

MEN'S TIME: PAVEL FEDOTOV AND THE PRESSURES OF MID-NINETEENTH-CENTURY MASCULINITY

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In the first of the “Philosophical Letters,” which was published in the Moscow journal *Teleskop* in September of 1836, Petr Chaadaev addressed the problem of a certain restlessness that had come to characterize contemporary life, an agony he associated at the most basic level with the torment of finding something to fill the day.¹ Without equivocation, he wrote: “Look around you. Everyone seems so restless. We are all like wanderers. There is no definite sphere for existence, there are no good habits, no rules for anything at all; [...] nothing is constant, nothing is necessary: everything flows away, leaving no trace of any appearance on any of you” (*Filosoficheskiya* 5). He elaborated on the consequences of such restlessness, what he called “advancement in an oblique line” in the third letter:

But, first of all, who can prevent me from escaping the stifling embraces of time? [...] Could not this fatal thought of time, which obsesses and oppresses me on all sides, disappear completely from my mind? Could not this imaginary reality of time, which so cruelly dominates and crushes me, be totally dissipated? [...] I see myself in this unlimited continuity, not divided into days or hours or fleeting moments, but one continuity forever, without movement and without change [...] Why does our intellect ceaselessly burst out of the immediate succession of things, measured by the monotonous swings of the pendulum? (Chaadaev, *Philosophical Works of Peter Chaadaev* 46–47)

Monotony and oppression, Chaadaev tells us in strong terms, are what constitute the life of man in 1830s Russia.

Now keep these ideas in mind and consider a small watercolor made by a

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Fig. 1. Pavel Fedotov, *Portrait of the Druzhinin Brothers—Andrei, Grigorii, and Aleksandr*, 1840. Watercolor on paper on cardboard, 9.5 × 13.5 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

contemporary of Chaadaev, the painter Pavel Fedotov: a portrait of three brothers which he made only four years after the philosophical letters first appeared in print (Fig. 1). How much does it bear out Chaadaev's claims? Or perhaps better to ask: how might we see the two as not strictly linked, but as parallel discourses stemming from the same root? At the most basic level, the painting conveys the way three brothers—their names were Andrei, Grigorii, and Aleksandr Druzhinin—looked in this specific moment. Fedotov visually brought them into being as such. The painting is not a flight of the artist's imagination, but a study observed from life. Fedotov carefully recorded the brothers' distinctiveness from one another, the two on the left with their fair mustaches; Aleksandr on the right, the youngest, only sixteen here, without facial hair yet. Andrei and Grigorii wear matching military uniforms—both served in the Finland Regiment of the Imperial Guards with Fedotov in St. Petersburg—while Aleksandr smolders on the right in his *de rigueur* all black. They all have the same light brown hair and each has it cut in a similar fashion; the strands of fawn brown shimmer slightly in the light. There is almost a tenderness to the way they all parted their hair the same way; one imagines the hand movement that made it look like this—left to right.

These details of dress and comportment play a critical role in the construc-

tion of the figures as emblems of midcentury masculinity. The militarism underscored by those uniforms couples with its associations of honor, bravery, and duty to reinforce what were considered values of unassailable masculine virtue at the time (Olmsted 49). The black-clad figure of Aleksandr on the right functions similarly. The austerity of the black suit marked men's dress as distinctively separate from women's in this moment across Europe (McPherson 84). Women wore color, but the soberness of black was reserved for men—Charles Baudelaire called it “the inevitable uniform of our suffering age” (303). By highlighting the dress of the brothers in this way, Fedotov marked these men such that their manliness was underscored. Subtly to be sure, but with perceptible effectiveness.

And he depicted them with a tremendous sense of nearness. We are placed at eye level and shown these brothers at close range, perhaps only from the distance of a few feet, as though the artist was sitting at the table and sharing it with them. Note in this regard too that Fedotov did not paint the felt-topped table with its outermost facing ledge inside the picture frame. The table's bounding edge juts out at us; it breaks the fourth wall, making the space of the Druzhinins pierce our own space, joining the two. He created an intimacy in doing so, refusing viewers any remove from the three men before us. It helps then also that this watercolor is small. It is almost miniature in its precision, a mere four by five inches—about the size of the palm of your hand. We can hold all three brothers easily in our sight; we can take them in at a glance.

Beyond all this, Fedotov's watercolor evokes a sense of stagnation though—one that brings us back to Chaadaev's letters. The little painting is so heavy with boredom and stasis, but also posited like a momentary glimpse. Its time is contained in that exhale of smoke emanating from the brother on the left. Another moment and it will dissipate. We get the impression that hours might go by and these three young men will look much the same as they do now. Another exhale of smoke, and another, and another—filling up the day in December that brought these brothers together with Fedotov. The treatment of temporality here accords with what Chaadaev described: “Nothing is constant, nothing is necessary: everything flows away.” The artist conveyed in visual form the stifling embrace of time that the writer had conjured in words. “Why does our intellect ceaselessly burst out of the immediate succession of things, measured by the monotonous swings of the pendulum?” It seems Fedotov found something similar in his daily life—and tried to capture it in paint.

I do not mean to suggest that what we have is pure equivalence, or even that Fedotov had read Chaadaev's letters (though he probably had).² My

2. Chaadaev's letters had been written between 1828 and 1830. It is possible that Fedotov encountered the material when it was circulating in manuscript form in the years before the first letter was ever published in 1836. If not, he most likely would have encountered Chaadaev's

claim is rather that Fedotov's portrait may be taken to exemplify a growing problem felt among a generation of Russian men. Fedotov recorded and gave form to elements of existence that could not be strictly seen, but could be intuited through the intimation of posture, through facial expression, via the recording of certain moments. He made of these three men objects for existential contemplation of the kind Chaadaev was conducting. They are, as visual evidence, a conduit for the ineffable. And Fedotov was, like Chaadaev, something of a man of letters. He scarcely exhibited a painting in the later 1840s without attaching to it some text he had composed, usually poetry or ekphrastic verse; all meant to clarify the meaning he sought to convey. But the Druzhinin portrait was before all that. Fedotov did not exhibit his first oil painting in the annual exhibition of the Academy of Arts until 1846. When he painted this little watercolor in 1840 he was still serving in the Imperial Guard and his life as a military officer seems to have been filled with the same kind of restless futility Chaadaev described.

