THE IMAGINED WEALTH AND REAL MISFORTUNE
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN PROSE

BY

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DISSErTATION

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This dissertation is an endeavor to read Russian classics by concentrating on the material aspects of plots developments, rather than the philosophical issues focused on the protagonists’ disillusionment with life and society. This work analyzes select works of Russian fiction from 1792 and from 1834-1867, which pursued the theme of commercial interests in the diminishing fictional universe of Russian nobility.

Several critics of the Western European literary tradition, such as John Vernon, Marc Shell and Patrick Brantlinger challenge the claim that nineteenth-century narratives are about money and feature the commercial side of the characters’ social interactions within the nuclear family and with the opposite sex. By taking into consideration this new perception of reading fiction with the focus on the materialistic values of the narratives, I question the applicability of this research to understanding the canonical works of nineteenth-century Russian literature and whether this approach would enhance the study of genre developments of the Russian prose-fiction in the aforementioned period. Therefore, the research questions for this dissertation are as follows: How does money appear in the stories of formative life-experiences for characters of nineteenth-century Russian classical literature? What is the relationship between the exchange of capital and the flow of gossip in these narratives? What are the gender and genre correlations and implications of these dynamics? And, how might studying these topics modify the traditional literary-historical understandings of the development of realism in nineteenth-century Russian literature?

The current work also illuminates the literary treatment of the diminishing world of the Russian aristocracy and the rising importance of capital as compared to land. It explores large-
scale socio-political changes during the period of study, and their influence on both the literary treatment of money, gossip and the creative process. This involves registering Russia’s intellectual or imaginary participation in the discourse of cultural and industrial revolutions that “progressive” Western States were experiencing, a discourse not actualized in Russia until decades later. I do not necessarily claim that fiction reflects every political development; nonetheless, I believe that one cannot ignore the dialectical relationship between fiction and reality. Overall, the goal of this project is to provide a new appreciation for selected works by prominent Russian writers who have contributed to the cultural phenomenon of the Great Russian Novel.

To a semi-hypothetical question about what function money plays in the stories, the inspection of each story seemingly reveals an answer within the terms of the repeated model, which shows that money appears in the presented fiction as a catalyst for the plot developments, and as a stage of self-evolvement for the characters. In addition to the revealed pattern, the analysis also showed that gossip and money both share an ability to add to or to reduce the social value of an individual, which can be considered as a formative stage of becoming, for both the story and for the protagonist. Furthermore, although it is believed money is a domain of men and gossip of women; the close reading reveals that the victims are women, but men are makers of both gossip and money. Overall, the final verdict for the function of money and gossip in the presented samples of Russian prose would be that the established nineteenth-century Russian literary tradition is a product of creative processes that were reflective of the cultural and popular events of Western Europe.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my grandfather, Timofei Fyodorovich, my only “real” parent…

I want to thank Professor Valeria Sobol for her support and sincere interest in guiding me through the captivating subject of Romanticism. I am indebted to Professor David Cooper for his academic generosity in steering me through the basics of building arguments, keeping me focused on important matters and his overall contributions to this work.

I am grateful to Professor John Randolph for giving me all the necessary resources for bolstering the historical foundation for my work. I cannot thank enough the chair, Professor Michael Finke, for his support and for introducing me to the formative realist tradition genres such as physiological sketch stories and society tales.

I would also like to thank the division of SLCL and REEC, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for funding for my research during the summer of 2009, which provided room and board, and therefore, allowed me to nourish my brain and soul enough to establish the structure of my dissertation. I also extend my sincerest gratitude to my friend, Lana Wegeng, whose support and familiarity with the English language helped me shape this work.
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I will use names and Russian words that are transliterated using the Library of Congress system with a few exceptions such as a simplified spelling that has become commonplace in English (like Alyona Ivanovna, Ganya, Nasta’ya Filippovna, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Gogol, Odoevsky, Zhukovsky).

I will place frequently encountered alternate spellings of a surname in square brackets. I will use the most prominent translation for titles of works with significant alternate versions indicated when appropriate.

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INTRODUCTION

In Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (1869), Princess Julie (in her personal letter to Princess Maria) shares “the big news” in the matrimonial chronicle of Moscow (PSS 9: 110-111):¹

La grande nouvelle du jour qui occupe tout Moscou est la mort du vieux comte Безухоû et son héritage. Figurez-vous que les trois princesses n’ont reçu que très peu de chose, le prince Basile rien, est que c’est M. Pierre qui a tout hérité, et qui par-dessus le Marieché a été reconnu pour fils légitime, par conséquent comte Безухоû est possesseur de la plus belle fortune de la Russie. On prétend que le prince Basile a joué un très vilain rôle dans toute cette histoire et qu’il est reparti tout pênaud pour Pétersbourg. Je vous avoue, que je comprends très peu toutes ces affaires de legs et de testament; ce que je sais, c’est que depuis que le jeune homme que nous connaissions tous sous le nom de M. Pierre les tout court est devenu comte Безухоû et possesseur de l’une des plus grandes fortunes de la Russie, je m’amuse fort à observer les changements de ton et des manières des mamans accablées de filles à Marieier et des demoiselles elles-mêmes à l’égard de cet individu, qui, par parenthèse, m’a paru toujours être un pauvre, sire. Comme on s’amuse depuis deux ans à me donner des promis que je ne connais pas le plus souvent, la chronique matrimoniale de Moscou me fait comtesse Безухоû… (110-111).

The big news of the day, broadcast all over Moscow is the death of old Count Bezukhov and his inheritance. Imagine, the three princesses received very little, Prince Vassily nothing, with M. Pierre inheriting the rest, and also being recognized as a legitimate son, and consequently heir to the title, Count Безухоû.

Bezukhov, possessor of the handsomest fortune in Russia. They claim that Prince Vassily played a very nasty role in this whole story and that he has returned to Petersburg [...]. I confess to you that I understand very little about legacies and wills; what I do know is that the young man we knew simply by M. Pierre has become Count Bezukhov and possessor of one of the largest fortunes in Russia. I have been very much amused to observe the changes of tone and manners of mamas burdened with marriageable daughters and of the young ladies themselves with regard to this individual, who, parenthetically, has always seemed a poor sort to me. Since people have amused themselves for the past two years by making matches for me that I mostly knew nothing about, the matrimonial chronicle of Moscow is now making me Countess Bezukhov… (Tolstoy 92).

The above excerpt illustrates the societal uproar about the sudden inheritance of Pierre Bezukhov and the acquisition of the title of Prince. It reveals the trivial preoccupation of a young woman, Princess Julie, whose main concern is finding a wealthy suitor and becoming the talk of the town. Although, the narrative of this fragment (from Leo Tolstoy’s epic novel) gravitates toward the singular object of gossip, it grasps the general predispositions and moods of the refined world of aristocracy at the beginning of nineteenth-century Russia. This letter raises issues integral to the dissertation questions: By building their stories around the interplay between money and gossip, upon what do Russian writers reflect? Do their stories represent a projection of authorial anxieties about the changing world order? Can we consider these stories as creative reflections of the diminishing world of the nobles? By taking gossip and money as the main themes of their narratives, did authors try to capture the transitional stage of Russian literature, from Romanticism to Realism?

Indeed, the letter alone, regardless of its minor place in the epic novel War and Peace, illustrates claims by John Vernon and Marc Shell, that nineteenth-century literature primarily
consists of the preoccupation of characters with money, and salient information (gossip) related to these fiscal matters. As Marc Shell suggests, for example, monetary interest in fiction is rooted in the language of the characters and defines social standing and the norms of social behavior or its deviations, and it supplies human stories with meaning” [...] (72). The note, indeed, regardless of its jovial nature, captures and reveals more than Julie’s desire to marry well. The miraculous rise of Pierre’s position in Moscow society, from bastard-son to legitimate heir after his father’s death is suggestive of larger scale social changes.

The main themes of this dissertation are the unbridled greed for money and fabricated, speculative gossip. Every story presented here ends tragically with suicide, madness, murder and the pointless lives of most of the main characters because of gossip and money. When analyzing nineteenth-century fiction, critics often state that money and gossip are the main components of the contemporary imagination; however, I claim that they also re-introduce onto pages of the “modern” novels and tales primordial tensions and desires fueled by avarice and lust. Vernon and Shell, for example, offer historical evidence that money represents the progress of humans from the primitive barter economy to a more sophisticated understanding of the value of human labor. Gossip has been a social preoccupation since the beginning of society. In fiction, according to Spacks and Hutchings, it introduces the primitive drives and desires of the characters by destroying societal norms and the hierarchy of the fictional universe. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, gossip entered the realm of the printed page via journalism, and thus the details of social status garnered an audience among well-read society.

This work implicitly considers the slight variability in the way money and gossip influence the progression from the Romantic to Realist epoch and the way it reflects socio-
political changes from the reigns of Catherine the Great to Alexander II. The reign of Catherine the Great, for example, brought into circulation paper money in the form of assignations and promissory notes, which influenced opinions about the concept of money and all the possible fantasies people allocate to it (Alexander 83). The reign of Alexander II is renowned for social change and the liberation of the serfs (Lee 67). Afterwards, characters from diverse social backgrounds, urban landscapes and city-dwellers permeated Russian literature.²

Since money and gossip are social currencies and in fiction function as the force driving the plot, Russian authors centered their narratives around money and gossip because capital and information exchange devices highlighted this eventful span of time for Russia. Furthermore, money and gossip, instead of reaffirming father-son connections and preserving the dogmatic homogeneity of the community, break with tradition and disrupt the structure of the patriarchal order. The texts presented here are samples of Russian prose from the early to mid-nineteenth century, with the exception of Karamzin’s “Poor Liza,” in which money and gossip create excess, stemming from a clash of two temporalities, the traditional and the new. The plots of the stories often feature trouble in or with the slowly diminishing world of the noble. Money and gossip, around which the story is constructed, instills this temporal duality in the fabric of the narrative.

Vernon (Money and Fiction (1984)), McReynolds (Redemption and the Merchant God (2011)) and Spacks (Gossip (1986)) provide the theoretical framework for contextual analysis in this dissertation. In his study of the nineteenth-century literary tradition, Vernon states that in works by authors from Balzac to Dostoevsky, social issues found their reflection in art through

² The term sosloviya according to Gregory Freeze becomes a part of legal vernacular defining urban social formations during the reign of Catherine the Great (Freeze 17). It covers primarily the town-folk stratum and follows the Western understanding of social groups rather than considering the uniqueness of “feudal” beginnings of Russian society. It is only in Dal’s dictionary that it receives a mildly realistic connotation of “castes” (19).
monetary operations. In other words, money serves as a tool to grasp and represent reality in literature. He states that objects “are no longer part of a continuum of human existence, a means absorbed into human life [...]” (34-36). McReynolds suggests that in Dostoevsky’s fictional universe, money replaces spiritual loss and is often the source of conflict in familial affairs. It turns sons against fathers and vice versa. With her extensive and thorough analysis of gossip in the European literary tradition, Spacks shows that gossip is as valuable a currency as money, and like money has the ability both to create social bonds and as easily the power to destroy them (Spacks 16). By incorporating these theories into my work, it became clear that money and gossip manifest a complex layered symbolic code, which shapes the reader’s expectations and simultaneously deceives his/her expectations, thus fueling the reader’s curiosity to read further.

I have chosen these tales (povesti) and novels for several reasons to examine the nature of money and gossip: Nikolai Karamzin’s “Poor Liza” (1792), Prince Vladimir Odoevsky’s “Princess Mimi” (1834) and “Princess Zizi” (1839), Alexander Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades” (1833), Gogol’s “The Portrait” (1842), Princess Evdokia Rostopchina’s “Rank and Money” (1838), and lastly, Fyodor Dostoevsky’s The Idiot (1868) and The Insulted and Injured (1861). First, they contain a degree of sensationalist allure and the discourse of the shared secret. Second, each of the selected stories is in the Russian society tale genre, representing the tale itself and paying homage to the grotesque tradition of menippean satire (Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics 113-20).

Neil Cornwell and Dalton-Brown state that society tales influenced the emergence of feuilletons—creative sketches about the cultural, criminal and commercial aspects of urban life
The selection of writers here represents the founders of the Russian literary tradition. I have chosen them for their creative and thoughtful preoccupation with the changing reality and for their awareness of the organicity of the narrative styles.

The themes of money and gossip as they appear are the products of these experimentations. The two entities, money and gossip create explosive plots and help evoke the grotesque tradition. As patterns, money and gossip often function as the knot of the narratives, triggering desire and turning seemingly reasonable wishes into those of the absurd. Furthermore, money and gossip, instead of reaffirming father-son connections and keeping the dogmatic homogeneity of the community, break with tradition by disrupting the structure of the patriarchal order and converting pariahs into leading characters.

The occurrence of the grotesque in the selected narratives, initiated by the ongoing exchange of money and gossip, represents the clash of the two temporalities: feudal and modern. First, this is because the plots of these stories often feature trouble in or with the slowly diminishing world of the noble. Nobility, which represents the feudal, often struggle with the demands of the new world order. Second, since fiscal matters in these works is the main theme, I connect the phenomenon of the co-existence of the “pre-modern” feudal with the modern in one story to the fact that money is simultaneously a reminder of the feudal past and a symbol of modern times. I claim this because according to Cedric Watts it is precisely money that enabled

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3 In a newspaper dated in 1847, this particular genre is characterized as "frantsuz" s bolovnii i spletmiam [...]: “A Frenchman with his chat and gossip” [...]. (Finskii Vestnik 45).

4 The definition of the grotesque in my work reflects Bakhtin’s perception of it. The original term for grotesque is a term applied to “a decorative art in sculpture, painting and architecture, characterized by fantastic representations of human and animal forms often combined into formal distortions to the point of absurdity, ugliness, or caricature. It was so named after the ancient paintings and decorations found in the underground chambers (grotte) of Roman ruins” (Bloom 76). I appropriate the modern findings of this term derived from the Bakhtin’s working of this term, a distortion of the norm, a play of laughter and terror: “Distorted, fantastic, ugly. The problem remains that grotesque is essentially something we distrust, the hidden demonic fantasy that still torments and attracts us, the shadow we repress because we don’t want to confront this central problem in our society”[...].
society to progress from a primitive barter economy to the complex and sophisticated one of the modern world(4). Therefore, money, by becoming the material out of which the story is constructed, instills this temporal duality in the fabric of the narrative.

This work involves the analysis of various works of Russian fiction from 1792 and from 1834-1867, when the Russian literary tradition began to integrate monetary interests into the central plots of the narratives. This was the era when not only prose-fiction was finding its place in Russian literature but also dramatic socio-economic changes in Russia were occurring. Although the year 1792 complicates the homogeneity of the chosen time span, I include it because it was the year of reaffirmation of Russian prose-fiction and the year Nikolai Karamzin wrote “Poor Liza.”\(^5\) I give special attention to this work because according to Russian literary critics, namely V. N Toporov, by creating “Poor Liza,” Karamzin made a great contribution to Russian prose-fiction:

...рассказывая сентиментальную и слащавую историю бедной Лизы, Карамзин- попутно- открыл прозу», и справедливо замечено: «Бедная Лиза» появилась на пустом месте. Её не окружал густой литературный контекст […] (39).

While narrating the sentimental and cloying story of poor Liza, Karamzin, simultaneously contributes to the development of prose-fiction. And as they note, “Poor Liza” occupied an

\(^5\) I accentuate the importance of the usage of the novelistic genre, prose, because it reflects the tensions of modern life and delivers the message that such means of social exchange, money and words, are the basis for the imagined realities one can find in nineteenth-century novels. For example, Budgen pens an entire case study about why experts of the eighteenth century considered prose corruptive and immoral. He states that in the beginning, prose held the status of “a bastard, an outlawed and orphaned genre up until Gogol” and promoted “the immorality of the imagination” contributing to the development of consumerist attitudes and bourgeoisie imaginations (Cross 65).
empty spot; it was not preceded necessarily by a rich literary tradition [...] [...] [The translation is mine].

Herewith, I open my dissertation with “Poor Liza,” which I give precedence over other works. First, because it sets the thematic content which represents the basis of my study, especially the social connections based on commercial exchange and the clash of the two epochs, pre-modern and modern. Second, the story uncovers the author’s artistic response to socio-economic changes that I attribute to his genre choice of prose. The other tales and novels from 1834-1867, represent a range of different genres and schools from high Romanticism to the Realist tradition. This borrowing, which is responsible for the formation of such sub-genres as the society tale, physiological sketch stories and the Great Russian novel, reflects the tensions of modern life. It also highlights the modern perception of novels as commodities, with an emphasis on commerce in the narratives and the introduction of the author-persona as both a confidant and a gossip. It also reflects the change in the purpose of writing, going from a medium for intellectual and flirtatious exchanges at the salon to a means of earning a living.

Chapter 1 is devoted to the analysis of Karamzin’s “Poor Liza” (1792), Gogol’s “The Portrait” (1842) and Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades” (1834). These stories demonstrate how the desire for money creates explosive outcomes and turns the narratives toward the resurrection of the grotesque tradition. Consequently, the chapter establishes an understanding of money as social currency, which drives the intentions of the characters, and is instrumental in breaking the

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6 Under the tensions of modern life or modernity, I mean the series of socio-economic events, which were the result of Petrine reforms. I draw this perception of “modernity” from The Russian Icon and Modernity, in which Douglas Greenfield states, “modernity defines itself against a past that it has created in its own counter image...” and from a work by Nikolai Karamzin, Zapiski o drevnei i novoi Rossi (Karamzin’s Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia), in which the term “modern time,” ‘soveremennost,’ describes events of Petrine reforms. Modernity within the context of this dissertation represents Russian post-Peter the Great’s social reforms with a diminishing world of the Russian aristocracy and a burgeoning new one with a new stratum of ordinary people (engineers, clerks, working women) (Pipes 10).
established narrative technique of Sentimental and Romantic traditions. Overall, the chapter provides an understanding of the main concept of this dissertation that the commercial aspect dominates over romance.

Chapter 2 explores the workings of gossip in select works of Odoevsky and Rostopchina and demonstrates the functional similarity of gossip with money. It also provides a detailed insight into the mechanisms of the society tale as a genre that contributed to the essence of commercial writing and the development of the Realistic tradition overall.

Chapter 3 provides a comparative study of the workings of money and gossip in Romantic narratives and in the pseudo-realistic settings of Dostoevsky’s *The Insulted and Injured* and *The Idiot*. The chapter reveals that fiscal matters and chatty social discourse cloud the lofty atmosphere of Romance and re-introduce the grotesque tradition. Regardless of the refined settings of society tales that reflect the life of Russian nobles and the idyllic fictional universe of “Poor Liza,” and Gogol’s unique narrative structure in “The Portrait,” money and gossip remain the pragmatic reality by placing price tags on almost everything and everyone. However, this tendency changes in Dostoevsky’s novels. Money and gossip are no longer only signs of pragmatic reality, but appropriate their own entirely different and significant dimension.
CHAPTER 1
WHEN RUBLES CAUSE TROUBLES

Often characters of nineteenth-century Russian narratives begin their journey with a firm belief that money can bring all dreams to fruition. But somehow, when their wishes are about to be realized, it turns out that money is just never enough; it turns out to be excessive and this excess often wreaks havoc on the characters’ personal lives and turns societal norms and hierarchies topsy-turvy. The novellas and tales in this chapter, “Poor Liza,” “The Queen of Spades” and “The Portrait,” feature a slowly diminishing world of traditional values, under the demands of modernity and urban life. For example, the main characters of these stories in the beginning have simple desires such as to love and to be loved, to gain a modicum of stability and a sense of belonging. However, as the stories progress the desire for money becomes the predominant motivator of their actions.

This chapter establishes an understanding of money as social currency and the way it is instrumental in breaking the conventional narrative technique of Sentimental and Romantic traditions, thus allowing the writers to seek innovative ways to express the new reality in art. They succeed in overcoming certain constraints of genre specifics through resurrecting the antique grotesque tradition in the texts, which manifests as the intrusion of materialism and the tale-telling culture of the market square. The triumph of materialism over sentiment is the key theme of the selected narratives.

The minimalist organization of the narrative of “Poor Liza,” for example, clearly allows us to see transgressions created by money, reflected in the author’s imagined (pre-conceived)
nightmares caused by the changing world order. Here Karamzin masterfully layers simple facts of the historical and socio-economic life of Russia within the stylized imitation of the bucolic narrative and a virtually impossible love story between an aristocrat and a peasant maiden.

In other words, “Poor Liza,” although appearing to be a conventional pastoral love story, voices authorial frustration in response to the socio-economic changes of eighteenth-century Russia. It represents the constant juxtaposition between the traditional and the new, which in this encounter is commercial, materialistic and corruptive like Erast himself. Focusing on the dynamics among the main characters of the story reveals that the entire story centers on a commercial transaction. Money in the chosen three stories destroys socio-economic hierarchies and readers’ expectations of grand love, and operates as a device for the authors to create parodies of the familiar and established literary trends and social expectations.

I give money precedence over gossip in order to establish a firsthand understanding of the way the economic exchange directly reflects social interactions and influences the feelings and emotions of the characters. Our perception of money not only as a social currency of value and exchange, but also as a containing entity of “material symbolism” is clear (Vernon 96). The perception of money results from our day-to-day interactions with money, satisfying basic and sophisticated needs and desires. The power that money has for fulfilling desires and ideas in fiction increases exponentially: by making the impossible possible. Whereas when one thinks of gossip, its speculative and imaginative nature is not the first thing that comes to mind. Because of the perception that gossip is just a simple pastime for women, one often dismisses its hidden and harmful agenda, and perceives it as sheer entertainment.

The texts of this chapter, “Poor Liza,” “The Queen of Spades” and “The Portrait,”
represent the early developments of nineteenth-century Russian prose fiction writing. The reader expects to enter a world of heightened emotions and a preoccupation with the metaphysical. However, these stories proffer constant petty social interactions, with the calculative mind winning over passion, and atypical characters of motley social backgrounds. As the following table suggests, the first two chapters exercise the understanding of money and of speculative gossip as an intrusion of pragmatic reality into the fabric of the narratives of the Romantic tradition. The third chapter uncovers speculative discussion of capital in the form of sensation novels.

In the early nineteenth-century narratives when the subject of money thwarts any hint of a romantic relationship, gossip removes the social hierarchies and barriers in the narrative. Then, in the late nineteenth-century narratives, which Dostoevsky’s novels represent here, money and gossip do not simply deconstruct the models of the expected fictional settings, but are responsible for creating unexpected twists in the plots’ developments.

Overall, the first chapter introduces ideas about money and the way materialistic values are destructive to familial bonding. Instead of making them stronger, money and materialistic values create sterile and suicidal endings for the active agents of the story, which follow the arrangements of the materialistic systems.
Table 1. The different modes of money and gossip in Russian prose.

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<td>“Poor Liza” (1792)</td>
<td>Bursting the bubble of Romance</td>
<td>Deconstructs the hierarchy/destroys the decorum of the world of the sublime and the beautiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Idiot (1869)</td>
<td>Builds the narrative</td>
<td>Creates three-dimensional characters/becomes professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Insulted and Injured (1861)</td>
<td>The most significant issue/a corroding force that eats through the surface of an otherwise sentimental novel/bringing the action closer to reality (The Cambridge Companion 99)</td>
<td>Creates three-dimensional characters/professional function</td>
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Karamzin’s character, Erast, visits the household of the peasants as if he is negotiating a marriage contract. Gogol’s character, Chartkov, upon encountering the magical golden coins creates his own fictional narrative; he thinks that these coins are an inheritance from a grandfather to a grandson. Chartkov’s thoughts reveal his hidden desire to be an heir himself. His ponderings also show his desire to belong to a family, to belong to a tradition. This little lyrical side-note of Chartkov’s consciousness sets forth the theme of surrogate fathers-sons. Pushkin’s Hermann, a young, ambitious foreigner in the stuffy, almost incestuous world of the Russian aristocracy, reveals his desire to acquire the magical combination of cards, the old Countess’s family secret. This desire to grasp simultaneously the familial and the traditional reveals the clash of the old and the new. It also demonstrates the way money is interconnected with historical myth-making.
1.1 When Moscow Does Not Believe in Liza’s Tears

Karamzin layers simple facts of the historical and socio-economic life of Russia with the stylized imitation of a bucolic narrative and a virtually impossible love story between the aristocrat, Erast, and the peasant maiden, Liza. The story opens in a Moscow on the brink of major changes, at a shabby, deserted cabin where the peasant maiden Liza had lived with her widowed mother thirty years before. From that moment, the narrator reveals Liza’s story, symbolically resurrecting her from the dead. The cabin, or the first location of the story which represents Liza’s symbolic grave, stands near the pond where she drowned:

About 150 yards from the monastery wall, by a birch grove, in the middle of a green meadow stands an empty cabin with no doors, no windows and no floor. The roof has long since rotted and caved in (“Poor Liza” 79).

The topography near the cabin also serves as a model of the diminishing organic world. Karamzin’s description of the grave-like cabin intensifies the gloomy atmosphere, alternating with the haunting images of the old and deserted Simonov monastery situated nearby. The place represents Liza’s symbolic grave:

But the most pleasant place for me is there by the gloomy, Gothic towers of the
Simonov Monastery (About 150 yards from the monastery wall, by a birch grove, in the middle of a green meadow stands an empty cabin with no doors, no windows and no floor. The roof has long since rotted and caved in (―Poor Liza‖ 79)). The translation is provided with an introduction and notes, New York; E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.1967).

«Страшно ветры в стенах опустевшего монастыря, между гробов, заросших высокою травою, и в тёмных переходах келий. Там, опёршись на развалины грозных камней, внимаю глухому стону времён, бездною минувшего поглощённых,— стону, от которого сердце моё содрогается и трепещет» («Бедная Лиза» 18).

The winds moan frightfully in the walls of the deserted monastery among the graves grown over with tall grass, and in the dark passageways of the cells. There, leaning against the rubble of gravestones, I hear the dead moaning of times devoured in the abyss of the past—moaning from which my heart shrinks and trembles (“Poor Liza” 80-81).

Liza’s life story begins with a short explanation of financial woes, which follow her father’s death: to survive she performs seasonal work such as knitting and selling stockings in the winter and picking and selling flowers on Moscow streets in the spring. One day, when Liza is selling flowers in the city, she meets Erast, a young, handsome aristocrat, who first becomes her devoted customer, then a friend, and eventually a lover. Unfortunately, when Erast joins the army, he gambles away his entire inheritance. To salvage his social and economic position in society and to maintain his lavish lifestyle, he chooses to marry a rich widow. Upon learning of this marriage and other lies he told, Liza drowns herself. Thus, the story returns to where it began, at the old cabin near the pond.
The first encounter between Liza and Erast takes shape as a bargain. Erast, while inquiring about Liza’s flowers, offers to pay more than the asking price, (he wants to pay a ruble instead of the requested five kopecks):

- Are you selling them, maiden? – he inquired with a smile.
- Yes, I am - she answered.
- And how much do you need? (a literal translation: And what do you need?)
- Five kopecks.
- That is too cheap. Here is a ruble for you (“Poor Liza” 5).
- I think that beautiful lilies of the valley, plucked by the hand of a beautiful girl, are worth a ruble. But since you will not take it, here is five kopecks, I would like to buy flowers from you all the time; I would like you to gather them only for me.” (“Poor Liza” 6).

Although Erast insists on paying one ruble instead of the requested five kopecks, she refuses to accept more than her asking price. Erast tries to disguise his amorous intent toward Liza with a simple business deal, assuming the role of a trickster from the beginning. Throughout
the course of this story, Erast is dishonest. The first time was when he offers Liza a whole ruble instead of five kopecks. He was not really in a position to be generous because his brash decision to marry a rich widow ascertains his flagging finances. Second, to arrange an interaction with a person from another social class, a female, at that, he hides his amorous intentions, under the guise of a seemingly legitimate business deal. By offering Liza more money than she requested, he has already seduced her, not by lust but by greed.

