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## **The Birth and Evolution of the Superfluous Man in 19th Century Russian Literature**

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### **Introduction: 19th Century Russian Society**

Redefining the culture and perspective towards life, the 19th century of Russian society was a period of immense transition. Under the rule of Nikolai I during the early 1800s, Russian society had experienced the full embodiment of autocracy, similar to the final years of Nikolai's older brother Alexander I, and the most severe reactionary policy through his implementation of strict rule and censorship. Nikolai I's rule was heavily influenced by the second half of his brother's reign in which Alexander I became weary of revolt and began to end many of his early reforms. Additionally, Nikolai I's first day in power heavily impacted his rule. This day was named the Decembrist Revolt in which thousands of protesters occupied the streets exclaiming demands of a constitution and representative government.<sup>1</sup> From very early on in his reign, Nikolai the first had ingrained in his mind the necessity of restraining Russian society in order to avoid losing his power and control. He accomplished this control with implementation of excessive censorship in publishing along with strict governing over all aspects of public life. He ended many of the

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "'Nationality' in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I," *The Russian Review* 19, no. 1 (1960): 19. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/126191](http://www.jstor.org/stable/126191)

reforms in education implemented during the start of his brother's rule establishing a centralization of education and knowledge in Russia. There was no local autonomy, very little industrialization, especially seen in railways, and an increased repression among all classes<sup>2</sup>. It was an era run by the parallels of an unquestioned compliance to the Church and the regime's absolute subjugation of the common man. Nikolai I wielded his power to impose a sense of order, in accordance with the Church, giving his people strict roles in Russian society. Feeding his people a crutch to continually withstand until their time had passed, Nikolai I imposed distinct roles to his people in an attempt to neutralize threats of revolt.

Unlike Nikolai I whose autocratic rule had seen the Russian empire grow to its greatest physical scope, his eldest son, Alexander the second, would implement the most influential institutional reforms experienced in Russia since Peter the Great. Taking the position of emperor in 1855 after the death of his father, Alexander II ruled with a strong condemnation of the backward and reactionary policy of his father. Alexander II's most significant and everlasting reform as emperor was the emancipation of Russian serfs in 1861 giving him the title of Alexander the Liberator.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Alexander became responsible for several reforms, including the reorganization of the judicial system, the establishment of elected local judges, the abolishment of corporal punishment, and the promotion of representative, local government. He limited the privileges of the aristocracy and promoted university education. During the first half of Alexander II's rule of the Russian empire, Russian society had established a foundation for an emergence into capitalism and further industrialization. His early years of power held a significant emphasis on a diversion from Russia's past with a societal change among his people.<sup>4</sup> Although he did not come into power until 1855, Alexander II was representative of a changing Russian society who, throughout childhood,

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<sup>2</sup> Riasanovsk, "'Nationality' in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I," 39.

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia H. Whittaker, "Government and Elite in 19th Century Russia," *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1980): 237, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/367917](http://www.jstor.org/stable/367917).

<sup>4</sup> Riasanovsk, "'Nationality' in the State Ideology during the Reign of Nicholas I," 43.

had begun to develop an aspiration of transformation for the future of Russia. Fully inaugurated in the latter half of the 19th century with the abolishment of serfdom, the new age of Russia had taken its position and began the implementation of their new ideals. These new ideas were born much earlier during the youth of these future “liberators” of Russia and this is where a new type of man emerged in Russia.

### **Birth of a Man**

Composed of two periods of differing identification of Russian society, the 19th century was an incredibly influential time of change. This period had given birth to a man whose only perception of the world, adopted from his life in childhood and youth, had now become foreign. These men experienced an inability to find a grounding and a part in this new Russia. They merely lingered in a state from which their life was in the presence of a changing world while their minds had remained in their memory of previous ideals. This type of man in 19th century Russian society adopted an “unhappy consciousness” as described by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a late 18th and early 19th century German philosopher. In *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel describes the “unhappy consciousness,” as one divided between itself and the universal world it lives in.<sup>5</sup> From the creation of thought and ideas, Hegel begins with an abstract conscious that has become an individual aware describing it as, “a being that thinks or is a free self-consciousness.”<sup>6</sup> This self-awareness brings the consciousness to recognize a duality between itself, the individual, and the world it exists in, the universal. The individual surrenders its freedom to the universal by working with the natural world in an attempt to be one with it. However, the unhappy consciousness recognizes its alienation from both the individual and the universal incapable of becoming a part of this universality. It establishes itself as a fluctuation between the two perceiving its existence as meaningless. Hegel defines this fluctuation as a state between universal truth and being a

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<sup>5</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) 16.

