarship and in Russian culture (McLean 242). The hero's orally narrated autobiography lacks the expected expressions of self-consciousness and self-pity, and the many unusual and harrowing episodes of his life cause his listeners and readers to consider what human experience is supposed to be, to answer the question "What is a Russian?" Animal imagery contributes to the riddle of this story, although it is less foregrounded in this work than in others that feature animal imagery. Thus, the animal image stands for inexorable reality, creates empathy and is involved in the theme of sacrifice, and figures in the riddle of characterization of the hero. These functions will be charted below.

The authority that accrues to the main hero, despite a life story that estranges him from the reader because it has so little in common with the reader's life experience, comes in large part from his intimacy with and understanding of nature. He seems to be part of nature, due to his life story, and he is formed in many ways by experience with horses and other animals.

Horses shape Fliagin's formation as a child and his understanding of the world, as Irina Okuneva points out, as his physicality, emotions, and sense of beauty take shape in an environment dominated by horses (59). Pity for the horses is one of Fliagin's early emotions.

Fliagin is raised to handle horses, his body is trained by working with horses, and he becomes an expert evaluator of horse bodies. Fliagin's emotional development is connected with animals, as he is affected by their beauty and interacts with them. Fliagin's physical self-awareness is affected by living with horses, and the horse world is accessible to him in an almost mystical way:

Living with my father in the coachmen's yard, I spent my whole life in the stables, and there I comprehended the mystery of animal knowing and, you might say, came to love horses, because as a little boy I crawled on all fours between horses' legs, and they didn't hurt me, and once I got older, I became quite intimate with them. (Pevear and Volokhonsky 120; *SS* 4: 396)⁶⁵

The picture of the baby crawling on all fours is a replication of the horse image, an image that will return when Fliagin is a captive in the steppe and forced to go around on all fours. The knowledge of "the mystery of horses" that Fliagin acquires when he "comes to love them" is accompanied by an affective attitude toward the object of his knowledge. Fliagin receives his gift of knowledge in the process of joining horses in their mode of existence, living with them, loving them, and even empathetically moving around like them. His vantage point is from below them as he crawls on the ground and, figuratively, he lives on the level of the horse.

Fliagin's gift with horses develops because his experiences are similar to those of horses. Fliagin's body is formed by working directly with horses: he is strapped to a horse and rides for so long that he loses and regains consciousness several times; he whips horses and treats them as instruments of service for his master and mistress; he learns to behave and to communicate

⁶⁵ Живучи при отце на кучерском дворе, всю жизнь свою я проводил на конюшне, и тут я постиг тайну познания в животном и, можно сказать, возлюбил коня, потому что маленьким еще на четвереньках я у лошадей промеж ног полозил, и они меня не увечили, а подрос, так и совсем с ними спознался.

through the system of blows and harnesses that are inflicted on horses and peasants alike as, bred for labor as a coachman like his father, Fliagin is punished by beatings when he behaves incorrectly. Like the horse body, Fliagin's body is formed for service, and is an object of violence.

Fliagin's choice of words to describe his understanding of horses refers to a mystical understanding. Fliagin says he has "attained the mystery of the knowledge of animals;" the word for mystery in Russian, «тайна», is the name of a liturgical sacrament, a sacrament being an action invested with the idea that there is another side to the phenomenon than that which is merely physical and visually perceived (Ware 274).⁶⁶ The sphere of religious experience is another source for knowledge of reality. Knowledge of horses, Fliagin implies, is not solely an intellectual acquisition, but involves comprehending a mystery in the process of participating in horses' experience. Fliagin says that he received his gift for horses from nature, claiming a direct connection with the natural world: "I received a special gift for it from nature" («я к этому от природы своей особенное дарование получил»; Pevear and Volokhonsky, 115; SS 4: 391).

Horses and other animals figure in many of the encounters with death that punctuate Fliagin's life events. Death is the ultimate voice, or sign, of nature, and of reality, and the fact that Fliagin's encounters with death are the regularizing events of his life makes him seem to speak from nature, or reality. He participates in death both by having death thrust at him,

⁶⁶ "It is called a mystery," writes St. John Chrysostom of the Eucharist, 'because what we believe is not the same as what we see, but we see one thing and believe another . . .'" (Ware 274). The Dictionary of Church Slavonic and Russian compiled by the Second Department of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of 1847 (*Словарь церковно-славянского и русского языка, составленный Вторым Отделением Императорской Академии наук*) defines "mystery" («тайна») as "that which is hidden from others, or known only to some" («то, что скрыто от других, или известно немногим») and also as the same as "sacrament" («таинство»), which is defined as "a religious rite in which God's grace is invisibly communicated through visible signs" («священнодействие, в котором чрез видимые знаки невидимо сообщается благодать Божия»).

seeking it himself, or imparting it to other living beings, and horses are often with him in this. As a boy, Fliagin watches wild horses die as a result of being tamed, including the “man-eating” horse that he himself subdues, and he accidentally kills baby doves by merely holding them.⁶⁷ Fliagin’s own first near-death experience is caused by a horse to whom he gives the anthropomorphizing epithet “astronomer,” as he describes: “. . . one of them, the scoundrel, was into astronomy—you only have to rein him in hard, and straightaway he throws his head up and starts contemplating deuce knows what in the sky” («. . . один из них, подлец, с астрономией был - как только его сильно потянешь, он сейчас голову кверху дерет и прах его знает куда на небо созерцает»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 124; *SS* 4: 400). Because death comes to Fliagin in the realm of and as a result of his trade of horse-handling, horses come to connote Fliagin’s violent life constantly at the border with death. The vocation that the monk prescribes for Fliagin, joining the monastery, is another image of death, since the monastic vocation is described as dying to the world.⁶⁸ Overcoming death is central to Christian life and texts; thus, reference to monasticism reinforces the emphasis on confronting death. Significantly, Fliagin is given the obedience of taking care of horses when he joins the monastery. The horse is poetically linked to Fliagin’s would-be experience of monasticism as a spiritual encounter with

⁶⁷ Fliagin’s experience of violence makes him intimate with nature’s representatives, both horses and death, with both of which his story is shot through. Horses, in fact, often appear when both literal and symbolic death happens (especially in the first half of the narration). The monk’s death is caused by Fliagin’s blow, the death of his father and his own near-death experience is caused by horses, his attempted suicide is followed by a crossing over into the criminal world (a figurative death to society) through stealing horses; Fliagin kills the Tatar over a horse, the Tatars put Fliagin in charge of doctoring the horses and women on the steppe, which is a place of death, as he says. On a more figurative level, Fliagin’s employment with the horses working for the remount officer is punctuated by “exits”—drunken binges thus dubbed by Ivan, which are, as McLean points out, images of death (250). The image of Grusha is connected to horses because of the way that Ivan perceives and describes her; on a continuum that starts with horses, Grusha’s beauty is the apotheosis of beauty. And Grusha’s life ends with her premature death.

⁶⁸ Leskov uses the phrase in the opening of «Peacock»: “people who have died to the world” (люди, умершие миру; *SS* 5: 212).

and overcoming of death.⁶⁹ Interaction with the horse trains Fliagin both inside and outside the monastery; horses accompany Fliagin as he lives in interaction with death.

The deaths in Fliagin's narration have the effect of making his life story the property of the community. His life filled with many near-deaths ("you will be perishing many times"; «будешь ты много раз погибать»; SS 4: 400), and ultimately leads to the figurative death of monasticism, or "substitutive suicide" in the words of Hugh McLean (250), to be followed by intended self-sacrifice in defense of Russia. Fliagin's story is structurally episodic linking of death and new life: each death enables another episode, and each episode culminates in a mention of death. The persistent theme of binge drinking is also an image of death, as McLean points out (250); scenes of battle are filled with death, as is the barren steppe during the winter, when little natural growth can be seen. The presence of signs of the regular occurrence of death is the mark of storytelling, according to Walter Benjamin in his article about Leskov: "Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death. In other words, it is natural history to which his stories refer back" (Benjamin 369).