With Liza’s initial refusal of the extra money, which demonstrates that money cannot seduce her, Erast changes his method of seduction: by asking her to sell flowers only to him. Thus, as her sole customer, Erast effectively devalues Liza’s labor as if he had paid more than the actual price of the flowers. Liza’s flowers serve no material purpose to him because he only wishes to seduce her via this transaction. It is highly likely that he would buy them and then merely toss them away. However, Erast still pays more than the flowers are worth, and the only true commodity of the transaction is Liza herself, thus devaluing her as a person. After all, one of the important qualities of the flowers, according to Erast, is that they are “picked by the hand of a beautiful girl.”

Moreover, Erast, by following his desire to be Liza’s sole customer, goes so far as to negotiate the terms with Liza’s mother, when he appears unexpectedly at their cabin:

Мне хотелось бы, — сказал он матери,- чтобы дочь твоя никому, кроме меня, не продавала своей работы. Таким образом, ей незачем будет часто ходить в город, и ты не принуждена будешь с нею расставаться. Я сам по временам могу заходить к вам (“Бедная Лиза” 27).

“I would like your daughter to sell her work to no one but me,” he said to her
mother. "Thus she will not have reason to go into the city often, and you will not have to part with her. I myself can stop by from time to time” (“Poor Liza” 83).

Although Erast presents Liza’s mother with an ostensible business proposal, Karamzin stylizes this conversation between Erast and Liza’s mother in the manner of a traditional negotiation for a bride. As a bridegroom claiming his bride from a paternal figure, Erast persuades Liza’s mother to give him sole rights to Liza’s flowers, and as I have already established, Liza herself. Furthermore, as he states, that if he is Liza’s only customer she would no longer need to leave the house, thus limiting her freedom and the opportunity to meet other, perhaps more desirable, men.

While it has the earmarks of a traditional marriage proposal, Erast’s proposal is morally reprehensible. First, by intruding upon the peasants’ household, Erast, being a young aristocrat, crosses social boundaries. Second, his intentions are somewhat foul, driven by lust. Here Karamzin creates a sense of the ironic grotesque by appropriating the model of traditional pre-marital negotiations as the basis for Erast’s proposal. The readers witness the way the two different worlds (noble and commoner) overlap. Moreover, this intersection of the different worlds takes place under the pretext of Erast’s charity, while it is actually a poorly disguised attempt at seduction.

Liza’s mother, although previously concerned and skeptical of Liza’s whereabouts, “buys” every word of the “silver-tongued” Erast, as if she were negotiating the traditional marriage contract (Andrew 40). The mother gladly agrees to the terms of the arrangement, not suspecting any ill intentions. In fact, it is greatly disturbing how Liza’s mother, throughout the

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entire story, does not suspect Erast’s deceitful motives. Joe Andrew, after noticing this peculiarity about Liza’s mother, concludes that, “the problem is that the mother’s gullibility leads to extremely un-maternal actions, and “one of the determinants of Liza’s fall is the lack of parental protection” (41).

In addition, Liza’s reaction upon hearing of the conversation adds to the ironic resemblance to a marriage proposal:

Нут в глазах Лизинных блеснула радость, которую она тщетно сокрыть хотела; она смотрела на левый рукав свой и ципала его правою рукою («Бедная Лиза» 27).

At this point, a joy that she tried in vain to hide sparkled in Liza’s eyes; her cheeks flamed up like the sunset on a clear summer evening; she stared at her left sleeve and plucked at it with her right hand (“Poor Liza” 83).

Here, Karamzin uses the description of Liza’s somatic reactions such as a flushed face, dewy eyes and restless hands to elevate the level of the developing situation.

Erast’s intrusion into the women’s home is illustrative of the transgressive power of money, which haphazardly brings together people of different social backgrounds, thereby setting the stage for an explosive plot. Erast believes that the only way to connect with Liza is through money, not even considering other ways to win her heart.

Therefore, the power of money increases exponentially as it acquires the almost fantastic quality of making the impossible possible. In addition, this need for money propels Liza outside
of her household, allowing her to become a mobile agent. Critics such as Andrew,\(^8\) Hammarberg,\(^9\) Lotman\(^10\) and others often state that the story of “Poor Liza” is the story of a love that transgresses social boundaries and one that is about the transgressive powers of money.

Here, money transgresses not only social boundaries, but also disrupts conventional concepts of gender roles, intensifying the effects of the grotesque and of authorial irony. Liza, who first appears dead in the narrative, plays the role of an active agent throughout the story. She has assumed her deceased father’s role as the breadwinner, a stoic person capable of assuming responsibility and enduring hardships.

Бог дал мне руки, чтобы работать,— говорила Лиза:— ты кормила меня своею грудью и ходила за мною, когда я была ребёнком, теперь пришла моя очередь ходить за тобою. Перестань только крушиться, перестань плакать. Слёзы наши не оживят батюшки («Бедная Лиза» 22).

God gave me hands in order to work,” Liza would say, “you fed me at your breast and watched after me when I was a child: now my turn has come to watch after you. Only do stop grieving, stop weeping; our tears will not bring dear father back to life” (“Poor Liza” 81).

When placed alongside the scene of Erast’s seduction of Liza, this illustration of Liza’s industrious nature and her strong sense of responsibility and duty appear to be contradictory.

Liza’s character, which at first appears to fit the profile of a formulaic sentimentalist genre

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\(^8\) See Wendy Rosslyn’s *Women and Gender in 18th Century Russia*, 2003, p. 19.
\(^9\) See Gita Hammarberg’s *From the Idyll to the Novel*, 1991, p. 27.
heroine contrasts sharply with that of a breadwinner, a traditionally male role in Karamzin’s time.

Liza’s ability to assume responsibility and to make choices adds a masculine quality to her character. For example, right before her actual “fall,” Liza had the opportunity to wed a wealthy peasant; however, she chose to remain in an illicit relationship with Erast, an unusual choice for a female character in a story written circa 1792.

From earlier discussion, we saw that Liza crosses the line of behavioral etiquette for “a proper young girl” by entering into conversation with Erast on the street. By selling flowers on the streets of Moscow, she has already sullied her reputation. As Toporov states:

“Позже обнаруживается опасная склонность Лизы к любовным приключениям, и со временем образ Лизы сливаются с обычной гризеткой” (Топоров 135) - (Later, Liza reveals a dangerous tendency to amorous adventure, and eventually the image (perception) of Liza merges with a typical grisette).

Toporov’s framing of Liza’s character with the use of words such as “опасная склонность” and “гризетка” places her in the company of adventurous, dodgy characters such as rogues, peddlers and grissettes/prostitutes. Once again, Liza’s affiliation turns her from her initial passive role of merchandise in a marriage transaction into a forceful agent who challenges the norms.

Her suicide, in the end, is a rebellion against the normative religious taboo of the Russian peasant community and again demonstrates that Liza controls her own destiny. Lotman states

11 Manolakev points out in his article “La Pauvre Lise De N. M. Karamzin Et Le Suicide Féminin Dans La Literature Russe Du XIXe Siécle” that Liza’s suicide reveals her ability to make decisions; she takes her destiny into her own hands, in tandem with the newly-born ideological concept of that time derived from a phenomenon known as the Werther suicide (“Revue Des Etudes Slaves” 732-734).
12 The unusual “business-induced” mobility of females in Russian fiction starts with Chulkov, Karamzin and Komarov’s eighteenth-century Russian tales that are stylized replicas of British (also German and French) works from Richardson’s Clarissa (1748) to Fanny Burney’s Evelina (1778).
that the theme of suicide in the works by Karamzin, especially in “Poor Liza,” is a manifestation of the radical freedom of humanity (222). In contrast, Erast suffers through until the end:

Эраст был до конца своей жизни несчастлив. Узнав о судьбе Лизиной, он не мог утешиться и почитал себя убийцею. Я познакомился с ним за год до его смерти («Бедная Лиза» 45).

Erast was miserable to the end of his life. Having learned of Liza's fate, he could not find any solace, and considered himself to be her murderer (“Poor Liza” 93).

Erast is just the opposite of Liza. Although he is a nobleman, and in accordance with his role, sexually dangerous—after all he seduces Liza—his character does not represent conventional masculinity for that time. Another aspect of “Poor Liza” which is relevant to the discussion of transactions is the gender “confusion.” This phenomenon is evident, according to Manolakev, as “une “desexualisation” cynique de l’amour,” which goes hand-in-hand with a theoretical understanding of gender politics in Russian Romanticism, where male and female cancel each other, forming one I in the manner of the mythical Narcissus (Greenleaf 124).13 This I often represents a superfluous man. Karamzin was the first to coin this new type of literary character by creating Erast (Boiko 44). Overall, a superfluous man is an important “cultural category” in Russia. The superfluous man represents a generation of liberals with the desire for reform on societal and personal levels, “matched with an incapacity for taking effective action.” The superfluous man is often a pariah in society. He usually is the cause of the heroine’s

heartbreak and moral downfall. The superfluous man often blames this, his ability to ruin other people’s lives, on his nature (Gheith 132).

In addition, when the breach from this gendered tradition occurred, the characters in Russian literature symbolically rebelled against their fathers, breaking from traditional duties and societal expectations. Erast here is also easily impressionable and leads a rather idle lifestyle:

Он вёл рассеянную жизнь, думал только о своём удовольствии, искал его в светских забавах, но не находил: скучал и жаловался на судьбу свою. Красота Лизы при первой встрече сделала впечатление в его сердце. Он читывал романы, идилии, имел живое воображение… («Бедная Лиза» 28).

He led a dissipated life, thought only of his own pleasure, sought it in worldly amusements but often could not find it: he was bored and complained of his fate. At their first meeting, Liza's beauty made an impression on his heart. He read novels and idylls; he had a vivid imagination … (“Poor Liza” 83).

This description of Erast’s nature and his reading habits better corresponds to that of a fair maiden, a baryshnya rather than a gentleman. He is unaware that most think his relationship with Liza is a misalliance. Liza, herself, reminds him of it:

Однако ж тебе нельзя быть моим мужем! - сказала Лиза с тихим голосом. Почему же?
Я крестьянка («Бедная Лиза» 35).

“But you can never be my husband!” said Liza with a quiet sigh.

“Why not?”

14 As Pushkin would later demonstrate by creating Tatiana Larina’s character (Mills Todd 127).
“I am a peasant girl” (“Poor Liza” 87).

The responsibility of maintaining a realistic outlook in a relationship with an expiration date usually falls on the man. It is often the case that a male seducer declares to a woman that he cannot marry her (after the deed, of course) due to the disparity in their socio-economic positions or because he is already married. Liza’s own acknowledgment that their relationship cannot possibly culminate in marriage, changes the readers’ perceptions of her from a passive victim into an active bargaining agent, in charge of negotiating her own future.

Through the devious and volatile personality of Erast, Karamzin illustrates his critical opinion of the nobility:

Я послал бы всех роскошных на несколько времени в деревню, быть свидетелем трудных сельских работ и видеть, чего стоит каждый рубль крестьянину: это могло бы излечить некоторых от суетной расточительности, платящей за ананас для десерта... (Избранные статьи и письма 90-91).

I would send all the spoiled and reckless spenders for some time to the village to witness hard agricultural work and to see what every ruble is worth to the peasant: it might extinguish some of the vain extravagance, such as, for example, paying for a pineapple for dessert."

(The selected articles and letters 90-91/ Pleasant perspectives, hopes and desires of the modern times / First published in «Vestnik Evropy» 1802, № 4).

The discourse in this article offers a similar juxtaposition between the noble and the peasant in “Poor Liza.” By accentuating the hard labor of peasants, Karamzin again depicts nobles as
physically weak with poor self-control when spending money so freely and therefore, in accordance with the discourse of the time, the age of post-classicist aesthetics, seems rather effeminate. Karamzin completes this characterization of the effeminate noble via his personal observations of the nobles’ predilection for an extravagant lifestyle replete with various sweets. He illustrates it with a reference to their ability to purchase and consume pineapple, an imported luxury in eighteenth-century Russia.

From this passage, it is clear that Karamzin sees corruption in excess money and in the over indulgence it prompts. Karamzin uses the following terms to describe the aristocratic lifestyle: безрассудная роскошь (reckless luxury), мотовство (prodigality), алчность (avarice), анапас на десерт (a pineapple for a dessert), while he calls aristocrats “роскшьне.” The analysis of monetary transactions between Erast and Liza, which led to their short-lived amorous adventure, reveals Karamzin’s political views embedded in the story and the presence of authorial irony within the fictional fabric of sentimental genre.

In other words, by utilizing money as a technique to analyze the dynamics between the peasant maiden and the young aristocrat, Karamzin creates the tradition of Russian prose writing in which he establishes authorial irony—the irony that reflects his uneasy take on the changing reality surrounding him in Russian society. The analysis shows the way “Poor Liza” contributes to the establishment of the Russian Romantic tradition. It also represents a contribution to the Russian literary archetype of the superfluous man.

Vernon identifies two types of literary characters within the range of the early nineteenth-century Western European fictional discourse: misers and spendthrifts. By misers, he primarily means characters of Balzac, those who hoard gold. The spendthrifts are the younger generation
of literary characters, basically, “the sons” of the hoarders. Exemplary spendthrifts in Western literary tradition include, for example, Dostoevsky’s characters, Dmitry Karamazov (The Brothers Karamazov) and/or Alyosha from The Gambler. They do not earn money—instead, they chase after other people’s money and look for opportunities to spend it.

For the most part, it appears that with good reason authors often portray fathers as misers in Russian literature: fathers are more strongly connected to State service and noble pedigrees, whereas the sons squander their assets, waste their lives and, presumably, their father’s money by gambling and dueling. Therefore, Liza’s lifestyle, her ability to earn money and her awareness of her social background, represent a symbolic connection with her father. This demonstrates evidence of her belonging to a traditional patriarchal order. At the beginning of the story, Liza requests five kopecks for her flowers. At the end of the story, Liza has one hundred rubles (ten golden imperials) from Erast, compensation for her lost innocence and a broken heart.

In summary, the analysis of the economic side of “Poor Liza” reveals one cannot explain away the difference between five kopecks and one hundred rubles except with fiction, a desire for something emulating love and an empty promise. Overall, not only does the seemingly sugarcoated story of “Poor Liza” deconstruct the normativity of gender roles, but also through authorial irony demonstrates that the aristocracy, due to its unproductive and idle nature, is diminishing. By creating this story of Erast’s empty promises to Liza, the author suggests that there is a price on a promise of love. The analysis of this story directly answers my dissertation’s argument by illustrating how commercial interests override sentiments, innate to the literary tradition of the time period, and thus drives the plot toward the grotesque tradition.

15 The familial bonds fracture, which occurs as an outcome of the son’s strong desire for the father’s money, one can find in Alexander Pushkin’s “little tragedy,” “The Covetous Knight” (1830). This work is an excellent example of the fatal clash between two generations on the grounds of monetary interest.
1.2 Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades:” A Tale of the Hunter and the Hunted

As Toporov states, Karamzin’s “Poor Liza” becomes a stepping-stone for subsequent prose-fiction writing in the Russian literary tradition. “Poor Liza,” as he notes, is a parent story to Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades.” The content and formal organization of Karamzin and Pushkin’s stories differ, but Karamzin’s “Poor Liza” remains distinguishable. Each of these stories, as do the majority of other early nineteenth-century works of Russian fiction, represents the crumbling world of the aristocracy and the dilemma of adapting to new circumstances as dictated by the availability of capital.

The first pages of both “The Queen of Spades” and “Poor Liza” share promises of love and hope for a miracle, which build up the reader’s expectations, but barely gratifies any of them. In “Poor Liza,” two disappointments occur for the reader. One is when Erast marries a wealthy widow rather than following his heart, and the second is when Liza commits suicide, despite the fact that she was a hardworking, positive character. Perhaps because a number of promises were unfulfilled in Pushkin’s tale, the ending remains ambiguous. As Shaw notes, the author provides little closure, and in the end fails to bring evil characters to justice (Shaw 93). It is suggestive of the discomforting possibility that the story will repeat itself. The annotation that the old Countess’s ward, Liza, acquires a ward of her own is suggestive of the sad prospects of Liza becoming senile and mean like the old Countess herself. As S. Dalton-Brown points out, the promise of romance in the story falls short, leaving both the characters and the readers disempowered (Society Tale 38).
Pushkin, similar to Karamzin, uses pragmatism to ruin the reader’s expectations of access to the world of gracious manners, splendor and romance (Shrayer 403). He satirizes sentimentalism and romance by giving priority to fiscal matters and the prose of life. For example, when Liza receives a second note from Hermann, she assumes that it is just another bill to pay:

Три дня после того Лизавете Ивановне молоденькая, быстроглазая мамзель принесла записочку из модной лавки. Лизавета Ивановна открыла ее с беспокойством, предвидя денежные требования… (Pushkin PSS 5:233).

Three days after this a sharp-eyed young person brought Lizaveta Ivanovna a note from a milliner’s establishment. Lizaveta Ivanovna opened it uneasily, fearing it was a demand for money… (The Queen of Spades 166).

The situation is farcical because interests and expectations clash. Liza, who is used to being dutiful by accommodating her demanding guardian at all times, expects at any moment to have to attend to household duties and errands. Instead, she receives a flirtatious invitation from Hermann. While Hermann’s note contains amorous discourse, the intention behind the letter is practical.

Money is responsible for everything in this story: from the decor in the rooms to the champagne on the table, and even for the characters themselves; everything revolves about money. Although the servants are secondary characters in the story, they deliver the main

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16 In order to define irony as applicable to “The Queen of Spades,” Shrayer cites Anne Mellor’s approach. She sees it as a creation of the author, where irony is a balancing act between self-creation and self-destruction. Mellor further provides the list of certain elements of irony as a literary mode: “… the universe as becoming, an infinitely abundant chaos; a literary structure that reflects both this chaos or process of becoming and the systems that men impose upon it; and a language that draws attention to its own limitations” (Mellor in Shrayer 399).
message of the author since they represent excessive and empty living and wasting of the Countess’s money. Without money, there would be no story, as money is the engine driving social activity and repetitive movements of life.

This dominance of capital saturates the entire framework of the narrative and creates an atmosphere of grotesque vulgarity instead of elegance. It promotes deviant behaviors such as gambling and the exploitation of others. For example, when the author describes the old Countess’s standard of living, he provides a rather vile description of her servants:

Многочисленная челядь ее, разжирев и посеďдев в ее передней и девичьей, делала, что хотела, наперерыв обкрадывая умирающую старуху (Pushkin PSS 5:235).

Her numerous servants, grown fat and grey, in her entrance hall and the maids’ quarters, did what they liked and vied with each other in robbing the decrepit old woman (The Queen of Spades 161).

The sentence here is not about abuse of the elderly, but of the aggressive consumption of everything and everyone. The adjective “многочисленная” refers to the surplus of staff, indicative of excess. That they turned grey and fat over time represents the overall decay and lack of motivation for change in the lives of the servants as well as the old Countess herself. Last, they seemed to be competing to rob the old woman. This mode of financial operation matches Marxist theory on the workings of the capitalist system that “is about commodity-exchange for purposes of endlessly accumulating abstract universal wealth (money), as opposed to specific use-values” (33). Marx renders this type of capitalist mode as vampiric. Capitalism
represents a type of occult economy, where one consumes everything, including the material body and its spirit (Marx 125).

According to Marx, money kills the human spirit in the chain of production and claims more victims on the journey to establishing fetishistic bonds with goods. Based on this, the definition of the fiscal mode of operation that deals with abstract values and the dismissal of the spirit as “vampiric,” matches the one that exists in the story. Further, the adjective “vampiric” as commonly understood hints at the semiotic aesthetical arrangement of the story; it deals with the subject of the walking dead, people exploiting others, and the mysterious, corruptive imagination of the old Countess. This vampiric element and the understanding of capitalism match the definition of vampire in Perkowski’s work; the psychic vampire is a classic literary type identified by its ability to drain emotional energy, even the life force from its victims. Perkowski writes, “their sustenance is psychic energy” (Perkowski 55).17

As the storyline of “The Queen of Spades” unfolds, it reveals that Hermann, a young, bullying opportunist of foreign origin, possesses an unstoppable drive to obtain the secret of the three cards. Even Liza, who fell in love with him for a short time, calls him a monster: “Вы чудовище!” “You are a monster!”

However, a close reading of his interactions with the old Countess and the circumstances under which Hermann became acquainted with her, reveal that on the contrary, Hermann is the hunted. He turns out to be a victim of the vampiric oeuvre that the old Countess and her world represent. Here the vampiric spirit of the capital preys on romance and emotions.

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17 He continues by discussing the non-supernatural, psychological explanation of psychic vampirism as rooted in emotional manipulation.
“The Queen of Spades” loosely reflects real life events of a notorious princess, Natalia Golitsyna (Helfant 86). The progression of the plot is linear and includes fragments of typical social situations, as defined by the places where the social interactions occur. The tale is about a young German opportunist, Hermann, who overhears his friend Tomskii tell about his grandmother’s gambling secret. According to Tomskii, the old Countess (Tomskii’s great aunt) knows a secret combination of three cards which supposedly guarantees winning. To get close to the Countess to finagle the secret from her, Hermann starts flirting with her ward, a girl named Liza; he writes romantic notes using pilfered lines from some sentimental German poetry. This tactic works and eventually he succeeds in persuading her to let him into the Countess’s home under the guise of visiting her (Liza).

Instead, however, he intrudes into the Countess’s boudoir where he begs the old woman to divulge her secret but she refuses. In despair, to scare the secret out of her, he points a gun at her with no intention of doing harm. Unfortunately, this tactic backfires and she dies from fear without divulging the secret. After her death, her apparition visits Hermann and gives him the code but warns him against playing more than one game per night. However, given his greed, he does not pay heed and suffers great losses. The losses have a traumatic effect on him, driving him quite mad. In the meantime, Liza, whom he misleads, marries well and gains a ward of her own.

One of the gamblers told the anecdote of the three cards during a late night outing when they had finished everything and were sipping the last of the champagne:

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18 Ian M. Helfant describes Pushkin’s reaction to the success of his story in his work *The High Stakes of Identity* (2002): “After its initial appearance in the March 1834 issue of *A Library for Reading*, “The Queen of Spades” was included later that year in an edition of Pushkin’s collected stories. A comment by Pushkin in his diary entry of 7 April 1834 attests to the popularity quickly gained by the story among readers: “My ‘Queen of Spades’ is in great vogue. Gamblers are betting on the three, seven and ace. At court they’ve discovered a resemblance between the old Countess and Princess N.P. [Golitsyna] and, it seems, aren’t upset” (Helfant 86).
Однажды играли в карты у конногвардеец Нарумова. Долгая зимняя ночь прошла незаметно; сели ужинать в пятым часу утра. Те, которые остались в выигрыше, ели с большим аппетитом, прочие, в рассеянности, сидели перед пустыми своими приборами. Но шампанское явилось, разговор оживился, и все приняли в нем участие…

-- И ты ни разу не соблазнился? ни разу не поставил на руке?. Твердость твоя для меня удивительна.

-- А каков Германн! -- сказал один из гостей, указывая на молодого инженера, -- отроду не брал он карты в руки, отроду не загнул ни одного пароли, а до пяти часов сидит с нами и смотрит на нашу игру!

-- Игра занимает меня сильно, -- сказал Германн, -- но я не в состоянии жертвовать необходимым в надежде приобрести излишнее.

-- Германн немец: он расчетлив, вот и все! -- заметил Томский. -- А если кто для меня непонятен, так это моя бабушка графиня Анна Федотовна.


There was a card party in the rooms of Narumov, an officer of the Horse Guards. The long winter night had passed unnoticed and it was after four in the morning when the company sat down to supper. Those who had won enjoyed their food; the others sat absent-mindedly in front of empty plates. But when the champagne appeared conversation became more lively and general…

‘Do you mean to tell me you were not once tempted to back the red the whole evening? Your self-control amazes me.’

‘But look at Hermann,’ exclaimed one of the party, pointing to a young officer of the Engineers. ‘Never held a card in his hands, never made a bet in his life and he sits till five in the morning watching us play.’

‘Cards interest me very much,’ said Hermann, ‘but I am not in a position to risk the necessary in the hope of acquiring the superfluous’

‘But if there is one person I can’t understand it is my grandmother, Countess
Anna Fedotovona.’

‘Why is that?’ the guests cried (The Queen of Spades 153).

The way the audience excitedly responded to Tomskii’s narrative “hook,” indicates that the guests were looking for more. Tomskii feeds them the story. This is the only place in the narrative when we encounter Hermann in his “normal” state of mind, not yet mesmerized by the allure of the story. The verb soblaznilsla with the negation ne, which is used in reference to Hermann, suggests, “You are awaiting to be seduced.” This phrase indicates that Hermann’s companions intend to seduce him, to persuade him to gamble. Tomskii acts upon that challenge and beguiles Hermann with his story.

-- Не могу постигнуть, -- продолжал Томский, -- каким образом бабушка моя не понтирует!
-- Да что ж тут удивительного, -- сказал Нарумов, -- что осьмидесятилетняя старуха не понтирует?
-- Так вы ничего про нее не знаете?
-- Нет! право, ничего!
-- О, так послушайте:

Надобно знать, что бабушка моя, лет шестьдесят тому назад, ездила в Париж и была там в большой моде. Народ бегал за нею, чтоб увидеть la Vénus moscovite; Ришелье за нею волочился, и бабушка уверяет, что он чуть было не застрелился от ее жестокости.
В то время дамы играли в фараон. Однажды при дворе она проиграла на слово герцогу Орleanскому что-то очень много. Приехав домой, бабушка, отлепливая мушки с лица и отвязывая фижмы, объявила дедушке о своем проигрыше и приказала заплатить.
Покойный дедушка, сколько я помню, был род бабушкина дворецкого. Он
ее боялся, как огня; однако, услышав о таком ужасном проигрыше, он вышел из себя, принес счеты, доказал ей, что в полгода они издержали полмиллиона, что под Парижем нет у них ни подмосковной, ни саратовской деревни, и начисто отказался от платежа. Бабушка дала ему пощечину и легла спать одна, в знак своей немилости (PSS 5:235).

But surely there is nothing surprising in an old lady in her eighties not wanting to gamble?’ said Narumov.

‘Then you know about her?’

‘No, nothing, absolutely nothing!’

‘Well, listen then. I must tell you that some sixty years ago my grandmother went to Paris and was quite the rage there. People would run after her to catch a glimpse of la Venus muscovite. Richelieu was at her beck and call, and grandmamma maintains that he very nearly blew his brains out because of her cruelty to him. In those days ladies used to play faro. One evening at the Court she lost a very considerable sum to the Duke of Orleans. When she got home, she told my grandfather of her loss while removing the beauty spots from her face and untying her farthingale, and commanded him to pay her debt. My grandfather, so far as I remember, acted as a sort of major-domo to my grandmother. He feared her like fire; however, when he heard of such a frightful gambling loss… he refused and pointed out to her that they have neither their Moscow nor their Saratov estates upon which to draw and refused to pay. Grandmamma gave him a box in the ear and retired to bed without him as a sign of displeasure (The Queen of Spades 154).

The beginning of Tomskii’s story is enticing. It is mystical, capturing not only Hermann’s imagination, but also the readers’. The overall story is captivating not just for the fantastic way to gain money, but also because of the eroticized image of the female. Tomskii literally seduces
Hermann with his story. It triggers Hermann’s imagination, as we see later; Hermann, in desperation to acquire the secret, even fleetingly considers becoming the Countess’s lover.

Furthermore, the Countess’s decision to sleep alone, to punish her husband because he refused to pay her debt, supports the ongoing theme in this dissertation of the objectification of the women we encounter, including Karamzin’s Liza. Irigaray draws a parallel between Marx’s fetishization of commodities and Levis-Strauss’s analysis of marriage in patriarchal societies to how women are valued in accordance with standards created by men. These standards originate from the claimed dominance of the phallic power, which finds confirmation in patriarchy. Thus, people value women by those standards, rather than as independent social and/or sexual subjects (Krier and Harvey 146).19 Perhaps, the detail of his great aunt’s self-objectification and the knowledge of her “self-value” provide an additional weight of fetishistic allure for the masculine interlocutors of the story, and fertile ground for masculine bonding. This circumstance, perhaps, makes the pragmatic Hermann more trusting and gullible.