<sup>6</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 32.

component of the truth in which the unhappy consciousness declares a nothingness from its existence.<sup>7</sup> In regard to the identification of the Russian empire under Alexander I, Nikolai I, and Alexander II, some members of society failed to assimilate to the changing age and were incapable of finding a role in the world as an individual. This societal clash between the old and the new created a fragmented man and became a core illustration in Russian literature in the mid-19th century; Russian literature examined who this man is and furthermore, demystified his place in the world throughout the century creating the “superfluous man.”

### **The First Taste of the Unhappy Consciousness**

Alexander Griboedov is the first author of Russian literature who examines a character perceived to be lost in the world and paves the path for the future of Russian literature with the character Chatsky in his play *Woe from Wit*. The play begins as the audience learns that Alexander Chatsky, a young man from a noble family, has been away for some time and recently returns to his former society. Upon his return to his home in Moscow, he hopes to reconnect with a young woman from his childhood named Sophia. However, Chatsky learns that Sophia has fallen in love with another man named Aleksey Molchalin and finds himself angry and dissatisfied about what had changed since he left Moscow. Chatsky publicly ridicules foreign influence, especially the French, and is agitated by his continual inability to be a part of this changed society.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps his societal group has not even changed, but rather, only Chatsky’s perception of the reality of his society is what has changed. By the end of *Woe from Wit*, Chatsky is perceived to be going mad by his societal group; he holds the drive to return to what values so precious in his memory of childhood with Sophia. Eventually, Chatsky declares that he has no belonging among any of his peers choosing to leave Moscow for good.<sup>9</sup> In Griboedov’s work, the reader experiences the gradual revelation of the unfitting nature of Chatsky. Chatsky is the first glance of Hegel’s unhappy consciousness

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>8</sup> A. Griboedov, *Woe from Wit* (Book on Demand Ltd.: 2018), scene 14.

<sup>9</sup> Griboedov, *Woe*, scene 14.

in Russian literature and the introduction of the philosophy into Russian society. He is a man of incredible intelligent and cleverness, yet he inevitably becomes aware of a continual increase in separation from his own society. Chatsky finds himself disgusted with his peers and is forced to retreat with no one but himself from the shallowness of society he has unveiled in his mind.<sup>10</sup> However, Chatsky has genuine intentions for a connection among his Russian peers witnessed in his quest to seek acknowledgment from Sophia. There is a fighting nature of Chatsky's soul against his society which ultimately detracts him from being a true superfluous man. Although unable to be defined as a completely meaningless being, Griboedov's Chatsky in his *Woe from Wit* establishes a man with a will unfit for his own home which the future of 19th century Russian literature is able to further develop.

### **The First Man**

Continuing along the foundation of Griboedov, Alexander Pushkin creates a character who falls victim to a perceived removal from Russian society in his novel in verse, *Evgeni Onegin*. Rather than explaining the formation a man like Chatsky in Russian society, Pushkin begins his work from where Griboedov had ended. Established in the start of the novel in verse, Pushkin unveils Onegin, similar to Chatsky's ending characterization, with superior appearance and intelligence yet contains a self-aware shallowness. For instance, in description of Onegin's childhood, the audience learns how easy it was for Onegin to touch upon anything without much effort and with a, "scholarly guise of an expert." Onegin could express himself in perfect French and effortlessly bowed having easily danced the mazurka.<sup>11</sup> He was a very pleasant, intelligent young man in the eyes of the high society. However, Pushkin quickly retorts that for Onegin, "the noise of the high society bored him," and "acts of unfaithfulness managed to tire him/friends and friendships had become

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., scene 17.

<sup>11</sup> Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, trans. Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 1981), Book III: V.

boring.”<sup>12</sup> Onegin is birthed in Pushkin as the man who Chatsky had developed into in *Woe from Wit* but develops even further with his, “languishing sloth.”<sup>13</sup> Pushkin extends the significant aspects of the superfluous man in regard to Onegin’s destructive impact of another soul, contrary to Chatsky’s final action of a disappearance from Russian society. Pushkin’s Evgeni Onegin is the emergence of a true superfluous man, a soul incapable of possessing a form in the world.