The work begins with a discussion of the problem of voluntarily seeking death, a discussion that arises on the boat before Fliagin enters the conversation with the other passengers. While the deaths of the captured horses' who die after being tamed are not suicides per se, they are a surrender and a refusal to live in a broken condition. This motif of escaping a captured and broken existence appears in the story of the alcoholic seminarian, the suicidal

⁶⁹ Fliagin's activity with horses, his figurative living on the level of horses, is the substance of his monastic experience, until he begins prophesying and is sent from the monastery. Thus, while Stoliarova sees the dead monk's urging of Fliagin to join the monastery as a concession to a comfortable, secure, and un-bogatyr-like life, nevertheless the monastery offers a similar experience of horses. Would Fliagin have developed into a bogatyr-like figure, eager to die for the good of the people, if he had gone to the monastery immediately after his vision? It seems unlikely, considering all the plot's clues; however, the fact that horses are Fliagin's training tools as a monk seems to offer that possibility, and the horse ties up the lines of the story.

priest, the Tatar who refuses to lose the whipping duel to Fliagin, Grusha, and Fliagin as a teenager, whose death attempts, however, are transgressions of the laws imposed on human life. The intentionality of these deaths or death-attempts is presented not so much as the perverse decision of a private volition, however, as an attempt to remain consistent with one's own nature, instead of adjusting to captivity. Fliagin, poetically conflated with horses, reacts to his captivity on the steppe similarly to how the captured horses react to theirs on the horse-farm: he decides that it is better to die than to hobble around: “‘Pah, you scoundrels!’ I thought to myself and turned my back on them and didn’t talk, but made up my mind that I’d rather die than follow their advice about walking bowlegged on my anklebones...” («‘Тьфу вы, подлецы!’- думаю я себе и от них отвернулся и говорить не стал, и только порешил себе в своей голове, что лучше уже умру, а не стану, мол, по вашему совету раскорякою на щиколотках ходить...»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 15; 1 SS 4: 429). The impulse to die comes from the rejection of a captive mode of life. The deaths in Fliagin’s narration have the effect of making his life story the property of the community because each additional episode in his life, following an encounter with death, is as if added-on time; as a result, the seeking of death reaps benefit for the community. According to the words of the monk whom Fliagin killed, the many near-deaths or “perishings” lead up to the final figurative death of monasticism, which is itself a positive seeking of death that benefits the community. Fliagin’s entertaining of death also yields benefits for the community, which includes Leskov’s readers, and inside the text includes the people on the boat listening to his story: Fliagin’s life is defined by death and this allows him to be the storyteller of his own life since, according to Benjamin, “not only a man’s knowledge or wisdom, but above all his real life—and this is the stuff that stories are made of—first assumes transmissible form at the moment of his death” (Benjamin 368). Perhaps the most striking

feature of Fliagin's narration is the fact that he does not react to his experiences according to the expectations of his listeners on the boat, or of the readers; he retells both positive and negative experiences without commentary and with a matter-of-factness that seems to be the sum of his own views and feelings.⁷⁰ The absence of personal commentary on Fliagin's experiences conveys a high level of immersion into the third-person perspective of himself, or the community's perspective. The narrow and private identity of Fliagin has expanded as his adventures, many of which include and are even caused by horses, have drawn him into the larger systems and cycles of life.

The heroic confrontation of death functions not only as the voice or presence of nature in Fliagin's story, it links Fliagin to prestigious figures of Russian history. The medieval Russian princes' voluntary deaths for the sake of freeing their people illustrate a similar impetus to die as a rejection of captive existence; their deaths enable the free life of their people, the community, as for instance in "The Lay of Great Prince Dmitry Ivanovich and His Brother, Prince Vladimir Andreevich," or "Zadonshchina" (Zenkovsky 211). The anecdote with which Fliagin enters the conversation on the boat shows that suicides can be prayed for, contrary to the claims of other conversationalists, and his life story argues against the idea that death is useless.

"That all means nothing, . . . What you say concerning the other world for suicides, that they will supposedly never be forgiven, I don't accept. And that there's supposedly no one

⁷⁰ This is a feature of a successful story, according to Benjamin, who described Leskov as a master storyteller: "There is nothing that commends a story to memory more effectively than that chaste compactness which precludes psychological analysis. And the more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his inclination to repeat it to someone else someday, sooner or later" (Benjamin 366).

to pray for them—that, too, is nonsense, because there is a man who can simply mend the situation for them all in the easiest way.” (Pevear and Volokhonsky 111; *SS* 4: 387)⁷¹

The meaning of death for Fliagin evolves from this remark with which he presents himself to people talking on the boat and to the readers, and he becomes “a man who can simply mend the situation for them all in the easiest way.” Beginning with an attempt at suicide, Fliagin’s narration of death-encounters culminates with the desire to sacrifice himself for the sake of the people. Additionally, Fliagin’s expectation of and conversance with death is expanded from a private to an apocalyptic scale as he predicts the imminent end of the world. His view of salvation includes the fate of his people, rather than being merely personal salvation, which reflects medieval thinking (M. Morris 131). As Stoliarova shows, the trajectory of Fliagin’s life bears a general similarity to the prince-saints of medieval Rus,’ who are commemorated for the way that they die.⁷²

Death, with which Fliagin’s is familiar thanks to his life with horses, makes Fliagin similar to the prince saints of medieval Rus.’ Fliagin’s entire life which involves going “from one suffering to another” («от одной стражды к другой»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 126; *SS* 4: 402) with patience and endurance, and can be seen as training or obedience in the spirit of monastic practice, reproduces features of a traditional saint's life (Stoliarova 212). The

⁷¹ — Это все ничего не значит, . . . Я, что вы насчет того света для самоубийцев говорите, что они будто никогда не простятся, не приемлю. И что за них будто некому молиться - это тоже пустяки, потому что есть такой человек, который все их положение самым легким манером очень просто может поправить.

⁷² The 1860s saw an increased interest and availability of Old Russian works, and references to old works appear in Leskov’s output, especially of these years (Stoliarova, 210). In an 1882 article «Sources of Russian Hagiography,” («Источники русской агиографии»), as Stoliarova summarizes: “Utilizing the ‘apt turn of phrase’ of St. Savva Zvenigorodskii, Leskov writes that the hagiographic novels of the ancient era “are . . . ‘the spiritual beauty’ of our people. Art should and even must preserve all the features of folk ‘beauty,’ as much as possible” («Используя «удачное выражение» св. Саввы Звенигородского, Лесков пишет, что житийные повести древней эпохи «являют . . . «духовную красоту» нашего народа. Искусство должно и даже обязано сберечь, сколь возможно, все черты народной «красоты»; Stoliarova 211).

eschatological coloring of Fliagin's feelings and ideas, the fruit of which is his response to St. Tikhon of Zadonsk's prophecy about the end of the world that he reads while he is in the monastery, reflects medieval Russian literature, especially the saints' lives and military accounts of the thirteenth century, which was the time of the Tatar-Mongol invasion that was interpreted as being the end of the world (Stoliarova 212). In the episode when Fliagin works as a nanny, he is poetically connected to the medieval heroism and sanctity: he takes a nap and dreams that Russia is being invaded by foreign warriors on wild horses. His interpretation of this dream as a sign of the end of the world is in the same spirit as medieval interpretations of the Tatar and Mongol invasions (Stoliarova, 214). Fliagin is oriented toward the fate of the people, like the medieval princes. An example is Prince Vsevolod-Gavriil, who was chosen by the people of Pskov to be their ruler. Fliagin wears an icon of Gavriil strapped to himself, which he mentions when recounting the episode when he rides the "man-eating" horse.

While horses are not emphasized in the medieval epics and lives of the prince-saints, which are a subtext to the account of Fliagin's life, the presence of the horse is implicit in these medieval texts. And their presence is implied where death is encountered, in battle. In a military context, horses were invaluable in their function of carrying warriors. The close connection of warrior and horse is illustrated in various texts of medieval Russian literature. In the *Primary Chronicle*, Prince Oleg dies from "the steed that [he] love[s] and which [he] ride[s], as predicted by the magicians (Zenkovsky 53). Even though he tries to avoid the horse, his fate is linked to his horse. The *Laurentian Chronicle* records how Grand Prince St. Andrei Bogoliubskii ordered full funeral rites for his horse which had been wounded in battle but carried him away before dying (Haney 76).

Like a medieval prince, Fliagin favors natural strength and energy in horses rather than docility and showiness, which shows his warrior impulse to be stronger than in the contemporary Russian officer. The best horses, Fliagin says, are the spirited steppe horses, not the officers' mounts, which are all placid.⁷³ With this remark, Fliagin aligns himself with the medieval warriors whose experience included direct confrontation with death, unlike the contemporary officers whom Fliagin meets, and whose roles in battle are more administrative than their medieval predecessors. The references to medieval warrior-princes presents horses as honored comrades of human heroes who also confront death for the sake of the greater good of the community.

Leskov also introduces folkloric material filtered through literature to connect Fliagin to the horse, accentuating the relationship between warrior and his steed. A horse appears in the poem quoted at the beginning of "The Enchanted Wanderer" in the description of Fliagin's appearance:

. . . he was a mighty man in the fullest sense of the word, and a typical, artless, kind Russian mighty man at that, reminiscent of old Ilya Muromets in the beautiful painting by Vereshchagin and in the poem by Count A. K. Tolstoy. It seemed that he should not be going around in a cassock, but riding through the forest in huge bast shoes, mounted on his "dapple gray," and lazily scenting "how the dark thicket smells of resin and wild strawberry." (Pevear and Volokhonsky 110; SS 4: 386-7)⁷⁴

⁷³ "They were cruel horses, not like some of the cavalry horses taken for officers nowadays. We call these horses *Kaffeeschenks*, because there was no pleasure in riding them, since even officers could sit them . . ." («Лошади были жестокие, не то что нынешние какие-нибудь кавалерийские, что для офицеров берут. Мы этих офицерских кофишенками звали, потому что на них нет никакого удовольствия ехать, так как на них офицеры даже могут сидеть. . .»); Pevear and Volokhonsky 120; SS 4: 397).