The setting of the old Countess’s story in decadent France and her comparison to Venus reestablishes the myth of the glittering façade of high society. It seduces Hermann, the newcomer, into its dying realm, making him desire entrance to this society and to become an integral part of the story. As the story progresses, Hermann sees that his only option is to fit in, and to become part of the storyline; for that, he needs the old Countess’s miraculous combination of the three cards.20

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19 As Luce Irigaray articulates these presuppositions in the *Speculum of the Other Woman*, are the “appropriation…transformation…reduction and submission of [woman] as nature...as well as “the constitution of women as ‘objects’ that emblematize the materialization of relations among men.” Women’s roles “as fetish-objects... in the world of commodities [is that] they are the manifestation and the circulation of power of the Phallus, establishing relationships of men with each other” (Irigaray 185).

20 As Boiko states, the epoch of Pushkin’s lonely men is far past; the hero of the conclusive period of Pushkin’s fictional world reveals interests toward blood kinships and familial bonds (Boiko 201).
From that evening on, Hermann’s obsession with the old Countess’s story captures his imagination and intrudes upon his dreams:

Германн затрепетал. Удивительный анекдот снова представился его воображению. Он стал ходить около дома, думая об его хозяйке и о чудной ее способности. Поздно воротился он в смиренный свой уголок; долго не мог заснуть, и, когда сон им овладел, ему пригрезились карты, зеленый стол, кипы ассигнаций и груды червонцев…оньтк очутился перед домом графини Неведомая сила, казалось, привлекала его к нему.  

Hermann started. The strange story of the three cards came into his mind again. He began walking up and down past the house, thinking of its owner and her wonderful secret. It was late when he returned to his humble lodgings; he could not get to sleep for a long time, and when sleep did come he dreamed of cards, a green baize table, stacks of bank-notes and piles of gold…once more found himself outside the Countess’s home. It was as though some supernatural force drew him there (The Queen of Spades 164).

Hermann, driven by his lust for money, found Liza instrumental to his grand plan to get the secret of the cards. To achieve his goal, he literally buys the opportunity to have a face-to-face encounter with the old Countess by writing Liza romantic letters; in other words, he gives rise to a false promise of love, a mere stepping-stone in his lust for wealth:21

21 It appears that Pushkin symbolically assigns to Hermann the role of the writer, who expects to “get paid” for providing his reader with the symbolic experience of love. But Hermann’s seductive techniques also indicate Pushkin’s own self-irony; to be exact, Pushkin’s sudden realization that the lyre can be sold for money. }
But Hermann did not give in. Every day Lizaveta Ivanovna received a letter from him by one means or another. They were no longer translated from the German. Hermann wrote them inspired by passion and in a style which was his own: they reflected both his inexorable desire and the disorder of an unbridled imagination. Lizaveta Ivanovna no longer thought of returning them: she drank them in eagerly and took to answering and the notes she sent grew longer and more affectionate every hour … (The Queen of Spades 167).

However, there is an indication of the authenticity of Hermann’s love notes to Liza this time. But a side-note telling that Hermann “говорил языком, ему свойственным” which is mostly used with the negation «не», is suggesting that he spoke in a tongue unfamiliar to him, as if his poetic outpourings to Liza were forced. The chaos of his unruly imagination inspired him to produce the love notes addressing Liza.

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Once in his youth, upon becoming insolvent, he staked and lost a group of lyrical poems as security for 1,000 rubles, and had difficulty recovering them later (Debreczeny 194). Anne Lounsbery states that Pushkin found an exciting new opportunity to make money with his pen: he called writing “my craft, a branch of honest trade,” “cultivating chummy relations with the reader-in-the-know” … even while affirming that he wrote poetry “as a baker bakes, as a tailor sews…- for money, for money, for money” (Lounsbery 13). As these biographical facts reveal, the farcical value of the story is in direct line with the author’s life narrative.
Gary Rosenshield, in his study of madness in Gogol and Pushkin, points out that Hermann’s madness takes place from the beginning. Hermann does not have the imagination to overcome his materialism. Therefore, the story in his mind appropriates a grotesque form of obsession (998). However, I would like to contest this point, because Hermann’s materialism goes hand-in-hand with the story. Although materialism in this story is fleshy and grotesque, money is flighty and abstract, like love: “Everyone speaks of it, but no one sees it (folk telling).”

His disturbed imagination is a manifestation of his desire for money. The power of the old Countess leads Hermann to visit her grave, one of the key scenes of the novella, simultaneously horrifying and ironic:

Hermann decided to approach the coffin after her. He knelt down on the cold stone strewed with branches of spruce-fir, and remained in that position for minutes; at last he rose to his feet and, pale as the deceased herself, walked up the steps of the catafalque and bent over the corpse... At that moment it seemed to
him that the dead woman darted a mocking look at him and winked her eye. Hermann drew back, missed his footing and crashed headlong to the floor. They picked him up. At the same time, Lizaveta Ivanovna was carried out of the church in a swoon. This incident momentarily upset the solemnity of the mournful rite. There was a dull murmur among the congregation, and a tall thin man in the uniform of a court-chamberlain, a close relative of the deceased, whispered in the ear of an Englishman who was standing near him that the young officer was the natural son of the Countess, to which the Englishman coldly replied, ‘Oh?’ (*The Queen of Spades* 177).

This scene of him falling next to the deceased’s coffin is *grotesque*, absurd and caricaturist. The scandalous undertone of the suggestive whisper of Hermann being the old Countess’s son defines the generational and class gap between these two counteragents.

Overall, in Pushkin’s story, the power of money appropriates the cannibalistic mode of capitalism. It reflects the author’s political views. Throughout his work, Pushkin presents the old world of the aristocracy and its inability to survive within the environs of the new and changing world and tries to extend artificially its reign at the expense of others. Undoubtedly, some critics consider “The Queen of Spades” an *en-vogue* piece of fiction of its time. One can find on its pages fashionable items of all sorts, from champagne and ice cream to flashy items of clothing and to the new modes of courting. Most importantly, though, is the acute timeliness of this work in the haunting nature of the story.

When Pushkin wrote this novel, world literature experienced a high rate of fictional births of monstrous entities of all sorts, predominantly vampires. Examples include Mary Shelly’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Polidori’s *The Vampyre* (1819) and later Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1827). Of note, “the literature of terror” was born precisely out of terror of a split society, and out of the
desire to heal it (Moretti 83).

The vampiric spirit of capital preys on romance and emotions in “Poor Liza” and “The Queen of Spades.” Psychic and money-infused vampirism takes place in Gogol’s short story “The Portrait,” as well. Chartkov is not a gambler; though an artist, he is also a great spender of his talent, money and himself. Vampirism in the story also has a link to a pseudo-parental figure, and behind the allure of money is a need for familial bonding.

1.3 Gogol’s “The Portrait” and a Surrogate Son of the Devil

According to Karlinsky and Maguire, Gogol created the fantastic tale “The Portrait,” as a warning against the slavish usage of art. However, the investment of the fantastic money into the story by Gogol, suggests that this work demonstrates the way money drives surfeit into the narrative and accelerates the plot. Regardless of this tale’s overarching themes of art and religion, the subtheme of money reveals Gogol’s move toward a genre that uses the grotesque tradition to portray the clash of two epochs in one narrative. In other words, “The Portrait” is another case where the grotesque tradition dominates the mix of genres due to the workings of money as a semiotic sign of materialism and the promise of satisfying basic needs. Gogol produces the first version of “The Portrait” in 1835 when Russian literary tradition, in appreciation of the ongoing major social events of urbanization, appropriates the physiological sketch genre to reveal hidden horrifying realities of city life.

Gogol pictures Saint Petersburg with its hardships and temptations in the life of Chartkov, a struggling artist. At the same time, Gogol squeezes in relics of the historical past. M. N. Boiko states that Gogol splits his fictional universe in “The Portrait,” evident in changes in
Chartkov’s behaviors:

Переходя к сюжетам из жизни, протекающий в мире слишком далёком от малороссийского фольклорного сознания … Гоголь в “Портрете” как бы смятенно раздваивается между привычными и новейшими мотивировками судьбы героя и, соответственно, старой и новой картиной мира (312).

The phenomenon of the two mental temporalities (old and new world perceptions) and Chartkov’s split personality commences with his purchase of the portrait. First, the vampiric essence of the evil usurer targets him as a victim. The usurer’s mesmerizing gaze influences Chartkov, making his spirit fragile before the final corruption:

С неподвижным страхом глядел он на него и видел, как прямо вперились в него живые человеческие глаза. Холодный пот выступил на лице его... И видит он: это уже не сон: черты лица двинулись, и губы его стали вытягиваться к нему, как будто бы хотели его высосать… (PSS 3; 16).

Frozen with terror, he stared at it and he saw that the human eyes were riveted upon him. Once more, a cold sweat broke out on his face. He wanted to run away, but his feet were rooted to the earth, and he could see that this was not a dream. The old man’s face moved and his lips began to project toward him, as though they wished to suck him in… (“The Portrait” 521).

The protruding lips indicate the diminishing boundary between reality and the imitation of reality as captured on the canvas. The lips also illustrate the violation of the physical boundaries of the canvas as they break through its surface. This is the very moment when the
long-deceased pawnbroker stakes his claim to the present. This is also a vivid illustration of the grotesque tradition claiming its place in nineteenth-century literary developments. Conceived as part of the folk discourse on the market square, it is being resonated by Karamzin, Pushkin and Gogol with the discourse of simplicity and trivial interests. Like a dead man resurrected, it consumes the body of the contemporary narrative and makes the readers and the characters experience the discomfort of being stuck between reality and the questionable, imagined other-world… because the “grotesque is essentially something we distrust, the hidden demonic fantasy that still torments and attracts us…” (xv).

Although the Romantic tradition partially contains Gothic traits and a fragmentation of the sterile and haughty essence of style, we see how in its transition toward Realism it appropriates the fleshy, entertaining and bourgeois features of the grotesque. The repeating theme of fiscal matters in the transitional phase of nineteenth-century Russian literature fosters the basic needs of the grotesque for consuming or consumed bodies, revelry replete with wine and food, balls and masquerades: all things that money can buy. The grotesque tradition appropriates its place in the creative imagination, pervading the pages of fiction with pages from the new “marketplace,” the newspaper. Therefore, the question of the “as if,” commercial, pragmatic reality finds its reflection in the discourse about realistic, commercial art, which takes place during Chartkov’s ongoing corruption by money.

The first version of Gogol’s, “The Portrait,” part of the Arabesques series, was finished in 1835, then revised in 1842. For the purposes of this study, I use the latter version, primarily for to its clarity and minimalist structure. The first half describes Chartkov, a young struggling artist, who acquires an unusual portrait from an art dealer. This portrait depicts an exotic looking
merchant with a pair of haunting, seemingly alive eyes. When he came home with the portrait, Chartkov soon fell asleep. At first, he dreamed that the man in the portrait came to life and stepped out of the painting, leaving behind sacks of golden coins.

Upon awakening, Chartkov saw the golden coins in paper sacks, exactly as he dreamed. From that moment, the narrative changes drastically. With money, Chartkov’s attitude toward his craft as an artist changes, deviates from the initial teachings of his professor, who was strict and always encouraged Chartkov to strive for perfection. Rather than pursuing art for art’s sake, Chartkov begins to paint commercially, specializing in portraits of the rich and famous.

In other words, he follows the desires of his clientele blindly, characterizing his clients as “v obraze” or “in imitation of” various personages of antiquity and classicism such as Corinne, Mars, Aspasia and others. He thus loses his true calling as an artist. This desire for money contributes to Chartkov’s moral degradation. Although he becomes wealthy, he dies in obscurity from self-loathing, surrounded by another artist’s slashed paintings, an artist who in contrast to Chartkov became famous by remaining true to pure, non-commercial art. Reportedly, in death, Chartkov’s body was unrecognizable in its horrific condition.

The second part of the story takes the readers back to the seventeenth century, to Kolomna, an unsavory, bleak area of Saint Petersburg.22 This part explains how this cursed portrait came to be, its mystical history and the circumstances of its writing. The entire second part is a mise-en-abyme, or a story about the portrait.23 (This effect of mys-en-abyme also reflects

22 Kolomna is historically a marginal and eclectic neighborhood. Pushkin writes his poem “Domik v Kolomne” (1813) based on his impression of the area. Its carnivalesque atmosphere is detectable in the way Pushkin introduces the archaic literary traditions with their variety of styles into unifying Romantic tradition, in one poem.
23 André Gide coined the term Mise-en-abyme, literally “placed into abyss.” See the explanation in detail in Le Récit Spéculaire: essai sur la mise en abyme by Lucien Daellenbach, pp.161-163. A mise-en-abyme is defined here as another scene, text is imbedded into the text, the core of which evolves around reproduction (mimesis) and reproduction “domination of representation abolishing the hierarchy between “form” and “content”” (Daellenbach 161).
the nature of the portrait, which in the manner of the Trojan horse conceals a threat, just like the hidden sacks of the cursed money delivered to Chartkov).

The grandson of the painter of the accursed portrait narrates the story of the portrait’s subject, an evil pawnbroker, by retelling events that occurred a hundred years earlier. As it happens, the pawnbroker was an actual villain, and according to local rumors lent money not only for interest, but also for souls.

The grandfather of the narrator was a talented artist whose work primarily depicted holy figures. He was well aware of the evil nature of the pawnbroker, and his reputation as a soul-corrupting devil. Despite this knowledge, he had always had a bizarre desire to paint the evil usurer. When the pawnbroker approached him and demanded that the artist paint his portrait, the artist eagerly agreed. Although this story, like many other Gogol stories, consists of many chilling plot complications and details, the most unnerving part is when the pawnbroker solicits his own portrait:

…Нарисуй с меня портрет. Я, может быть, скоро умру, детей у меня нет; но я не хочу умереть совершенно, я хочу жить. Можешь ли ты нарисовать такой портрет, чтобы был совершенно как живой? (PSS 3; 18).

…Paint my portrait. I may possibly die soon. I have no children; but I do not wish to die completely, I wish to live. Can you paint a portrait that shall appear as though it were alive?’ (“The Portrait” 553).
The evil pawnbroker’s request illustrates the way the parasitic existence of an evil substance travels in time: from past to present to contaminate Chartkov’s life.\(^{24}\) The stereotype of usurers as “soul-eaters” or in Russian “krovoiitsy” (bloodsuckers) derives from the sentimental value of things pawned by people in need.\(^{25}\) In literature, there is a vivid example of this stereotypical perception of usurers in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866). When Raskolnikov comes to Alena Ivanovna to pawn his father’s watch, he recognizes her indifference toward his sentiments and starts to doubt her humanity; he trembles as if his soul were about to be violated.

The moneylender’s desire to have his image captured on canvas comes from his desire for immortality. When making this request, the usurer explained to the artist that he was childless and had no one to whom he could leave his inheritance. Yet he hoped that he could immortalize himself via canvas. There is a meta-narrative connection between this desire of the old usurer and Chartkov’s thoughts of inheritance when he sees the sacks of gold spilling from the portrait. Chartkov thinks this gold must have been an inheritance saved by a grandfather for a grandson. Chartkov then dreams of belonging to a family with an inheritance passed from one generation to another. This connects with Gogol’s theme of complicated relationships between fathers and sons/daughters: a parent with vampire-like traits. This type of a “parent” one encounters in “Майская Ночь или Утопленница” (“A May Night, or The Drowned Maiden” (1830))\(^{26}\) and

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\(^{25}\) People believed that the way the usurer makes money is diabolical, because “such magical reproduction was surely diabolical” (Fabian 159). Marc Shell also in his analysis of Shakespeare’s “Merchant of Venice” (1598) clarifies usury’s stereotypical relation to the devil. He even coined the term “a spiritual usury” in reference to Antonio. For further inquiries on the subject, see Marc Shell’s work *Money, Language and Thought*, University of California Press, 1982.

\(^{26}\) In this tale, the stepmother tortures her stepdaughter, who states that her stepmother literally sucks the life out of her.
«Страшная Месть» (“The Terrible Vengeance” (1832)). This trope of the “vampiric parent” also occurs in “The Portrait.” Chartkov, by taking the usurer’s money, becomes his surrogate son, and the latter starts living through (in) him.

When Chartkov sees the coins, the morning after the nightmare, he believes this “treasure” is a mysterious inheritance:

В воображении его воскресли вдруг все истории о кладах, шкатулках спота́ёнными ящиками, оставляемых предками для своих разорившихся внуков, в твёрдой уверенности на будущее их проматывавшееся положение. Он мыслил так: «Не придумал ли и теперь какой-нибудь дедушка остаться своему внуку подарок, заключив его в рамку фамильного портрета?»

In his imagination, he conjured up all sorts of tales of hidden treasures, cabinets with secret drawers left by ancestors to their spendthrift descendants in the firm belief that the money would restore their fortune. He began to think that perhaps some grandfather might have wanted to leave a present for his grandchild, and had hidden it in the frame of the family portrait (“The Portrait” 526).

In Chartkov’s way of thinking, his “romanticized” perception of money and his assumption that this money represents an inheritance reveals Chartkov’s hidden desire for an inheritance and a familial bond. This detail increases Chartkov’s vulnerability due to his “rootless” position in life: he is a typical urban dweller without a past or a family. Consequently, Chartkov’s acceptance of the money symbolizes his acceptance of the terms and will of the evil usurer: he has contracted with the devil or in this case the evil moneylender.

27 In “Terrible Vengeance,” the father of Katerina is a wicked wizard, who demonstrates incestuous impulses toward his daughter.
This symbolic commercial transaction, which makes Chartkov a surrogate son of the moneylender, once referred to as the devil, justifies the artist’s last name Chartkov, of the Devil, of Chert, a surrogate son of a devil.\textsuperscript{28} In reference to Chartkov’s professor and his teachings of piety, there is a direct allusion to a father-son type dynamic and biblical teaching of God. Here we observe how Chartkov no longer accepts God as his father, instead finding a father in the devil after willingly taking the coins and following the inner voice that encouraged him to spend, consume and paint commercially.\textsuperscript{29} Similar to Hermann in “The Queen of Spades,” who tries to appropriate the role of a surrogate son in order to acquire the secret of the three cards from the old Countess, Chartkov entertains a similar desire. Similar to Hermann, Chartkov begins losing himself as he reaps his fortune.

From the moment of the portrait’s purchase, the narrative changes. References to material excess and the color yellow saturate the text, which range from glittering images of gold to champagne and traces of bile on Chartkov’s face, all of which indicate changes in his mental and somatic processes.

Although Chartkov is the one who purchased the cursed portrait, the readers discover that as the narrative progresses, it is really the other way around; the portrait takes possession of Chartkov. From that moment, the narrative accelerates. The narrator’s perspective changes; unsavory details become more palpable with the “physiological” perspective of the story emerging.

\textsuperscript{28} In the earlier version of “The Portrait,” the protagonist’s last name is “Chertkov,” and the old usurer is defined as “Antichrist.”

\textsuperscript{29} The association of a familial bonding, based on an “inheritance,” is reflected in Chartkov’s behavior when he begins enjoying the found or “inherited” money: “He drank a bottle of champagne, which had, up to this time, been known to him only through hearsay. The wine went to his head, and he went into the street, alacritous, pugnacious, as though he were the devil’s best friend…” (“The Portrait” 527). - in the phrase “sam chertu ne brat,” (“even not a brother to the devil”), suggesting that he was related to the devil.
«Зачем я мучусь и, как ученик, копаюсь над азбукой, тогда как мог бы
blesнуть ничем не хуже других и быть и таким как они, с деньгами.
Произнесши это, художник вдруг задрожал и побледнел: на него глядело,
высунувшись из- за поставленного холста, чьё- то судорожно искажённое
лицо... Холодный пот облил его всего; сердце его билось сильно...грудь
была так стеснена... (PSS 3; 16).

Why do I trouble myself and burden myself like a student learning his ABC’s
when I might be no less than the rest of them and make as much money as they
do?” At these words, the artist suddenly shuddered and grew pale; a terribly
distorted face stared at him from behind the canvas […] (“The Portrait” 517).

…он начал ходить скоро по комнате, ерошить себе волоса, то садился на
кресла, то вскакивал с них (16).

...He paced up and down the room quickly, running his fingers through his hair,
and sat down in a chair for a moment, only to get up... (“The Portrait” 529).

...он поспешил принять значительную физиогномию знатока (23).

He hastened to assume the important air of a connoisseur [...] (“The Portrait”
539).

Желчь проступала у него на лице (Bile became detectable on his face) … им
овладела ужасная зависть, зависть до бешенства (26).

… A horrible envy obsessed him, an envy which bordered upon madness... hatred
distorted his features… (“The Portrait” 542).
The arrival of the money accelerates the narrative illustrating Chartkov’s fast-spent life.

In the beginning, when we first meet Chartkov, before the ill-fated purchase of the cursed portrait, we have no indication of his exact age, but his manner of dress and general demeanor indicate that he was a young man. He ages rapidly, however, after the purchase. Almost immediately, he becomes thicker in his waist, fleshier, and at the end of the narrative, is almost obese. This supports Maguire’s point that money consumes Chartkov, his biological decay beginning from the very moment he acquires the money within the portrait.

These golden coins are material evidence of the nocturnal transformation of the portrait because they confirm the supernatural. This coinage represents the surplus, which magically appears from an unknown source. The money arrives, asserting its presence in Chartkov’s modest apartment; to use Karlinsky’s expression, it represents an “intrusion of the Antichrist into the present world” (*The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* 113):

“…послышился треск. Квартальный пожал, видно, слишком крепко раму портрета…; боковые досточки вломились вовнутрь, одна упала на пол, и вместе с нею упал, тяжело звякнув, свёрток в синей бумаге… Чарткову бросилась в глаза надпись: «1000 червонных» (16).

“…He heard a loud crack. The policeman had held the frame too tightly… and the molding on the side broke and fell with a loud noise, and with it fell a roll wrapped in blue paper. Chartkov’s eyes fastened on the inscription: 1,000 gold coins […] (“The Portrait” 525).

As this passage reveals, the money not only violates the physical frame of the portrait, its excess rapidly corrupts Chartkov’s morals, physical health, artistic mission and the text itself. In
the beginning, Chartkov hoped his newly acquired fortune would provide just enough to satisfy his basic needs so he could concentrate on his artistic endeavors. Yet in the narrative, he somehow вдруг (accidentally) goes overboard with his spending:

...Так говорил он заодно с подсказывавшим ему рассудком; но изнутри раздавался другой голос, слышнее и звонче. Теперь в его власти было всё то, на что он глядел доселе завистливыми глазами, чем любовался издали, глотая слюнки. 
... нечаянно накупил тоже бездну всяких галстуков, более нежели было нужно, завил у парикмахера себе локоны, прокатился два раза по городу в карете без всякой причины, объелся без меры конфектов в кондитерской...(19).

That was what he said to himself at the prompting of his good judgment, but within himself, another voice, growing ever louder, was making itself heard [...] Everything which he had before looked at with envious eyes, was now within his reach. That which he had from afar looked at longingly could now be his... On an impulse he bought … a huge quantity of neckties of every kind, many more than he could possibly need. Then he went to a hairdresser’s, and had his hair waved; he rode twice through the city without any destination in mind; he bought an enormous amount of candy at the confectioner’s… (“The Portrait” 527).

The more Chartkov consumes champagne, cakes and other luxuries, the more the devil’s essence consumes him from within.

The reading of “The Portrait” from the vantage point of money, however, demonstrates the breaking point of the intertextual organization of this work, and how literary developments reflect socio-economic changes. “The Portrait” demonstrates the authorial perception of a
fiscally changing world due to its “greediness.” For example, the scene where Chartkov greets his first clients, a mother with daughter Liza, provides a relevant illustration of these developments:

“Do you know,” said the lady with a positively touching expression of countenance, “I should like her to be painted simply attired, and seated among green shadows, like meadows, with a flock or a grove in the distance, so that it could not be seen that she goes to balls or fashionable entertainments. Our balls, I must confess, murder the intellect, deaden all remnants of feeling. Simplicity! Would there were more simplicity!” Alas, it was stamped on the faces of mother and daughter that they had so over-danced themselves at balls that they had become almost wax-like figures (“The Portrait” 531).

This passage appears to represent the reference to the developing literary traditions. For example, Karamzin’s sentimental tale “Poor Liza” (1792), Gogol’s “The Portrait” (1835) and Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades” (1833) represent developments of genres, which contribute to the formation of the new literary tradition of the Great Russian novel. Mother and daughter bear a striking resemblance to wax figures, thanks to their decadent lifestyles. The sallow, pronounced yellow tinge of their faces suggests profligate lives of excess.

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For example, in Valeria Sobol’s article “The Physiological Aspect of the Society Ball,” the newly appropriated lifestyle of polite society during the Petrine reforms was not only morally corrupting, but also, according to intellectual discourse of the time, negatively affected health (294-97). (The article concentrates on one particular aspect of the negative portrayal of the ball’s unnaturalness, consistently interpreted in this period in physiological terms)... Princess Golicyna was labeled “la Princesse nocturne.”

The yellow-tinged faces once again indicate the excessive lifestyle of the evolving Russian aristocracy. These social habits eventually led to this generation’s reputation as that of the spent people. The verb isplyasalis’ and the explanation of their “public” lifestyle as one that “murders souls” are indicative of doom and disgrace.

However, in Chartkov’s painting, Liza appears as fresh and natural looking as Karamzin’s peasant maiden Liza. Here, the mother’s desire to create a falsely healthy image refers back to the moneylender’s desire to have his portrait done in order to cheat death, to have “eternal life.” Liza’s mother anticipates her and her daughter’s impending demise and attempts to elude it by positioning Liza within the organic and uncorrupted world of the idyllic tradition.

In summary, starting from a close reading of “Poor Liza” and proceeding to the analyses of “The Queen of Spades,” and “The Portrait,” we have established that fiscal matters play a prominent role in the historic development of prose-fiction writing. It is responsible for opening avenues for the ancient grotesque tradition that is politically charged, and reflects authorial anxieties about socio-economic changes. The result of the interplay of the Romantic aesthetics and intrusive monetary pragmatism is the formation of the imagined paradigms about the effects of the capitalist systems.
CHAPTER 2

OLD WIVES TALES

“Our balls, I must confess, murder the intellect, deaden all remnants of feeling. Simplicity! Would there were more simplicity!” Alas, it was stamped on the faces of mother and daughter who had so over-danced themselves at balls that they had become almost wax figures (“The Portrait” 53).

This chapter is devoted to the study of gossip in the following three society tales: “Rank and Money” (1838) by E. Rostopchina, “Princess Mimi” (1834) and “Princess Zizi” (1839) by V. Odoevsky. In the introduction of my work, I posited gossip’s functional similarity to money as a means of social exchange and as an artistic device to compromise the expectations of romance in the narratives that formally belonged to the Romantic tradition. In this chapter, I intend to show how gossip functions as an independent entity, similar to culture, before demonstrating its functional similarities with money.

Separately gossip and money often behave as catalysts to advance the action of the story. They also open avenues for the grotesque tradition to dilute the rigidity of genres, as we encountered in the first chapter. Taking into consideration this fact, my purpose here is to see if the connection between gossip and money drives the unfolding of the plots in the given narratives. Then I will move toward supporting my initial claim about the similarities between
money and gossip. In real life, gossip is often a source of false information, whereas in fiction it exposes the complicated nature of socio-economic dynamics and the developments of the narrative itself.

Gossip, like fiction, “creates its own sense of mastery over narratives” through an intimate exchange of information (Spacks 23). In fiction, gossip represents more than simply harmful and/or entertaining tittle-tattling: it can also be the source of a problem or problematic truth, which may lead to explosive outcomes in literary narratives. For example, when gossip about an alleged affair between Baroness Dauerthal and Ranevskii, her protégé, in Odoevsky’s society tale “Princess Mimi,” reaches its peak, it becomes clear that these characters use gossip to secure their own shaky positions in the societal hierarchy.

In this instance, all the tongues of the town which were at all capable of wagging began to wag: some from a wish to persuade their listeners that they were not implicated in those sorts of sins; others from a dislike of the Baroness; others again, so as to make a laughing stock of her husband; and yet others just from a need to demonstrate that they too were privy to drawing-room secrets (“Princess Mimi” 34).