After Pushkin’s introduction of Evgeni Onegin’s childhood, Onegin arrives in a charming village, which he, unsurprisingly, finds as a bore. While staying in the village, he catches the eye of the beautiful Tatiana. Tatiana, a young girl with a grandiose sense of romanticism, falls in love with Onegin having only seen him for a brief moment and decides to write him a confession of her love.<sup>14</sup> Onegin meets Tatiana in a garden where he responds to her, “soul’s trusting confession.”<sup>15</sup> In this response, Pushkin fully depicts what the superfluous man is and captures where this man lives in society. This man understands the beauty in the conformities of society, yet fully cognizant of his alienation, he understands his inabilities to conform to his society. Onegin starts to describe to Tatiana his thoughts of a pleasantly commanded fate living a life in the role of a father and spouse, fantasizing of a family portrait besides Tatiana alone, and choosing her as his companion. However, Onegin continues to say, “But I am not created for bliss/To it my soul is alien/In vain are your perfections/And I don’t deserve them at.”<sup>16</sup> Onegin furthers his character as he goes on to say, “No matter how much I would have loved you/Having been accustomed, I’ll stop loving you immediately/You will start to cry; your tears/will not touch my heart/but only annoy it.”<sup>17</sup> He professes that he is completely aware of that which makes life beautiful,

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<sup>12</sup> Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, Book XXVII.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVII.

<sup>14</sup> Ann Gelder, “Wandering in Exile: Byron and Pushkin,” *Comparative Literature* 42, no. 4 (1990): 313, JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/1770706](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1770706).

<sup>15</sup> Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, Book III: II.

<sup>16</sup> Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, Book III: XIV.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Book III: XIV.

but he speaks to the inevitability of becoming bored as a spouse harshly delivered with a non-existent empathy to Tatiana. Moreover, Onegin conveys that he does not desire those beautiful, integral parts of life such as marriage with the appetite of society; in fact, he does not desire them at all. Evgeni Onegin is a man who had attracted an objectively beautiful, virtuous, trusting soul, but nonetheless, is possessed by an emptiness that can do nothing but pollute its intrinsic purity; every man of that society dreamed of Tatiana, but from his failure to generate a mutual love, an intrinsic nature of all humanity, Onegin was the cause of suffering to a beloved, angelic soul. Tatiana learned in her life to be more aware of men like Onegin who are unable to share in an everlasting, unconditional love. From Onegin's impression, Tatiana never acquired an admiration for another soul similar to that which was held for him; Onegin's proposal to Tatiana, later in life, is symbolic of his failed search to find a place of meaning after he left Tatiana. Tatiana rejects Onegin's proposal just as society begins to reject this type of man once they understand who he is, for they know he does no good to him. By the end of his time, Onegin was left with the same perspective of life from which the novel began, bored and uninterested in society, only ever amounting to a barer of suffering for an innocent soul. From Griboedov's Chatsky, Pushkin had created a man of an idle, meaningless, wasted existence and introduced this man's destruction unto others opening the gates for Russian literature to continue this examination as time progressed in the 19th century.

### **The Destruction of a Wandering Soul**

Although troubling in his languishing sloth and possession of a perceived soul of inhumanity, Evgeni Onegin's embodiment of a superfluous man had not delved into that of the disturbingly damaging soul which is brought into conception by Mikhail Lermontov's Pechorin in *Hero of Our Time*. Lermontov provides the spite and sour view towards society in his character as enamored by Onegin; however, Lermontov's Pechorin breaks into the superfluous man's mobility his path leaving a trace of ruination. Additionally, the aspect of alienation within Pechorin is amplified, for Lermontov decides to forgo the common introduction of heroes in Russian

literature such as Pushkin's first chapter of Onegin's upbringing and establishment of his awareness of distaste towards the high society. In fact, the audience does not know anything about Pechorin's past and what actions have led him to where he is. The manner in which Pechorin is revealed, similar to the manner in which he introduces himself to others in the novel, brings about a mysteriousness and darkness to him. The reader comes to know about Pechorin through the lens of a narrator in the chapter "Maksim Maksimych" who describes Pechorin's eyes as though, "they never laughed when he laughed. Have you not happened, yourself, to notice the same peculiarity in certain people? It is a sign either of an evil disposition or of profound and constant sorrow."<sup>18</sup> Pechorin is eerie, and his unbelonging is established from his introduction to the audience. Where Lermontov gives action to this man is how Pechorin becomes an even greater embodiment of the superfluous man. No one knows where his home is, and it seems that not even Pechorin does; rather, he continues to move looking to find a place as his own, physically as a shelter and figurately in society. As seen in "Taman," "Princess Mary," and "The Fatalist," Pechorin is always in a state of movement, and it is never clear what the purpose is for such travel. He is never at rest, never at ease but one thing for sure, is that he is a fragmented soul wandering in the world with no guide.