⁷⁴ . . . он был в полном смысле слова богатырь, и притом типический, простодушный, добрый русский богатырь, напоминающий дедушку Илью Муромца в прекрасной картине Верещагина и в

In Aleksei Tolstoy's poem "Il'ia Muromets," the bogatyr addresses his horse as it not only carries him away from the comforts of court life to do deeds of valor for the people, but listens to his self-justification, his life story. As the bogatyr's steed, the horse is an essential component of the warrior's activity, enabling him to accomplish his feats for the people. Such a steed is absent in Fliagin's story, despite the fact that Fliagin is described like a bogatyr. With one exception, Fliagin never pictures himself riding a horse. Instead, he takes care of horses and handles them from the ground. His symbolic location is at the side of the horse and he sees as if from the horse's viewpoint. The one exception is when he tames the "man-eating" horse when, as mentioned, he wears a belt in remembrance of the medieval prince-saint Vsevolod-Gavriil:

I got up on him, on that cannibal [the "man-eating" horse], without a shirt, barefoot, in nothing but balloon trousers and a visored cap, and I had a braided belt around my naked body, brought from the brave prince St. Vsevolod-Gavriil of Novgorod, whom I believed in and greatly respected for his daring; and embroidered on the belt was '*My honor I yield to none.*' (Pevear and Volokhonsky 117; SS 4: 392)⁷⁵

The addressee "no one" («никому») on the belt is a horse in this scenario; Fliagin's honor is at stake in his contest with the horse and the horse rather than a human enemy is his opponent. This, and the absence of his own steed, places Fliagin figuratively on the level of the horse, while interaction with horses prepares Fliagin for heroic endeavors. Fliagin emanates the heroic warrior spirit that treats horses as partners in battle and is contrasted with the modern officer who requires a docile horse. Fliagin's epic stature is not diminished by his lacking a

поэме графа А.К.Толстого. Казалось, что ему бы не в рысках ходить, а сидеть бы ему на «чубаром» да ездить в лаптищах по лесу и лениво нюхать, как «смолой и земляникой пахнет темный бор.

⁷⁵ Сел на него, на этого людоеда, без рубахи, босой, в одних шароварах да в картузе, а по голому телу имел тесменный пояс от святого храброго князя Всеволода-Гавриила из Новгорода, которого я за молодечество его сильно уважал и в него верил; а на том пояске его надпись заткана: «Чести моей никому не отдам».

horse of his own, however, as seen when he is contrasted to the officer who fights Fliagin for his lover's child, and also when Fliagin is contrasted to the remount officer, who is a prince and Fliagin's employer. The prince lacks the love for his people that the princely rulers of medieval Russia demonstrated, and which Fliagin displays. Additionally, the prince's romance with the Gypsy woman is a lowering of Lermontov's "Bela," another subtext to Fliagin's story (McLean 253). Bela, the heroine of this work, is equated in price and desirability with a horse by the bandit Kazbich, who at the culmination of the plot kills her, while in Leskov's work after the prince's passion for Grusha cools, the heroine is intended for Fliagin, who has appreciated only the beauty of horses to this point.⁷⁶ Grusha replaces the horse as Fliagin transfers his devotion from beautiful horses to the beautiful woman.

Fliagin's life experiences, in which horses constantly figure, make him a good storyteller. Fliagin faces death in the company of horses, has common experiences with horses, and lives on the level of the horse. His immersion in the world of horses gives him secret knowledge of the mysteries of animals. However, Fliagin's harsh life leaves him focused on survival. In his growth into a higher mode of living, focused not on survival and negotiating or avoiding death but on the good of others', nature gives him the tools. His appreciation of natural beauty, especially the beauty of horses and birds, makes him able to appreciate human beauty and from this appreciation to offer himself for it.

Fliagin's heroism begins to develop after he is affected by Grusha's beauty and is moved to "suffer for her" («за неѣ отстрадать»; Pevear and Volokhonsky, 217; SS 4: 498). He moves beyond the focus on his own survival, and from this point his experiences of death occur from the perspective of being "a man who can mend the situation for them all." This transformation is

⁷⁶ Bela's brother says to Kazbich: "Isn't Bela worth your racer?" («Неужели не стоит Бѣла твоего скакуна»?; my trans.; Lermontov, part 1).

enabled by his appreciation of beauty, which initially means horses' beauty. He gives himself to this beauty. Grusha's beauty is the culmination of all the beauty he has been able to appreciate, which has been animal beauty, as his life has been on the level of the animal, with his body battered in the service of human masters, his flight from his masters, his captivity in the steppe, where he lives on the lowest level of the hierarchy, crawling around on all fours. He understands the movements, the strength, the qualities of horses, and he describes their beauty in terms of another animal's beauty: birds'. When Fliagin meets Grusha, his reverence for horses' beauty is transferred to her: "“Here's that real beauty,' I think, 'which is called nature's perfection. The magnetizer was telling the truth: it's not at all like in a horse, a beast for sale”" («“Вот она”, - думаю, - “где настоящая-то красота, что природы совершенство называется; магнетизер правду сказал: это совсем не то, что в лошади, в продажном звере”»); Pevear and Volokhonsky, 190; *SS* 4: 470). The beauty of the human image becomes accessible to Fliagin through his familiarity with the horse image. In Fliagin's perception, the Gypsy girl's beauty registers on a scale established by the beauty of horses and he understands her beauty as a revelation of nature: "...beauty is nature's perfection, and from that ravishment a man can perish—even joyfully!" («“А так”, - отвечаю, - “и понимаю, что краса, природы совершенство, и за это восхищенному человеку погибнуть . . . даже радость”»!); Pevear and Volokhonsky 197; *SS* 4: 478). The perfection of nature for Fliagin had previously been the beauty of horses; just before going on the drinking binge during which he meets Grusha, he expresses his sorrow over a mare, Dido, sold by the prince:

As for me, she was so much to my liking that I never even left her stable and kept caressing her from joy . . . I didn't know why he was sending for my beauty, in whom my fancier's eyes rejoiced. But I thought, of course, that he had traded or sold my darling to

someone, or, still more likely, had lost her at cards . . . And so I sent Dido off with the stableman and started pining away terribly and longed to go on an outing.” (Pevear and Volokhonsky 176; *SS* 4: 455-6; second ellipsis in original)⁷⁷

Fliagin’s sorrow at losing Dido chronologically precedes his meeting Grusha, as Fliagin gets entangled with the “magnetizer” who convinces him to visit the Gypsy tavern. The horse for whom Fliagin had entered the whipping contest with the Tatar similarly inflamed him with her beauty: “The mare was, in fact, wonderful . . . As I was a lover of such beauty, I simply couldn’t tear my eyes off this mare” («Кобылица-была, точно, дивная . . . Я как подобной красоты был любитель, то никак глаз от этой кобылицы не отвлеку»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 141; *SS* 4: 418). Exclamations at the beauty of this mare are similar to how Fliagin will refer to Grusha. He says about the mare: “Ah, you serpent!” I think to myself, “ah, you kestrel of the steppe, you little viper! Wherever could you have come from? And I feel that my soul yearns for her, for this horse, with a kindred passion” («“Ах ты, змея!” - думаю себе, - “ах ты, стрепет степной, аспидский! где ты только могла такая зародиться?” И чувствую, что рванулась моя душа к ней, к этой лошади, родной страстию»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 140; *SS* 4: 418). About Grusha he says: “. . .she can’t even be described as a woman, but just like a bright-colored snake, moving on her tail and flexing her whole body, and with a burning fire coming from her dark eyes” («. . . аже нельзя ее описать как женщину, а точно будто как яркая змея, на хвосте движет и вся станом гнется, а из черных глаз так и жжет огнем»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 189; *SS* 4: 469). The killing of Grusha, then devoting his life to the

⁷⁷ Мне же она так по вкусу пришла, что я даже из конюшни от нее не выходил и все ласкал ее от радости . . . Мне неизвестно было, зачем он эту мою красавицу потребовал, на которую мой охотничий глаз радовался. Но думал я, конечно, что кому-нибудь он ее, голубушку, променял, или продал, или, еще того вернее, проиграл в карты . . . И вот я отпустил с конюхами Дидону и ужасно растосковался и возжелал выход сделать.

redemption of Grusha's soul by taking on additional suffering, is foreshadowed by Fliagin's reckless appreciation of the Tatar mare's beauty, for the sake of whom he ended up unintentionally killing a man: "If the Tartar had asked me not just for my soul, but for my own father and mother, I'd have no regrets . . ." («Кажется, спроси бы у меня за нее татарин не то что мою душу, а отца и мать родную, и тех бы не пожалел . . . »; Pevear and Volokhonsky 141; SS 4: 418). Horse beauty inspires Fliagin to disregard his focus on survival and prepares him for giving his life for others. The eventual turn that Fliagin will make is to living in the divine image, when he decides to die for his people: "I want very much to die for my people" («мне за народ очень помереть хочется»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 231; SS 4: 513). The horse image is instructive for Fliagin; analogously, Fliagin's image can be instructive for Leskov's readers, despite Fliagin's unlikeliness as a model for readers.

The attention to the realities of nature and the immersion into nature and the world of animals softens Fliagin's hard outlook by attuning him to their beauty and empathizing with their plight under human masters who rely on corporal violence to maintain boundaries between the dominant and the subaltern, and the human and the animal. In this oppressed setting, the ability to determine one's actions and to enjoy unconstructed movement becomes exceptionally attractive, and for Fliagin this freedom of movement is exemplified by birds in flight. For Fliagin, flight represents a partial attachment to the restrictions of life on earth. As Fliagin moves from a poetically animal identity into living in the divine image, death becomes moderated by the human person who has the ability to mend even post-death situations, and death becomes a means of undoing captivity: Fliagin's seeking of death for Grusha's sake is to redeem her sin and his wish to die for his people is to redeem their situation. While this movement from living in the animal image to living in the divine image matures continuously

and gradually, a turning point is when Fliagin sees Grusha as the culmination of all beauty he has ever seen before.