Because gossip is the primary form of social currency in the society tale genre, it is a
particularly useful form to explore. The advantage of studying gossip in society tales is that regardless of the predictability and the conventional setting of the plot, gossip always manages to create a sense of multiple mental communicative processes. As Spacks notes, “when information comes by means of gossip, one can hardly avoid noting that it has been filtered through multiple consciousness,” which enables us to see clearly how gossip drives the narrative as a product of social judgment and exposure (Spacks 9). Most importantly, the society tale genre provides the specific concept of gossip I challenge in this work.

The type of gossip that occurs in these stories involves trivial societal occupations and interpersonal relationships based on observations and speculations of the nuclear community. Additionally, the society tale genre, borrowed from the French literary tradition, is representative of Russia’s imitation of Western society in an attempt to participate in the discourse reacting to the socio-economic changes that the Western world began experiencing in the early eighteenth century. I claim that although Russia did not actually experience modernization at the time, Russian society prematurely injected itself via artistic literary forms. The society tale genre is a good example of this attempt to fit into the Western world.

Thus, the society tale genre is a good illustration of Russia’s imagined participation in socio-economic changes of the Western world. Gossip, as one of the main forms of social discourse in the Russian society tale, “a nineteenth-century fictional form of today’s gossip column,” works as both thematic content and narrative mode (The Society Tale in Russian Literature 65-66).

Overall, the study of gossip articulates how Russian society perceived itself as modern (or not) in the limited setting of the society tale genre, which is the first attempt to provide a
physiological study of society; it served as a barometer of modernity. An excerpt from Gogol’s “The Portrait,” which I quoted in the opening of this chapter, highlights the main spirit of the society tales genre. It features Līza’s mother complaining about the soullessness and artificiality of their milieu. In her tirade, she concludes that observation and judgment, together with constant social exposure in ballrooms and salons, are the components that serve as the narrative fabric of society tales. The three stories I analyze in this chapter reveal the unfortunate personal lives of the protagonists (Princess Mīmi, Vadim Svirskiī and Princess Zizi), which are delivered primarily to the readers by way of gossip.

These three society tales at first appear to be the conventional “salon literature,” fiction about the world of nobility. “Princess Mīmi,” for example, is about an old, envious and unhappy spinster, who, in the end, sabotages another woman’s reputation, leading to the woman’s premature death, and a ruined opportunity to rekindle the romance of reunited lovers. In short, Odoevsky describes the pleasure Princess Mīmi derives from her sociopathic behavior, which is driven by a desire to reassure her position in society. She achieves this goal via gossip.

“Rank and Money” tells of the unfortunate love of a young impoverished aristocrat, spurned for his lack of wealth or high rank. “Princess Zizi,” the sister-story of “Princess Mīmi,” tells of Zinaida, a woman who became a pariah after her brother-in-law declared her immoral and manipulative. Once again, however, as I previously mentioned, the scrutiny of gossip in each of the stories reveals how these tales reflect the authors’ imagined transition to modernity and how they contributed to the formation of innovative fiction writing.
2.1 “Princess Mimi”

2.1.1 Subversive Power of Gossip

Prince Odoevsky, who was not fond of gossip, was anxious about sharing his personal life via correspondence. Gifted with a creative mind, he predicted such modern means of communication as e-mail and the telephone as early as 1837-1839:

Odoevsky, in his work *The Petersburg Letters* (1837-1839), wrote that in the future the means of correspondence would be by “electrical” conversation, certain connections via magnetic telegraphs, so the distant households communicate: переписка заменится электрическим разговором (*Петербургские письма* 28)...

Сверх того, для сношений в непредвиденном случае между знакомыми домами устроены магнитеские телеграфы, посредством которых живущие на далёком расстоянии разговаривают друг с другом [...] (60).

Drawing from Prince Vladimir Odoevsky’s impressive imagination it becomes clear that he understood quite well the subversive nature of gossip, and how it contributed to the (de)construction of the imagined paradigm of a new society.

His society tales “Princess Mimi” and “Princess Zizi” are wonderful examples of how gossip challenges the traditional perception of human interaction in *le beau monde*, imagined as the dominion of glamour and refined manners. Similar to money, gossip directly triggers imaginations and some clandestine desires and fears of the beholder. It opens avenues for the unexpected and ruins the expectations of romance. It also illustrates the concept of capitalism conceived, but not yet experienced, and therefore mystified. Consequently, the promises of
wealth intertwine with the knowledge of its grave price.

Stephen Hutchings, for example, pinpoints that gossip is not restricted to rules of public relevance since the gossipmonger deals with a group of intimate acquaintances and thus, in addition is “self-indulgently indiscriminate” (Hutchings 59). It works, however, because as Patricia Spacks asserts, gossip “never takes itself seriously,” (Spacks 108). Due to its “democratic” nature as low pedestrian discourse, gossip cancels social barriers (hierarchy) and creates an atmosphere of the carnivalesque, as described by Bakhtin in his text on menippean satire (Problems of Dostoevsky Poetics 23-38). Odoevsky, through behavioral patterns of Mimi and her usage of gossip, criticizes the norms and mannerisms of high society in his time. Survival in society as we see in “Princess Mimi” depends on the use of gossip as subversive discourse, which creates a false sense of intimacy leaving Mimi’s victim vulnerable for her future manipulations. Gossip helps the author to create an ironic subculture that ridicules the overtly sophisticated and theatrical life of Russian high society.30 In his insightful biography of Odoevsky, P. N. Sakulin states that Prince Vladimir Odoevsky considered it his duty to eliminate the “outdated” forms of classicism and “pseudoromanticism” in the Russian literary tradition. Odoevsky uses gossip for a deeper psychological portrait of women and makes definitions of gender permeable. In the previous chapter, the task of money was to create subversions of gender and genre. Here Mimi, regardless of her spinster status, uses gossip to manage her nuclear social surroundings, i.e. her female peers.

Odoevsky’s “Princess Mimi” has not received the critical feedback or attention it deserves, except for acknowledgements by Odoevsky’s progressive contemporaries and fellow literati Belinsky and Delvig. Many critics mention this story as a basic illustration of the society

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30 I draw this from William Mills Todd’s claim that Pushkin’s experiments with “informal” linguistic discourse helped him to create a successful parody of the overtly refined Russian high society (Mills Todd 64-200).
tale genre, which pits woman against woman, turning one into a jailer, like Mimi, and the other into a prisoner. For example, S. Dalton-Brown, in her article, *The Society Tale in Russian Literature*, notes that the society tale genre shares the same organization as a fairy tale in that there is always both a captive and a jailer […] (24-30). Dalton-Brown further mentions that Princess Mimi is not a mediator of social norms and morals, as she would like to believe, but a powerful jailer:

… The lesson the society tale heroine learns, therefore, is not merely one of disillusionment or suspicion. She learns the true nature of her state—one of her captivity. Women such as Mimi or the Countess are indeed not merely keepers of social morals, as Mimi likes to think she is; they are, paradoxically, powerful jailers […] (26).

After realizing that she failed to gain a respectable position in society through marriage, Princess Mimi redirects her energies to the malicious scrutiny of others: “вся обратилась в злобное, завистливое наблюдение за другими начала говорить о всеобщем развращении нравов” (“Княжна Мими” 103). “… applied herself totally to the malicious, envious observation of other people… She started talking of the universal depravity of morals” […] (“Princess Mimi” 8).

Thus, as Dalton-Brown claims, Mimi, empowered by intrigue and scandal, acquires the new (for the female heroine in nineteenth-century Russian literature) dominant position in the story. The metaphoric identification of Princess Mimi with the powerful jailer from fairy tales, together with the statement that her literary ancestor is Pushkin’s old Countess, places the story in the proximity of the innovative genre developments.

This purposeful usage of gossip makes Odoevsky a true successor of Griboedov, whom
he credits with the incorporation of conversational discourse into the Russian literary tradition and masterfully uses gossip to show “the shallowness and fears of the society that surrounds Chatskii” in *Woe from Wit* (Sokol 13). Odoevsky similarly uses gossip to ridicule the exaggeratedly sophisticated fictional world of Russian nobility, baring its inner social dynamics.

To clarify the function of gossip in “Princess Mimi,” it is necessary to examine the way gossip develops in *Woe from Wit*. The following dialogue in *Woe from Wit* between Sophia and the anonymous Mr. N. shows how a casual conversation turns into gossip via the interplay between the expectations of one party, and the mixed feelings and hesitation of the other:

Г.Н.
Вы в размышления?
София
Об Чацком
Г.Н.
Как его нашли по возвращеньи?
София
Он не в своём уме.
Г.Н.
Ужли с ума сошёл?
София (помолчавши)
Не то чтобы совсем…
Г.Н.
Однако есть приметы?
София (смотрит на него пристально)
Мне кажется… (*Горе От Ума* 108).

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31 Odoevsky names his sister-tales “Princess Mimi” and “Princess Zizi” after the subsidiary characters in *Woe from Wit*, the unmarried daughters of a general. In both tales, the driving force of plot development is gossip.
Mr. N. (coming up to her): I see, you are lost in thought.

Sofia: It’s Chatsky.

Mr. N.: Has he changed? Or what?

Sofia: He is insane.

Mr. N.: Oh! Has he lost his mind?

Sofia: Not quite…

Mr. N.: But are there any indications?

Sofia (stares at him): I think so (Woe from Wit 259).

The interlocutor here, identified as “Mr. N.,” receives and processes information the way he wants, whereas the provider of the information, Sophia, by omitting details and remaining silent, willingly or unknowingly provides an extra opportunity for the interlocutor’s imagination to develop, creating his own versions of the situation. Gossip, similar to money, has a corruptive quality with a multiplicity of options for the imagination. Also like money, it imparts power and influences others.

Mr. N.’s observation, “you appear to be perplexed,” catches Sophia off guard and causes her to divulge more than she intended. That she provided indirectly negative comments about Chatskii, with whom she just had an argument, because of manipulation is apparent. She indicts him with her silence and by passive agreement to the remarks.

Due to her vulnerable, confused state of mind, Mr. N., who is bored and assumes the mask of the confidant for selfish entertainment, easily manipulates her. He takes advantage of Sophia’s mixed feelings, intuitively deducing her tension, as caused by the embarrassment she feels at her symbolic betrayal of Chatskii and her forbidden fondness for her servant Molchalin, a young opportunist.
As we see, Sophia passively participates in gossip about Chatskii because she does not want Mr. N. to make assumptions about her personal affairs. I interpret Sophia’s fear of being “misunderstood” to mean that she does not want to become a possible target for gossip. Thus, they fabricate gossip as a defense against the possible misreading. Sophia wants to prevent Mr. N. from reading her. She diverts his inquisitive attention from herself to Chatskii by passively providing him with the answers and reactions he expects, as if offering him a bribe.

This need “not to be misunderstood” may be due to Sophia’s fear of her unconventional fondness for Molchalin, for example. Unlike Sophia, Princess Mimi starts gossip about her nemesis, the Baroness, intentionally. In fact, Mimi’s role in spreading gossip is similar to Mr. N.’s: she manipulates people around her into talking about the Baroness and her alleged lover, Radetsky. According to Mimi, the reputation of the Baroness is already “done.” “… Её репутация сделана” (“Princess Mimi” 21); the Baroness is already a fallen, dead woman. Her mother’s guests report to the Princess about the Baroness’s behavior at the ball:

Вы долго вчера оставались на бале?- спросила княжна Мими у одного молодого человека.
Скажите ж, чем кончилась комедия?
Княжне Биби наконец удалось прикрепить свою гребёнку…
Ох! Не то…
О! Всё не то… вы, стало быть, ничего не заметили?
А, вы говорите про баронессу?...
О нет! Я и не думала об ней… Да почему вы об ней заговорили? Разве о чем ннбудь говорят?
- … не сходила с доски.
Она совсем не бережёт себя. С её здоровьем…
О! Княжна, вы совсем не об её здоровье говорите. Теперь всё понимаю… («Княжна Мими» 118-121).

‘Tell me, then, in what way did the commedia end?’
‘Well, Princess Bibi did finally manage to get her comb to fasten…’
‘No! That’s not…’
‘Oh, are you talking about the Baroness?’
‘Oh, no! I wasn’t even thinking about her… But why are you talking about her?’
‘Is there really something they are saying?’
‘Well, that’s the social world! I assure you she had no one particularly in mind. But apropos the Baroness: did she dance a lot after I had gone?’
‘Oh, Princess! It’s not her health you’re really talking about. Now I understand it all. … (“Princess Mimi” 24).
‘She never left the floor.’
‘She isn’t looking after herself at all. With her health…’

Princess Mimi, by acting concerned, (about the Baroness’s health) and as if she knew more than the others receives the desired results. One of the guests finally admits:

-Ах, бога ради, перестаньте! Я вам говорю, что я об ней и не думала. Я так боюсь этих всех пересудов, сплетней…… («Княжна Мими» 118).

‘Oh, for goodness’ sake, that’s enough! I tell you that I was not even thinking about her. I so dread all this tale-telling and scandal-mongering… (“Princess Mimi” 24).

Mimi’s respondent’s exclamation demonstrates that Mimi manipulates others to gossip about the Baroness almost against their will.

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Consequently, the conversation, which starts as casual chatter about yesterday’s ball, turns into gossip about the Baroness. Although at first glance these reports about the Baroness’s behavior at the ball and other appearances lack scandalous details, Princess Mimi in the end achieves her goal: the Baroness becomes a target of gossip. Mimi here, similar to Tomskii in “The Queen of Spades,” infects her audience’s imagination with the strained suggestive eroticism of the event and the invitation to gamble with the Baroness’s social standing.

2.1.2 Spectacle, Theatricality and Gossip

In “Princess Mimi,” it appears as if the Baroness’s (Mimi’s) public appearances trigger everyone’s scrutiny and judgment for no specific reason. Let us analyze each bit of gossip/appearance separately, in the consequential order of intensification.

1. — И сегодня она показывала в своей ложе …
 : ‘And today,’ put in a third lady, ‘she was showing him off in her loge’ (“Princess Mimi” 25).

2. …. Не знаю, как-то зашла речь об « Антони», об этой ужасной, безнравственной пьесе, я не могла досидеть до конца, а она вздумала вступаться за эту пьесу и уверять, что только такая пьеса может остановить женщину на краю погибели… (ibid.).
 ‘I don’t know, but discussion somehow got on to Antony (Romantic drama by Alexander Dumas (pere), 1831), to that horrible, immoral play. I couldn’t sit through it to the end, but she suddenly started standing up for that play and was trying to tell us that only a play like that could restrain a woman on the brink of perdition...’ (“Princess Mimi” 26).
In these reports, the superfluous details reveal not so much about the Baroness, but more about the gossipers’ personal preoccupations and fears. The Baroness’s attendance at the theatre and the discussion of Dumas’s play, for example, reveal nothing but appreciation for the performing arts by the Baroness and her peers. Yet, the Baroness’s whereabouts provides fodder for gossip, which eventually reflects negatively upon the Baroness’s reputation.

Why are these specific events in the Baroness’s life so gossip worthy? Simply put, this gossip about the Baroness’s alleged fondness of the theatre reveals the gossipers’ interest in the theatre as well, since they are invested in the event, and obviously receive enjoyment from seeing the Baroness at the theatre.

First, in Odoevsky’s time, the theatre was a guilty pleasure. Theatre was entertainment, where one could while away time, and experience an emotional outlet by watching tragedies and comedies about love and adventure. Therefore, in society, which Odoevsky represents here, it is apparently not socially acceptable for a woman to frequent theatres. That is why the information about the Baroness attending the theatre is ruinous for her reputation, and, thus, becomes gossip. Moreover, in order to testify about her theatre attendance, those spreading gossip about her must be present as well, demonstrating that they, too, share this deviant pleasure with the Baroness and are as such, equally guilty of such inappropriate activities for women (The Semiotics of Russian Culture 145-167).

Second, the Baroness’s discussion of “Antony” by Dumas (father) reflects the popularity of Dumas’s salacious plays in Russia at that time. The Baroness’s favorable opinion of the play

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32 In his historical overview of Odoevsky’s era, Sakulin specifies that in the 1830s and 1840s, Russians started questioning their religious beliefs, their class systems, and with an interest in occult sciences, esotericism started to flourish. That is why gothic themes started appearing in social anecdotes and journalist sketches (Sakulin 382).
is apparently a threat to the social (patriarchal) order to which she belongs. That the detractors are familiar with the plot of the play echoes the social deviance of Mimi’s critics.

Another scandalous detail from that bit of gossip about the Baroness is that she is spending time with her houseguest, Radetsky, who has just returned from Italy (and who is in love with Lydia, another married woman). Mimi’s milieu mistakenly assumes that Radetsky and the Baroness are lovers and conveniently pairs them because the Baroness, like her houseguest, represents a certain anomaly in the eyes of society.\(^{33}\)

The narrator specifies this is due to her good looks and her popularity among young men, despite the fact that she is married to the old Baron. They call Radetsky “a visitor from the other world” and “Jacobin,” indicative of their perception of him as an outsider and a possible threat to set social order:

3. Бог знает что он такое! Какой-то выходец с того света…(“Княжна Мими” 120).
4. То уж правда, что он бог знает что такое! Он какой-то этакой якобинец……(“Княжна Мими” 120).

‘God only knows what or who he is! Some sort of a visitor from the other world (“Princess Mimi” 25).
But really, though, he is God knows what! He is some type of a supposed Jacobin … (“Princess Mimi” 25).

\(^{33}\) The narrator, when introducing the Baroness, specifies that the Baroness was aware of the fact that she and her husband represented some sort of anomaly: "Баронесса знала все свои преимущества; знала, что для всякого она вместе с бароном была чем-то невозможным, противным приличию, какою-то нелепостью… ("Княжна Мими" 104).
Mimi’s milieu targets Radetsky in a similar manner to the gossiping parties who attack Chatskii in Griboedov’s *Woe from Wit*. They call Radetsky a *jakobinet*, whereas in *Woe from Wit*, they call Chatskii *carbonari*. Similar to the gossips in *Woe from Wit*, Mimi’s social group views Radetsky as an outsider and a possible “political” threat to their community.

The viewing of Radetsky as otherworldly indicates another trend in the intellectual discourse of nineteenth-century Russia: an infatuation with Gothic fiction. Despite the fact that this comparison of Radetsky appears nonsensical and reveals the primitive intellectual processes of a gossip, it contains a “political” anxiety about the intrusion of the so-called ‘other.’ This is because “everything Gothic” made a comeback in mid-eighteenth century as a literary manifestation of the Revolutionary spirit. This manifested itself as the intrusion of the ‘other,’ and as a representation of the class struggle and a degradation of the aristocracy.

Along these lines of literary and overall cultural references about gossip, something is particularly interesting about the gossip, which occurred during the scene at the theatre. As we established, this title-tattling describes the seemingly innocent public appearance of the Baroness and Granitsky, a friend of the family. The events do not strike the reader as particularly immoral, but the culturally erotic connotation attributed to theatre at that time, and the fact that they spent time alone in the loge is suggestive of vulgar behavior by the Baroness and Radetsky.

Given that gossip manipulates the imagination, the recipients of gossip often end up seeing what is not even there. It also suggests that gossip is like fiction: it fuels one’s imagination and is a product of such, as Rebecca Spacks claims in her introductory definition of gossip (Spacks 14-36). Furthermore, this first bit of gossip represents a familiar scene for a modern reader. It repeats later in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* (1873), the scene when Karenina sits in the
theatre’s loge with a ruined reputation. As a comparative analysis of gossip reveals here, the realist quality of gossip allows Odoevsky to create an additional psychological and socio-economic dimension to this seemingly conventional society tale. The way Odoevsky creates gossip demonstrates that the inclusion of a low form of social discourse such as gossip into Romantic prose helps to capture realistic episodes of social life and what is new and intellectually acute. Additionally, the mirroring quality of gossip creates a sense of constant exposure and an authorial self-reflection in his narrator and in the leading protagonist/antagonist, Princess Mimi.

Based on these points of the introductory section on the function of gossip, I claim that the specific type of gossip that dominates the discourse of this story is speculative. Speculative gossip, usually based on observations, is all about sizing up and assessing others. The root of the adjective “speculative” is from the Latin root *specere* “to look.” The concept of “speculative gossip” explains Mimi’s behavioral patterns in society since her transformation from the object of gossip into a gossipmonger herself. After Mimi loses all hope of finding a husband, she focuses her energies on the malicious scrutiny of others: “вся обратилась в злобное, завистливое наблюдение за другими начала говорить о все общем развращении нравов” (“Княжна Мими” 103); “... applied herself totally to the malicious, envious observation of other people... She started talking of the universal depravity of morals” (“Princess Mimi” 8).

The narrator, when introducing the Baroness, specifies that the Baroness was aware of the fact that she and her husband were an anomaly: «Баронесса знала все свои преимущества; знала, что для всякого она вместе с бароном была чем-то невозможным, противным приличию, какою- то нелепостию...» (“Княжна Мими” 104).

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34 Spacks defines gossip as speculation, so drawing off her definition I refer to the type of gossip based on assumptions and observations as “speculative.”
She chooses to join a community of observers who have taken on the job of policing and enforcing the moral standards of society in order to survive. This definition of “speculative” gossip explains the sense of constant exposure, which dominates the narrative of the story and the ambiguous connection between Princess Mimi and the narrator. As mentioned before, Odoevsky writes this story in order to expose the theatricality of society, and with the help of gossip, he achieves his goal. He employs observation and judgment to deliver his vision of a society snared in a game of mimicry.

2.2 Odoevsky and His Unconventional Heroine’s Prose of Life

Mimi’s name is apparently a talking name. In Russian fiction, sometimes a heroine has a fashionably anglicized name, such as Princess Zizi, a heroine in another society tale by Odoevsky; the readers eventually learn that her ‘real’ name is Zinaida. Mimi, however, remains “Mimi” throughout the entire story. The name refers to the concept of mimicry, which is representative of the Princess’s survival skills in society. For example, in response to speculative gossip, which commences after the public sizes up Mimi’s appearance, Mimi tries to

“Княжна Мими” (1834) и “Княжна Зизи” (1839) – Mimi and Zizi appear first in Griboedov’s work Woe from Wit (1823) as General Tugoukhovskii’s daughters. Mimicry with roots from Latin mīnicus, Greek mīmikós, although there is in Russian a specific word for imitation such as подражание, Odoevsky who was passionate about natural sciences most likely uses this term to create the analogy from survival in a wild habitat to survival in Russian beau monde.

“Баронесса помирала со смеху, слушая подробности туалета Мими, - как страдала она, затягивая свою широкую талию, - как белила посиневшие от натуги свои шершавые руки, - как дополняла разными способами несколько скосившийся правый бок свой, - как на ночь привязывала к багровым щекам своим ужас! - сырые котлеты! Как выдергивала из бровей лишние волосы, подкрашивала седые, и проч» («Княжна Мими» 225).

“The Baroness would die with laughter hearing the details of Mimi's toilette: how she had to suffer, tightening her rather wide waist, how her homy hands, gone blue from the strain, she then had to whiten them; how she would add by various means to her slightly bent-in right side; how to her purple cheeks she would attach for the night- and what a horror! - raw cutlets; and how she would pull unwanted hairs from her eyebrows, tinting the grey ones, and so on‖ (“Princess Mimi”15).
disguise her age by applying raw ground beef patties to her cheeks, plucking her grey hair and pouring herself into tight corsets.

The readers learn about these practices from the maids’ gossip. These toilette rituals, which hardly improve Mimi’s appearance, her milieu harshly judge (Odoevsky’s) as artificial and theatrical. Since the Princess herself is a product of the social milieu she represents, her name also symbolizes the operational mode of the society to which she belongs. The story opens with Princess Mimi gossiping about Baroness Dauerthal, after socializing with her at the ball:

Скажите, с кем вы теперь танцевали?- сказала княжна Мими, остановив за руку одну даму, которая, окончив мазурку, проходила мимо княжны.
Он когда-то служил с моим братом! Я забыла его фамилию,- отвечала баронесса Даурталь мимоходом и, устала, бросилась на своё место («Княжна Мими» 104).

‘Tell me, who were you dancing with just now?’ said Princess Mimi, stopping a certain lady with her arm who, having just concluded the mazurka, was walking past the Princess.’
‘Oh, he served with my brother once! I’ve forgotten his name,’ replied Baroness Dauerthal as she passed and, tired out, hurried back to her seat (“Princess Mimi” 56).

And it ends with Princess Mimi talking, but this time not with, but about Baroness Dauerthal, because the latter is dead:

Для княжны Мими была составлена партия,- она уже отказалась от танцев.
Молодой человек подошёл к зелёному столу.
Сегодня поутру наконец кончились страдания баронессы Дауэрталь! — сказал он.— Здешние дамы могут похвалиться, что они очень искусно её убили до смерти.

In the first conversation, Mimi retrieves information from her victim that she later spins into gossip. In the second conversation, we observe Mimi hearing the outcome of said gossip, news of the Baroness’s death. Interestingly, the beginning and the end of the story involve the same cast of characters and the use of gossip in both conversations indicates a circular structure and a feeling of theatricality.37

Princess Mimi seems disinterested at the news of the Baroness’s death. While dealing her cards, Mimi casually pronounces her verdict in response to the news without even interrupting her game: ‘killing is done not by people, but by lawless passions.’ This response not only is indicative of Mimi’s desire to evade responsibility for figuratively murdering the Baroness, but also uncovers a new dimension of Princess Mimi’s character, and its interconnectivity with the narrator.

Since we know that certain passions were driving Princess Mimi to attack the Baroness, the impersonal tone and the contradictory nature of this response confuse the reader. The outcome of the gossip, which is a “ruined reputation,” cannot possibly be the work of a direct speech of the story’s character: it can only be an assumption of the narrator, who is a direct

37 Odoevsky also uses the term маховое колесо to describe a mode of socializing in the fictional milieu of “Princess Mimi.” The author compares social public life to a flywheel operation that sucks people in:

Между тем скоро гостиная княгини наполнилась: тут были и супруги, для которых собственный дом есть род калмыцкой кибитки, годной лишь для ночлега; и те любезные молодые люди, которые приезжает к вам в дом затем, чтоб было что сказать в другом; и те, которых судьба, наперекор природе, втянула в маховое колесо гостиных; и те, для которых самый простой визит есть следствие глубоких расчетов и пособие для годовой интриги («Княжна Мими» 118).

Hilde Hoogenbroom states that the linear structure of society tales accentuates the “mechanistic, automatic, nature of high society” (The Society Tale in Russian Literature 91), thus, the circular structure of this society tale reflects the artificial character of Russian fictional beau monde.
observer. The verdict merely suggests that Princess Mimi is just a projection of the narrator. For example, when the narrator confides that he tried to establish some mental connection with Mimi, imagining her in different garb and life circumstances, this perception of Mimi as the narrator’s counterpart strengthens:

Скажи мне, чем другим, какою поэзиєю она заинтересует такое существо, какова княжна Мими? Какою искусное катастрофою ты тронешь её сердце? … О, эта женщина навела на меня ужас! Смотря не неё, я рядил её в разные платяя, то есть логически развивал её мысли и чувства, представляя себе, чем могла бы такая душа в разных обстоятельствах жизни, и прямехонько … дошёл до костров инквизиции («Княжна Мими» 124).

Oh, that woman really instilled horror into me! Looking at her, I dressed her up in various outfits. What I mean is that I worked out a logical development of her ideas and feelings, pictured to myself how a spirit like hers would react in life’s varying circumstances and I got straight to… the bonfires of the Inquisition! (“Princess Mimi” 30).

Joe Andrew states that although Princess Mimi appears to be driving the narrative, her influence slowly dissipates: “Familiarity with ‘Mimi’ is at once established, while the reader might expect the heroine to be the subject of the narrative. Or will it turn out that she is merely the object of a male narrative and gaze?” (Andrew 61).

This observation goes hand-in-hand with his other claim that Mimi appears to be in charge of the narrative, although she later disappears and has no significant role in the actual dénouement. In other words, I claim here that Mimi, on the compositional level of the narrative,
is the counterpart to the narrator.