From this wandering, Pechorin, entirely, is the 'unhappy consciousness' establishing himself in this fluctuation of physical locations, but in regard to Hegel, a fluctuation between universal truth and being a component of truth. Even within the format of the novel, Lermontov, breaks and jumps from chapter to chapter; additionally, Lermontov does not make clear distinction of how much time has passed or any references to past events for a chronological grounding adding a sense of unknown to Pechorin and an aimlessness of his actions. In Chapter 5, The Third Extract, from Pechorin's Diary, where the audience reads into the depths of Pechorin's mind, Pechorin is in discussion with

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<sup>18</sup> Mikhail Lermontov, *Hero of Our Time*, (London: Penguin Press, 1987), 99.

Princess Mary who calls him a dangerous man of whom she'd, "rather perish in the woods under the knife of an assassin than under [his] tongue." Pechorin responds with a confession of his true self proclaiming,

I was prepared to love the whole world—no one understood me: I learned to hate. My colorless youth flowed by in conflict with myself and the world; fearing ridicule, I buried my best feelings in the depths of my heart, and there they died. I spoke the truth—I was not believed: I began to deceive. Having acquired a thorough knowledge of the world and the springs of society, I grew skilled in the science of life; and I saw how others without skill were happy, enjoying gratuitously the advantages which I so unweariedly sought. Then despair was born within my breast—not that despair which is cured at the muzzle of a pistol, but the cold, powerless despair concealed beneath the mask of amiability and a good-natured smile. I became a moral cripple. One half of my soul ceased to exist; it dried up, evaporated, died, and I cut it off and cast it from me. The other half moved and lived—at the service of all; but it remained unobserved, because no one knew that the half which had perished had ever existed. But, now, the memory of it has been awakened within me by you, and I have read you its epitaph.<sup>19</sup>

This is one of the most powerful and significant moments of Lermontov's novel in regard to the superfluous man. Lermontov awakens society to the inner dimensions of this lost man just as Pechorin awakens the memory of the dead half of his soul to Princess Mary. The audience learns that Pechorin's greatest extension from Onegin and Chatsky is his intellect of himself which he had grown to secretly possess since childhood. He recognizes he has no feeling like those he interacts with,

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<sup>19</sup> Lermontov, *Hero of Our Time*, 241.

and he manifests a purpose of posing pain and suffering to others. He has no power in finding a place and being accepted but finds himself in a position removed from others. His intellect is superior, and his taste of satisfaction is obviously nonparallel to others in the world. It becomes that only a destructive imposition onto those blissful from their ignorance is what he is capable of. In a sense, the superfluous man has developed from the sluggish will of Onegin into a more sophisticated intellect about its own soul and an embrace of darkness due to its absence of light received from others. Lermontov gives way that the true superfluous man is dedicated to nothing and governed by the incomprehensible impulses of existence only negatively affecting those souls which mistakenly cross its path.

### **The Ultimate Embodiment of the Superfluous Man**

Although Lermontov's Pechorin and Pushkin's Onegin are unquestionably regarded as strong compositions of the "superfluous" man, Ivan Goncharov's Oblomov is the final product of this type of character's evolution in 19th century Russian literature. In his novel, Goncharov creates an indecisive man unable to take any action in his life. Goncharov's character, Oblomov, exists physically in a changed world but mentally in the memories of his past. Oblomov is from a family of high class and stature, and since his youth, he was never required to work for the sake of his family. He existed in a blissful childhood retaining only memories of joy and ease. As a grown man, Oblomov finds incredible difficulty to do anything, and for most of the novel, he does not move from his bed. His childhood estate is in financial distress, but Oblomov fails to attain any will to journey to his home and take actions to solve his problems.<sup>20</sup> Rather than acting in the present and further developing a meaning in his life, he spends most of his life living in his thoughts and dreams attempting to return to his childhood life. Goncharov incorporates a foil to Oblomov, his friend Andrey Stolz, similar to that of Tatiana to

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<sup>20</sup> Ivan Goncharov, *Oblomov*, trans. C. J. Hogarth (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1915), 14.