Fliagin's appreciation of beauty continuously develops with his new experiences, and for a time horse imagery defines beauty for Fliagin. The symbolic importance of horse beauty is eventually inherited by Grusha, however, who becomes the new standard of beauty and who begins to affect the course of Fliagin's life. Horses had taken some of their symbolic significance from their similarity to birds in flight. Like the birds that appear at various moments in the story, the Tatar mare is pictured covering wide spaces and moving around freely.⁷⁸ The free movements of birds that fly through the air contrasts with Fliagin's constricted mobility. The first bird in the text is a dove, a species that has additional connotations beyond the general image of the bird as being above the limitations that a land-bound life entails and figuratively as ascending to a loftier state of being. In Genesis 8, Noah sends out a dove, which comes back with a freshly picked olive leaf, telling Noah that the water had receded from the earth and that he can open the ark and come out onto the land. The dove has a salvific connotation in this account. In Luke 3, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove. The image of the dove is even more salvific here.

⁷⁸ The first bird in the text is specifically a dove, a species that has additional connotations beyond the general image of the bird. In Genesis 8, Noah sends out a dove, which comes back with a freshly picked olive leaf, telling Noah that the water had receded from the earth and that Noah could open up the ark and come out onto the land. The dove has a salvific connotation in this account. In Luke 3, the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove. The image of the dove is even more salvific here. Cats, on the other hand, stalk their prey, walk on all fours, are independent to the point of being sometimes perceived as unsociable, and make a noise that is uninspired compared to birdsong. As a smaller, domesticated version of the lion and other wild cats, yet still possessing their traits in modified form, the cat is to a lesser degree an animal that "prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour," a description assigned to the devil in 1 Peter 5:8. Fliagin plays with doves that are living in the stable but the cat begins killing the baby doves. Fliagin beats the cat, cuts off its tail and nails the tail on the wall of the stable, for which he himself is beaten and given a mindless and dehumanizing task of battering rocks into pieces, until he tries to kill himself. His willingness to be beaten for cutting off the cat's tail symbolize an attraction to natural beauty, which is developed over the course of the plot.

Horses share some of these connotations with birds because the motif of free motion or of flying is conjured up by the horses' speed. Fliagin's description of the Tatar mare employs aerial imagery:

... and the boy leaps on her, the little she-swan, and starts her off—sits her, you know, in his own Tartarish way, working her with his knees, and she takes wing under him and flies just like a bird and doesn't buck, and when he leans down to her withers and whoops to her, she just soars up in one whirl with the sand. (Pevear and Volokhonsky 140; SS 4: 418)⁷⁹

This image of horses in motion is part of the equine symbolism that connotes freedom, flight, and movement. The captivity of horses is especially poignant, as Fliagin compares captured horses to birds: "they stand in the yard—they're bewildered and even shy away from the walls, and only keep their eyes turned to the sky, like birds. You'd even feel pity looking at them, because you see how the dear heart would like to fly away, save that he has no wing . . ." («стоят на дворе - все дивятся и даже от стен шарахаются, а все только на небо, как птицы, глазами косят. Даже инда жалость, глядя на иного, возьмет, потому что видишь, что вот так бы он, кажется, сердечный, и улетел, да крылышек у него нет . . .»); Pevear and Volokhonsky 120; SS 4: 397). Beauty for Fliagin is related to unbounded, free movement that is figured by the image of flight and therefore epitomized by a bird that flies unrestrained in the air.⁸⁰ Initially, however, Fliagin is unable to interact with this beauty with causing harm. His

⁷⁹ . . . тот как прыг на нее, на лебедушку, да и ну ее гонить, - сидит, знаете, по-своему, по-татарски, коленками ее ежит, а она под ним окрыляется и точно птица летит и не всколыхнет, а как он ей к холочке принагнется да на нее гикнет, так она так вместе с песком в один вихорь и воскурится.

⁸⁰ Even the money that is piled on the tray she carries is described by him by bird imagery: ". . . there were banknotes: blue titmice, gray ducks, red heath cocks—only white swans were missing" («и ассигнации, и синие синицы, и серые утицы, и красные косачи, - только одних белых лебедей нет»); Pevear and Volokhonsky 189; SS 4: 469). When Fliagin is carried away and tosses the prince's money onto the tray, he refers to it as releasing swans: "I gave her a swan, and I'm not longer counting

appreciation of his doves not only killed several of them but landed him in trouble and led to his first attempt at suicide.

When he first sees Grusha, his perception of her beauty is colored by the bird image. He compares her eyelashes to birds: "...what eyelashes they were, long, long and black, and as if they had a life of their own and moved like some sort of birds..." («вот этикие ресницы, длинные-предлинные, черные, и точно они сами по себе живые и, как птицы какие, шевелятся . . .»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 189; *SS* 4: 470).

Grusha is also associated with horses because Gypsies were culturally associated with horses, horse trading being among the more respected occupations of the Roma, along with music and coppersmithing (Lee 9). After Fliagin's first suicide attempt he awakens to see a Gypsy horse-thief standing in front of him. Nineteenth century literature associated Gypsies with nature, both idealized and vilified them, as it conscribed them to living in a primitive state of social development (Landon 45, 48). Pushkin's poem "The Gypsies" describes a Gypsy caravan: "All is meager, wild, all is discordant / But all so lively and excited, / So alien to our own dead comforts, / So alien to this idle life of ours / Like the monotonous song of slaves" («Всё скудно, дико, всё нестройно, / Но всё так живо-неспокойно, / Так чуждо мертвых наших нег, / Так чуждо этой жизни праздной, / Как песнь рабов однообразной!»; my trans.; Pushkin 336). The figure of the Gypsy was associated with rogues, and lends itself to being interpreted because in the Romantic era, "The gypsy is always already a repository of signification, yet is always beyond the immediate knowledge of the observer" (Houghton-Walker 12).

how many I've loosed" («то я ей за то лебедя, и уже не считаю, сколько их выпустил»; (Pevear and Volokhonsky 192; *SS* 4: 472).

But unfortunately beauty is not merely for looking at; birds, horses, and Grusha are all victimized: Fliagin accidentally kills the baby doves before he learns how to hold them without squeezing them. Many of the wild horses die as a result of being tamed. Grusha's death is likewise caused by being figuratively captured because of her beauty and later abandoned by the prince. The words of a song she sings on the night that Fliagin meets her in the tavern foreshadow her fate: "Don't look, go away . . . they will sell me . . . for my beauty . . . I will kill/ Both you and myself" («Отойди, не гляди . . . А меня с красотой . . . Продадут, продадут . . . убью/ И тебя, и себя»). Grusha is sold for her beauty and in the end demands that Fliagin kill her in order to obviate the necessity of her killing her unfaithful lover, her rival, and herself.⁸¹

Thus, these representatives of nature's beauty are traded and their fates are disregarded.

⁸¹ Unlike Lermontov's Kazbich, however, Fliagin has learned how to view beauty, beginning from his handling of the baby doves: "I started examining them, these pigeon chicks, and so as not to squash them, I picked one up by the beak and looked and looked at it, and got lost in contemplating how tender it was, and the big pigeon kept driving me away. I amused myself with them—kept teasing him with the pigeon chick; but then when I went to put the little bird back in the nest, it wasn't breathing anymore" («Стал я их, этих голубят, разглядывать и, чтобы их не помять, взял одного за носик и смотрел, смотрел на него и засмотрелся, какой он нежный, а голубь его у меня все отбивает. Я с ним и забавлялся - все его этим голубенком дразню; да потом как стал пичужку назад в гнездо класть, а он уже и не дышит»; Peavear and Volokhonsky 126; SS 4: 403). The first fascination with beauty leads to the deaths of the objects of admiration. Later, Fliagin becomes an expert at reading the story of horses written in their bodies. He reveals to his future employer, the prince, the many techniques by which Gypsy horse dealers deceive their customers by disguising deficiencies in the horses they are selling. "From the first glance you have to look intelligently at the head and then at the whole horse down to the tail, and not paw it all over the way officers do" («С первого взгляда надо глядеть умно на голову и потом всю лошадь окидывать до хвоста, а не латошить, как офицеры делают»; Peavear and Volokhonsky, 172; SS 4: 451). From this glance, Fliagin can discern a horse's condition. The prince is unable to learn how to evaluate horses by observing them in this way, and he is similarly unreceptive when Fliagin warns him that his treatment of the Gypsy woman will lead him to boredom: "Eh, it's not good your insisting that you only want to look at her face! You'll get bored!" («Эх, нехорошо это, что ты так утверждаешь, что на одно на ее лицо будешь смотреть! Наскучит!»; Peavear and Volokhonsky, 198; SS 4: 478). Fliagin pushes aside the dagger that Grusha proffers him and flings her into the river, where she drowns. This movement extricates him from fulfilling the role of Kazbich in Lermontov's work, who fatally stabs Bela with a dagger. Kazbich owned the horse that was stolen by Bela's brother, assisted by Pechorin in exchange for kidnapping Bela. In Leskov's work, the Russian officer hopes to marry off the beautiful girl to his serf after he has grown bored with her. The fact that Fliagin has an eye for extraordinary horses and is also a potential suitor of the beautiful woman, puts him in a position that echoes Lermontov's Kazbich.