Usually within the Romantic tradition, a leading male has a female counterpart. Joseph Andriano, for example, in his work, *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Demonology in Male Gothic Fiction* claims that, if “a man is haunted by a feminine demon or ghost, he could still be encountering himself or part of himself. The haunting Other may be a projection of the haunted Self: outer demon is inner daemon, a psychic entity unrecognized as such by the male ego” (Andriano 24).

Odoevsky creates Princess Mimi as a projection of his critical views of society, his voice. Despite the seeming simplicity of Princess Mimi’s character as an ordinary, unhappy spinster, she has many controversial traits. As the narrator shares, beneath her corset Princess Mimi suppresses an *inferno of emotions*: for example, the narrator describes Princess Mimi’s frustration about the unfairness of life and her status as an unmarried aging woman. In comparison to the Baroness, the *inferno* describes her emotional state of mind as one of repressed anger:

И все это надобно было сжимать под узким корсетом, под условными фразами, под вежливою наружностью!.. Пламень целого ада выпускаеть тоненькою неприметною ниточкой!.. О, это ужасно, ужасно!

…And all this had to be confined beneath a tight corset, beneath conventional phrases, under a courteous exterior! The blaze of an entire inferno let loose only as the thinnest imperceptible thread! Oh, it is ghastly, ghastly!

Odoevsky’s narrator is Irinei Modestovich Gomozeiko. In “Princess Mimi,” the narrator
does not introduce himself, but his digressive mode of narration, with embedded philosophical stances, suggests Odoevsky’s usual narrator. His unobstructed presence is similar to the eunuch, Monsieur Ravi, who, due to his ambiguous identity, by default learns about the secrets of others. Monsieur Ravi works where “men were not admitted,” but the narrator is somehow able to provide a detailed description of the room (“Princess Mimi” 10):

На другом конце дома находилась заветная комната, неприступная для мужчин. Там огромное зеркало, ярко освещенное, отражало голубые шелковые занавески: оно было окружено всеми прихотями причудливой моды; цветы, ленты, перья, локоны, перчатки, румяна—все было разбросано по столам, как Рафаэлевы арабески; на низком диване лежали рядами бело-синеватые парижские башмаки—это воспоминание о хорошеных ножках, — и, казалось, скучали своим одиночеством…(«Княжна Мими» 109).

At the end of the house was a secret room to which men were not admitted. A huge mirror there, brightly lit, reflected the curtains of blue silk; around this was every whim then in quaintest of fashion: flowers, ribbons, feathers, locks of hair, mittens, rouge—all thrown about on tables, just like in the arabesques of Raphael. On a low divan there lay in rows blue and white shoes from Paris—this as a reminder of pretty little feet, bored and solitary (“Princess Mimi” 10).

The space, although reserved for women, is open for observation by the narrator and, apparently, for readers, male and female alike. Like gossip, falsely believed to be solely a woman’s domain, the narrator exposes intimate details of female garments, normally hidden from male eyes. In a similar manner, he divulges secrets gathered from within the boudoir.
The items of clothing described by the narrator are typical for those with luxurious and sophisticated taste. The fetishistic value of a pair of shoes is a reminder of a pair of pretty feet. Apparently, shoes, corsets and lace stockings are more than simple items of clothing here. Like gossip, which is not merely idle chatter but strategically compiled observations with a hint of intrigue, these items carry qualities and stories of their own. This room with a mirror and these "meaningful" items of female attire help illuminate the cultural background of the story and its organizational structure.

In fact, this room represents a familiar iconic scene with emphasis on a fetishistic presence of things: a mirror, a wig, a corset, etc. There is a similar dressing room in Pushkin's "The Queen of Spades." When "Princess Mimi" was published in 1838, the same year as "The Queen of Spades," dressing room scenes were obviously en vogue, or in Russian, "на слуху;" literally "on everyone's ears." The scene depicts the old Countess's bedtime ritual, where there is a clash of two temporalities: the refined literary tradition and the bourgeoning realist tradition.

Lyubov Golburt's close reading of the passage explains the significance of the scene and the items of fashion in it. She states that Pushkin utilizes "the temporality of fashion" to highlight "the main tensions of modern life: its discomfort with history, commercialization, narrative, and the body" (142).

Golburt claims that through the presence of fetishistic fashion Pushkin achieves the effect of "the intimacy of both a lover (from the past) and a murderer (of the present time) with the old Countess the way a modern reader strives to achieve in relation to history." According to Golburt, when Hermann observes the dressing room ritual, he has a revelation that is the root of his madness: "Hermann's is a kind of elegiac sensibility, gone awry feigning indifference and
practicality, but miscalculating the danger of the encounter with the past which can strike back and drive one to madness…” (ibid.). Additionally, Golburt states that this boudoir scene became a repeated motif by the 1850s; “copies of the Countess fill the pages of real and fictional family chronicles, which interweave erotic and economic narrative lines.”

The two stories also share the same degree of eeriness. In “The Queen of Spades,” a feeling of uneasiness occurs when the narrator allows the reader a glimpse of the Countess’s aging body in her intimate undressing ritual. In “Princess Mimi,” too, the narrator permits the reader to glimpse Princess Mimi’s beauty routine, with the revelation of an age-ravaged body and her attempts to stop the ravages with extravagant and absurd preparations. The feeling of awkwardness in the room, the realization that the various objects tell their own stories like people, and the haunting reminder of body parts, provide a perception of characters in the story as objects.

As we have seen in Pushkin’s story and in the boudoir description in Odoevsky, the accessories and other items such as a corset or a wig make the characters respectable to outsiders; they construct a person together with the clichés and phrases of polite conversation. Moreover, the specificity of the interest in marriage, which established the plot of society tales, also adds to this perception that social identity is created, rather than inherent.

In “Princess Mimi,” the narrator makes it obvious that the primary goal of socializing for a heroine is to find a suitable husband. However, “husband,” per se, has no significance as any specific person. To find a husband simply means fulfilling social obligations, paying homage to tradition, and simultaneously gaining financial stability. Hence, according to the ideology of this fictional beau monde, a husband does not have true value as a person. The accessories and items
of clothing, similar to the topics of gossip, intensify the sense of theatricality and a perception of events on the surface.

This reduction of humans to the level of objects is representative of the nature of speculative gossip itself. Spacks, when analyzing George Eliot’s *Middlemarch*, specifies that the constant assessment and speculation about people turn them into “objects of discussion by one another—objectified rather than subject—people lose human reality, figuring as pawns in the social game” (Spacks 172).

Spacks locates speculative gossip in novels by Gaskell and Trollope, in which nobility, or “old money,” use gossip to protect their assets against interlopers “by talking about them, asserting their own status as sole signifiers” (Spacks 172). At times, even the interlopers use speculative gossip to launch themselves in a new hostile environment (Spacks 170). Furthermore, speculative gossip, due to its primary function of sizing up others, produces a greater awareness of material reality in the fictional universe rather than in actual life: “when a heroine finds a wealthy suitor, everyone talks about the fact, and her stock rises. If she loses the suitor, she loses capital. As she declines in social stature she becomes a safer and a more vulnerable target for gossip, her decline consequently ever more precipitous” (Spacks 175).

The dynamics of socializing among characters in “Princess Mimi,” are also representative of the stock market. The social weight and the value of women fluctuate daily, similar to stock prices. For example, “the little flirt who yesterday sought Mimi’s protection was now herself already speaking in the tones of a protector” because of her appropriated status of the well-married woman (“Princess Mimi” 7). In the meantime, readers also receive hints from the narrator that Princess Mimi’s value has declined with time, unsuccessful courtships and visible

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38 Spacks locates speculative gossip in the novels by Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot and Edith Wharton (Spacks 172).
signs of aging, from which she becomes a target of gossip by way of smirks and whispers, reducing her stock to the level of castoff furniture:

Её положение сделалось нестерпимо: всё вокруг её вышло или выходило замуж... Мими оставалась одна, без голоса, без подборы... Хозяйка встречала её с холодной учтивостью, смотрела на неё, как на лишнюю мебель...[...] («Княжна Мими” 107).

“Her situation had become unendurable. Everyone in her circle had already married, or was getting married… only Princess Mimi remained on her own, without any such voice or prop...[...]” (“Princess Mimi” 7). Here I use italics to emphasize the point about objectification of women in the fictional society to which Mimi belongs.

The comparison of the unwedded woman to castoff furniture and the usage of the definitive pronoun всё (in its entirety) in reference to other females accentuate the author’s critical observation of the societal norms of Russian beau monde.

As specified earlier, members of polite society, who embody the basis of the society tale, create patterns of social interactions derived from the observation and evaluation of each other. The two stories I will analyze contain gossip as speculation. This type of gossip produces possible (imagined) versions and scrutinizes the causes that led to the scandalous happenstances and the eccentric behavioral patterns of the targets. The main topics of this speculation are usually money and the financial circumstances of the objects of gossip.

For example, the heroes of both stories are objects of gossip not for their suspected immoral and deviant behaviors, but for their unfortunate connections to money. In the case of Vadim Svirskii, a protagonist of Rostopchina’s “Rank and Money,” he was not a wealthy suitor
and this unfortunately prompted the loss of his inamorata, Vera Klirmova, to another man. This ill-fated love story ends in Svirskii’s suicide. Svirskii, already dead at the time of the narration, commits suicide because the woman he loved married a rich man of rank: her parents considered him an unsuitable match as he was neither rich nor of high rank. His death stirs up gossip, labeling him a life floater: one without means and solid social standing.

In “Princess Zizi,” the heroine becomes a pariah due to the tricky games and manipulations of her brother-in-law, Gorodkov. He schemed to marry her sister, and after becoming a widower, attempts to steal the family’s money from Princess Zizi (his deceased wife’s sister). When she fights for her money, he uses gossip to destroy Zizi, a likely impediment to his acquisition of her family’s wealth. The gossip, based on fact, is the scandal created when Zizi, a woman, dares to enter into a legal battle against her brother-in-law.

On the interior level of the narratives, gossip reveals the moods and trends of the community. Rumors are like local newspapers, incorporating all things exciting and important in the social environment. Gossip also uncovers the truth about the inner psychological processes of the gossipmongers and touches upon the imagined realities of Russian life on the brink of change. On the exterior level of the stories, gossip shapes the narrative. Logically, gossip is usually the aftermath, or dénouement, of a communal reaction to explosive events. But in these two stories, the narrative is constructed in response to gossip from the beginning.

Moreover, since the selected society tales usually represent the clash between the diminishing Romantic epoch and the Realist one, gossip works as a mediator between the two. Gossip reduces the loftiness of the Romantic discourse, and introduces the pedestrian chatter of the officials who scrutinize Zizi’s status and her family’s estate, and the overall buzz of the town.
Additionally, the scrutiny of gossip in each tale demonstrates that gossip not only changes perceptions of the protagonist by others on the seminal level, but also changes perceptions of others in a mirroring projection. On the level of contextualization, gossip shapes the character outside of the conventional norms and expectations of the Romantic tradition.

2.3 “Princess Zizi” (1839)

Я не смеюсь, а наблюдаю, каким образом байронизм соединяется с биржею. Если и на наше поколение повеял этот мрачно-промышленный дух, что же будет с новым? («Княжна Зизи» 145).

I am not laughing, but just observing how Byronism is fused with the exchange. If that dark industrial spirit had begun breathing over our generation as well, what would become of the new one? ("Princess Zizi" 69).

This preface represents the opening scene of Odoevsky’s “Princess Zizi” (1834), when the protagonist inquires about the effects of “that dark industrial spirit” on his “romantically-inclined” generation. This inquiry can operate as a principal statement for this work, since it questions how the industrial, capital-infused spirit influenced the evolvement of the Russian Romantic literary tradition. Indeed this opening of the story predicts the dual intertextual system that builds the narrative of this society tale. At first glance, the story appears to follow conventional Russian prose writing of the 1830s that features the plot built around the conflict between an individual and society with reputations and money at stake. In other words, “Princess Zizi” like any society tale features the life of high society played out in drawing rooms, salons and ballrooms, and ends in the heartbreak of the protagonist, resulting from either conforming to
or confronting the demands of the noble society. This is because every society tale offers dilemmas of choice for the main characters: callings of the hearts versus callings of social demands and fiscal concerns.

Thus, the tale “Princess Zizi” is about an unfortunate maiden, who becomes a victim of her brother-in-law’s schemes against her. He uses gossip against Princess Zizi and succeeds in purging her from the map of his financial strategies. The gossip that he generates, while slanderous, is also suggestive of Zinaida’s eccentric, near mad behavior. It ruins her reputation and turns her into a pariah. The story, like other Odoevsky stories, condemns the usual high jinx of high society such as theatricality in public and finances intertwined with romance. In any society tale of that time, money is highly prized, competing even with love, and often surpassing it. To be sure, “Princess Zizi” operates along the canonical requirements of the time.

On the other hand, “Princess Zizi,” due to an intermixture of narrative sources, puts forth unusual plot developments. A more careful reading and analysis of the story’s frame, which gossip helps to decipher, reveals a much more complex plot. As in “Princess Zizi’s” sister tale, “Princess Mimi,” Odoevsky masterfully reflects the transitional phase of the literary discourse with the help of speculation in societal events. Here, however, Odoevsky intentionally creates ambiguity for his readers by not using direct dialogue among his leading characters. The work features fragments of oral and written gossip, and excerpts from correspondence and official documents. Gossip in “Princess Zizi” corresponds with Spack’s definition that “gossip is comprised of half-truths, and represents fictions within fiction” (Spacks 161). The ongoing theme of vagueness and the obscurity of events and characters, create a sense of hesitation in
both the readers and characters. For example, Odoevsky was able to capture via creation of the eerie character of Gorodkov, the changing world around him from idealist aspirations of the nobility to the pragmatic bourgeoning reality. Gorodkov’s character, according to Bagby, possibly served as a prototype for Gogol’s Chichikov (a caricaturist reference to Napoleon) (Bagby 237). Radetsky, for example, shares with his friend why he does not like Gorodkov:

…тут должна скрываться какая-то тайна, над которой я тщетно ломал себе голову. Я не могу скрыть от вас, что поведение г. Городкова мне кажется очень странным: он пользуется прекраснейшей репутацией в свете; он принят в лучших домах; он очень любезен в обращении, но мне не понравился он с первого раза -- и знаете отчего? Он входит в комнату боком, всегда как-то пролезает между людьми (Odoevsky 94).

…There must be hidden here some secret or other, which I have been racking my brains over to no avail. I cannot conceal from you that Mr. Gorodkov’s behavior seems most strange to me. He enjoys the finest reputation in society: he is received into the best houses: he is very amiable in his manner… He sidles into the room; he always somehow creeps around people (Two Princesses 97).

Radetsky describes Gorodkov’s manner of entering the room as “creeping,” which explains the repulsion he feels toward him. This “creeping” illustrates not only Gorodkov’s unsavory qualities as a person, but also helps to explain the overall sense of eeriness of the story. This accurately captures Gorodkov’s overall demeanor, revealing his criminal status as a thief and child abuser. In the story, Gorodkov marries Zinaida’s sister, intending to steal the estate,

39 According to Tzvetan Todorov, it is precisely the sense of hesitation that is responsible for the fantastic in literary pieces and visual art: “Dream or reality; an integration of the reader into the world of the characters. The reader must receive the same ambiguous perception and hesitation” (Todorov 35).
valuable papers and assignations from Zinaida and her family, which is criminal enough. Further, there is a passage describing how he administers unnecessary medication to his and Lydiya’s healthy child to induce illness:

Владимир Лукьянович обратился к другому средству: за несколько дней до выезда он начинал беспокоиться о здоровье своей дочери. "Что это, -- говорил он, -- Зинаида Петровна? кажется, Паша как будто нездорова; посмотрите, и глазки у нее поословели, и кушает мало." Зинаида пугалась, посылала за доктором: доктор советовал дать дитяти гуфландов порошок: тогда дитя действительно занемогало, а княжна, разумеется, оставалась дома (Odoevsky 98).

… Vladimir Lukianovich turned to another route: for a few days before a trip away, he would begin worrying about his daughter’s health. “What do you think it is, Zinaida Petrovna?” he would say, “Pasha doesn't seem very well: just look, her eyes look a bit drowsy and she's not eating very much.” Zinaida would get anxious and send for the doctor; the doctor would advise giving the infant some German powder or other; then the child would really get ill and the Princess, of course, would stay at home (Two Princesses 104).

Gorodkov’s false concern about his daughter’s health is another way to manipulate the women in the household: to keep one from going out and to keep the other one closer to himself through the mutual care of the ill child. Princess Zinaida, simultaneously Gorodkov’s beloved and his nemesis, adds to the sense of eeriness in this story given her belletristic discourse is emotionally charged, chronologically misleading and filled with superfluous details. Odoevsky uses secondhand commentary to tell the story with no direct conversation or firsthand witnessing of
events.

The gossip commences when Radetsky’s guest, in the opening scene, persuades him to tell about his love life. The speculative discourse is fragments from three volumes of personal correspondence:

Я это знаю, и это доказывает твоя коллекция писем в нескольких томах. Только берегись, я когда-нибудь ее украду, хоть для того только, чтобы посмотреть, чем ты мог нравиться женщинам и как уживаются все эти разноязычные соперницы, сдавленные одним и тем же переплетом?

‘I know that, and this is demonstrated by your collection of letters over several volumes. Only look out! Perhaps I should steal it one day, if only to examine how you can be attractive to the ladies and how all these polyglot rivals could get on, crammed between the same covers? (Two Princesses 15).

Radetsky, as both the interior narrator and a character, appears to be the jailer of his former inamoratas whom he memorialized in the letters he shares. This adds to the story’s mysticism. Additionally, the emphasis on food during the recalling of the past, illustrates the gluttonous nature of gossip, which defines the constituent part of this story:

«Хорошо, я тебя потешу, буду сентиментальничать; но только велите давать обедать скорее… («Княжна Зизи» 146).

‘All right, I’ll play it your way; I’ll sentimentalize. Only order dinner pretty quickly… (“Princess Zizi” 71).

Thus, as in “Princess Mimi” gossip removes the mask of Romantic tradition and highlights the
pragmatic values of modern life. Gossip here reduces the exalted Romantic tone of the story and bolsters its pragmatic counterpart.

“Princess Zizi” tells of another spinster, one spinsterhood and gossip does not turn into a monster, as in the case of “Princess Mimi,” but into a “grotesque” woman, outside societal norms (patriarchal conventions). This is because the story of Zizi features her as a vindictive person, one who legally challenges her brother-in-law over financial disputes. Simply put, she is a woman who fights a man for her money and her good name. Additionally, the “grotesque” quality of Zizi’s persona results from her actions and conversations in the form of vague and fleeting speculations about her.

On scrutiny, we see Princess Zizi’s psychopathic tendencies in her confidential letters to her friend Maria. She mentions her jealousy of her sister, whom Gorodkov, her future antagonist, marries, and how she even wants to shred her to pieces: «… я ревную, я готова растерзать Лидию…» («Княжна Зизи» 135), which becomes a juicy piece of gossip. Moreover, for Zizi, unlike other heroines in the first half of nineteenth-century Russian fiction, marriage is not her first priority.

Initially she falls in love with Gorodkov, who became her brother-in-law. He was the first relatively charming young male she had encountered. When Gorodkov marries her sister Lydia, Zinaida’s romantic feelings do not dissipate although she is hurt. Just the opposite, like Richardson’s “Clarissa,” she found loving Gorodkov, despite all the difficulties and pain associated with this love, fulfilling and satisfying. When she meets the present protagonist, Radetsky, a romantically inclined, inexperienced young man, she plays an unkind game with mixed messages: “I love you, I love you not.” He proposes to her twice. Her last refusal is
remarkable and confirms her status as a new literary character, a demonic woman. She lures him into the masquerade, enchants him with her wiles, then ignores him, and finally, when they meet face-to-face, she removes her mask and declares that she is forty-years-old and cannot possibly marry him. Since the readers only hear of this from the protagonist’s memory, the scene leaves a feeling of uncertainty and hesitation about the entire chain of events, as gossip often does.

From a cursory examination of the narrative, Zizi is a victim, a sensitive heroine, raised on sentimental novels, a fan of Zhukovsky and Pushkin, misunderstood by society with ideas about love and life which did not match the pragmatic reality, similar to Svirskii in “Rank and Money.” On closer examination, though, she is a demonic woman, to use Lotman’s term. She has no empathy for either her sister or young Radetsky. She is able to resist Gorodkov and to stand her ground to protect her financial interests and eventually chooses an alternate social station.

Gossip portrays Princess Zizi as strange, greedy and manipulative. People call her *intriganka* and overall strange. However, it is Gorodkov, who is in fact strange, greedy and manipulative, who by jeopardizing Zizi’s reputation, tries to render her legally incompetent. The story is a response to gossip about Princess Zizi’s strangeness. However, it works differently from what we saw in “Princess Mimi” and “Rank and Money.” It serves as a positive agent, reaffirming the unconventional social position of Princess Zizi as a possible victim of life circumstances, morphed into an intimidating masked figure. Instead of talking about her as “damaged goods” and “a bride without dowry,” they talk about her as a menacing entity. After

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40 Lotman explains that together with a revolutionary spirit of the pre-Decembrist movement and other socio-economic changes in Russia, Russian literature saw a new character on the stage, a demonic woman, which stands against the conformation of the traditional social order: “В литературе и в жизни возникает образ «демонической» женщины, нарушительницы правил, презирающей условности и ложь светского мира. Возникнув в литературе, идеал демонической женщины активно вторгся в быт и создал целую галерею женщин-разрушительниц норм «приличного» светского поведения” (Лотман 66).
all, she won her battle and in the end, influences Radetsky, so that he changes from a Romantic into a savvy businessman, who tells her story. Indeed, Zizi is an unconventional nineteenth-century Russian literary female character. Similar to the heroines (Lizas) of Karamzin and Pushkin, she struggles with her own mother, who makes major decisions in her life:

Поутру, пока маменька молится, мы сидим с Лидией на мезонине: она зевает за канвою, я за книгою, ибо я по-прежнему продолжаю красть книги из папенькиной библиотеки: это одна моя отрада. Хоть маменька и не дает нам ключа, говоря, что в этой библиотеке все мужские книги, но я прочла всего Карамзина, всю и"сторию о странствиях аббата Лапорта, весь "Вестник Европы". Мне наконец удалось достать "Клариссу" из шкафа, помнишь, у которого была такая крепкая проволока, -- хоть я оцарапала себе руку, зато наплакалась вдоволь; только последнего тома никак не могу достать: он упал за большой лексikon, и рука никак не доходит, -- такая досада.

Ракитина дала нам несколько разрозненных русских нумеров журналов, -- где недостает конца, где начала; что за охота этим господам писать: продольжение вперед; терпеть не могу этого слова! Но зато я нашла там прекрасные стихи Жуковского и нового стихотворца Пушкина. Постарайся достать его стихов. Ах, никто так хорошо не пишет, как Жуковский и Пушкин! (Odoevsky 63).

Of a morning, while Mama is praying, Lydia and I sit in the attic: she yawns away behind her canvas, as I do behind my book- as I, just as I used to, still steal books from Papa’s library, it is my only comfort. Mama won’t give me the key, though, saying that it’s all men’s books in this library … Mama is angry! But I’ve read all the Karamzin…Whatever we might say, she just gets angry again and complains continuously, about the weather, or about her health, and about other people (Two Princesses 76).
This phenomenon of the well read, and therefore, dangerous woman, receives an epithet in the intellectual tradition of early nineteenth-century Russia, a demonic woman. Russian culture specialist Lotman explains that together with the revolutionary spirit of the pre-Decembrist movement and other socio-economic changes, Russian literature saw a new type of character on the stage, a demonic woman who defies traditional social order:

Indeed, the scandalous (in the eyes of the fictional society that Odoevsky creates here) dynamics between Princess Zizi and Gorodkov has a flare of Slavic folklore when a male protagonist encounters a monster woman, a demon’s daughter (ibid.), in battle. For example, the seemingly prosaic detail about Zinaida seeking alternative ways to live her life such as moving to her female friend’s house, illustrates her “otherness:”
Зинаида оставила дом, переехала к одной приятельнице—у княжны не было ни копейки денег (Odoevsky 83).

Zinaida left home. She moved in with her acquaintance - additionally, she had no money, not a kopeck (The translation is mine).

From that moment on, the readers follow the development of the heroine in the manner of Bildungsroman, from a naïve and sentimental woman the readers witness to Zizi's evolvement into a dangerous vindictive entity. Her first letters, for example, reveal her predictable preoccupation with feminine pursuits: from dressing up, to attending soirées and to romantic expectations. After her brother-in-law sullies her reputation, she loses sight of social boundaries. This provides support for the theoretical claim that gossip indeed cancels social hierarchies and boundaries and demonstrates the loss of significant “polite” norms of conversation:

…”купишь за бесценок -- молва будет, репутации повредишь; нынче умный человек разные обороты имеет -- на такие хитрости подымается, что век гадай, не отгадаешь. Вот что он выдумал, господа: он подъехал к свояченице с турусами на колесах, свел девку с ума, да и отбивает от нее женихов, а между тем в нераздельном имении то крестьян переведет, то пустошь обменяет, то людей на волю выпустит -- вот какой молодец! (Odoevsky 98).

Buy it up for a song, and there’ll be rumours; you’ll damage your reputation. Nowadays the smart man has various tricks up his sleeve—he can get up to such ruses that—take as long as you like, you’ll never guess it. This is what he came up with, gentlemen: he goes up to the sister-in-law with his fine chatter, drives the lass out of her mind, and then repels suitors from her. Meanwhile, in the
indivisible estate, he's moving peasants about, exchanging plots of waste ground, next he'll be setting people free--he's such a fine fellow! (Two Princesses 119).

The conversation indicates how they are verbally trying to assess whether to accept Gorodkov’s offer of a reduced price for Zizi’s property. As the first two lines reveal, this bargain could ruin the reputation of the potential buyer. The salacious preoccupation with the pragmatic details of running the household is an unexpected conversation of polite society in the prose of the 1830s. The reference to Princess Zizi as “девка,” as a simple “broad,” demonstrates not only sexist and overall disrespectful attitudes of the speakers, but also imitates the vernacular of the simple folk. One can interpret this as derogatory to Zizi, but also as her symbolic social liberation.

Interestingly enough, throughout the narrative there are no direct interactions between Zinaida and Lidiya, all are secondhand, as reported by Zinaida in her letters to Mariya. This creates an effect of mirroring or Zizi’s self-reflection. There is an impression that when Zizi (Zinaida) describes her disappointing interactions and quarrels with her sister she self-reflects:

Но иногда в минуты бреда на Лидию находил припадок ревности. -- Что вы на меня смотрите? -- говорила она, -- вы дожидаетесь, скоро ли я умру. Вы любите друг друга... я это знаю. Только берегись, Зинаида! он ужасно хитр и ужасно зол; он и тебя обманет... У него много бумаг, разных бумаг... он все пишет, пишет...
Слова ее превращались в рыдание или хохот (Odoevsky 89).

But occasionally in these minutes of delirium a fit of jealousy would befall Lydia. ‘What are you looking at me for?’ she would say; ‘you are just waiting to see how
quickly I will die. You are in love with each other...I know...But be careful, Zinaida! He is really so cunning and so nasty; he will deceive you as well...'[...]
‘...He has all these papers, piles of different papers... he keeps writing ... writing...’
Her words would then break off into sobbing or laughter (Two Princesses 94).

When reading her sister's warnings that “he will eventually trick you,” there is an impression that with these warnings she (Zizi) targets herself. Therefore, by exercising this symbolic self-reflection, Zizi creates her double. Only when Lydiya dies do the readers witness how Zinaida changes, becoming aware of Gorodkov's treacherous behavior and thus prepares for the estate trial.

The apogee of her transformation is in the final scene with Radetsky at the masquerade. When Zizi takes off her mask and refuses the youth’s marriage proposal, she is not showing her advanced years, but as Lewis Bagby notes: “…she reveals the face of Romance as outworn, old, past” (Bagby 239). The ongoing juxtaposition of romance and pragmatism creates an uncomfortable shift, which is puzzling and perhaps eerie for the readers of this story.