'Again, the same activities'

Nearly every day in a seven-week period lasting from March through April of 1835, a little over a year before the first Philosophical Letter appeared in print, Pavel Fedotov kept a journal. It records in unusual depth of detail the life of a nineteen-year-old Russian officer in St. Petersburg and is worth quoting at length.³ Keep in mind Chaadaev's ideas while reading Fedotov's daily musings on the activities which marked his young life.

March 2. Saturday

The morning was rather difficult; I was forced to lie down, play the guitar or pace my room. In the evening Shevelev came, I sang songs with him and played the guitar. Gedeonov came; I went for a stroll with him and S. [...] I read some natural philosophy—that's all.

March 3. Sunday

This morning was like yesterday: I read more physics. The regiment is on sentry duty. [...] The pug-nosed [*kurnosyi*] Sasha Korsakov came and looked at my drawings [...]

March 4

In the morning I drew the same thing that I drew yesterday, went to Overbeck. He gave me a prescription for powders, advised me to blood-let with twelve or fifteen leeches, eat light vegetable foods, take sour drinks, not drink anything hot and not eat meat. I sat drawing again. Then around 4 o'clock I made Shevelev come to sit for his portrait. We talked. [...] We drank

first letter when it was published. We know the artist read Moscow journals at least to some extent in these years; he mentions reading the *Moskovskii telegraf* in his journal on April 16, 1835.

3. To my knowledge, Fedotov's journal has only been mentioned once in English-language scholarship. One excerpt from one single entry was translated by Rosalind Blakesley (née Gray) in her book on Russian genre painting and it was followed by the comment: "The reader on this occasion should be thankful of being spared the laborious accounts Fedotov gives elsewhere of his health, or how well he is sleeping" (134). I respectfully disagree and find the "laborious accounts" meaningful as documentary evidence of what Chaadaev was describing in the same years.

tea [...] we played piquet and bank; I lost 80 005 rubles and went to sleep bankrupt. Slept decently.⁴

March 5. Tuesday

In the morning I read the natural philosophy of Pavlov; began a portrait of Svoev on slate. [...] I continued to draw, later I read and analyzed the romance “The Prisoner.” Fleisher and Dubasov came; they brought no news. The weather was clear, clean. Nevskii [Prospekt] was full of strollers—in just frock coats. Dandy-guards [*franty-gvardeitsy*]. I didn’t go to the Academy, like yesterday. [...]

March 9

Again, the same activities. [...] I sang and played, drew, slept, played the flute. [...]

March 13. Wednesday

[...] At home I played the guitar and also played with a dog. I ate some butter and bread. I painted a bit and went to bed.

March 14. Thursday

I finished the Tsar’s portrait; fashioned frames for it, went for a walk—that’s it.

15

I played the flute and drew some doodles.

16

I started a portrait on ivory paper. Shevelev and Gusev came; first we sang, then we played cards; I won 28 points. [...]

17 March. Sunday

I forgot to keep track of the days, I forgot that today is a holiday; I sat at home unshaven and unwashed. Ganetskii came with a slate for a portrait. I kept him and struggled with it until 2:30. He dined at my place. After dinner, I played guitar and flute. [...] (Fedotov 102–105)

It is easy to see how he could have forgotten what day it was. He was visited by the same small group of male friends day in and day out. And they repeated much the same activities over and over; they play cards, read, play music, eat, drink tea, eat again, and on and on. The picture that forms from the journal tells us a great deal about Fedotov’s hobbies, his acquaintances, his habitual activities, to some extent even his concerns. And the entries tell us that by 1835 Fedotov was something of a dilettante artist, spending much

4. As reproduced in the volume edited by I. D. Leshchinskii, this entry in the journal is puzzling. 80,005 rubles would have been an astronomical financial loss in this time period. The entry as printed by Leshchinskii reads: “...ya proigral 80 005 rublei i bankrotom leg spat’.” In the other journal entries that mention card playing, Fedotov stipulates his winnings or losses in points (see the entry of March 16) or he says they were playing “for pretzels” (see March 16, 17, and 24 entries). I would venture that Fedotov’s claim to have lost 80 005 rubles might have been an instance in which he and his friends were playing with pretzels or an occasion in which Fedotov and his friends were making bets by recording them in chalk (without the use of actual cash). Viktor Shklovsky also believed this was the case; in his *Povest’ o khudozhnike Fedotove*, he claimed this 80,005 ruble loss was an instance when Fedotov “played on chalk [*igral na melok*]” (28). All other mentions of monetary sums in the journal are consistently pragmatic; these include his mention of 50 rubles arriving by post (see entries of April 9 and 11) and how much he and his friends paid for simple items like brushes and paints (see for example the entry dated April 20: “[...] sepia 2. 50, cobalt 1. 90 [...]”).

of his long stretches of down time from guard duty sketching portraits of his comrades. The diary tells us more than this though. It is a testament to the monotony of this young man's life—the hours wiled away in a homosocial den of card-playing, music, eating, drinking, and, often it seems, doing nothing. He muses constantly on the state of his health, how he is sleeping, and his various ways of killing time—citing drawing portraits for friends, playing cards, and the consumption of wine as his key occupations.