Fliagin understands that the beautiful object must not be treated predatorily. Fliagin's response to beauty distinguishes him from the prince, as well as from Lermontov's Pechorin and Kazbich, whose

While beauty is connected to flight and free movement in Fliagin's perception, the narrative suggests that even a free creature must be somehow integrated into the greater society. The steppe horses come from outside the homeland and must be tamed in order to realize their potential benefit to human society. When describing the Tatar horse fair, Fliagin recounts that the Tatar leader, Khan Dzhanger, is "just the same as a tsar on the steppe" («в степи все равно что царь»; Pevear and Volokhonsky 139; SS 4: 417) because there is not enough motivation to bring it under Russian control. In fact, Dzhanger, khan of the Inner or Bukeevskii Horde, was on amicable terms with the Russian government, specifically of the Orenburg Border Commission, the Orenburg Military Governor, and the Ministry of State Property, and he ruled under the oversight of the Russian government (Polovtsov). Dzhanger quelled several rebellions against both himself and the Russian government, created a Tatar aristocracy that enjoyed hereditary dispensation from tax obligations (calculated based on the livestock count of each family), and also rewarded special services with gifts of land. His unregulated method of distributing real estate to loyal subjects caused problems and disrupted the traditional way of life in favor of a haphazardly introduced Russian system. He was made a General Major of the Russian Army and received the Order of St. Anna. An article by A. Evreinov "The Inner or Bukeevskii Kyrgyz-Kazak Horde" («Внутренняя или Букеевская киргиз-казачья орда») was published in *The Contemporary* in October 1851, and Khan Dzhanger was the subject of articles in various publications from 1841, which made him a relatively familiar figure to a well-read audience. Leskov, however, does not present Khan Dzhanger as a familiar and domesticated figure, but emphasizes his exotic qualities. This accentuates the alien nature of the steppe, where Fliagin is

rapacious response to both horses and women ends in violence and death. The encounter with beauty allows Fliagin to grow into a higher mode of living, from survivalistic to sacrificial. His experience of violent treatment and imprisonment, and his encounters with death, give him the ability to empathize with the victims.

forced to go around on all fours in order to survive. On the steppe, Fliagin is in an untamed and uncivilized place, but the place where the horses he admires so much live. For Fliagin, this place is captivity.

Birds, horses and Grusha all enjoy various amounts of freedom. Fliagin measures his freedom by a bird's, just as he had compared the captured steppe horses to birds; in both cases the contrast inspires pity because the non-bird cannot escape.

There's not a living thing there, there's only, as if in mockery, one little bird, the redbill, like our swallow, quite unremarkable, only it has a red edging on its bill. Why it comes to that seashore, I don't know, but since there's nothing for it to light on, it drops onto the salt, lies there for a while on its behind, and then flutters up and flies off again, but you're deprived even of that, for you've got no wings, and so here you are again, and you've got neither death, nor life, nor repentance, and if you die, they'll put you in the salt like mutton, and you can lie there salted till the end of the world. (Pevear and Volokhonsky 156; SS 4: 435)⁸²

Fliagin juxtaposes the wild, Romantic attractiveness of the unbroken steppe horses who have strength and spirit, (which were painted by artists like Nikolai Sverchkov, whom Leskov mentions in "Monastic Islands,") with the showy, aestheticized beauty of officers' horses that reflect the interest in breeding, horsemanship, and exhibition that developed in Russia in the 1820s. However, the superiority of wild and energetic with domesticated and docile is not unequivocal: the untamed potential must be turned to a purpose for the Russian land.

⁸² Живности даже никакой нет, только и есть, как на смех, одна малая птичка, красноустик, вроде нашей ласточки, самая непримечательная, а у губок этакая оторочка красная. Зачем она к этим морским берегам летит - не знаю, но как сесть ей постоянно здесь не на что, то она упадет на солончак, полежит на своей хлупи и, глядишь, опять схватилась и опять полетела, а ты и сего лишен, ибо крыльев нет, и ты снова здесь, и нет тебе ни смерти, ни живота, ни покаяния, а умрешь, так как барана тебя в соль положат, и лежи до конца света солониною.

Figuratively, this echoes Leskov's views of the peasantry, who must be educated rather than simply received in their uncultured state. Peasant culture is raw material and must go through an educational process in order to fulfill their purpose within the greater community. Fliagin too, must mature and in this he is a microcosm of the Russian peasantry, which Leskov thought must go through stages of education and development. Fleeing the wild steppe where he walks on all fours like a horse, Fliagin must adopt a higher code of living than the enjoyment of physical freedom and give to human society. Thus, animal imagery in this work transmits Leskov's philosophical views on the country.

Beauty is the means of delivering the education that Fliagin must receive. Leskov uses the image of the horse to imbed his own real life experiences into the text, to tell an engaging story, and to widen its significance through medieval, hagiographical, folkloric, artistic and historical connections. The hero's connection with horses occurs at a foundational level in the text; the image of the horse is so inherent to Fliagin's experience that it verges on becoming another iteration of Fliagin's image. Horses are the means by which Fliagin is precipitated onto his path of spiritual growth, which is predicated on the apprehension of beauty. Horses are integral to the environment from which Fliagin develops, as he figuratively lives on the level of the horse, is formed by horse experiences, and receives a type of mystical knowledge from interacting with horses and other animals, especially birds. His development into the historic-spiritual person that he will become is enabled by horses, and horses symbolize Fliagin's potential.

Fliagin lives on the level of the animal and acquires wisdom and knowledge. Fliagin's immersion in the world of horses enables him to speak with the assurance of being in the natural world. Empathy for the horse prepares him for heroic feats; inspiration from horses triggers his

heroic endeavors as horses inspire him with their beauty. Beauty turns his feats into self-sacrificing ones, and his appreciation of beauty results from empathy for the horse and from a self-image molded physically by horses and a sense of beauty that is formed by the beauty of horses, as well as of birds, which serves to a degree as a measure of horses' beauty. Through the horse, Fliagin becomes a full human by beginning to live by spiritual principles when his response to the horse predisposes him to respond empathetically and actively to the figuratively captive and subjugated human subaltern, the Gypsy woman, whose beauty galvanizes him. The beauty of animals sensitizes him to recognize the beauty of the human image, and from there to imitate the divine image, the manifestation of which is self-sacrifice for the sake of the world. Fliagin prepares to give his life for his people as an intercessor, "a man who can simply mend the situation for them all in the easiest way," as he himself says about the priest who prays for suicides. The enlargement of his vision into seeing the Russian population as "his people" occurs gradually, but being a captive in another culture is the closest point in the novel to a turning point in this regard. The story follows hagiographic structures in that Fliagin is prayed for by his mother and she promises him to God, in the form of becoming a monk. When he refuses, his fate pursues him; his becoming a monk would have been a symbolic death, and when he refuses, it stays with him in the form of near-death experiences until he accepts it and is seeks make it count for the greater good. This acceptance of the spiritual heritage of a truly human being is the apex of his story, which begins with living in the image of the animal, ecstatic over the beauty of birds and horses. This beauty, which is a representation of flight and freedom, is a symbol of the spiritual freedom into which he will grow. Immersion in the animal world of physical survival and brutality and of constant service to the master, carries through to the eventual intended sacrifice of his body: while monastics, or righteous people, or even

conscientious citizens can give their lives by service and activity, Fliagin feels the need to give his physical body to violent death. This establishes a line of continuity and fruition between the monk's words in his boyhood vision and the last episode of his life, but it also resonates with the function of the animal body as a sacrificial offering. Having lived in the animal realm, figuratively alongside horses rather than astride them as a heroic human would be (remember that Fliagin was flogged for cutting of a cat's tail, thus being put lower than animals), Fliagin uses his body to conclusively seal his transition into living in the divine image and sacrificing himself for his fellow humans.

CONCLUSION

Animals complicate everything. They are implicated in science, in theology; they change the course of human development in its technological, linguistic, and nearly every other aspect (Kelekna 1). Animals have often provided material for thinking about what it means to be human, since they have been harnessed by writers to generate symbolical codes, allegories, and associations. Animal bodies are physical and figurative bodies that populate the real world and fictive worlds and in both are often unnoticed. At the same time, they enable and define continued human existence not only in a physical sense but in a figurative sense, as “animals teach children how to become human” and “offer . . . ‘possible bodies’ for human imagination (Cohen 39, 40). Attention to animals inevitably yields productive consideration of a wide range of questions; they are “good to think with,” as Claude Levi-Strauss writes (Costlow and Nelson 2). In Leskov’s writing, the animal image acts as a point of convergence for questions of scientific, religious, and social content engaging society in the mid-nineteenth century in Russia; these questions form the backdrop and sometimes the substance of Leskov’s literary works.

Leskov anticipates modernism: he utilizes the animal to force his readers to examine their own seeing and to puzzle over what they previously skimmed over and took for granted. This has to do with the way in which Leskov’s texts are riddles; perhaps more than other writers of his generation, Leskov anticipates modernism with its epistemological tricks (McHale 9). The conclusion of modernism is that art is in fact adequate to depict reality but needs new methods and strategies; Leskov’s answer is the riddle. At the same time, his central technique of the riddle has ancient provenance.