In sum, “Princess Zizi” together with “Princess Mimi” demonstrates how gossip, as one of the primary linguistic means of the society tale genre, dilutes the lofty discourse of refined society and boosts the creative imagination. In “Princess Zizi,” in particular, gossip adds new psychological dimensions and new types of characters to the rigid structure of the society tale.

2.4 “Rank and Money” (1838)

During the high point of Romanticism in Russia, literary audiences witnessed the flood of titles that often appropriated first names, last names and epithets of protagonists. Examples
include: “Natalya the Boyar’s Daughter” (1792), “Poor Liza” (1792), “Julia” (1796) by Nikolai Karamzin, “Svetlana” (1813) by Vassily Zhukovsky, “Evgenii Onegin” (1825-1832) “The Belkin Tales” (1831) by Alexander Pushkin, “The Song of Merchant Kalashnikov” (1837), “Mtsyri” (1840) by Mikhail Lermontov, and many others. Rostopchina’s work stands out in the plethora of early nineteenth-century Russian literary works due to its title. “Rank and Money” features the dominance of materialistic values over emotional concerns; in this story, money wins over love. I suggest that this story’s main players are money and gossip. Again, the author here allows objects to speak, to narrate a story, predicting Marx’s claim about the uncanny ability of objects to speak using the commodity of language. The title of the story suggests the triumph of materialism over Romantic tradition, and most importantly, that objects consume people in the story, not vice-versa as expected.

As I have previously indicated, Rostopchina’s society tale “Rank and Money” is a fragmented story about suicide triggered by a lack of money, a case that sets off various forms of gossip in the narrative. Similar to my reading of The Insulted and Humiliated, I examine and analyze the dynamics of money and gossip in this text to reveal truths about social anxieties, incorporated by the author in her writing. Rostopchina, although not a commercial writer like Dostoyevsky, intellectually invested herself in the emerging development of print culture and journalism.42

41 Marx in his critique of political economy comes up with the concept of commodity fetishism, which contains the unusual approach to the analysis of the relationships between humans under the growth of market systems similar to the relations between things such as objects (labor) and money. In this discussion, Marx also develops the idea that objects have a language, a commodity language, which consists of various references and promises that people impose on objects. For further discussions, please see: Sprinker, Michael. Ghostly Demarcations: a symposium on Jacques Derrida’s spectres of Marx, Verso, 1999. (176-79).

42 For further discussions see: Mark Steinberg, Saint Petersburg Fin de Siecle, Yale University Press, 2011; especially pp. 65-153.
One can trace Rostopchina’s intellectual preoccupation with the birth of the print culture in Russia to her personal letter to Druzhinin (a literary critic and her close acquaintance through the salon culture of Moscow):

Говорить, даже думать мне тягостно; читать могу только газеты, которые меня бесят, и серьёзные вещи, которые несколько отвлекают меня от самосозерцания. Надо отдать справедливость, все библиографические статьи журналов стали превосходны отчасти выкупают плохой отдел литературы. (Москва, 28 октября 1854) (Ростопчина 368).

Not only is it hard to share with anyone, it is even difficult to admit to yourself, that I can read only newspapers, which annoy me dearly, and few serious things, which to a certain degree destruct me from being self-absorbed. One needs to be just, that all bibliographical articles of journals achieved the level of outstanding and somewhat excuse the poor section of nowadays literature. (Moscow, October 28th, 1854) (Rostophchina 368).

This statement reveals Rostopchina’s negative outlook toward changing literary and social tastes.

Further, she proceeds:

Я чувствую себя 50-ю годами старее своих сверстников, так и отстала я от их «интеллектуальности» и «филантропического реализма». Не знаю, как Вам, а мне кажется, что мы пережили свою эпоху и попались в хаос Вавилонского столпотворенья, где идет разноголосица, соединяющая в своем бестолковом шуме все ереси, все лжеученья, все сумасбродства, до которых может только что не каменными побивают за мое служение поэзии и пристрастие к великим людям замогильного поколения; я одна только за
I feel fifty years older than my contemporaries. This is because I am either behind or cannot catch up with their “intellectualism,” their movement of “philanthropic realism.” I do not know, how you feel about this, but it seems to me, that we have outlived our epoch and found ourselves in the middle of a Babylonic pandemonium. Apparently, we live in the place filled with polyphony, which nonsensical noise contributes to all the heresy, all the false doctrines, all the insanities. In all this chaos, they are critical of me, they are almost throwing stones at me for my devotion to the poetry and my rejection of our graveyard generation. Only I am capable of displaying my preference for the wide range of artists of our time; from Schiller and Dickens, to Pushkin. But is my opinion worthy of anything, since I am only a powerless female? (the translation is mine).

This fragment of Rostopchina’s personal correspondence shows that despite the lofty style of the narrative of “Rank and Money,” which is representative of the Romantic tradition there are indications about Rostopchina’s own anxieties toward the new developments within Russian literature and Russian society equally.

Apparently, Rostopchina was not content with the changing world around her. In this confession, she claims that she feels fifty years older than her contemporaries. She refers to her generation as one that already belongs in a graveyard. In other instances, she even calls herself
“already a corpse” and “a living corpse.” By reading Princess Rostopchina’s personal correspondence, we detect her discontent with the changing world in some of her works.

Rostopchina, similar to Gogol and Dostoyevsky, treats money as a liability, a demonic power. Money, or rather the lack of it, triggers the suicide of Vadim Svirskii, the protagonist, driving even more gossip in the wake of his death. Furthermore, there are constant references to some obscure dark forces in the tale:

Нет! Верно, все демоны злобы вооружились против меня, что я так несчастлив (Чины и Деньги 322).

Но зачем же этот невольный страх, порою так неотразимо обвивающий моё сердце? Какой чёрный демон нашептывает мне слова сомнения, слова отрицания? (Чины и Деньги 317).

No! All the demons of malice must have armed themselves against me, that I’m so unfortunate (“Rank and Money” 73).

But why this involuntary fear, which intermittently winds so irresistibly about my heart? What black demon whispers words of doubt to me, words of negation? (“Rank and Money” 70).

The way that “evil” presents itself through superstitious fear of the protagonist and his sudden anxieties suggests that this evil force saturates the entire fabric of the narrative and triumphs over

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43 In her letter to Odoevsky, she writes (Pyatigorsk, 25 May 1844) “…вы хотите посмеяться, посвящая мне “Живого Мертвеца”, мне, которая так на него походит...Это, право, было бы грешно, ибо о друзьях-покойниках велено вспоминать и молиться, а я, если и не совсем покойница, но решительно похоронена в грязи, ссоре и запустении того, что смелом звать московской жизнью…” (Ростопчина 338). “…did you want to make fun of me by attributing “The Living Corpse,” to me, who has so much in common with him… This is really inappropriate and sinful, because you need to pray and remember for your dead friends, but I am not really dead yet, but I am definitely buried, and in a chaos of what they dare to call “Moscow style life…” (my translation).

44 I bring up the idea of blasphemy in relation to money in Rostopchina’s ‘Rank and Money’ earlier in this chapter—it would be better to quickly summarize that point again in the text here.
everything that constitutes “good.” This indicates that evil forces, which I identify as money and gossip, have consumed lives and become the Law in the fictional universe of “Rank and Money.” That is why ghost-like characters dominate “Rank and Money.” Unlike The Insulted and Humiliated, “Rank and Money” does not have an antagonist, like Prince Valkovsky, whom the evil forces of money and gossip use as their physical vessel. In “Rank and Money,” money and gossip represent the ideological agenda of Rostopchina’s fictional universe; they are the Law.

In The Insulted and Injured, as we shall see in the next chapter, evil is physically palpable, even compared to an insect, a spider, something concrete. In “Rank and Money,” the evil forces are abstract and fantastic. The perception of money in “Rank and Money” falls within the norm of Romantic aesthetics and echoes the medieval insight on money, which is demonic. Marc Shell explains this view as the uncanny ability of money, “a fictive Nothing, pretending to be Something” (Shell 68). Additionally, in Renaissance Europe, money was the “devil in specie” (ibid. 69). Similar representations of money as devil’s work appeared in England, Italy, Holland and Russia and later in Germany and France. The perception of money as demonic, fictive and deceitfully seductive, prevailed when money became paper (Shell 142).

The lack of palpability and the chimerical, ephemeral quality of paper money translates to the narrative’s settings. First, the story consists of bits and pieces of personal correspondence of the protagonist, excerpts from his personal diary and even a bit of news from the newspaper, The Moscow News (Moskovskie Novosti). Furthermore, the setting of the tale takes place in two parallel worlds in which the protagonist escapes the oozing reality of a post-fire, unrecognizable Moscow. These two alternative realms of existence of Svirskii are his opium-infused dream.
world and the artificial and farcical replica of the old Moscow beau monde. The access to these worlds provides Svirskii with money.

The tale opens in post-Napoleonic, fire ravaged Moscow. Rostopchina successfully presents a post-apocalyptic, haunting image of this “new” Moscow through Vadim’s eyes:

Сады и бульвары безмолствовали, как будто приговоренные к торжественной тишине египетских развалин, а если кое-где и показывались на них два, три лица, то и они скорее напоминали египетских мумий в расщепренных нарядах, чем свежие, молодые личики, мною отыскиваемые” (Чины и Деньги 295).
“... мне стало пусто и дико в местах, где я был одинок, как будто с неба упавший...” (ibid. 295).

The gardens and avenues were soundless, as if sentenced to the portentous silence of Egyptian ruins, and if two or three faces showed up in some places, then they, too, sooner resembled Egyptian mummies in varicolored attire than the fresh young faces that I was seeking (“Rank and Money” 53).
… it felt empty and strange in a place where I was as alone as if I’d dropped from the sky… (“Rank and Money” 53).

This disturbingly modern landscape of Moscow is slightly futuristic: the protagonist’s self-perception of the new and unrecognizable Moscow was as if he had “dropped from the sky,” as if he finds Moscow as alien as another planet. Svirskii does not recognize people; the ones he encounters he refuses to refer to as people. When Svirskii goes to the theatre, for example:

“Я бросился в театр- и нашёл мрак, темнее осеннего, пару кресел, занятых
…[...] (“Чины и Деньги” 302)

“- he finds there no one from proper Moscow society, but a group of the figures from the world of the dead loudly eating nuts (Rostopchina 84). Those he encounters on the street he compares to Egyptian mummies and ghosts:

“Сады и бульвары безмолвствовали, как будто приговорённые к торжественной тишине египетских развалин, а если кое-где и показывались на них два, три лица, то и они скорее напоминали египетских мумий в распещрённых нарядах, чем свежие, молодые личики мною отыскиваемые” («Чины и Деньги» 295).

“Then out of loneliness I started to visit public places such as gardens and boulevards. But they met me with the solemn silence of Egyptian ruins… And women’s faces passing by me, reminded me more of the dried Egyptian mummies rather than fresh and young faces I imagined”… […] (“Rank and Money” 85).

Furthermore, unlike other society tales that depict the gilded life of the Russian beau monde, “Rank and Money” features a gallery of “commoners,” from the German hotelkeeper to a tax-farmer’s daughter. The reason Rostopchina populates the setting of the burned post-Napoleonic Moscow with “non-conventional” society tale characters may be rooted in a historical event, described by Alfred Rieber. He states that the reconstruction of Moscow following the French occupation and the fire of 1812 offered fresh opportunities for provincials and foreigners to establish new enterprises (140). This socio-economic historical event evidently made its way into Rostopchina’s narrative. Apparently, the author of the tale, a representative of the Old Russian aristocracy, could not simply ignore the changes in Moscow’s social landscape
before the emancipation of the serfs.

Through Vadim Svirskii’s negative perception of the new type of unrecognizable people, Rostopchina also makes it clear to her readers that she does not accept the new public face of Russian society in the following line:

“Москвичи! Вы зажгли свои дома, дома, где родилось, где жило столько ваших предков, дома, где столько поколений оставили свои воспоминания, где таились и ваши собственные…” (“Чины и Деньги” 294).

―Muscovites! You set fire to your houses, houses where so many generations left their memories, where your own recollections dwelled too…” (“Rank and Money” 53).

Although there is an appreciation for the courageous action of the Muscovites, one also can sense that there is a bitter undertone of concealed accusation and regret. This statement shows mourning for the old, forever lost Moscow. The door to the “lost paradise,” the world of gallant manners and ornate ballrooms, opens for Svirskii with the wedding invitation of his old acquaintance, L. But as L’s marriage is a misalliance and travesty, the world into which Svirskii receives his invitation is phantom-like and unreal, similar to an opium-infused dream. And this reality, at the end is fatal for Vadim.

L shares with Svirskii his news that he is marrying a tax-farmer’s daughter:

“Завтра моя свадьба,— сказал он мне,— женюсь на дочери богатейшего и счастливейшего откупщика; беру изрядную невесту и красивый миллион в
придачу!"
Я прежде поздравлял его с невестою- тут должен был поздравить с миллионом, который, казалось, несравненно более занимал Л... ("Чины и деньги" 296).

"Tomorrow’s my wedding," he told me, “I am marrying the daughter of the richest and the most fortunate tax-farmer; I’m getting a pretty bride and a beautiful million into the bargain!"
Earlier I’d congratulated him on his bride—now I had to congratulate him on the million, which seemed to absorb him incomparably more... ("Rank and Money" 54).

Here Rostopchina switches adjectives, calling the million beautiful and the bride "изрядная" meaning “hefty,” “significant” to accentuate the irony of the situation. Reducing women to the rank of objects is an ongoing motif in Rostopchina’s fiction. Svirskii, in the opening passage of the tale, confesses to Katya (his sister) how bitter and indifferent he became in his pursuit of true love, the love he long imagined. He became so jaded that even when writing “a passionate letter” to the next “love of his life, he would indifferently puff his pipe ("Rank and Money" 85).

Одна после другой, женщины мелькали перед моими глазами, были в моих объятиях, не оставляя по себе ни тени заветного воспоминания, ни минуты сожаления («Чины и деньги» 293).

One woman after another passed before my eyes was in my arms without leaving a shadow of a cherished memory or a minute of pity behind her ("Rank and Money" 85).
Svirskii would consume women as he consumes tobacco with cold indifference:

Я насильно забирал себе в голову двухдневную фанта — но только для того, чтобы не отставать от резвых товарищей моей молодости...

... систематически брал кольца, ленты, волосы; спокойно, раскуривая трубку, писал письма, дышавшие страстью, получал записочки на атласистой бумажке и отправлял в огонь все эти трофеи моих шалостей, когда арсенал мой ими наполнялся. Но при всём этом сердце моё билось так же ровно, как в детстве за геометрическим чертежом, и в моей душе было пусто, как в глуши степной... (—Чины и Деньги‖ 292).

By force, I took a two-day fantasy into my head—but only so as to follow the fashion... I systematically took rings, ribbons, hair; calmly puffing at my pipe, I would write letters that breathed passion; I would receive messages on satiny paper and I threw into the fire all these trophies of my pranks when my arsenal became filled with them. But during all this my heart beat as evenly as in childhood during geometry drawings, and my soul was as empty as the depth of the steppes” (“Rank and Money” 85).

The listing of *trophies* such as ribbons, rings and hair represents Svirskii’s collection of female mementoes, a poignant reduction of women to the level of objects. Additionally, Rostopchina uses her character’s scopophilic pleasure of gazing upon Vera’s good looks to accentuate the reduction of females to the level of objects (trophies) in this story and the overall theatricality of Svirskii, after he receives L’s wedding invitation. Regardless of his proclaimed love for Vera, Svirskii objectifies her as well:

И я в самом деле- посмотрел! … тут красавицы развлекали взоры, дробили
внимание, не давали разглядеть себя поодиночке- так много было их в большой зале. Первые минуты бала я провел в чаду, в волнении страстного любителя живописи, которого заставили бы пробежать галереи del palazzo Pitti, не дав ему остановиться ни перед одной картиной, и в воображении которого всё виденное мельком долго рисуется в фантастическом беспорядке... Но скоро глаза мои остановились на моём vis-à-vis, восемнадцатилетнем личике, в котором нашёл я что-то столь пленительное... Мои взоры, как околдованные, не могли с ней расстаться («Чины и деньги» 297).
loving one with the seductive theatricality of the ballrooms and an overall playful travesty. However, the feminist psychoanalytic interpretation evokes the sense that the voyeur will receive his punishment, a symbolic castration along the lines of the development of the plot. Indeed, as soon as Vadim decides to cut the visual distance and to become an active participant in this farce by proposing to Vera, the matters within this realm of the artificial high society turn gruesome.

The subject of marriage is unavoidable in society tales; it agitates the plot and activates the forces of money and gossip. In the plot of “Rank and Money,” the hero’s downfall is inevitable with the proposal of marriage.

Rostopchina is one of the first “feminist” writers to provide a detailed “physiological” description of marriage in the story, showing her absolute revulsion of it. As if providing a precise “cultural study” of Russian marriage, she describes the process of getting married as a monotonous, unhappy, enforced ritual. Rostopchina creates a heavy, depressing atmosphere, which bemoans the described event:

…The ceremonious arrival of the fiancé with a proposal, the formal communication from her parents, excuses, tears, and finally, the agreement…a ceremonious engagement, trips without pause to shops and stores, and to complete it all—a Turkish shawl and the right to disfigure the lovely little face with an ugly cap and heavy toque! That’s the way the majority of families teach their poor young girls to think about the most important business in life… (“Rank and Money” 87).

This list of clothing (a Turkish shawl, an ugly cap and a heavy toque) and the description of the marriage ceremony, with its obvious cultural connotations, bring to mind the “barbaric” custom
of veiling women. In addition to the aforementioned materialism and sadness used to describe marriage, the veiling of a woman often symbolizes death. According to Soledad Caballero in *The Gothic Other* (2004), because the dead are often covered with fabric, the veil represents a “black cloth” that can be linked to the death cloth (Anolik 152).

The mark of death, for instance, as the result of a marital affair, is present in Princess Sophia, Vera’s sister. Her mother (Madame Klirmova) married her off to a man that Sophia had seen only once, trading her for the man’s rank and money. There is not a clear understanding as to whether Sophia’s marriage is happy or not, but her appearance suggests a shadow-like existence, like one who is half-dead:

Cold and silent… She seemed to have had her day and to be detached when everything around her was alive and in a state of ferment. A habitual pensiveness remained in her as the result of some grief… The absence of all animation and a kind of grief in all her bodily movements, even in her voice—everything about her expressed a slain soul and the complete insignificance of a will that had been broken too many times too cruelly. She was older than her sister by a few years, but she had left behind her whole youth, the entire flower of life (Rostopchina 89).

Right after Vera’s marriage, when the reader sees her in the church for the last time, the same look of despair appears on her face: “Her features were regular, attractive, noble, but so exhausted by suffering and tiredness with life; she was so thin, so pale, that her youth was puzzling. Her eyes were large and black, but lacked fire, lacked life, lacked focus” (ibid. 99). The author does not clearly tell her reader that this is Vera; she just refers to her as “another woman.”
It is as if Rostopchina wants her audience to guess at the identity of the mysterious woman under the silk veil. There is also a constant usage of the verbs *to cover*, or the passive form of *to adorn*, in the description of married women (the mother, Princess Sophia and Vera). These verbs specifically describe the way female characters in the story wear silk and diamonds. For example, when the newly engaged Vera is dressed to perfection, she is surprisingly described, “She! Dressed, adorned…” (ibid. 97); and when confronting Sophia’s argument about the right to choose one’s marriage partner, Klirmova throws at her, “What do you lack: you’re dazzling, you’re covered in diamonds…” (ibid. 89). Such usage of the verbs *to cover*, *to be adorned*, and *to be dressed* all directly refer to “veiling,” or to the covering of a dead body. Paired with such nouns as silk and diamonds, these verbs help to create a picture, linked perhaps to the luxuriously adorned sarcophagi of Egyptian mummies.

The haunting connection between money, marriage and death is emphasized in Madame Klirmova’s need to find Vera an appropriate match: “She included in her list not only all the rich widowers and old men, but even two senators who had already prepared graves for themselves in a famous cemetery…” (ibid. 91). This description of possible candidates for Vera’s hand has gothic overtones. They are widowers and grave owners who are still alive. Moreover, Madame Klirmova literally threatens to kill Vera, to drown her in the river if she dares to marry a penniless man. She angrily hisses, “…if such a disaster were to happen, then I’d throw you in the Moscow river as fast as possible; I’d sooner see you underground than give you to a beggar, to trash, to an unsuitable urchin…” (ibid. 91). Rostopchina succeeds in her description of the repulsive truth about the values of middle eighteenth-century Russian high society. She depicts a society where aging wealthy “vampires” purchase victims from their own mothers to satiate
themselves with young blood.

The matter of Svirskii’s death (his suicide), which is the dénouement of “Rank and Money’s” plotline, connects two seemingly disparate themes: money and death. Marital customs of high society shackled Svirskii. Madame Klirmova (Vera’s mother), in a conversation with Princess Sophia (Vera’s sister) about Vera’s marriage, clarifies the importance of rank and money (justifying the story’s title) when describing a possible match for Vera:

Now, I’m crafty—I won’t marry her off to parvenu! The match for her is a man who is distinguished, who has risen to a higher rank, who’s earned his ribbons, or a man whose status gives him a decent position in society. And you, miss, how did you marry? For love? And aren’t you grateful to me that I didn’t heed your foolish tears? What do you lack: you’re dazzling, you’re covered in diamonds, and you’re received everywhere, it couldn’t be better… […] (“Rank and Money” 91).

Madame Klirmova’s tirade confirms that she is going to decide Vera’s destiny in the manner of a skilled merchant who sells goods for the right price. Money functions as a mediator between notions of marriage and possession, and symbolically claims its reward—human life. “Rank and Money” reveals the author’s repulsion of a changing society, where money is simultaneously “the core of all evil” but yet an essential element of life. Svirskii’s suicide in a hotel room on Tverskaya brings the narrative back to physical reality from the artificial world of the stylized replica of Moscow’s high society.

На следующий день в одной из гостиниц на Тверской заметно было странное волнение. Прислуга бегала из этажа в этаж, из номера в
The next day in one of the hotels on Tverskaya Street a strange phenomenon was noticed. Servants ran from one floor to another, from one room to another. The hotel owner was distressed and frightened… On the stairs and in the entrance bustled doctors, police, and so forth, and so on… The old servant in tears tried to confirm his suspicions, and on the sofa lay a motionless corpse. Vadim’s story was finished (“Rank and Money” 78).

Indeed, as I remarked earlier, the addiction to the imaginary world or the unwillingness to release dreams of the past lead to this dénouement. One could interpret this suicide as another way to escape reality, but Rostopchina’s intent is clear when she states, “Vadim’s story had come to an end.” She kills her protagonist. By choosing a male as her protagonist, Rostopchina endeavors to explore forbidden boundaries, which are otherwise unattainable due to the norms of gender. The androgyny of her character allowed her to experience travel to distant realms, to play the role of an opium-eater, and an unfortunate gallant lover. But then, she kills him off. Rostopchina once confessed to her friend F. A. Koni: “я держу перо в руке как орудие, единственно нам данное против вас; я стараюсь воспроизводить женщин наиболее интересными, а мужчин как можно пошле...” (Ростопчина 378) - “I am holding a plume like a weapon. The only weapon that was given to me, against you, men. I try to create women more interesting, and men more trivial” (Rostopchina 378).
In the fictional world, this suicide stirs up gossip for several reasons. First, the scene at the hotel strikes readers with a switch from the lofty high style of narration to the prosaic, matter of fact language of the press. This reflects the new social phenomenon of the time, an increased suicide rate in nineteenth-century Russia, often mentioned in newspapers (Morrissey 269). Apparently, the nature and causes of suicide triggered curiosity in people. Because “the law treated suicide as a sin, not a crime,” the topic was taboo for “legal” discussions, leaving people to gossip about the matter (Paperno 62):

People in Moscow talked about the event for about a week. Opinions and rumors were conflicting. In the English Club people insisted that Svirskii had gone bankrupt, and perhaps had even lost government money. In drawing rooms, in society, people maintained that a rich bride had refused him. Ultraromantics vegetating in Pedotti’s confectionery shop and in studies to complaints about the universe repeated with a sigh that Vadim had got bored with the vile stagnant, incoherent life (Rostopchina 99).

The possible causes of Svirskii’s suicide reflect the values of the svet, which is to deny the actual cause of the suicide. Such denial represents a primitive, ritual-like activity that exorcises something undesirable from the community.

Gossip is always present in the society tale genre because firstly, it controls behavioral patterns of others, keeps the community and social formation together and sets formal boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not for that particular community (Ben-Yishai 89). Secondly, gossip functions as a mediator of anxieties in society, as a social pacifier, because it is easy to alter the information from a gossipmonger to its recipient to please either of them (Rosnow 88).
All of these suggested pieces of information identified as gossip transform the passive audience into active readers because they have the freedom to draw their own conclusions from information received. According to Morson, “reality disappoints or disillusion,” and “the realist novel means to be understood as objective truth-telling,” but it is nevertheless fictitious, and therefore the reader has his own understanding of what he has just read. By doing so, he becomes an active participant in the narrative (381).

Three months later, one could read in the *Moscow News* the headline: “Departing for Abroad to Germany, to the mineral waters, General-major Baron Hochberg with his wife, the Baroness Vera Grigorievna” (“Rank and Money” 99). Here gossip is a “typed trustworthy word,” which the attentive reader recognizes as gossip, hidden among important messages of a trip to the mineral waters (Rosnow 89).

This type of gossip functions as a mediator of societal norms, because it makes everything appear within the framework of societal dogmas and virtues. However, the attentive reader intuits this news as the prediction of Vera’s death. In addition, Rostopchina’s incorporation of a newspaper article in the narrative celebrates industrial progress and the forthcoming modernism in fiction.

An additional motif of gossip is present during Madame Klirmova’s conversation with Princess Sophia, where they discuss Vera’s destiny. “The scene took place where scenes of that kind normally take place, at the table, the court of malicious gossip, the domestic council of decorum” (Rostopchina 90). The purpose of this conversation is to retrieve information from Madame Klirmova on her prospects regarding Vera’s future. For Princess Sophia it is necessary to know her mother’s thoughts on Vera’s marriage, but at the same time not to raise suspicions
regarding Svirskii and Vera. For Madame Klirmova, it is a role in and of itself. She is a gossipmonger and an aggressive mediator dictating boundaries of propriety. She is in charge of assessing other people’s wealth and categorizing them accordingly. In a similar manner, Jane Austen’s heroine is usually dependent or “possessed” by the gossipmonger, because the gossip maker is involved in “marketing” or a “PR campaign” in the field of marriage and possesses all the pertinent information. The gossip maker also influences choices in courtship and in marital affairs (Gordon 47).

Such a claim, however, belongs to two top groups of people: those that spend their leisure time in the English Clubs (probably senators by occupation), and those that represent the survivors of the old aristocracy, the core of High Society. The final irony though, is that Svirskii commits suicide because he cannot have Vera due to a lack of money and rank. Moreover, Vera, despite rank and money and despite her travels abroad to mineral waters dies young, shortly after marriage, most likely of consumption.

In sum, the analysis of the dynamics of money and gossip in “Rank and Money” reveals the writer’s own anxieties as a reaction to the changing environment and the decay of the salon culture and the very concept of beau monde. As a female poet, Princess Rostopchina is repulsed at the idea that the crude and corruptive force of money changed the writer and the readers.

As I indicated in the introductory claim in this study, the dynamics of money and gossip in nineteenth-century Russian fiction operate as a unified force that targets and disrupts the narrative as well as societal structures and relationships within them. Nineteenth-century fictions employ tropes of money and gossip as a device driving their plots to capture social anxiety in the form of an artistic response to modernization. In this chapter, I argue that analysis of the fictional
works in which gossip and money drive the narrative may reveal truths about economic realities that helped authors of the selected texts shape their fictional universe.