The portrait of the Druzhinin brothers makes more sense in this context. We can imagine it forming in the artist's mind at any one of the evenings he described: "We talked. We drank tea. We played piquet and bank." And it calls to mind more of Chaadaev's letters:

The best ideas are paralyzed like sterile visions in our heads for lack of any relationship and consistency. It is in man's nature to lose himself when he does not find the means of referring his condition to what preceded and what follows him; then all consistency, all certitude escapes him; without the feeling of continuity to guide him, he discovers that he has wandered aimlessly in the world. There are some of these lost souls in every land, but in ours it is a common characteristic (Chaadaev, *Philosophical Works of Peter Chaadaev* 23).

Compare Chaadaev's sense of paralysis and aimless wandering to the repetitiveness of Fedotov's daily life: "This morning was like yesterday." "In the morning I drew like yesterday." "I didn't go to the Academy, like yesterday." Chaadaev described time as something oppressive, an imaginary reality without respite or escape. Fedotov does not describe his feelings per se in the journal; it seems not to have been a place for existential musings of any kind for the young artist. But we do get a sense of the purposelessness of Fedotov's daily life. And the lack of guiding continuity that Chaadaev described so well.

Cravats and Curlers

By now it might have struck the reader that neither of the pictures of Russian life these men give us—Fedotov with his journal and his portrait and Chaadaev in those letters—is all that manly. Or perhaps better to say, it breaks apart and fragments to some extent the firmness of the signs of the masculine that were so strongly evoked by the mustaches and military uniforms and black suit described earlier. There is a disjunction here between the feeling of time as oppressive, what Chaadaev described as its "stifling embrace" and the way the signs of masculinity are elaborated in the painting. I mentioned earlier the exhale of smoke as a sign of perpetual time unfolding in the portrait, but there are other markers that evoke the performance of gender as a time-based structure as well. All three of the brothers sport fashionably folded and carefully tied black cravats—a central fixture exclusive to men's dress at the time which had the potential to be particularly time-consuming.

In France it was not uncommon for the tying of one's cravat to take several hours in pursuit of the desired effect. Honoré de Balzac, something of a connoisseur of cravats and the meanings they could possess, described a charac-

ter in his *Cousin Bette* of 1846 taking great care in configuring his best cravat: “He took as long over his toilet as a woman when she wants to make the best of herself” (Balzac 233). The troubling of gender constructs is important here. Balzac’s implication is that no element of a man’s dress should take a “womanly” period of time to bring about. And indeed the cravat was an object of impassioned attention but also ridicule for fashionable men across Europe in the early nineteenth century. It acquired near legendary ritualistic care to bring about correctly. “[T]he cravat was raw material to be transformed by a painstaking series of operations: its ends were folded; it was passed around the neck, and tied into a knot; then, the proper shape obtained, it was smoothed out again with the aid of a small iron, and so on. In short, so much time squandered [...]” (Perrot 117–18).

While the Druzhinin brothers do not sport cravats anywhere near as complicated as those that had characterized life in France under the Directory, it is significant that each displays this fixture of men’s attire. And that seeing it in portraiture would bring about associations not only of the rigor of military dress, but of dandies and the time-consuming nature of high society fashion. Chaadaev himself was known to be something of a famous dandy in Russia in these years and depictions of men like him in complicated cravats, whether as part of military garb or civilian dress, abound in this period. Literary depictions can also be found dotted throughout the midcentury decades. Mikhail Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time*, written between 1838 and 1840, includes a description of the cravat as a vital element of military dress:

Half an hour before the ball Grushnitsky came by, resplendent in his infantry officer’s uniform. [...] He had a black neckcloth [*platok*], wrapped around a very high stiffener for his cravat [*nodgalstushnik*], whose rigid folds supported his chin. The cravat protruded half an inch above his collar, but it didn’t seem enough for him: he pulled it up to his ears [...] (Lermontov 117)

Lermontov’s depiction hints at the problematic associations that such dandy behavior had in these years. And he was not alone. Literary figures like I. A. Krylov had been mocking Russian men of fashion since the first decade of the century, comparing dandies to women and children and, as Olga Vainshtein has argued, “unmasking their claims to masculinity” (53).

By the 1830s though, such satire co-existed with a surge of interest in both men’s and women’s fashion in the Russian popular press. A leading literary journal of the time, *Moskovskii Telegraf* (*Moscow Telegraph*), featured detailed descriptions of Parisian fashion trends throughout the 1820s and 30s, reporting on shifts in dress first in French, then in Russian (Goscilo 60). The *Telegraf* was envisioned to provide coverage not only of literature and history, but of subjects that reflected the interests of all levels of society. Its mixture of popular contents made it an immediate success, especially among university students and aspiring writers, who subscribed to it by the hundreds (Rzadkiewicz 65). Fedotov reports reading this specific periodical in an entry

in his journal from 1835 (Fedotov 109). Dotted throughout his entries are also references to elements of men's fashion that would have been covered in the *Telegraf*. He mentions the endless praise a certain Izvol'sky received for his "narrow cavalry trousers [*chakchiry*]" (Fedotov 103); he reports going shopping to buy a rosette [*rozetka*] (Fedotov 108); and there are several brief discussions of his friends' epaulettes (Fedotov 108, 109) and men's coats on Nevskii Prospekt (Fedotov 102).

All this charges the depictions of the neckcloths worn by the Druzhinin brothers with added significance. Those cravats existed amongst an abundance of representations that testified to the permanent, exhausting duty of masculine self-control they entailed and which cut across class lines and professions in this moment. The cravats these men wore existed within a spectrum of masculine dress that ranged from the austerity of a smart military gorget to the exorbitant cravats of French dandies (and their counterparts scouring the *Telegraf* for fashion news in Petersburg). These singular items underscored the effort of masculine deportment in this moment, even in the private realm of men casually spending time together in the space of an interior.