In a time of modernization represented iconically by the train, Leskov's writing intends to gather disparate individuals into a community based on continuation with the past. With modernization, animals were in many ways replaced by tools and machines, just as older forms of experience made way for new. In one work, Leskov refers to Pisemsky's complaint that the proliferation of railroads has led to the impoverishment of literature. Leskov's interactive poetics are based on the riddle, in which a range of references to various spheres of human experience, knowledge, and culture engage the reader's sense of atemporal community. Bridging human experience in time and space, Leskov responds to the modern decline of traditional identity structures. The animal code plays a central role in this questioning and reiterating of human identity.

The en-riddling of the main character is part of a larger impetus in Leskov's work: to comment on the situation in Russia in such a way as to incite response and discussion. Leskov's argument is that people should be more concerned about Russia's problems and more intent on finding solutions to them in a historically informed, practically minded, and morally sensitive way. To achieve this aim of developing an engaged public, Leskov's strategy as a writer is to make puzzles out of his material so that readers have to question themselves about the ostensible interpretation and to closely scrutinize it.

Ultimately, Leskov uses the image of the animal to separate the human from the animal, an operation that acquired deeper significance in the context of debates about human origins sparked by the publication of Darwin's work in Russia. Leskov uses the animal imagery that was fresh in people's minds by acquaintance with Darwin's work and popular discussion of it. The high frequency of animal imagery in Leskov's writing may have been a deliberate rhetorical strategy or it could have resulted from Leskov himself being "under the influence of" animals,

since Leskov was an avid reader and fully up to date in current debates; probably both are true. Animals appear in the sacred texts and the traditions of Judaism and Christianity as well as of other religious traditions, and Leskov's self-education made him familiar with a surprisingly wide variety of such texts.

More specifically, Leskov uses the animal image to restate a Judeo-Christian understanding of the human, while responding to changes in scientific theories; Leskov's understanding of the human hinges on morality, and in this understanding the animal serves in a variety of functions in relation to the human person and the human society or nation. Far from adopting a de-anthropomorphizing approach to the animal, Leskov uses the animal to develop paradoxes that stem essentially from a Judeo-Christian conception of morality and righteousness.

However, traces of contamination and crossover remain even after the re-assertion of the divine-human hierarchy. Animal studies shows that the relationship between humans and animals has been an intimate one, as evidenced not only in empirical reality but also in central human texts, such as the Book of Genesis, in which animals were created before humans, witnessed humans' disobedience, and provided their own skins for coverings for the humans' newly-realized nakedness. Similar to the Aesopian tradition in which animals stand for humans in a politically fragile writing situation, Leskov's texts emerge from a political and social situation in which the blurring of boundaries and recognition of close connection between animals and humans can be productive. A practical addresser of problems, Leskov is really concerned with suggesting options for Russia's way forward. He concludes that personal uprightness is necessary for the country to improve, and uses the relationship with animals to push humans into their proper place in the hierarchy. Nonetheless, the blurred boundaries linger.

Works that do not include animal imagery confirm the function of the animal code in Leskov's approach. In the absence of animals, the question of what it means to be human is posed by other means, often less rich in provocative connotation than the image of the animal. Without the fecund level of complication, connotation, and possibility that animals offer in relation to humans, the question is approached more directly via the sphere in which the outcome will be suggested, i.e. morality, ethnicity, religion. For instance, moral behavior is the referent in "The Cynical Man," while the question of what it mean to be human is presented as a question of what it means to be righteous, as in "Deathless Golovan." Sometimes the question takes on a national or ethnic framework, as in "Iron Will," in which the question is "What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of the German in comparison to the Russian?" In "The Unbaptized Priest" and others, the question is "What does it mean to be a Christian?" Without the infusion of animals with their connection to Nature, the interrogation of identity becomes less intuitive and more polemical.

Animal imagery invokes the authority of reality, elicits empathy in the reader, and enhances the literary riddle with which Leskov challenges his readers. Animal imagery allows Leskov to enrich the reading experience and to construct complex riddles of characterization that involve readers' calling to mind various texts and traditions of world culture while at the same time turning to the implicit authority of the natural world over the course of life. Positive characters model an empathetic response to the animal and the human subaltern, which involves identifying with the other and raises the question of the validity of an implied neutral stance of the reader, which the narrator exemplifies. Thus, Leskov questions himself as a writer and considers the act of consuming others' lives for either edification or entertainment. Animal imagery also serves a variety of symbolic functions, drawing on the contextual frames of

reference of the cultural-historical moment, a Judeo-Christian worldview, and the inheritance of world literature and culture, as well as the sociological and entertaining operation of the riddle.

In “Sheramur,” Leskov presents a riddle of characterization to be unraveled by taking into account references to an emperor, Pushkin’s dwarf, as well as the momentous events of French military campaigns and the succession of emperors, the Balkan uprisings and the Russian-Turkish War, English Protestant missionary efforts in Russia, Napoleon III’s career, the Lives and iconographic depictions of St. Moses the Moor and St. Moses the Hungarian, as well as wolves, dogs, and cats. Even more importantly, “Sheramur” also invokes a foundational text for thinking about animals, Genesis’ account of Creation through Cain’s sin and exile, which involves both animals and food in the brokenness that the hero symbolically carries from his ancestors. The hero’s animal characteristics approximate him to a less than human mode of living focused on feeding oneself. At the same time, the heritage of past sins is invoked as an explanation of his distressed condition, which casts his problems as universal human problems.

In “Peacock,” the animal image is employed to illustrate human virtue and vice. The peacock as a text charts a turn from a vain and self-occupied state to a humbled and repentant state. The animal image deciphered according to medieval conventions is used to contest Chernyshevsky’s vision of a future ideal that is stripped of signs of continuity with the past. The readers are given the opportunity to learn from the animal image as they engage the debate concerning the nature of the “new people” who will determine Russia’s future.

In “Wild Animal,” the animal image is again a teacher of human virtue and vice, but this time the learning process is enacted inside the text. Acquiring empathy after a physically threatening encounter with the bear, the human tyrant is reformed and begins living in the divine image. An emphasis is placed upon the virtue of visiting of the poor and exposed in their own

abodes, which is an echo of the message of Christmas around which this work is based, with the appeal to imitate God's appearing in the poorest of human living places. The setting aside of privilege and protection from the elements over which humans do not have control results in an identification with others and an empathetic outlook, which is proven by effective actions.

The non-fiction travelogue, "Monastic Islands," is presented as a riddle of genre based on the ambivalent attitude of Leskov toward the aesthetics and purpose of the pilgrimage; and the interpretation of a visual riddle of Horse-Rock is attempted by Leskov for the reader. Leskov comments at length on different ways of observing, and himself demonstrates the preferred way of viewing. His own dedication to the preferred way of viewing results in becoming more empathetic: not only does he criticize himself for judging a man who had revealed his struggles with alcoholism, but the direct encounter with the animal inhabitants of the island and the viewing of the intentionally secluded monastic settlement accomplishes a subtle change from a critical, appraising stance to a more committed and participatory outlook.

"Musk Ox" depicts an embodiment of empathy, with the hero identifying himself with human victims of injustice and exploitation and consenting to be called by an animal nickname. In attempting to overturn the oppression inherent in the economic and social system, the hero is compared to animals in order to explain his unconventional behavior. He acts on the sacrificial connotations of his name to such an extent that he becomes a sacrificed body, while Leskov asks his readers whether the sacrifice is a tragic waste or a heroic effort.

"Enchanted Wanderer" immerses its hero in the animal and natural realm, due to which he acquires a knowledge of horses and a sensitivity to animal beauty, which prepares him for self-sacrifice under the inspiration of human beauty and in the divine image. References to medieval prince-saints simultaneously heighten the heroic role that he fulfills and underline his

position on the level of the animal as he not only handles horses but, as a baby in the horse barn and later as a Tatar captive on the steppe, walks on all fours. The hero has wisdom for his listeners/readers because of his connection with nature, as he not only appreciates horses but lives a life very similar to theirs. The deciphering of the riddle of how to understand the hero is enacted by his listeners, as people on the boat to whom he is telling his life story regularly interject questions and prompts.

Leskov comments on the human condition, intimating his viewpoint in the context of the debates around human origins, the new reforms, the questions of modernization that involved the attitude toward the achievement of Western and Russian civilization in relation to one another, and other key questions in the decades of change in the second half of the nineteenth century. Leskov shows that the texts and the ways of thinking that have lasted have done so because they remain thought-provoking. His message about Russia is that there is plenty of hope, but that common and moral sense, and good information, must be consulted. The animal code contextualizes Russia's and the individual's problems in a larger frame: the frame of history, the frame of the human community and the community of being that is shared with animals and nature. A storyteller whose message is ultimately practical, as described by Walter Benjamin, and whose narratives hold interest only with captive audiences who have the time to let their minds play and be engrossed in the words, Leskov tells stories about a world that his readers and listeners think they know but, as it turns out, do not in fact know in the way that they could, until they have heard the story.