Onegin. Stolz has an impeccable sense of independence and self-worth originating from a middle-class family amounting to a wealthy, respectable, businessman; Stolz adapts to the ever-changing society. Stolz has pity for Oblomov and strives to change his friend throughout the novel. He introduces him to Olga, an old friend of Stolz, in hopes that a new love will turn Oblomov to make a new self with this companion.

Life is composed of a series of changing states from birth to youth to adulthood to old age; human souls must choose to learn how to move with the world or else their existence cannot continue. The soul dies where it decides to wallow just as a man in a grave remains paralyzed as the society above him continues to walk; Stolz fears his friend's absence of desires and hopes a companion such as Olga can lead Oblomov to grow with her. Oblomov and Olga develop a mutual, loving relationship for one another. At the end of chapter four, Oblomov expresses awareness of his inert, empty soul and Olga's completeness proclaiming, "Only through you can I breathe or feel or see... Without you everything is wearisome and distasteful. I feel like a machine; I walk and act without knowing ever what I am doing. Yes, I am like a machine whereof only you are the fuel, the motive power."<sup>21</sup> From this declaration, Goncharov portrays that Oblomov is entirely aware of his soul's shallowness realizing that after several years of his adulthood he has not created anything of himself. However, it is unlike any prior superfluous man of 19th century Russian literature to be enamored for a woman and seemingly desire to change. In regard to Onegin and Pechorin, both men had intense self-intellect but professed that their character may never change for it is impossible for them to reshape their interpretation of society; these men can only float in the world until their death. As the chapter concludes, Goncharov conveys a fear to the audience that Oblomov's loafing nature may override his genuine love as Oblomov proposes a delay to marriage.

Although optimistic for the development of Oblomov's soul, in the beginning of the following chapter, Goncharov entirely dispels those

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<sup>21</sup> Goncharov, *Oblomov*, 100.

former fantasies of change. Oblomov proves that he is, in fact, no different than Onegin or Pechorin, and, in fact, an even deeper manifestation of the two. Oblomov proves his soul's inability to grow and causes the termination of his relationship with Olga. As Oblomov continues to create excuses for a delay for their marriage, Olga confesses that his hindrance for change will never end. She asks him if he can stand by her his entire life, "and be to [her] all that [she] needs." Olga poses to Oblomov that, "should you return a bold, a considered 'Yes,' I will cancel a certain decision of mine—I will give you my hand."<sup>22</sup> Olga gives Oblomov the opportunity for marriage if he is capable of proving action. The weak and cripple soul of Oblomov fails to respond and Olga has no choice but to leave. In her departure she describes to Oblomov that his only future is to—

...retire to rest each night with a sigh of thankfulness that the day had passed so quickly; and each morning you would have awakened with a prayer that today might be exactly as yesterday. That would have been our future. Is it not so? Meanwhile I should have been fading away. Do you really think that in such a life you would have been happy?<sup>23</sup>

In these few pages, Goncharov delineates the context of the superfluous man in the 19th century Russian society. Olga represents the Russian society who, similar to Stolz, has a drive to grow from the past and remodel themselves to fit into the changing culture; whereas, Oblomov represents individuals bound to the old socioeconomical ideals and fearful to change. When faced with the inhibitions of those men who cannot obtain a role of the future, society recognizes the necessity to disregard such a man from themselves; only serving as a catalyst to the end of his own existence, this man buries his shallow soul into a hole of familiarity allowing for his meaninglessness. While being deprived of

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

such a man, society can successfully carry out their drive to move forward and be a part of the new age. This nature and identification of the superfluous man within Russian society is completely encompassed as Goncharov illustrates the rest of Oblomov's life thereafter Olga, as well. Oblomov eventually marries a woman, his landlady, though not from aspirations of growth and change.<sup>24</sup> Contrastingly, in the marriage with his widowed landlady, Oblomov solidifies a retreat into his past and memories of childhood. Oblomov spends the rest of his life being cared for by Agafia successfully shaping his dreams of the paradisiacal childhood times into his reality. By the end of his life, Oblomov's existence had amounted to the same level of nothing to which his soul originated from.