There are further signs of vestimentary rigor in Fedotov's portrait. I mentioned the brothers' hair before, but notice how all three wear it short on the sides and long on top with a lateral sweep to the right. It was not uncommon in this time for men to achieve the gentle waves we see on all of the brothers through the use of curlers. In 1832 Charles-Frédéric Herbinot de Mauchamps had derided men in Paris who were as concerned with their coiffures as this, lampooning "the boyish moustache that covers your upper lip, with the long sideburns that meet almost beneath your chin" (qtd. in Olmsted 51). Fedotov might have had something similar in the way of satire in mind when he sketched the sartorial weakness and effeminate toilette of an anonymous gentleman (it might perhaps even be a self-portrait) sometime between 1848 and 1850 (Fig. 2). This aging man adjusts his wig before a mirror placed amongst brushes and jars. Dressed in a fashionable knee-length waistcoat and britches which wrap under the boot, his attire is completed by a buttoned vest into which is neatly folded that quintessential marker of sartorial diligence—the dark and elegantly wrapped cravat. In another context the Soviet art historian Nikolai Mashkovtsev described Fedotov's subject matter in this period as one in which: "The human type is formed from the pressure of the social environment. The personal setting becomes imprinted on the man depicted with extraordinary clarity" (156). This applies equally well to the Druzhinin brothers—all are a product of the social pressures around them. They are formed by the requirements for masculine propriety and the objects and space around them take part in the formation of their values.

The façade of male honor and dignity, however, crumbles quickly. Fedotov presented the Druzhinin brothers as upstanding citizens—on one hand they are all epaulets and shiny buttons, honor-bound sons of the Imperial Russian State.



Fig. 2. Pavel Fedotov, *Now the bride is here*, 1848–50. Graphite pencil on paper, 25 × 20.7 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

But they are, at the very same time, young men killing time, reduced to stifling boredom and disillusionment. The hunch of the outer two brothers, the one on the right staring vacantly into space and the other deep in thought—all this underscores their inactivity, their embeddedness within the space before that plain wall. Their uniforms provide a certain rigidity to their bodies, a quality of uprightness that might be associated with virile manliness, but their hunched self-absorption destroys all easy readability as such. These three men's bodies run counter to what Richard Dyer has described as the exces-

sively phallic quality of so much male imagery: "The clenched fists, the bulging muscles, the hardened jaws, the proliferation of phallic symbols—they are all straining after what can hardly ever be achieved, the embodiment of the phallic mystique" (274–75). Fedotov's men do not possess the hard lines or angular shapes that allow them to be analogized with an erect penis. These men are too soft, too vacant—they sit flaccid inside those rigid dark clothes trying so urgently to contain them.

Their lives and their bodies are like that one long, smoke-filled exhale, human voids centered on nothing but apathetic deliberation. The outside world impinges on them in the papers and notes open on the table before them; those objects are waiting for the eyes of men, but they remain unseen. The odd mask-like sculptures on the table—two incomplete profiles that form an imaginative whole—become in this sense parallels for the faces these men present in private and public life. On the one hand they are young, handsome sons of the stringent autocracy, eligible bachelors, elite Cadet Corps graduates, themselves future husbands and fathers. But their facial expressions and body language belie that public ideal of masculine virtue. The tilt of the head, the self-absorbed slouch, the detached and deadened eyes—these combine to communicate a sense of perpetual ineffectualness. Life as erectile dysfunction. Chaadaev's lost souls "paralyzed like sterile visions" made flesh.

What we see in Fedotov's portrait is ultimately what Alexis Boylan has called in another context "the need to codify bodies into knowable signs, to define [men's] bodies by sight and create for them a solidity of meaning" (149). The failure to establish such a system, however, results in what Boylan describes as the kind of liminal men that Fedotov depicted (163). And in this sense, it is of central importance that Fedotov's portrait of masculine experience emerges in 1840. Fifteen years into Tsar Nicholas I's reign, the years leading up to midcentury in Russia were ones of increasingly strident efforts to consolidate and indoctrinate official ideals for masculinity among young men. Seen as the future servitors of Russia's expanding military and civilian bureaucracy, the generation to which Fedotov belonged was inculcated into a system which took very seriously the strict separation of gender roles.

The tsar devoted a great deal of time in these years to developing and enforcing new regulations for the cadets in the Empire's military schools. Everything from the temperature of the rooms to the wearing of mustaches became subject to strict guidelines set forth by the tsar and his brother the Grand Duke Mikhail Pavlovich (Friedman 8). Fedotov had been educated in one of these cadet schools from the age of ten and was thus indoctrinated into the system of obedience and orderliness envisioned by the tsar and his brother from a young age (Sarabianov 6). Chief among the tsar's concerns was the instilling of values for respectable masculine comportment entailed by orderly dress and neatness. In this atmosphere, a student's clothes and hairstyle were not simple

matters of taste and status, but a means of judging devotion to the autocracy. Even failure to comply with regulations for hair to be maintained “according to military length” meant serious punishment in the time of Nicholas I (Friedman 33).

In his work on Fedotov, the literary theorist Viktor Shklovsky also highlighted these directives for young cadets as vital to Fedotov’s formation. Shklovsky briefly examines the ambiguous nature of many of the tenets, especially regulations on posture and facial hair. Military rules from the time, according to Shklovsky, stated that a soldier’s stance should never appear stiff or arrogant, but should make it seem as though one moves in accordance with the natural constitution of the body without effort or force (25). Additionally, he points out that young soldiers were taught at this time not to lower their eyes while in conversation lest they be considered devious or fearful. These principles extended to the manner in which a soldier presented his face to the world; he was supposed to have a mustache and whiskers, but these should be maintained so that the facial hair never became too long, as this would make the face “disgusting [*otvratitel’nyi*]” (25).