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APPENDIX: PLOT SUMMARIES

Plot of “Sheramur”

Sheramur visits a fellow Russian, a novelist named Nemo who has just arrived in Paris from St. Petersburg. Sheramur asks him for work and then for money for food, which he punctually returns with exact change a few days later. Nemo mentions Sheramur to his friends, who know him and suggest he take Sheramur out to eat in order to get to know him. Sheramur and Nemo go to Tante Grillade’s, who is the only woman to whom Sheramur shows his respect (by doffing his hat), and who has an eating establishment where Sheramur goes to eat as often as he can manage. Sheramur cannot understand the purpose of most things, such as perfume or linen and only thinks of how much food could have been purchased for the price of the objects. Nemo asks Sheramur about how he came to be a political criminal and Sheramur answers that when they locked the doors of the technical institute where he was studying, they arrested anyone who asked to be admitted into the yard (a fuller answer is given later).

The narrator had found Sheramur because he was curious about him and also because he needed a copyist. On returning the completed copy, Sheramur gives his opinion that the narrator should write something more useful. When asked, Sheramur admits that he himself cannot write, but that he can howl. Later, when the narrator and Sheramur are enjoying the day in Neuilly, the narrator hears wolf howls, which turns out to be Sheramur. He and his fellow trade school students used to howl in Petersburg when they were hungry and cold until the hostess gave them firewood and some bread. The narrator makes use of the occasion to ask Sheramur about his life.

Sheramur's biological father was a noble, his mother one of his serfs whom he (his father) married off to a bureaucrat who did not treat her well; she returned to the noble. Sheramur was given to a midwife for his education in the city but she did not feed him and the surveyor beat him, and he stopped growing. They gave him to the educational institute where he ate and grew but then he was put in a room without food, which spoiled his vision because he only looked at a tiny bit of wall. The beating made his memory bad; he went to the technological institute and studied poetry and prose but can only remember a little of it. Then the rebellion occurred and he was arrested. A countess asked the director Ermakov for someone she could help and he sent Sheramur. The countess gave Sheramur the Gospel to read but he said he could not understand most of it and it was unnecessary for him. She took him with her on a trip to the country with her children, their governess, two house girls, and a buffet attendant on the train. They talked nonsense and were cynical, as Sheramur related, and so Sheramur went to sit with the peasants in another train car. He sees a peasant being beaten. He wants to return but has no ticket; he oversleeps and they leave him; he sees the peasant being beaten for the fourth time. He discovers that the peasant has traveled all the way from Moscow without a ticket using this method of being beaten for not having a ticket but continuing his journey each time. Sheramur wants to take him to a restaurant but the peasant calls a guard; they both are arrested, Sheramur's countess is contacted and she sends Sheramur to an artist she knows in that area; Sheramur and the peasant have tea together and Sheramur buys pastries for the peasant's children, whom he is traveling to see.

The artist, whose name Sheramur does not know, was old and sick and told Sheramur it was not worth it to go to the countess' school and gives him five rubles. Sheramur goes anyway to live at the school the countess runs in order to help people, since she has nothing to do, or so

the artist had explained it to Sheramur. Sheramur is given a bad place to sleep and falls sick; a young Jewish doctor takes care of him (the doctor has become a Christian and is kept on by the countess). The doctor gives Sheramur advice on how to answer the countess so that he will be fed good food. An Englishwoman sometimes accompanies the countess when she comes to teach Sheramur. When Sheramur has answered with the right words so that the countess understands him to be converted, she sends Sheramur to teach the children. Once a priest comes to check the children and Sheramur does not know the answer—after that, he is not allowed to teach the children. The countess, upholding her principles, does not send him away; the Englishwoman continues to pay attention to him and tells him to come to her room and she will give him sweets. He goes and she gives him bottles to drink and is half-dressed, perfumed and made-up; she tries kissing him but he jumps out the window and the buffet attendant catches him and accuses him of trying to steal perfume. He is taken to the police as a suspected nihilist and the military doctor suggests to him that it might be better to run, and so he runs away. He goes to the artist to tell him that he cannot return the five rubles, but the artist is dying, laughs at Sheramur's story, and gives him 20 rubles more; he goes to Geneva, and then to Paris, where people are more polite.

Sheramur's narration ends; he and the narrator get up from where they were sitting on the edge of the ravine to return to Paris so Sheramur can eat. The narrator decides he should take Sheramur back to Russia where people eat better, and so seeks to discover whether Sheramur needs to be cleared of any criminal charges.

But first he will tell two words about how Sheramur lived in Paris. Sheramur never had a place to live and only earned money at odd jobs; learned how to sleep on benches sitting up for half an hour till the *sergeant de ville* discovered him.

Once the narrator met and talked to an old acquaintance from high society. She knew many interesting people that the narrator only knows from books; she knew both Herzen and Garibaldi. As they are talking on a park bench, suddenly Sheramur appears. The narrator asks her to help Sheramur and she arranges a meeting with the Russian diplomat.

As the narrator later finds out, Sheramur had gone to the lady's house as arranged, had been fed and had chewed and completely eaten the bones, but when he had heard other visitors mention a book called Poppinjay he had rushed out of the house. The narrator does not see him in the days before his (the narrator's) departure for Russia. Sheramur does come to his house when he is out and leaves a strange request: "Leave me the bottle of eye drops that help my toothache" («Оставьте мне пузырянку глазных капель, что помогают от зубной боли» SS 6: Leskov 280). Sheramur suddenly appears when the narrator is eating a better breakfast (to recover from breakfast at Mademoiselle Grillade's where he hoped to see Sheramur) in a restaurant next to the train station. He orders food for Sheramur, and demands the story of the diplomat from him.

Back in Russia when he tells about Sheramur, most people take it lightly and laugh, but a lady defends him: "that's how God created him . . . it's a sin to laugh at him . . ." («так Бог его создал . . . над ним грех смеяться . . .»; SS 6: 288). Two years later the narrator receives a book in wrapping with "debt and for the interest zh. v. kh." («долг и за процент ж. в. х.»; SS 6: 190). Sheramur had left it. The narrator waits for him to come again, for a long time; ("and finally, when I had entirely stopped waiting, he suddenly appeared" («и наконец, когда я совсем перестал ждать,--он вдруг и явился»; SS 6: 291).

A guest, who is of the "new people" had dropped off the packet from Sheramur and later relates how Sheramur is doing. Sheramur had read in the newspapers that the Turks were taking

away all eating supplies from the poor Slavs and so he went to fight in the war. He “drummed” but when in Serbia he saw more food than he had ever seen before, he concluded that it was all thought up by Aksakov and Kokorev in Moscow and so he left. He worked as an orderly administering the patients’ feedings in the hospital. He saves all his money and takes it to “the Swiss” but they want to undertake a different enterprise than he is interested in—he wants a place “to eat and to feed others” («пожрать и других накормить»; SS 6: 294). So Sheramur goes to Paris and to Tante Grillade. He leaves his money with her, thinking to send hungry people to her to be fed meals until she says “tout est fini.” But she is much smarter and far-sighted, and has plans for him. She works out an arrangement to feed people based on her and Sheramur marrying so that everything is in common (his money and her restaurant). He likes the idea, even though she is much older than him. At the end of the wedding celebration the *sergeant de ville* requires the guests to disperse; Tante Grillade washes Sheramur, and Sheramur “submitted himself to his portion” («покорился своей доле»; SS 6: 299).

And they lived happily ever after: Sheramur was tormented only by the sponge with which Tante Grillade washed him but he learned to use it to his advantage. If he wanted to feed someone who was not “on the subscription” and his wife objected, he would refuse to be washed unless she consented.

The narrator raises the question of whether or not Sheramur was happy in this situation. The nanny thinks he was happy. The narrator explains that Sheramur seemed simple and understandable after years of knowing him but might not appear so to the reader.

Plot of “Wild Animal”

“The Wild Animal” describes a miracle of character transformation: the narrator’s tyrannical uncle is so affected by the love that his serf dog-handler shows a captured bear cub, who has grown to maturity in freedom on the estate, that the tyrant transforms into a charitable old man. The climax of the story is the bear-baiting that the uncle arranges for his guests on Christmas day. The uncle had heard that his dog-handler, named Ferapont and called Khraposhka by the people, had sworn not to shoot the bear even if ordered to do so. This was in spite of the “death-bearing punishments” («смертоносные наказания»; *SS* 7: 264) that the uncle prescribed for any serf who did not carry out a task. During the bear-baiting, which followed the time when the bear inevitably began “to reveal his beastly inclinations, inconvenient in the community” («обнаруживать своих зверских, неудобных в общежитии наклонностей»; *SS* 7: 263), the uncle’s leg is injured when his horse bolts and runs up against a tree. This occurs during the mayhem that ensues when the bear begins swinging a plank of wood that had accidentally become attached by a rope to his arm. Ferapont neglects an opportunity to plunge his knife into the bear’s heart, despite the threatened punishment. By unwittingly swinging a plank attached to his paw, the bear endangers the circle of spectators watching from the safety of their sleds and escapes into the forest. The next day as the children and guests stand waiting for the uncle’s reaction to the disastrous bear-baiting, the priest improvises a homily on the significance of the hymn “Christ is born” («Христос рождается»; *SS* 7: 268). Suddenly the uncle’s cane drops to the floor and the old man calls for Ferapont, whom he then pardons and emancipates. He also does not give orders to track and kill the bear in the forest. Ferapont declines to leave his master and becomes the uncle’s trusted servant, accompanying him on

philanthropic missions and earning the appellative “tamer of the wild animal” («укротитель зверя»; *SS* 7: 279) from him.