### **Conclusion**

From the first versions of Griboedov's *Woe from Wit* written in 1823 leading to the final publication of Goncharov's *Oblomov* in 1859, 19th century Russian literature had successfully explained the birth and development of a new man in the Russian society caused from the shifting societal and cultural ideals. The shift in Russian culture was focused on attaining a goal to reject the backwardness during the rule of Nikolai I and to elevate their sense of self in the world. The characters of Chatsky, Onegin, Pechorin, and Oblomov all grow off of each other just as the continual passage of time grew a new age in Russia. They possess the composition of a charismatic, sophisticated, and incredibly intellectual man who finds himself bored and cynical of his societal peers.

Although categorized into a group as the origination of this lost man in society, each author represented a different time in Russia and each character was a different stage of this man along his path to being. For instance, during the 1820s and 1830s in the works of Pushkin and Griboedov, this man was seemingly pitied. A famous critic and journalist of the 19th century, Nikolay Dobroliubov, comments on the interpretation of the early superfluous man in that, "fate dealt with them ruthlessly."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>25</sup> Nikolai Dobroliubov, "What Is Oblomovism," *Sovremennik*, 1859, 95.

Men like Alexander Chatsky and Evgeni Onegin had studied diligently and performed in accordance to their respective societies of nobility for the entirety of their upbringing. Everything they had perceived life to encompass was completely altered forcing them to proclaim life as a whole to be frivolous. In Evgeni Onegin, Pushkin proclaims that what Onegin knew, “harder than all sciences,” was the, “science of tender passion.”<sup>26</sup> This knowledge did not infer an implicate embrace of such science, but rather a knowledge and understanding so great that he was driven towards unhappiness and, “finally he stopped loving,” and, “nothing touched him/he did not take notice anything.”<sup>27</sup> This was not Onegin’s choice but rather was derived from the understanding of the very society he was a part of. It was a feeling of abandonment from his own peers that drew this man into being. This sympathy of Onegin was in part due to Pushkin’s use of a narrator who found Onegin’s strangeness and “sharp, child mind” favorable because, “[they] had both known the game of passions/life tormented both of [them].”<sup>28</sup> Pushkin invited the audience into the depth of Onegin’s composition with a peer and not in solitude. During the time of Pushkin’s publication of Evgeni Onegin, the man depicted by Onegin was interpreted to have unfortunate circumstances to which he had no control on the effects on himself.

This all changed as time progressed as a better understanding of this man came to be in Russian society. Dobroliubov contradicts his original perspective in his later article, “What is Oblomovism?” in the *Sovremennik* analyzing Oblomov with lesser regard. Dobroliubov describes Oblomov not as a new man in Russian literature but rather the same man introduced by Pushkin just in his most simple and natural form. Goncharov presents the skeleton of the superfluous man developed from Griboedov and Pushkin and extremized in Lermontov’s Pechorin. In his critic, Dobroliubov infers that Oblomov and men like him of the current

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<sup>26</sup> Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, Book I: XXXV.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, Book I: XXXVII.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, Book II: XLV.

era, had brought their character upon themselves.<sup>29</sup> Dobroliubov begins with the discourse of the facts of Oblomov's childhood writing, "He becomes accustomed with lolling about at an early age...If Ilya Ilyich wants anything, he has only to make a sign- and at once three or four servants rush to carry out his wishes." Dobroliubov continues and writes, "It would be wrong to think that nature has deprived him of the ability to move of his own volition."<sup>30</sup> Rather, the superfluous man in Russian society brought his inertness upon himself leashing his soul unto a shallow purposelessness. From the repressive reign of Nikolai I, society had been established as a composition of lavish, effortless aristocracy in which society was restricted to conform. Represented in the differences of Nikolai I and Alexander II, the defiant, new generation of youth came into adulthood and changed everything. Having once been children indoctrinated by a constricted, repressive policy, these young adults endorsed nothing but movement. Alexander II provided the most opportunity for movement along the social and idealistic ladder; if a man was unable to attain a new position like our character's of Onegin, Pechorin, and Oblomov, there was nothing to blame besides himself; he was an inert, meaningless soul unwilling to ground his mind into the new soil that Russia now cultivates. The world walks away from Russian literature in the 19th century understanding that the superfluous man will continue to be born in the world as long as society continues to birth change; Russian literature of the 19th century awakened the world to understand these half-dead souls who wallow about constricting the growth of society damaging the innocent souls with its deception.

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<sup>29</sup> Dobroliubov, "What Is Oblomovism," 344.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

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