Thus the regulation of men’s bodies was operative at a number of levels and served an important function in this moment. A man’s outward appearance was held to be a sign of his internal principles. And if he could be *made* to look the part, then he might serve as a vital symbol of the orderly society Nicholas wanted to present to western Europe. But it meant fashioning masculinity into a stable sign through rigid programming. And it proved more difficult to achieve than the regime anticipated. Consider for a moment an outsider’s personal verdict on Russian military soldiers, taken from the “Foreign Miscellany” section of an American publication called the *Army and Navy Chronicle* in 1836:

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS—are far from being formidable in their appearance. At St. Petersburg [*sic*] the guards, which are in general, almost the only force there, are drawn in at the waists like wasps till they can hardly breathe; and so helpless do they seem that the idea occurred to me, when looking along the line, that by means of a single good buffet on the ear of the nearest man, the whole rank might be flooded! Out of St. Petersburg [*sic*], they are, taken in the mass, small, mean-looking, suffering fellows. Their undress is peculiarly unbecoming; and even in warm weather you see them shambling along buttoned up to the throat in coarse, grey, great-coats (Homans 104).

This is not unbiased rhetoric to be sure, but it is nonetheless insightful. The impression this author had of guards “drawn in at the waists like wasps” testifies to the common practice among certain fashionable military men of the time to alter their body shape by wearing corsets under their uniforms, as well as, in some cases, adding shoulder pads with thick epaulettes on top of them to achieve a more elegant and masculine silhouette (Pyliakov 164). Military dress trousers sometimes even hampered movement to such a degree that it was not possible to sit down in them. Nicholas I himself fell victim to this cir-

cumstance and was not able to appear in public for several days “as a result of soreness produced by his military uniforms” (Vainshtein 61–62).

With this background, Fedotov's depiction of military men in 1840 takes on new meaning, as does the idea of men as suffering for the sake of their appearance and what it meant for constituting their masculinity at midcentury. Now it is possible to see the full inherent duality of the Druzhinin brothers and the accruing dichotomy that grew from putting so much pressure on the male body to read as a sign for the stability and power of the state. Many men would find living up to these strictures unsustainable. What Fedotov described in his painting (as Chaadaev and Lermontov had in their writings) was just such failure. To be sure, from one standpoint the three men have all the outward signs of masculine invulnerability and self-regulation. Their neat and identical haircuts, the crisp military uniforms and suit, well-tied cravats, and shimmering gold epaulettes—all served as markers of the fully realized articulation of the ordered male body. But at the same time, the brothers' slumping postures and weary gazes betray cracks in the oppressive façade.

A Lesser War

Within a few short years all this would find its way into more of Fedotov's paintings in fascinating ways. But not before the artist had been through a process of self-education and personal struggle. He spent most of the decade that followed the months recorded in the journal managing a careful balance between fulfilling his military duties and growing his artistic skill. He had begun attending evening classes which were open to all at the Imperial Academy of Arts in 1833 (Leont'eva 3). But he was ultimately barred from officially enrolling because he was considered too old for formal training. Nonetheless, by the late 1830s he had produced hundreds of drawings and watercolors of fellow soldiers, friends, and passersby and had even begun to show promise studying under the battle painter A. I. Zauerveida (Mashkovtsev 151). He seems to have reached a crisis point about eight months before he painted the Druzhinin brothers, though. He wanted to retire from the regiment, but knew it was risky, especially from a financial standpoint. The letters that survive from the 1840s attest to continual struggles between buying the resources he needed to develop his artistic skill and the items that were required for his orderly appearance and his day to day work as an officer. He frequently had to resort to asking friends and would-be patrons for money and he was not ultimately able to retire until 1844 (Sarabianov 94).

It is in terms of these struggles that we can view a painting like his *Bivouac of the Grenadier Regiment of Life Guards* from 1841–42 (Fig. 3). A scene that was first and foremost a vehicle for demonstrating Fedotov's ability to handle a variety of poses, the work is at the same time a showpiece for just those qualities of masculine militarism which Nicholas struggled so hard to enforce and codify. Scattered in a frieze across the foreground of the composition are



Fig. 3. Pavel Fedotov, *Bivouac of the Grenadier Regiment of Life Guards (Installation of an Officer's Tent)*, 1841–42. Watercolor and ceruse on paper on cardboard, 30.3 × 35 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

military men engaged in a variety of activities—chatting, smoking, tying ropes to trees, planting stakes in the ground—all without dirtying their pristine cream uniform breeches. These are men whose lives seem to be filled with purposeful activity. They are all so individual and active and yet knitted together—this is regimental life as bonded masculine community. This is a homosocial utopia.

But the officer swinging the ax highlights a troubling undercurrent. Chaadaev would say he is a “burst out of the immediate succession of things”; his ax swinging is an activity which literally illustrates a life “measured by the monotonous swings of the pendulum.” The ax in midair, like the exhale of smoke in the earlier portrait, serves as a marker of prolongation, holding us as viewers in a state of mid-action suspense, but also continual anti-climactic repetition. None other than Aleksandr Druzhinin, our black-clad friend from the portrait, had something interesting to say about all this. In his reminiscences of the artist from 1853, Druzhinin claimed that paintings like *Bivouac* show

that Fedotov was actually: “[...] not at home amongst the majestic and destructive paintings of the battle of the masses. The depiction of episodes of a lesser war—bivouacs, dressing-stations, small corners of the barracks—attracted him a thousand times more [...]” (190). This idea of a lesser war summarizes the problem perfectly. The war in these men’s lives was no epic battle scene, but it was still a heroic struggle nonetheless. It was the daily war against one’s cravat fought at the dressing table. It was there in the confrontation with one’s hair—getting that sweep to the side just right. A fight whose battles are small watercolors pasted on cardboard. A war against man’s relation to time. A fight raging against the excess of time that was his life.