According to historians Alfred Rieber and Carlos Sabillon, in the first half of the nineteenth century, Russian society witnessed the impoverishment of the nobility, the rise of the merchant class and erratic reforms of the rulers, which included appropriating the railroad system, austere tax and tariff policies and the introduction of manufacturing. Despite all the measures to modernize Russia, the country remained, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, in socio-economic stagnation.

Throughout most of the imperial period, Russia had a well-defined caste society due to its rigid social system and serfdom (Rieber xxiii). This prevented the development of potential spheres of production, which were necessary for the growth of the domestic product. This caused a delay of growth in all sectors of the economy. Additionally, after the Napoleonic Wars, attempts to promote manufacturing failed due to the Russian nobles’ unwillingness to foster the middle class. They did not want to repeat the mistakes of the French aristocracy, thus providing a ready market for British imports to flood the Russian empire.

The Napoleonic wars, the events at the Senate square and the loss of the Crimean War contributed to the overall financial stagnation, stopped Russian banks from growing and prevented savings from growing (Sabillon 121). Economic stagnation—a byproduct of modernization efforts—helped to create an environment in which the gothic novel flourished. In sum, nineteenth-century Russia was on the brink of major socio-economic reforms such as the emancipation of serfs (1860) and the growth of the print culture and increased authorial anxiety, represented in art through tropes of the gothic and themes of money and gossip.
In “Rank and Money,” the protagonist, Vadim Svirskii, dead from the beginning, represents the end of the Romantic tradition and the end of the privileged class of nobility. The story is about Svirskii’s suicide, triggered by a lack of money, with the news delivered by means of gossip. Money and gossip saturate the entire fabric of the narrative. Moreover, money and gossip are a measure of social order and law, and Svirskii acknowledges it:

Я вспомнил требования общественных приличий, вспомнил закон света: “Имеющему дастся!” […] (302).

I recalled the demands of social propriety, recalled the law of society: “To those who have shall be given!” […] (59).

This phrase is an appropriation of Matthew 25:29: “for everyone who has will be given more.” Rostopchina, by changing the context of the saying and using one of the well-known biblical maxims, criticizes the norms of Moscow’s beau monde and creates a symbolic act of blasphemy. This reflects Rostopchina’s perception of high society life (Law) as an artificial and corrupt world. But even more so, this phrase “to those who have shall be given” uncannily precedes the Marxist maxim that “capital gains capital.” Additionally, according to John Vernon, money is a sign of reality in the novel, “but it is also fictional, chimerical, romantic” (18):

It transforms real human and natural faculties into mere representations, i.e., imperfections and tormenting chimeras; and on the other hand, it transforms real imperfections and fancies, faculties which are really impotent and which exist only in the individual’s imagination, into real faculties and powers (19).
In the new paper forms, money and gossip became more influential in real life and even more so in fiction. Money gained more fluidity, became more chimerical and fictional, while gossip, especially in newspaper columns, gained a certain degree of credibility and influence. Also, the forms of paper money and gossip in novels, such as promissory notes, banknotes, wills, newspaper excerpts, personal diaries and letters, have an omnipresence, which dictates the unfolding of events. By granting money and gossip the status of three-dimensional characters, nineteenth-century fiction authors imitated the new conditions of life and revealed changes in the social order.
CHAPTER 3
THE DEAD, THE MAD AND THE PURLOINED GOOD(S)

This chapter opens with a discussion of money in Dostoevsky’s works. I believe that Boris Christa’s analysis of “The Meek One” and Susan McReynolds’s work on the role of money in The Brothers Karamazov provide a solid foundation for understanding the mechanism of money in Dostoevsky’s fiction. Victor Terras and Lydia Ginzburg’s theory of the organicity of genre developments provide a contextual framework for my argument and evidential support. Dostoevsky’s novel, The Insulted and Injured, exemplifies the contrived commercial interests of Dostoevsky and demonstrates how the author uses money to shape the central conflicts of his plots.

The analysis of his two novels The Insulted and Injured and The Idiot shows that money and gossip function differently than in the previous chapters. Fiscal matters and speculative gossip as content and as devices for the telling and shaping of the story charge these two novels by Dostoevsky.

To have a clear understanding of my claims of the catalyst-like workings of money and gossip in Dostoevsky’s works, it is necessary to remind the readers of the previous findings along these lines, from Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 1, which discusses money separately from gossip, reveals how fiscal issues dominate over romance. In Karamzin’s work, “Poor Liza,” Erast, the protagonist, uses money to gain love; in “The Queen of Spades,” Hermann uses love to gain money. In Gogol’s “The Portrait,” money not only taints the plot via an unexpected windfall from the past that corrupts the spirit of the young artist Chartkov but also influences the
mechanism of the narrative. The analysis of gossip in Chapter 2 reveals the striking similarity with the function of money in the narrative as an artistic device. In “Princess Mimi,” Odoevsky uses gossip to ridicule the exaggeratedly sophisticated fictional world of the Russian nobility; gossip also uncovers the mechanisms of genre developments from the romantic to the physiological. Gossip, similar to money, destroys romance and the refined domain of royalty.

In Odoevsky’s “Princess Zizi,” gossip originates with a slew of legal documents and instead of featuring, as usual, the depth of someone’s personal life it focuses on fiscal affairs and legal disputes. Rostopchina’s story, “Rank and Money,” introduces gossip via the various settings such as the English Clubs and confectionaries, places indicative of the interests and social standing of the people that fabricate gossip. This nuanced accentuation of gossip’s background shows that gossip appropriates features of the everyday occupations and whereabouts of the people who are responsible for its creation.

In conclusion, Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate that money and gossip preserve their status as social currency, and their ability to stand for fiction within fiction. Money and gossip as expressive devices not only destroy the socio-economic hierarchies, but also serve as an artistic device for ridiculing the fictional universe of the characters that populate the domain of romance. The previous stories by Karamzin, Pushkin and Odoevsky, at first, attempt to represent a beautiful and refined world of the sublime and the beautiful. However, unresolved fiscal matters and gossip burst the bubble of romance and trivialize the initially attractive and complex characters of these stories.

The primary research question for this chapter is whether money and gossip in Dostoevsky’s realist novels function similarly to the previous narratives. Often in the fictional
romanced world of sentiments and ballrooms, money and gossip invite the presence of pragmatic reality. This question pertaining to the distinctiveness of the workings of gossip and money in Dostoevsky’s fictional domain carries a foremost precedence: several Dostoevsky specialists observe how money and gossip dominate Dostoevsky’s fictional world and represent complex maxims of the socio-economic changes of that era (Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 221).

In the previous stories, which are closer in time to the Romantic tradition, money is a corruptive agent, metaphorically representing avarice, yet it is still simply money or material wealth. In Dostoevsky, whose fictional universe is realistic, money takes on a larger conceptual character. Money influences the actions of the characters and situations in the narrative, turning a mundane and prosaic world into one of extreme passions, crimes and ludicrous occurrences. Money overwhelsms the narratives and speaks through his characters. Moreover, Dostoevsky lived on the brink of poverty for much of his life. Money was more than just a subject of his narratives; money, or the lack of it as the case may be, was personally relevant. Perhaps, as the reading of The Insulted and Injured and The Idiot will demonstrate, money for Dostoevsky represents a sense of personal dignity and his family’s security.

И заметили вы, князь, в наш век все авантюристы! И именно у нас, в России, в нашем любезном отечестве. И как это так устроилось- не понимаю. Кажется, уж крепко стояло, а что теперь? Это все говорят и везде пишут… Вон, в Москве, родитель уговаривал сына ни перед чем не отступать для добывания денег; печатно известно. Ипполит ростовщичество оправдывает, говорит, что так и нужно, экономическое потрясение, какие-то приливы и отливы, чёрт их дери (PSS 6: 138).45

...And have you noticed, Prince, how everybody’s on the make these days! Here I mean, in Russia, in this beloved country of ours. How it all came about, I’ve no idea. Everything seemed to be so solidly based, but what’s it like now? That’s what everybody talks about and people write about it everywhere. They expose things... Parents are the first to go on the retreat and feel ashamed at their former moral values. In Moscow now a father tried to persuade his son to stop at nothing when it came to making money; it was in the papers... They’re all money-lenders, every last one! Ippolit defends money-lending, he says it has to be that way, economic crisis, the ebb and flow of capital, blast it... (The Idiot 138)

The chapter starts with this passage, a critique of the bourgeoning world of pragmatism by Kolya Ivolgin, a young friend of Prince Myshkin and the adolescent brother of Ganya and Varya Ivolgin. Unlike his father and brother, Kolya is an even-tempered person, who possesses desirable qualities sought by most people.

Kolya Ivolgin shares with Prince Myshkin his uneasy perceptions about the changing world order. According to Kolya, the world has changed from one of stability and predictability to one in flux, unfamiliar and hostile. Kolya’s complaints about the changes mirror the conceptual representation found in the stories featured in this dissertation, which I believe make this monologue an appropriate introduction to this chapter. As I indicated in the main thesis of this dissertation, money and gossip, often signs of pragmatic reality in fiction, reflect the changes and authorial anxieties triggered by these socio-economic events.

For example, Kolya’s phrase “в наш век все авантюристы” returns us to Chapter 1, which provides a conceptualization of money when introducing the stories of “Poor Liza,” “The
The desire to belong initially drives the characters in these stories like Chartkov, for example, to have social recognition and a need for stability, but they wind up desiring money and security that they believe it represents. Erast, Hermann and Chartkov represent a gallery of people seeking easy money despite the consequences. Erast, as we remember, goes bankrupt, and in order to maintain his social standing, simply marries a rich widow. To make the breakup with Liza easier he tells her that their separation and his forced marriage to the rich widow is the result of his sudden bankruptcy. Nevertheless, it causes her heartbreak and drives her to suicide.

Chartkov, instead of following the advice of his professor to perfect his skills as an artist through life experiences and persistence, chooses an easy path as a commercial painter. He paints reproductions for a clientele who wish to emulate glorious figures of history and antiquity. By pursuing easy money through commercial art, Chartkov clearly trivializes his true talent.

In “The Queen of Spades,” Hermann’s insatiable desire to acquire the secret of the three cards drives him to consider extreme options, even fleetingly entertaining the idea of becoming the eighty-year-old woman’s lover. However, with time constraints, he instead intrudes upon the old woman in her bedroom and threatens her with a pistol, demanding the winning combination. This intrusion, unfortunately, ends in the old woman’s death from fright.

From this brief recollection of the plots of the stories I analyzed in the previous two chapters, it is clear that these three characters are all inclined to varying degrees of dishonesty, similar to the “swindlers” that Kolya mentions in his monologue. Returning to Kolya’s tirade, we see how his complaints about socio-economic changes define the overall atmosphere of a bygone

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46 In Russian, “avanturist” comes from the Latin word meaning a peddler, an opportunist. It also means плут, пройдоха, делец meaning a swindler, a hustler; the one, who is able to cheat, to steal and pass by in life with all the possible means (http://ozhegov-dictionary.info/Словарь Ожегова/61/Авантюрист).
Russia, one he no longer recognizes, and now home for such unsavory characters: “... уж крепко стояло, а что теперь Ипполит ростовщичество оправдывает, говорит, что так и нужно, экономическое потрясение, какие-то приливы и отливы, чёрт их дерн».

As the world turned upside down with distorted moral values, the apocalyptic image of Russia that Dostoevsky provides through Kolya’s words also fits the profile of the artistic representations by Karamzin, Pushkin, Gogol and Odoevsky. In summary, this monologue uncovers the functions of money and gossip as signs of pragmatic reality and the means of social exchange in the fictional universe in Russian literature of that period.

Before going into the detailed reading of *The Insulted and Injured* and *The Idiot*, I want to add that Dostoevsky, while often secretive about his personal views in general, expresses himself openly via his feuilleton sketches. I also believe that his fictional works, which are replete with themes of money and gossip, contain the traits of this style of writing. In addition, within fictional settings of these mid-nineteenth century works by Dostoevsky, gossip appropriates a new feature, “professionalization.” The paid “gossiping” characters in the selected works fully expect to benefit from gossip in every way possible. This phenomenon of professionalization of gossip I pinpoint, for example, in Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*.

In the opening scene of *The Idiot*, when Myshkin meets Rogozhin on the train, the readers cannot help but notice the imposing presence of the busybody, Lebedev. He appears to be a fan of Rogozhin’s family, given his knowledge of personal information of the Rogozhins, father and son. At first, Lebedev irritates Rogozhin, but in the end Rogozhin invites Lebedev to go with him with the following phrase: “А ты ступай за мной, строка,- сказал Рогожин Лебедеву» (12) - “H’m! well – here, you fellow – you, meddling, can come along with me now if
you like!” cried Rogozhin to Lebedev, and so they all left in the carriage (*The Idiot* 14). This is an example of how Lebedev earns his reputation as a “know it all.”

Rogozhin invites Lebedev to join him, calling him a “line,” referring to a newspaper line, which is lost in every English translation of *The Idiot*. This is a nickname for journalists of Dostoevsky’s time, in other words, for people who earn their living by gathering the city gossip and inventing stories about the rich and the famous. Indeed, from that moment on, Lebedev freely charges food and drink to either Rogozhin or Myshkin’s accounts, and in the end, also receives some financial support for his children from Myshkin.

This example not only illustrates the new “modern” form of gossip and its function as social currency, but it also demonstrates that both money and gossip provide better access to good social standing and power. It shows that money and gossip are simultaneously the means to one’s ruin and together, they are likely to pave the way to one’s immediate success, as these stories reveal.

Although Dostoevsky accepted as positive some of the changes in the socio-economic progression of Russian society, such as the emancipation of serfs and the expansion of the railroad system, he was fearful of Russia appropriating capitalism as its main socio-economic structure, like Britain. For example, Dostoevsky’s anxiety about Russia’s emulation of Western ways is evident in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (1862). In this work, he compares the city of London to the kingdom of Baal for its tarnished and overall corruptive spirit.47

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47 It is the same in London, but what vast, overwhelming scenes! Outwardly, what a difference from Paris! A city, bustling day and night, as immense as the sea; the screeching and howling of machines; the railroads built over the houses (and soon under the houses); that boldness of enterprise; that seeming disorder which in essence is bourgeois order in the highest degree; that polluted Thames; that air saturated with coal dust; those magnificent public gardens and parks; those dreadful sections of the city like Whitechapel with its half-naked, savage, and hungry population. A city with its millions and its worldwide trade, the Crystal Palace, the International Exposition… Yes, the exposition is striking. You feel a terrible force that has united all these people here, who come from all over the
In this emotionally charged section conveying his impressions of London, I believe that Dostoevsky unveils his anxieties about what he sees, and is apparently fearful that Russian society may soon embrace this capitalist structure, especially when Dostoevsky specialists have characterized the author’s negative impressions of London as his prediction for Russian society in the *fin-de-siecle* (Hudspith 51). Dostoevsky describes the masses of the English working class as “disposable automatons.” According to Dostoevsky, the women he encounters in the Haymarket area are simultaneously beautiful and horrifying. He finds beauty when describing a young woman with a pale face drinking gin, admitting that British women have an unusual haughty, cold beauty about them. The horrifying part is when the author notes that these women act like automatons, lacking emotion or animation, passively accepting physical abuse. Apparently, Dostoevsky, by detailing the horrifying conditions of the prostitutes and factory workers in the Haymarket area, suggests that capitalistic exploitation is responsible for the dehumanization of people.

These impressions of one of London’s unfortunate districts are detectable in *The Idiot* and in *The Insulted and Injured*, in a recurring theme as the exploitation of one human by another. For example, the capitalist Totsky entertains exploiting Nasta’sya Filippovna anew, upon noticing certain changes about her, adding to her attractiveness:

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world, into a single herd; you become aware of a gigantic idea; you feel that here something has already been achieved, that here there is victory and triumph. You even begin to be afraid of something.

No matter how independent you might be, for some reason you become terrified. “Hasn’t the ideal in fact been achieved here?” you think. “Isn’t this the ultimate, isn’t it in fact the ‘one fold?’ Isn’t it in fact necessary to accept this as the truth fulfilled and grow dumb once and for all?”

It is all solemn, triumphant and proud that you begin to gasp for breath. You look at this hundreds of thousands, these millions of people humbly streaming here from all over the face of the earth - people who come with a single thought, peacefully, persistently, and silently crowding into a colossal palace - and you feel that here something final has been accomplished, accomplished and brought to an end. It is a kind of biblical scene, something about Babylon, a kind of prophecy from the Apocalypse fulfilled before your very eyes. You feel that it would require a great deal of eternal spiritual resistance and denial not to succumb, not to surrender to the impression, not to bow down to fact, and not to idolize Baal, that is, not accept what is as your idea (*Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* 137) …
Но теперь Афанасий Иванович, прельщенный новизной, подумал даже, что он мог бы вновь эксплуатировать эту женщину. Он решил поселить Настасью Филипповну в Петербурге и окружить роскошным комфортом (31).

The emphasis on the verb “to exploit,” regardless of the casual manner of the narrator, spells out that the conditions are truly horrifying. It refers to the author’s anxiety in the face of the approaching dominance of the capitalist structure and values in Russia during his time.

Taking into consideration Dostoevsky’s views on the social developments of the Western states under the overwhelming power of capital, I will state that money gains a new dimension in Dostoevsky’s novels. It no longer simply introduces the pragmatic material reality as it did in his romantic narratives. For example, Boris Christa notes that money in “Krotkaya” represents financial power and sexual advantage. According to Susan McReynolds, money allows Dostoevsky to question central spiritual agendas by creating puzzling narratives that feature the quest in which redemption through money appears to be plausible. She states that money becomes the means for salvation and the foundation for barter-exchange social relationships, which are imitative of the relationship one has with God: sacrifice in a bid for forgiveness (McReynolds 87-89).

Dostoevsky’s novel *The Idiot* (1861) contains 173 various references to money in all its possible forms, from gold to paper. The intrigue of the sub-stories that shapes the plot of *The Idiot* arises from the characters’ interactions with money, and through money, with each other. Bruce French, who analyzes the nature of money in Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*, claims that money is
the only measure for human dignity in the eponymous incident of burning money. In the notorious scene of Nasta’sya Filippovna’s birthday party, the disinterest in money becomes “the almost single criterion by which goodness is expressed” (French 180). When Nasta’sya Filippovna demands that Gania Ivolgin crawl for the still-burning 100,000 ruble notes and he refuses, she proclaims: «Впервые человека вижу…(36).» “For the first time I see the person, a human here…” After Gania withstands her test, she finally sees something good in him and this makes her understand that Gania and she are on equal terms and that both are the victims of Totsky’s desire to create his own stories.

The three main characters of the novel have an uneasy relationship with money, which contributes to the fantastical situations and outcomes throughout the narrative. For example, the depth of the character of Nasta’sya Filippovna is a result of her tenuous position as a kept woman, a victim of the capitalist Totsky, seeing that he not only reared her but later also bought her. These facts are at the heart of her story. Prince Myshkin unexpectedly inherits money, which comes with a price, his sanity, as Liza Knapp notes (Knapp 31). He is no longer a traveling fool, but a simpleton with a million.

The third main character, Rogozhin, is simply the son of a merchant who sacrificed his entire life to accumulate wealth. As a merchant’s son, he is a money handler by default and his very social being is dependent on monetary exchanges. Therefore, the passions and interpersonal connections such as love and friendship in this novel come with or through monetary transactions. For example, Rogozhin makes his moves on Nasta’sya Filippovna with expensive gifts; Myshkin attracts attention only after he inherits money.
3.1 *The Insulted and Injured*

As in *The Idiot*, in *The Insulted and Injured*, money together with gossip dominates the narrative line, and thematically represents the center of Prince Valkovsky’s crimes, around which Dostoevsky constructed the entire plot of the novel. Prince Valkovsky’s relationship with money provides fodder for different forms of gossip and promulgates the narrative. The entire description of the prince’s social portrait and his standing in the novel, other than a number of instances of Ivan Petrovich’s direct interactions with him, evolves from hearsay and reminiscences.

Князь был ещё молодой человек, хотя и не первой молодости, имел не малый чин, значительные связи, был красив собою, имел состояние и наконец, был вдовец, что особенно было интересно для дам и девиц всего уезда. Рассказывали о блестящем приёме... (*PSS* 4: 22).

The prince still was young, though not in his first youth. He was of good rank in the service; had important connections and a fortune; was a handsome man and a widower, a fact of particular interest to all the girls and women in his social circle. **People talked** of the brilliant reception given him ...

(*The Insulted and Injured* 13).

Говорят, что ещё в первый год своего сожительства с женой он чуть не замучил её своим грубым с ней обхождением (*PSS* 4:21).

*It is said* that even in the first year of his marriage he wore his wife out by his brutal behavior (*The Insulted and Injured* 16).

Рассказывали, что в нём действительно было что-то обаятельное, что то
It is said that there really was something fascinating about him; something dominating and powerful (The Insulted and Injured 16).

These excerpts reveal that people watched every step in the prince’s life and reported on it. We have seen this formation of the plot in society tales by Odoevsky and Rostopchina. Plus, the mini-stories about the Prince also center around marital and monetary relations as in the stories analyzed in Chapters 1 and 2, which is indicative of Dostoevsky’s ironic incorporation here of the Romantic tradition, or, to be precise, an ironic treatment of it. This supports this novel as an excellent work to study because it most directly concerns money and marriage of all of Dostoevsky’s other fiscally-charged novels, except The Idiot.

Furthermore, the constant drive of the Prince to stabilize his social standing with money through marriages without love brings us back to readings of Karamzin’s “Poor Liza” and Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades.” In “Poor Liza,” Erast, after gambling away his fortune, marries a widow and forsakes his promises to Liza. In “The Queen of Spades,” Hermann, in order to acquire the magical combination of cards, gains the trust of Liza, the old Countess’s ward, through promises of love. I find that the Prince’s calculated marital arrangements represent a repetitive mechanistic operation, and in comparison with the previous stories, this story does not have a weighty closure and lacks a didactical exercise in moral values.

In my understanding, Dostoevsky knew this novel had an open message: it was time to abandon old ways of storytelling and to redirect energies toward saving the country from its intellectual and socio-economic stagnation. As John Bartle states in his dissertation On the Edge
of Genre (1994), for Dostoevsky, it was important to weave a sense of “real life” into the fabric of the narrative. Thus, Dostoevsky advocated eliminating canonical works in favor of a new, socially-inspired literature of the people… (Bartle 12). The giants of the past—both Russian and foreign—such as Pushkin, Gogol, Belinsky, Goethe, Hegel, Schiller, were frequently reread, revalued, and reinterpreted to fit the theoretical underpinnings of the writer’s platform. The urge for new beginnings and the rebellion against fathers through readings of money and gossip, one finds here as well as in the reading of The Idiot.

Every time I read The Insulted and Injured, it represents a challenge. It is an unusual novel, which incorporates a variety of genres, and contains the authorial ironic homage to the Romantic tradition.48 As many Dostoevsky specialists note, Dostoevsky borrows “Little Nell” from Dickens’ novel The Old Curiosity Shop (1841). The story of the elder Ikhmenevs is reminiscent of Pushkin’s “The Queen of Spades” (1834), and echoes The Belkin Tales (1830). The antagonist, Prince Valkovsky borrows discourse from Rousseau’s Confessions (1798).

Dostoevsky himself admitted that he wanted to write a Russian version of Eugene Sue’s Parisian Mysteries set in Saint Petersburg (Frank 318-324).

Another factor that contributes to the mixed organization of this novel is the fact that Dostoyevsky writes The Insulted and Injured (1861) upon his return to Saint Petersburg after his Siberian exile with the purpose of gaining financial stability from the sale of the work. This confirms that the novel was an experimental transitional phase for Dostoevsky, before he immersed himself into a new, innovative style, resulting in his masterpieces The House of the Dead (1862) and Notes from Underground (1864). Even though The Insulted and Injured is

48 As many Dostoevsky specialists have noted, this novel still indicates the author’s transitional creative phase after his Siberian exile. Lary states that The Insulted and Injured “is still in the grip of the ideals of his pre-Siberian years. This work is, however, pervaded by a new cynicism about social brotherhood and about the Schilleresque concepts of noble passion and sacrifice” (Lary 46).
widely considered Dostoyevsky’s least acclaimed work, this novel is an interesting example of Dostoyevsky’s feuilleton-derived commercial writing. My claim here is that the author, via the usage of money and the power of common language (gossip), creates a subversion of the canonical works of both Russian and foreign literary giants (Pushkin, Gogol, Dickens, Schiller and Rousseau) in order to accelerate the unique developments of Russian prose-fiction writing.

At last, in addition, it appears as if *The Insulted and Injured* is contradictory to the main statement of this chapter: in Dostoevsky’s fictional universe, money is fantastical, and the settings, in contrast, are of pragmatic reality and evidence of the prose of life. Indeed, although the topography of Saint Petersburg in *The Insulted and Injured* is accurate, and the mirroring of socio-economic historical changes is realistic, the physiological description of the grim corners of Saint Petersburg adds a grotesque, fantastical quality to the novel’s setting.

Fanger, in his seminal work *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism* (1965), states that the city of Saint Petersburg, in Dostoevsky’s works, is a place of extremities: “these very extremities are of situation, character and behavior” because it is the real city, the encounters with such extremities that “force the suspension of our disbelief.” But once “our wonder has been simulated, the city itself becomes its object, and all that seemed most real a moment before may at any time begin to appear as the sheerest fantasy” (Fanger 134). For example, Ivan’s evening stroll along *Voznesensky Prospekt*, when he encounters Old Man Smith and his dog illustrates this situation of extremity. The old man’s appearance astonishes the narrator; he compares it to the illustration of E.T.A. Hoffman’s tales by Gavarni:

Помню, мне ещё пришло однажды в голову, что старик и собака как-нибудь выкарабкались из какой-нибудь страницы Гофмана, иллюстрированного
I remember thinking once that the old man and the dog seemed to have stepped out of a page of Hoffmann, illustrated by Gavarni, and were parading this world as walking advertisements of the edition (The Insulted and Injured 11).

The reason for the caricature-like appearance of Old Man Smith, as the readers discover, later is great heartbreak and starvation.

Another cause for such astonishment that triggers a feeling of disbelief in Ivan Petrovich and the reader alike is a brothel on Vasilievskii, where he follows Nellie:

We walked a long way, as far as the Maly Prospekt. She was almost running. At last, she went into a little shop. I stood still and waited. “Surely she doesn’t live at that shop,” I thought. … Going a little further, she went in at the gateway of an unattractive-looking house. It was not a large house but it was a brick one, old, two-story, painted a dirty-yellow color. A miniature red coffin-trade sign of an insignificant coffin-maker was displayed in one of the three ground-floor windows… (The Insulted and Injured 152).
Unquestionably, in the physiological sketch novel, shabby yellow houses (brothels) do not represent anything out of the extraordinary. However, this unknown house turns out to be a brothel where little Nellie apparently lives and works, triggering a feeling of “extremity”—a term used by Fanger when describing the Dostoevskian fantastic plot. The author uses money and economic situations as devices to build the conflict of the story by contrasting the grotesque images of extreme poverty and surplus wealth. For example, the descriptions of the lodgings of Old Man Smith and of the freelance detective Masloboev represent this divergence, which not only adds to the sense of thematic social inequality in the novel, but also to the formal mechanism that makes this a sensation novel:

Жил он ужасно бедно. Мебели было всего стол, два стула и старый-старый диван, твердый, как камень, и из которого со всех сторон высовывалась мочала; да и то оказалось хозяйское. Печь, по-видимому, уже давно не топилась; свечей тоже не отыскалось. Я серьезно теперь думаю, что старик выдумал ходить к Миллеру единственно для того, чтоб посидеть при свечах и погреться. На столе стояла пустая глиняная кружка и лежала старая, черствая корка хлеба. Денег не нашлось ни копейки (PSS 4:14).