Plot of “Monastic Islands”

The travelogue begins from the point when Leskov, whose narrative persona differs little from those of his works of fiction but in this case is meant to represent Leskov himself, has decided to go on a voyage to the famous monastery islands of Valaam and Konevets and successfully procures steamboat tickets only after repeated frustrations, finally boards the vessel, and waits out the delay caused by the late arrival of an important passenger. Space is cramped but Leskov interacts with other passengers, listening to their conversations, discussions and stories and observing their behavior. One passenger confides that he is making the pilgrimage in order to avoid going on a drunken binge, a strong urge for which he feels coming on. Leskov remains devoted to his goal of viewing the famous Horse Rock on Konevets Island and the parts of the island not usually seen by pilgrims, even after fellow passengers warn him that he will probably not be allowed to do so. When they arrive at Konevets, Leskov has tea with the abbot and in fact receives his blessing to see other areas of the island. After a few hours of sleep, Leskov and the artist who is traveling with him walk to the place where the horses are readied, and Leskov is struck by the beauty of the early morning scene. Joined by a foreign couple, they are driven by a monk to the famous Horse Rock, and discover that it does not resemble a horse at all. On the way back, they notice cows, some with horns and some without, and ask the monk how they came to be on the island, but the monk has only a vague explanation to offer. The foreign travelers tip the monk for driving them and, to Leskov’s surprise, the monk accepts the money. Leskov declines to have tea a second time with the abbot and boards the steamboat. Some child novices who have come out to the docked vessel accept non-fasting food from the travelers while everyone is waiting for the important passenger to finish tea with the abbot and to

board the boat. The pilgrim who was struggling with binge drinking tells Leskov about an experience he had in the monastery, after which his urge to drink left him.

Plot of “Enchanted Wanderer”

Born a serf in the Orel province, Fliagin is trained to be a coachman like his father. Astride the lead horse pulling his master’s cart, he exuberantly whips a sleeping monk atop a cart of hay, who rolls off and dies. That night, the monk appears to the teenager and urges him to join a monastery as his mother had promised when she was praying to God for a child. As a sign that the monk is speaking the truth, he predicts that Fliagin will nearly perish many times but only when his real downfall comes will he remember his mother’s promise and join the monastery. Horses bring Fliagin’s first near-death experience: he is atop the lead horse of his mistress’s carriage on a steep descent when the horses slip and panic, and Fliagin barely manages to halt the carriage at the edge of a cliff while the horses plummet over. Fliagin dangles from the precipice until he falls and regains consciousness to find out that his father, the coachman, had fallen over the edge and died.

The next episode of Fliagin’s life contains animal variety: Fliagin takes a liking to a family of doves and, enraged that his mistress’ cat kills the baby birds, beats the cat and cuts off its tail. For this he is whipped and assigned the demeaning task of breaking rocks. Not willing to endure this humiliation, Fliagin decides to kill himself. Horses again appear: after jumping down a hill, Fliagin wakes up to find a Gypsy standing in front of him, offering him employment as a horse-stealer. However, When the Gypsy sells the horses that Ivan helped steal from his master and gives Fliagin only 1 of the 300 rubles of income, they quarrel and Fliagin leaves him and goes to the police to report that he does not have a passport. The government clerk sees an opportunity and suggests that Fliagin use a false passport, providing him one in exchange for all his money. Fliagin stands for hire as a day laborer and is conscripted by an assertive gentleman

who employs him as babysitter to his young daughter. Fliagin spends his days with the toddler and a grazing goat, until the gentleman's wife shows up with her lover, an officer, to take the baby. The woman's entreaties do not convince Fliagin to allow her to abscond with her daughter, but when Fliagin sees the gentleman riding furiously toward them with a pistol, he switches his sympathies from the domineering husband to the pitiable young couple, gives them the baby, and joins them as they escape. Although the couple are grateful, the officer cannot allow Fliagin to stay with them, because he has left his passport behind with the goat and it is by now in the hands of the gentleman.

In perhaps the most memorable episode, Fliagin next goes to the horse market, where Tatars are buying and selling horses, disputes over the most coveted horses being settled by a contest in which the two bidders hold left hands and alternate blows with the whip on their opponent's bare back until one contestant renounces his bid or otherwise forfeits his right to buy the horse. Fliagin watches a whipping duel, and when a horse of unbelievable beauty is brought out, he volunteers to enter the duel on behalf of a Russian officer who has money to buy the horse. Fliagin wins the brutal contest but his Tatar opponent dies because he is ashamed to accept defeat from a Russian and so does not surrender. Despite the fact that the Tatars bear Fliagin no grudge for winning a fair fight, the Russian bystanders decide to call in the authorities. Fliagin asks the Tatars to help him escape. They willingly take him to the steppe but in order to keep him from leaving—since, as they say, they like him—they make incisions on the soles of his feet and insert horse hairs in order to prevent him from running away. Fliagin is forced to go around on all fours or by walking on the sides of his ankles. He lives with the Tatars for more than ten years, and sires children by four wives, but he does not consider the children to be his because they are half-Tatar. Fliagin finally intimidates the Tatars with fireworks left by a

martyred Russian missionary, draws out the hairs from his feet with a caustic soil from the fireworks, and runs away. Returning to Russia, Fliagin is imprisoned and exiled for a time, and eventually returns to his master's estate. The serfs have been emancipated during the time that Fliagin spent on the steppe, but Fliagin's former master whips him before giving him his allotted parcel of land. Additionally, the priest gives Fliagin a penance of not having communion for three years. At the marketplace, Fliagin prevents a Gypsy from conning someone into buying a horse in bad condition, is compensated by the appreciative buyer, and begins to make a living with his horse skills. A remount officer values his expertise in horses and hires him permanently. Working for this prince, where for the first time he is treated as an equal by his employer, Fliagin regularly goes on drinking binges, but always safely relinquishes the prince's money beforehand for safekeeping. Once, however, the prince is out of town when the urge to binge comes and Fliagin spends all of the five thousand rubles he is carrying. This occurs when a drunken stranger in a bar swears that he can "magnetize" away Fliagin's drinking passion and takes Fliagin to a Gypsy tavern where he is mesmerized by the beauty of Grusha, a Gypsy girl who sings and dances and he throws all his money onto the money platter she is holding. After his binge, Fliagin reports himself to the prince, ready to be punished, but finds out that the prince has paid 50,000 rubles for her to Grusha's father and that she is now living with the prince. The prince appreciates Fliagin's valuing of Grusha's beauty and forgives him the 5,000 ruble loss. As Fliagin predicts, however, the prince's passion for Grusha soon dies out and he decides to marry a rich noblewoman. When the prince leaves town, Grusha sends Fliagin to discover his intentions and Fliagin confirms that, in order to buy a textile factory, the prince will mortgage the house he had bought for a former lover with whom he has a daughter and that he is planning to marry off Grusha to Fliagin and land himself a rich wife. Before Fliagin has a chance to report

to Grusha, he is sent on a business errand by the prince, and when he comes back, Grusha has disappeared. Fliagin hears from a serving woman that ten days ago the prince rode away with Grusha and that she has not returned since then. On the prince's wedding day, Fliagin does not take part in the festivities but goes looking for Grusha and eventually finds her in the forest. She first makes him swear to help her and then tells him to kill her, to prevent her from murdering the prince and his wife and from committing suicide, a sin which cannot be repented of, and then to redeem her sin and his own by "suffering them out." Refusing her knife, he casts her into the river and she drowns. Fliagin runs away and immediately begins "suffering out" their sins: he meets a peasant couple whose only son has been conscripted into the army and volunteers to take the son's place. Fliagin serves in the army fifteen years. During a battle against the Tatars, he volunteers for a suicide mission, and senses Grusha protecting him; he survives, and for his bravery he is made an officer. He will not stop confessing to his superiors that he has killed people (Grusha, the monk, the Tatar), and so to be rid of him they eventually send him into retirement. He works for an information bureau in charge of names beginning with Θ, the "most insignificant letter." Leaving this post because of the lack of customers for his letter, he tries to work as a coachman but finds that no one will hire him because he is an officer and so cannot be mistreated. So Fliagin becomes an actor, enacting the devil, and in this role is physically beaten during every performance. He defends an actress from harassment by a fellow actor and is removed from the troupe through the latter's influence, and so he goes to the monastery, where he is given the obedience of taking care of the horses. In the monastery the devil appears to him in Grusha's form, and Fliagin overcomes him by praying on his knees. However, Fliagin mistakes the monastery cow for a small demon coming into the stables, where Fliagin sleeps, and kills it with an axe, and for this he is sent to live in a cellar. But a fellow monk provides him

with reading materials and after reading a prophecy that “when everywhere peace is being spoken about, then the end will come,” and having read about the current political situation in the newspapers, Fliagin begins prophesying about the end of the world. To quell his prophesying, he is directed to stand in front of an icon called “Blessed Silence,” but this does not silence him. A doctor examines him to determine whether he is insane, and the doctor’s conclusion is that Fliagin may have “stayed in one place too long” and should be sent away. Fliagin is allowed to leave the monastery, and as he concludes his narration, he is on his way to ask a blessing of two ascetic elders living on one of the Solovki islands, two days from Valaam, after which he intends to join the army to die for the Russian people in what he senses will be a cataclysmic military confrontation.