The more we look for them, the more Fedotov’s “episodes of a lesser war” will become apparent. Masculine decorum and orderliness are in tension with time itself in his paintings. A great battle is being fought. In none of Fedotov’s works does the conception of time align with the linear scope that should have characterized his life as a man. In fact, the repetitiveness both he and Chaadaev described would have had strictly feminine associations at the time. As Julia Kristeva pointed out in her influential essay on “Women’s Time,” conceptions of temporality can be understood in three primary categories: cyclical, monumental, and linear. The first two have traditionally been linked to female subjectivity—the *cyclical* echoes nature and is imposed through cycles of gestation and internal biological rhythms and the *monumental* is the sense of an immense temporality without cleavage or escape—one in which time does not pass, but is essentially eternal. Monumental time, according to Kristeva, is “thought of as necessarily maternal” in the sense that its massive presence can be linked to various myths of resurrection (16–17).

These types of temporality linked to female subjectivity are opposed in Kristeva’s construct to what she describes as “the time of history”—conceptions of time which are linear and prospective, time experienced as unfolding; a series of projects which involve departure, progression, and arrival. This linear/historical time is, according to Kristeva, “readily labeled masculine” and is at the same time “both civilizational and obsessional” (18). Chaadaev described something similar in fragments of writing he left behind: “Fortunate would be the man who could retrace his steps. That is not, however, the established order; he must always advance [...]” (Chaadaev, *Philosophical Works of Peter Chaadaev* 139). The established order as time advancing is the masculine order of things. Or, at least, it *should* be. In this structure, any man who experiences time as cyclical and monumental might become linked to female subjectivity via the hysteric—a being who suffers from constant reminiscences which make time fixationally repeated without respite or resolution.

Now consider these types of temporality while looking at Fedotov’s paintings. The moments he chose for his painterly focus belong much more to the cyclical and monumental than to the masculine time of history. His emphasis is constantly on those moments in men’s lives which are repetitive and cycli-

cal in the feminine temporal sense—the smoke exhalation, the cravats, the ax swinging. He (wittingly or unwittingly) collapsed temporal gender distinctions by presenting us with such vivid and habitual markers of time. He denied the men he portrayed their rightful experience of a progressing temporality which moved continually forward. And the journals tell us that Fedotov did not seem to *feel* time in the traditional teleological sense. His time was women’s time in that it was characterized by repetition—card games, sentry duty, drawing, playing the flute.

Chaadaev highlighted the same problem without explicitly stating it in gendered terms: “[...] I know that there is an infinity of time and that this infinity, this incommensurable duration, this succession of things without end, it is nothing but *life itself*[...]” (Chaadaev, *Philosophical Works of Peter Chaadaev* 133). Is not the “succession of things without end” the quintessential feminine temporality? With its endlessly repeating rhythms of menstruation, pregnancy, and birth; the day to day experience of managing a household and preparing meal after meal? The problem that both Chaadaev and Fedotov are elaborating (without necessarily realizing the gender implications) is that associating men with cyclicity meant feminizing their ontological experience of the world. In the 1830s, women’s time was passive time. It underscored a world that happened *to* you, not because of you. But Fedotov’s paintings show that men’s temporal passivity was the reality. All those days lost in card games. All those hours wiled away tying one’s cravat. And Fedotov was first and foremost a realist—that is why he painted it.

Temporal Extensiveness

In 1846, two years into his retirement, Fedotov finally felt he was ready to begin painting in oils. That year saw a burst of portrait activity as the artist painted a number of small canvases—most no bigger than 23 × 13 cm. He scored a first public triumph with the exhibition of his *Fresh Cavalier* that year. He tried to segue that success into lithographs, but found himself in a bitter entanglement with the censors. Alterations to the painting were demanded before officials would allow publication. Fedotov was faced with the reality of financial struggles he had always foreseen. He was confronted with not being the bread-winner his aged father and sisters desperately needed him to be. He had not married so he could support them. At the same time, a wave of recriminations swept Russia after democratic revolutions rocked Europe in 1848 and Nicholas’s early autocratic stridency and rigid censorship only deepened in the time leading up to midcentury. Fedotov’s letters show the artist’s mood darkening:

I put my works into exhibitions, but they proved utterly humiliating—my fate did not have the fury of thunder, but was more like the buzzing of a mosquito [...]. I was lost. I felt some kind of continual nonsense about my insult.....a sort of madness. (Fedotov to Y.V. Tarnovskaya (draft), no date, 132)

By 1850, a discernable change had taken place in the overall style and tone of his subjects. In some ways they seem to be a return to those earlier themes of barracks life, but with a bleaker bite. Fedotov threw himself into work.

I shook off, so to speak, everything worldly, I openly announced my heart to be forever closed to everyone, [...] and indifferent to everything around me, I began my artistic immersions (perhaps God, it is now apparent, helps no one). My eyes, my eyes were always burning from the surf of tears (often so very hot). When human ambition is wounded in its exact center (insulted substantially), my eyes for a year and a half forced me only to do things which applied to painting [...] (Fedotov to Y.V. Tarnovskaya (draft), no date, 133–34)

His friends knew something was wrong. They began to express grave concerns at the hours he was putting in; painting nearly every moment of every day.

He managed a few more lucid portraits, but also began two dark genre paintings that were ultimately to remain unfinished. One of these portraits, a mid-sized oil begun some time in 1850 or 1851, depicts the General-Major Sergei Krylov, then commander of Fedotov's former regiment (Fig. 4). At first sight the painting appears to be little more than a conventional portrait of a decorated officer, a man who would have represented for Fedotov the upper crust of Russian nobility. The General-Major is seated facing out toward the viewer, a tricky bit of foreshortening which obviously gave Fedotov some trouble. To Krylov's right is a sturdy desk with various writings and official papers arranged on it, classic signs of the sitter's upbringing and sophistication. All this takes place in a stuffy interior, neither profusely ornate, nor overly spare; Krylov seems at home in this dwelling. The warm red and orange tones carried throughout the painting provide a sense of harmonic unity between man and the space he occupies. Pleasant and self-assured in his dress uniform, he betrays little of his emotional life; he reads as possessed by a quiet composure. He is manhood (of a certain age) par excellence. Or so it would seem.