He had lived very poorly. His furniture consisted of a table, two chairs and a very old sofa as hard as a stone, with hair sticking out of it in all directions; and even these things turned out to be the landlord’s. The stove had evidently not been heated for a long while, and no candles were found either. I seriously think now that the old man went to Mueller’s simply to sit in a lighted room and get warm. On the table stood an empty earthenware mug, and a stale crust of bread lay beside it. No money was found, not a farthing (The Insulted and Injured 9).
A pretty pinchbeck samovar was boiling on a little round table covered with a handsome and expensive tablecloth. The tea-table glittered with crystal, silver and china. On another table which was covered with a tablecloth of a different kind, but no less splendid, stood plates of very good sweets, Kiev preserves both dry and liquid, fruit-jellies, French jams, oranges, apples, and three or four kinds of nuts—in fact a regular fruit-shop. On a third table, covered with a snow-white cloth, a great variety of dishes was displayed—caviar, cheese, pate, different kinds of sausage, smoked ham, fish—and a row of excellent cut-glass decanters containing spirits of many sorts and of the most attractive colours—green, ruby, brown and gold. Finally, on a little table apart—also covered with a white cloth—there was champagne in ice buckets. On a table before the sofa there were three bottles containing Sauterne, Lafitte and Cognac, very expensive brands from Yeliseyev’s (The Insulted and Injured 270).
These contrasting descriptions of Old Man Smith and Masloboev’s households provide examples of how surplus and the lack of money function as devices that invite the fantastic into a prosaic setting of the quasi-realist novel. The *phantasmagoria* of the delicatessen in Masloboev’s apartment adds superfluous details, which do not play any key role in the novel.

Indeed, regardless of his repetitious ritual-like behavior, the Prince with his balancing act of acquiring money and ruining the lives of others does not bore the readers, but rather frustrates and mesmerizes them, making them want to read more. At the same time, by choosing monetary operations of the Prince as central to the plot of the novel, Dostoevsky delivers his own frustrations with the reality that surrounds him.

As a rule, when any monetary transaction occurs, there is a natural expectation of palpable returns. In *The Insulted and Injured*, this is not the case. The monetary operations here repeat themselves, leading to unproductive results and little change. This reflects the author’s frustration with Russian society. According to his views, while standing on the brink of change and various socio-economic developments, Russia, nonetheless, was showing signs of stagnation.49

*The Insulted and Injured*, similar to *The Idiot*, reflects Dostoevsky’s views toward the new beginnings of Russian society of that time. As William Leatherbarrow, a Dostoevsky specialist notes, Dostoevsky’s novels mirror a changing world in which “poverty and social disadvantage no longer appear as a God-given fate to be meekly accepted without complaint” (99).

In this new world, which Dostoevsky describes, money outweighs most of the social advantages of birth. This novel, published in 1861, the year of the serfs’ liberation, provides

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49 For further details see: *Dostoevsky and the Idea of Russianness* by Sarah Hudspith, p. 198 (2003).
accounts of different layers of the social and ethnic strata of Saint Petersburg. We encounter Germans who run a confectionary; the old Englishman who formerly ran a successful factory; and a surviving group of the nobles, Prince Valkovsky and Katya’s friends and family, who squander their lives with idle high jinx. In addition, Dostoevsky uses money and gossip not only as a catalyst for the plot progressions, but also as an artistic device to link together these disparate groups and places.

Money allows camouflaged matters to become visible with brutal clarity. Regardless of the complexity of the novel and the exuberant cross-cultural literary references, focusing on the workings of money in the novel provides a better understanding of the plot developments. As I previously stated, Boris Christa, in his analysis of “Krotkaya” (“The Meek One”), claims that Dostoevsky, by using money’s textual value as a semiotic sign, “enables his reader to perform a kind of pragmatic deconstruction of text” on his own (Christa 146).

For example, Christa’s reading of “Krotkaya” within these terms makes it clear that the story features a gender struggle in which money is instrumental in uncovering sexual exploitation and the dominance of patriarchy. In The Insulted and Injured, we struggle with unexpected twists of the plot and with untangling the convoluted stories of romance of the different characters in the novel. As Christa suggests, following the lead of money and gossip as semiotic signs provides us with a better understanding of the message behind the story. The workings of money and gossip in the novel lead us to believe that the novel is a provocative manifesto against the outdated, pseudo-Romantic.

By examining the deviant character Prince Valkovsky’s connections to money and gossip, it becomes clear that he is an ironic reminder of the outdated convention of patriarchy
and of the Romantic tradition. All of his motivations came from his desire for money and as such, he used his social position and sexual advantage to lure his victims into idle promises of marriage for his own financial gain.

3.2 The Idiot

In The Idiot (1867), similar themes of the fiscally charged sexual exploitation and rebellion against fathers dominate the narrative. Dostoevsky wrote The Idiot in 1866, when traveling throughout Europe and experiencing financial difficulties. The novel’s narrative fabric reflects the author’s poor financial situation and his rather forced exploration of Europe. At the core of the novel’s plot is a case of arson, with 15-year-old, Olga Umetskaya being the accused; Dostoevsky eagerly followed the trial, featured in newspapers’ criminal columns:50

September 23-24 (October 5-6). A publication of the trial report on “A case of the esquire’s daughter Olga Umetskaya, accused of arson, and on her parents Vladimir and Ekaterina Umetsky, accused of abuse of parental authority (Letopis’ 138).”

51 Достоевский интересовался новыми русскими судами и внимательно следил за уголовными процессами. Дело Умецких разбиралось в сентябре 1867 года в Кашире. Пятнадцатилетняя дочь Ольга, доведённая до отчаяния жестоким обращением, пыталась поджечь усадьбу (274).
The Umetskaya case represents a response to physical abuse and starvation, for which the accused blamed her parents. When discovered by police, Umetskaya was very battered and quite emaciated. At first, it may seem that the case has little in common with the novel (The Idiot), but a conscientious reading of the treatment of money and gossip in the novel makes this connection palpable, and provides a new perception of this work.

The main theme of the novel is the “sons’ protest” against abusive “fathers” via the act of neglecting inheritances, burning money. Besides, the verbs describing burning “zhech,” “prozhigat” dominate the novel’s discourse. Overall, throughout the novel, one can directly connect the act of burning to familial matters with an emphasis on financial dealings. Here, the act of burning the fathers’ material possessions is the children’s attempt to thwart the wills of their fathers. For example, the trope of burning first occurs in the novel when Nastas’ya Filippovna’s father’s estate is burned, after which she becomes socially (financially) vulnerable and becomes Totsky’s ward; his kept woman:

…Сгоревшее имение, с разбредшимися по миру мужиками, было продано за долги; двух же маленьких девочек, шести и семи лет, детей Барашкова, по великодушию своему, принял на своё иждивение и воспитание Афанасий Иванович Тоцкий… Вскоре осталась одна только девочка, Настя, а младшая умерла от коклюша (PSS 6: 39).

His estate was sold for the creditors; and the little girls—two of them, of seven and Totski, who undertook their maintenance and education in the kindness of his heart, respectively—adopted eight years of age…

Very soon, however, there was only one of them left—Nastasia Philippovna—for the other little one died of whooping-cough. (Kindle Locations 764-765).
The second occurrence of the ritual of burning occurs when Nasta’sya Filippovna burns Rogozhin’s money, which he brings over to trade her. He receives this money as an inheritance after the death of his father:

"-Э-эх!- крикнула Настасья Филипповна, схватила каминные щипцы, разгребла два тлеющие полена и, чуть только вспыхнул огонь, бросила на него пачку.” (PSS 6:179).


Third, Dostoevsky uses the verb ‘burning’ when Rogozhin sees Nasta’sya Filippovna for the first time and feels as if he is on fire. From that moment on, Rogozhin stops being an obedient son, and starts spending his money recklessly, primarily on Barashkova:

“Я тогда, князь, в третьегодняшиней отцовской бекеше через Невский перебегал, а она из магазина выходит, в карету садится. Так меня тут и прожгло” (Идиот 11).

“I was walking about the Nevsky one fine day, prince, in my father's old coat, when she suddenly came out of a shop and stepped into her carriage. I swear I was all of a blaze at once.” (Kindle Locations 155-156). Public Domain Books. Kindle Edition.
Taking into consideration all of the minute evidence in the novel that links the story to the Umetskaya case, the new understanding of *The Idiot* suggests that the novel is about spendthrifts, who by squandering (burning) their money sever connections to their miserly and abusive fathers.⁵² Apparently, Dostoevsky saw the burning power of fire in the Umetskaya case as a liberating gesture and used it in *The Idiot* as a means to fight stagnation and hoarding.⁵³

The two generations in *The Idiot* represent two opposing camps: hoarders (fathers) and spendthrifts (children). Myshkin is an orphan, but the inheritance from another male relative Pavlischev brings trouble and, to a certain degree, abuse into his life. Nasta’sya Filippovna, whose natural father is dead, stays with her former surrogate father, Totsky, who sexually abuses her and attempts to control her money even into her adult life.

Rogozhin’s father uses physical abuse and money to control him. The three main characters in *The Idiot* deviate from the “ordinary logics of life” by neglecting money, burning and spending it.⁵⁴ Overall, in *The Idiot*, money is inherited rather than earned, and appears to have little value for Rogozhin, Myshkin and Barashkova.

In the opening scene in which Rogozhin and Myshkin meet, the lightness of being of these two characters, which is, according to Vernon, a characteristic of spendthrifts, comes forward:

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⁵² John Vernon, in his analysis of money in nineteenth-century fiction uses the portrait of Dostoevsky’s character Dmitry Karamazov, a spendthrift, to illustrate, “… spendthrifts fail to understand or have turned away from the traditional male role of earning or managing money… The spendthrift became kind of a holy fool. Like Dmitri, most spendthrifts are compulsive and asocial. They create an artificial conviviality by buying social energy and companionship” (Vernon 37). He further explains that the characters-spendthrifts appear in the nineteenth-century novel as an opposing force to the canonical order of life (35).

⁵³ According to Vladimir Papenyi’s analysis of the “revolutionary” symbolist’s tropes in his book *Kul’tura Dva*, fire in Blok, for example, represents razrushenie-sozidanie (Papenyi 309) - which matches the philosophy of the carnivalesque that after the destruction and self-annihilation there is always a new beginning, a new life.

⁵⁴ This is M. Bakhtin’s term; he uses it in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* while providing readings of the carnivalesque as examples of behavioral patterns of the key characters of *The Idiot*. 
В одном из вагонов третьего класса, с рассвета, очутились друг против друга, у самого окна, два пассажира- оба люди молодые, оба почти налегке, оба не щегольски одетые, оба с довольно замечательными физиономиями и оба пожелавшие, наконец, войти друг с другом в разговор (PSS 6: 5).

In one of the third-class carriages, two passengers had, from early dawn, been sitting facing one another by the window. Both were young men, not very well dressed, and travelling with little luggage; both were of rather striking appearance, and both showed a desire to enter into conversation (The Idiot 3).

The adverbial modifier of manner “налегке” suggests not only that the two characters are traveling light, but also have few obligations in life. Their “lightness” is in juxtaposition with the rest of the passengers: «Все, как водится, устали, у всех отяжелели за ночь глаза, все назяблись, все лица были бледно-желтые, под цвет тумана» (PSS 6: 6). The heaviness of the tired eyes of the other passengers on the train, which the narrator delivers with the perfective verb отяжелеть contrasts with the adverb налегке in describing the way these two are traveling.

Узелок ваш всё-таки имеет некоторое значение,— продолжал чиновник, когда нахохотались досыта (замечательно, что и сам обладатель узелка начал, наконец, смеяться, глядя на них, что увеличил их весёлость), и хотя можно побиться в нём не заключается золотых, заграничных свёртков с наполеондорами и фридрихдорами, ниже с голландскими арабчиками... (4)

55 “All, of course, were tired and shivering, their eyes were heavy after the night’s journey, and all their faces were pale and yellow to match the fog (The Idiot 3).”
“Your bundle has some value, anyway,” the petty official went on, when they had laughed to their heart’s content (strange to say, the owner of the bundle began to laugh too, looking at them, and that increased their mirth), “and though one may safely be sure there is no gold in it, neither French, German, nor Dutch- one may be sure of that… (The Idiot 5).

The “lack” makes Myshkin’s bundle meaningful. The bundle is apparently the symbolic representation of his master. Like his bundle, Myshkin is also “light,” because he is lightly dressed, of a fragile physique and overall pitiful to see. In addition, the lightness of the bundle points toward the unrestricted mobility of its owner. Indeed, Myshkin is on the train returning to Russia from Switzerland; his ability to travel through physical space is obvious. However, Myshkin’s mobility is not restricted only to covering physical geographical space, but his bundle with a “lack” also manifests his mercurial flexibility to transgress boundaries of gender (Pelikan-Straus 113).

Rogozhin’s “rootlessness” or his condition of symbolic “castration” becomes evident because of Dostoevsky’s constant reminder that Rogozhin’s family shares their house with “skoptsy,” where they used to hold their commercial transactions. William J. Comer, in his article Rogozhin and the “Castrates,” provides an explanation to the possibility of Rogozhin’s future as oskolyony (castrated) from Nasta’sya Filippovna’s tirade in Rogozhin’s recollection:

«…у тебя, говорит, Парфен Семеныч, сильные страсти, такие страсти, что ты как раз бы с ними в Сибирь, на каторгу, улетел, если б у тебя тоже ума не было, потому что у тебя большой ум есть», говорит (так и сказала, вот веришь или нет? В первый раз от нее такое слово услышал!). Ты всё это баловство теперьшнее скоро бы и бросил. А так как ты совсем
небообразованный человек, то и стал бы деньги копить и сел бы, как отец, в этом доме с своими скопцами; пожалуй бы, и сам в их веру под конец перешел, и уж так бы «ты свои деньги полюбил, что и не два миллиона, а, пожалуй бы, и десять скопил, да на мешках своих с голоду бы и помер, потому у тебя во всем страсть, всё ты до страсти доводишь» (PSS 6: 220).

... you have strong passions. And since you are a completely uneducated person, you would start to amass money and, like your father, you would stay in this house with your “Castrates” (skoptsy). I guess that toward the end you would convert to their faith; and since you’d be so in love with your money, I guess, you’d amass not two million, but ten million, and you’d probably die of starvation sitting on your money bags, because in everything you do you have passion, you turn everything into passion (The Idiot 122).

Comer makes a valuable point that in Nasta’sya Filippovna’s eyes, “Rogozhin’s passionate nature and family background place him in danger of turning into a “Castrate” (skopets) in both senses of skopit” (Comer 92). Rogozhin could continue to amass wealth, but at the price of cutting off physical and emotional needs. I find this idea of a connection of Rogozhin’s house (family) to the religious group of skoptsy meaningful, but I interpret Nasta’sya Filippovna’s prediction of Rogozhin’s life possibilities differently.

Nasta’sya Filippovna drives everyone mad with her interpretation of “the logics of life.” She warns Rogozhin that if he accumulates wealth he can become “skopets,” but she also suggests the opposite with the following underlying message: he must spend money in order to avoid becoming a “castrato.” Instead of running the risk of cutting off his anatomical root, he cuts ties with his family by not following the merchant’s path.

By burning money, the main characters fight to gain their independence from their
fathers. The characters of Dostoevsky’s novels turn the fictional universe upside down (Bakhtin 173). As Adelaida Epanchina in The Idiot once predicts: «Такая красота- сила,- горячо сказала Аделаида,- с этакою красотой можно мир перевернуть!» (82). “Such beauty is power,” said Adelaida warmly. “With beauty like that one might turn the world upside down” (The Idiot 75).

This layering of the novel’s contents within the confines of the juxtaposed co-existence of the characters—the spendthrifts versus hoarders—aids in understanding the formal arrangement of this work. By displacing his characters outside the norms of this quasi-society tale fictional world, Dostoevsky again experiments with storytelling, by challenging his reader to become an active participant rather than a passive spectator.

Thus, Rogozhin father’s house is a symbolic representation of the heavy burden of the inheritance of the fathers, which contrasts with Myshkin and Rogozhin’s rootlessness. As in Umetskaya’s case, we view the parental house not as a place of comfort and security, but as a symbol of oppression and abuse, a place where one person sadistically subdues the other. Robin Feuer Miller argues that The Idiot is a story with a strong presence of the Gothic via a close reading of Rogozhin’s house:

С необыкновенным любопытством подходил он проверить свою догадку; он чувствовал, что ему почему-то будет неприятно, если он угадал. Дом этот был большой, мрачный, в три этажа, без всякой архитектуры, цвета грязно-зеленого (PSS 6: 210). - Этот дом ещё дедушка строил,- заметил он.- В нём всё скопцы жили, Хлудяковы, да и теперь у нас нанимают. Мрак-то какой. Мрачно ты сидишь,- сказал князь, оглядывая кабинет. Один портрет во весь рост привлек на себя внимание князя… Это уж не отец ли твой?- спросил князь (213).
As he approached the intersection of the two streets, he was surprised to find himself feeling intensely nervous; he had not expected his heart to pound so painfully. One house, no doubt because of its peculiar configuration, began to attract his attention while still some way off, and the prince recalled later saying to himself: ‘That must be the house.’…

It was a large, gloomy, three-storied house, devoid of architectural pretension, and of a dirty-green color (*The Idiot* 213).

This house is Rogozhin’s inheritance; it is heavy and full of history in the literal and direct sense. It used to be the house where the sect of *skoptsy* traded and lived; it resembles a museum in which Prince Myshkin notices Karamzin’s work on Russian history, and a strange portrait of Rogozhin’s father. The house not only represents the inheritance of the fictional fathers, it also refers to the fathers of Russian literary tradition, Karamzin and Gogol. Dostoevsky masterfully endows this house with a double meaning relevant to the fabric of the narrative and to the artistic developments. After all, the journey of money and gossip in *The Idiot* begins with Myshkin and Rogozhin meeting at the train, and ends with their bonding at Rogozhin’s father’s house.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

In the article “Money Talks,” Boris Christa states that the author of “Krotkaia” uses “one of the basic elements of modern living - the semiotic informative power of cash. He further explains the popular expression ‘money talks’ and how Dostoevsky makes it ‘speak’ to serve his literary purposes (Christa 144). “Krotkaia” narrates the story of a vulnerable woman who is married to a pawnbroker and cannot endure the passive-aggressive enjoyment he derives from the financial power that places him in a position of physical, social and sexual advantage over her. Christa’s reading of one of Dostoevsky’s stories provides insight to the other stories mentioned in this study. Similar to Dostoevsky, Karamzin, Gogol, Pushkin, Odoevsky and Rostopchina also use money to drive their plots. Every story in this work provides evidence that fiscal matters affect the form and content of these stories exactly the way Christa describes.

Similar to money, gossip also “talks,” altering the society tale’s form and content with the features of skaz (a nonchalant tale-telling). As previously mentioned Stephen Hutchings states that the society tale has the power to depose social hierarchies due to its subversive nature. He further claims that gossip is democratizing in the sense that it has popular folk appeal (Hutchings 59). William Mills Todd also claims that Pushkin’s experiments with “informal” linguistic discourse, which helped him to create a successful parody of the excessively refined Russian high society, included primarily the gossip of drawing rooms and salons (64-200). In an analysis of the presented fiction, gossip, like money, proves to be an instrument of power and manipulation. Gossip corrupts and ruins others, as we observed in two tales by Odoevsky as well
as “Rank and Money” by Rostopchina. Gossip is the mechanism that drives plot progression and unites reality and fiction.

Since money and gossip gain importance as a means of social exchange only in circulation, they deal with the surface aspects of the narrative. Even if the readers are familiar with the detailed somatic experiences of the characters, there is a palpable feeling of the fleeting truth. This is a fairy-tale charm, as Maria Tatar suggests in her study of Grimms’ fairy tales (Tatar xv).

It is as if formally, we agree with how the stories take their course and cannot interfere with them. The stories that strive to mirror realities also serve as mirrored surfaces in the narrative. These tales appropriate the imitative format of newspaper columns and business correspondence that highlight fiscal matters. The idea of “mirroring surfaces” also refers to the trope of portraits, which occur in every story in direct connection to money and scandalous affairs. In Gogol’s “The Portrait,” in Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* (a photograph of Nasta’sya Filippovna), and with an allusive reference to a French coin stamped with the profile of Napoleon in “The Queen of Spades,” the portraits tell of dependence on money, and the social ruin which eventually results. This type of storytelling is typical of newspapers of the nineteenth century: trials of crimes based on commercial machinations and the gossip about town.

For example, money in Gogol’s “The Portrait” appears literally out of the portrait. In addition, Chartkov earns easy money by painting portraits as ordered, succumbing to the vain desires of his clientele. In “The Queen of Spades,” the comparison of Hermann’s profile to
Napoleon’s portrait on French coins interconnects money to the “portrayed” captured memory of events as a narrative.

The society tales of the second chapter, “Princess Mimi,” “Princess Zizi,” and “Rank and Money” feature the stock characters and rigid social codes of the diminishing high society of nineteenth-century Russia. The mirror-like projection of portraits in these three narratives emphasizes the sense of production similar to the publication of newspapers and paper money.

In *The Idiot*, the photographic portrait of Nasta’sya Filippovna has a similar effect. For example, even before the readers meet Nasta’sya Filippovna in the opening pages of the novel, the reader learns of her connection with the fiscal matters of the Rogozhin family. Her character captures the imaginations of the readers as well as Prince Myshkin. Her portrait strengthens the impression she makes, which initiates much speculation and excitement:

Так это Настасья Филипповна? - промолвил он, внимательно и любопытно поглядев на портрет,- удивительно хороша! - прибавил он тотчас же с жаром. На портрете была изображена действительно необыкновенной красоты женщина *(PSS 6: 34).*

‘So that’s Nasta’sya Filippovna?’ he said, taking a close and curious look at the picture. ‘She’s astonishingly pretty!’ he at once added warmly. The portrait certainly depicted a woman of extraordinary beauty.

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56 “And who is this remarkable person?” “His name is Hermann.”

... “This Hermann,” continued Tomskii, “is a most romantic individual. He has the profile of a Napoleon, and the soul of a Mephistopheles. I believe he has at least three crimes on his conscience....

Lisaveta Ivanovna extinguished the dying candle - a pale light crept into the room. She dried her eyes, red with weeping, and raised them to Hermann’s face: he was sitting on the windowsill, with his arms crossed, frowning ominously. In this pose, he strikingly resembled a portrait of Napoleon (“The Queen of Spades” 97).
Everyone—General Ganya Ivolgin, as well as the readers and others—witnesses Prince Myshkin’s astonishment and is struck that this absent-minded newcomer already knew Nasta’sya Filippovna. Further, Prince Myshkin’s reaction that she is as beautiful as he imagined, intensifies the aura around her name, thus adding value to the portrait. So the portrait of Nasta’sya Filippovna, and later Barashkova herself, represents a certain signified index (the origin), that has monetary and emotional value, and eventually, deadly passion.

This metaphoric representation of money in the gallery of portraits finds its explanation in John Vernon’s work *Money and Fiction*. The reader, he claims, “like the eavesdropper, participates in creating a representation (I would say story), not just a simple, empirical correspondence between image and reality, but rather a social contract by which the fidelity of the image to the world is always in context and always entails the readers’ (or decoders’) active participation. The parallel with money is telling: paper money is accepted as a representation only when the user’s faith in it becomes second nature, part of the way he or she perceives the world” (Vernon 96).

The linkage of the text (writing) and money in this explanation of symbolic projection brings in mirroring genre developments in these stories. All of the selected works reflect the capital-driven greediness of the evolving new society in Russia when the Russian aristocracy was appropriating the habits of the bourgeois and the genre of feuilleton was becoming more popular. This genre was a reflection, an obsession, with the capitalist values of the core-leading representative of Russian society. The genre of feuilleton as the reflection of capitalist greediness itself is avaricious. It appropriates different literary genres which were popular and therefore,
marketable, together with the newspaper worldliness within its essence.

Although, Russian society was not yet showing all the outward appearances of modernization, which went hand-in-hand with the worship of capital, it gathered it from the newspaper pages:

Внутренняя пограничность русской культуры оценивалась по-разному. Так, славянофилы могли провозглашать желание увидеть западническую «публику» вернувшейся в исконное лоно «народа»...Само предположение о Чичикове как переодетом Наполеоне возникает, по объяснению автора, потому, что Наполеон для гоголевских чиновников- это не некоторая реальность, но персонаж русских газет и карикатур. Никакого реально «заграничного» Наполеона для них просто нет, потому что сама «заграница» для них- лишь газетный фантом, лишь фантастическое удвоение их собственного усредненного («ни то ни сё») мира. Мотив нереальности, газетной фантомности «заграницы» был специально развернут Гоголем в сюжете «Записок сумасшедшего». Герой этой повести Поприщин, впадая в помешательство, воображает себя испанским королём. Его мания возникает на почве чтения «Пчёлки» («Северной пчелы») (Паперный 98).

The narrator, as an aside mentions that nobody actually knew what Napoleon looked like. Papernyi claims that this approximate knowledge, this assumed reality of the “cultural center” came to middle class Russians from a summarized collage comprised of newspaper bits and pieces.

Papernyi’s explanation of Russia’s imagined categories of reality is central to my initial claim. His article’s title–“Гоголь и Парадоксы Русского Изоляционизма”–speaks for itself. In his work, Russia’s defined intellectual border becomes transparent. The only access to worldly
events and socio-economic developments was through newspapers, a privilege reserved for Russian middle and upper classes. Such sources often yielded a distorted and exaggerated perception of world events. Papernyi, in his conclusion, states: “Заграница для них лишь газетный фантом… Поприщин безумен, но безумны и газетные рассказы, и это уже не точка зрения героя, но позиция автора […]” (Паперный 97).

I consider Papernyi’s findings relevant because money and gossip also function metonymically as newspapers, novels and texts, creating a place for imagined realities. Hence, within the novel, paper money and gossip are thus representing a fiction within the text as both of these social forces circulate and gain value through exchange. Paper money becomes chimerical and flighty. Losing the weight and palpability of gold, it becomes impersonal and anonymous like gossip. Money passes without a trace from hand-to-hand, while gossip travels from mouth-to-mouth in a similar vein. In examining these features of money and gossip, I prove through my work that this process played a key role in reflecting a forceful intrusion of capitalism into the Russian aristocratic society via the prevalent presence of Gothic tropes such as death and decay in nineteenth-century Russian literature.

For example, many cultural critics defined the banking crisis (England, 1864) and other financial crises and socioeconomic changes in the United Kingdom “a return of the Gothic,” defining this event in Victorian fiction as “Gothic economy.” Gail Turley Houston, in particular, in her book *From Dickens to Dracula: Gothic, Economics, and Victorian Fiction*, juxtaposes in her analysis the terms of domestic economy (control of the house) with the capitalist version of economics, which is unheimlich, outside the house. Houston builds her works’ argument around the connection between financial crises in England and the fictional production of Gothic tropes.
In a similar manner, by embedding money and gossip into the body of their fictions, Russian writers made way for their nightmares of the approaching dominance of capital to materialize in the imaginary universe.

However, if one analyzes the increased occurrence of Gothic themes in Russian nineteenth-century novels, it is necessary to consider that in Russian economic development, material innovations were only just beginning to arise. The drastic socio-economic changes in Russia arose due to the policies of Peter the Great, but industrialization only entered the scene after the Napoleonic War, diminishing the importance of serfdom. One can only imagine that the intrusion of modernity—in the forms of paper money and the printed word (i.e. newspapers)—into the realm of the traditional Russian household caused moments of intense panic.

The transition of both gossip and money into paper forms goes hand-in-hand with the transition of nineteenth-century fiction from Romanticism to Realism, which raises the question of the interconnection of the two events. Thus, my claim, which is based on my analysis of the selected stories, is that money and gossip allowed notions of the fantastic to intrude into the textual body of the prose writing. The gallery of fiction presented here shares a single denominator, money. Gossip, as the analyses of the selected stories show, is also a social currency that helps to reaffirm a position in society, to manipulate others, and to form bonds. Money and gossip is at the core of the stories of this dissertation. As stated before, money, according to Vernon, Shell and Christa has a unique ability to create dark secrets; and gossip has the capacity to reveal these dark secrets. The characters of these stories built around the subjects of money and gossip are prone to cheat, to lie to themselves and others and even to destroy other persons’ lives. The digressive mode of the main actors of these texts also influences the structure
of the narratives, which reveals the organicity of developments of literary genres and can be explanatory of the origins of the Great Russian Novel.
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