One detail within the painting cracks the veneer of this masculine stoicism and decorum. The fingers of the hand which Krylov rests on the table before him tap pensively, opening out the space of recorded time which the artist has captured. That one single raised digit is charged with temporal significance, allowing the viewer to imagine the span of time it took to create this portrait. Otherwise well hidden amongst all the familiar tropes of aristocratic respectability, the drumming fingers create a durational experience which opens the space of the painting out into infinity. It summons time as unfolding in the cyclical and monumental sense. In the feminine sense. It marks what Chaadaev had called "the stifling embrace of time."

And the tapping works in tandem with the warmth of the room's overall tonality to create a heightened sense of suffocating interiority. Never was a man so packed into his suit. So inhibited by it. He might be one of those men who wore a corset underneath his dress uniform and the trousers make it clear



Fig. 4. Pavel Fedotov, *Portrait of Sergei Sergeevich Krylov*, 1850–52. Oil on canvas, 34.5 × 25.2 cm. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

why officers found it so difficult to sit in them. Likewise, never was a room more stifling than this one. Both the uniform and the space combine as forces of sheer inescapable compression. Hammershøi's interiors are downright beatific compared to this. Fedotov has painted this dwelling such that it does not seem to be a room filled with light and air, but rather a burning hellscape of the pressures of midcentury masculinity. Even the doors opening slightly behind Krylov seem only to open onto a closet of some sort—a negative barrier obfuscating all respite from the captivity of this interior. And that slight opening of the door mirrors the raised tapping of the single finger—breaching the barrier of the insular space and the closedness of the moment, dilating time into an eternity of sameness.

Encore! Once More Encore!

In 1851, Fedotov began what would be the last painting he was able to bring off with any real degree of finish. The cheery title—*Encore, Once More Encore!*—betrays the very real darkness which characterizes the painting both formally and in terms of its content (Fig. 5). It shows a dramatic change in the artist's style. He began to focus less on the meticulous rendering of objects and turned his attention instead to atmospheric effects, increasing the warmth of his color. *Encore* is all murky umbers and burnt reds;



Fig. 5. Pavel Fedotov, *Encore, Once More Encore!* 1851–52. Oil on canvas, 34.3 × 46.4. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

sfumato blankets everything in the painting, trying to handle it with your eyes is like trying to hold an object seared down to ash, it crumbles in your grasp. The subject is simple—two men in a compressed interior. The reclining figure on the right lies on a cot, his upraised foot dangles in the air behind him as he trains a dog with a riding crop. He is nestled next to a guitar—as though he has just turned away from playing it. It is a nice bit of foreshortening, this man lying headlong towards us; sketches survive that show the care Fedotov took in his rendering. The man on the left is nearly impossible to make out. Too large in scale, he is crammed into the left corner of the space; his head cranes awkwardly as he draws smoke from a long pipe held in his right hand.

The rest is nearly mush. There is little beyond a household's necessities—canteen, candlesticks, various tools lining the walls—objects from everyday life scattered about, rendered in a hushed, hazy stillness. The stifling atmosphere and overall color tonality is not far from the *Portrait of Krylov*, but here the oppressive constriction of the interior is taken to the extreme. It makes me think again of Chaadaev: "We live only in the most confined present, without a past and without a future, in the midst of a dead calm" (*Filosoficheskiya*, 6). This is one of only two oil paintings in the artist's entire oeuvre which includes a window to the outside world. And yet in many ways it feels like the most enclosed of them all. All those blazing shades of rust and amber, bronzed ochres, caramels and siennas—from floor to ceiling it reads as a space of heat and compression. The timbers bear down from above and below. Gone is the nearness of the Druzhinin brothers. We are not invited to share this space, but to observe it. We are visitors here, not participants. The sharply raking floor keeps us firmly on another plane; Fedotov made a tableau vivant for us, a little theatre scene.

But as in so many earlier works—time is everything. Here the motif of the poodle jumping over the riding crop functions similarly to Kyrlov drumming on the table and the smoke-filled exhale of the Druzhinin brother. The dog rendered in mid-jump, all four spindly legs suspended in the air, is the culmination of the earlier works' suspension. This is the summa that stasis can sustain without rupturing. And just in case we miss the sheer power of the repetitive temporal expansion, the title is there to remind us: "Encore! Once More Encore!" Again and again the dog will be encouraged to jump. Fedotov created a scene demonstrating the meaninglessness and futility of men's lives that is palpable.

And he mirrors the scene before us in a way that further underscores the repetition of the dog's jump and the title itself. Outside, just beyond the window frame is another hut, two windows blazing with the same heat. Fedotov could have just painted the blank darkness of a wintry Russian night, but instead he gives us another hut just like this one. We might imagine it contains two men doing much the same as those before us. Killing time. Men's time.

The red of the windows blazes like two eyes looking back at what must be the same sight from outside that hut. Looking out or looking in, there is only sameness. This is Chaadaev's "stifling embraces of time" given full visual presence.

Marina Shumova once called this painting a "meditation on life" (24). Galina Zagianskaya called it a "giant image of boredom" (68). It is most definitely both of these. But I think perhaps Nikolai Mashkovtsev said it best way back in 1954:

Perhaps in all of world painting there is no other picture that captures with such force the profound anguish and hopeless futility of life—this is life as it drives a person to despair, to madness. A person is so diluted [*rastvoren*] in his surroundings here that it is difficult to distinguish his face. Moreover, the face is not the main concern here. A low, stifling, barely lit room. A dog jumping, like a pendulum, measuring worthless time. Nothing is able to fill his gaping void. This life does not even deserve to be called life. But on it goes—killing time. From such a life, people go mad. (160)

The key that Mashkovtsev gives us is that the futility of this sameness drove people to despair. The time in Fedotov's paintings may appear linear in the sense that it fools us into thinking we are seeing the potential for change, for progress, but that duration is actually nothing more than an infinity of stagnation. Druzhinin's exhale of smoke, the officer's ax swinging, Krylov's drumming fingers, the dog jumping over and over—there is nothing truly narrative or extensive about the way time is handled in Fedotov's work. It is always a trap, a loop of sameness. And it diluted man down to something that cannot really even be called manhood anymore.

Hidden in Fedotov's notebooks is a gem of an analogy that fits in well with these ideas. From it we might infer how this experience of time and its sameness *felt* for the artist; something denied to us in his journal. Fedotov wrote that:

A person is like a glass of water. Leave a glass of standing water to sit and at first bubbles will go up the sides. But already that same freshness is no longer there; a web of mold has begun to spread all around the glass, the transparency has faded and the water is drying up. Some little beasts have begun to grow (like tadpoles), though barely noticeable. But if you look under a microscope, you will throw up your hands. This is the truth of stagnation (Fedotov 116).

All in all, this is troubling from the standpoint of midcentury manliness. Stasis and masculinity did not belong together in Nicholas's vision of Russia. But men's experience of interminable time—as recorded in paintings and journals and letters—attested to the fact that they were paired. The durational instantaneity in Fedotov's paintings proved much like the vacuum of restless wandering Chaadaev had described. The writer knew something had changed about his generation, that Russia—and her men—were standing at a threshold. Fedotov's paintings only confirmed the reality of the problem. All that card playing, endless evening guitar strumming, friends coming and going. "I forgot to keep track of the days." "This is the truth of stagnation."

All Those Who Sorrow

Ultimately, Fedotov would lose his battle with time and the pressures of masculinity at the age of only thirty-seven. He was increasingly tormented by headaches and complained that his eyes burned constantly. Those closest to him said he became increasingly suspicious and withdrawn. He almost stopped sleeping entirely. One June evening in 1852, his long time manservant, Korshunov, found him in a field near the Smolensk cemetery. The artist was weeping with his head in his hands. He was placed in a mental institution in Petersburg. The artist Lev Zhemchuzhnikov visited him there and left this heartbreaking description:

We found him in a closet-like room under the stairs, from the corner of which we heard a scream and we saw two eyes gleaming like a cat, [...] from this dark corner emerged instantly in front of us a human figure in a hospital dressing gown, his hands bound in leather, straps tightly binding his shoulders. He was barefoot and the tatters of his underpants trailed dragging after him. His head was shaved, his eyes were terrible, he was foaming at the mouth, insane, wild, his eyes were ferocious and he screamed continuously. You could not recognize him. This was a man, but it was not a man, [...] poor Fedotov, whom I respected so much, for me he had been an indestructible stronghold and an example. It broke me instantly. I felt as though everything in my body was shaken (220).

A large sheet filled with wild scribbles has been preserved from the time Fedotov spent in the hospital (Fig. 6). It is painful to try and read this mad conglomeration of visual utterances by means of the usual art historical praxis. But on the left side, amidst all the furiously wrought figures and various shapes and jottings, one can make out the pure, almost child-like outline of a penis and testicles. It is a mad little scribble. Masculinity asserts itself here, even to the end. All those years of uniforms and cravats, all those hours wiled away playing cards and singing with other men, reduced here to the purest morphological symbol. All the rigor of Cadet school, all the expectations of his father and family, all the strictures of tsarist Russia—here boiled down to a squiggled shape. He tried to bring so much order to his life, first by keeping that journal in 1835. And then over many years as he sketched his friends, waiting a decade to retire so that he could devote himself completely to painting. But the burden of the “confined present” proved too heavy.

Just below the phallic doodle is a highly rendered sketch of Tsar Nicholas I examining Fedotov under a magnifying glass. The sheet is titled *All Those Who Sorrow*.

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Fig. 6. Pavel Fedotov, *All Those Who Sorrow* (detail), Outlines Done by the Artist during his Stay in the Hospital, 1852. Graphite pencil on paper, 43 × 35.2 cm (sheet of irregular shape). State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.

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Тезисы

Эллисон Ли

Мужское время: Павел Федотов и давления маскулинности в середине девятнадцатого века

Весной 1835 года, в течение семи недель, русский художник Павел Федотов вёл дневник. В это время он служил офицером в Финляндском полку императорской гвардии, но в итоге обрёл славу как самый знаменитый русский художник раннего реализма. Дневник сохранил необычную глубину деталей однообразной жизни девятнадцатилетнего офицера, когда он формировался как живописец. Исследование дневника, а также нескольких картин и рисунков художника,

показывает, что найденная в дневнике повторяемость также характеризует живописную деятельность Федотова. Снова и снова художник добавлял в свои работы детали, подчеркивающие аспект продолжительности изображаемого момента. Эти тропы визуальной и повествовательной обстоятельности параллельны тому, что Петр Чаадаев называл в те же годы «удушающие объятия времени.» Оба хотели обозначить новую беспокойную тщетность, которую они почувствовали среди поколения русских мужчин, тщетность, которая возможно связана с проблемой в отношении этих мужчин к самому времени. Используя отрывки из ранее непереведенных дневников и писем Федотова, наряду с литературными и философскими трудами его современников, в данной статье исследуется, как темпоральность переживалась по-новому; также в статье даётся новая интерпретация социальной организации времени по гендерному признаку.