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A semiotic interpretation of national typology: the English, the Boers and ... the Russians  
(Ivan Goncharov's *Frigate Pallas*)

Abstract

This article examines the text of renowned nineteenth century Russian travellers notes, *The Frigate Pallada*, by Ivan Goncharov, the author of *Oblomov*. Using the teachings of Victor Shklovsky, Yuriy Tynianov and Yuriy Lotman on the role of the genre of travellers notes in the history of Russian literature, the author examines the chapter on the Cape Province. She demonstrates that in his descriptions of the two nations of the Cape Province - the English and the Boers - Goncharov is applying that which is known to him - his own cultural model of the Russian society of the mid-nineteenth century. In his examination of differences between the English and the Boers Goncharov applies the ideological dichotomy between the Slavophiles and the Westernisers. Goncharov, by "inverting" the "dual model of Russian culture" (Lotman & Uspensky, 1984a) draws comparisons between the Russians of the Oblomov Slavophile type on the one hand, and the English on the other hand as the model for the improvement of the industry of the economically backward Russian nation. To Goncharov the Boers resemble the Oblomov, old world side of dichotomy, which by inversions of the dual model can fluctuate between "the good" and "the bad" categories.

Introduction

In the vast area of cross-cultural studies, the field of South African-Russian connections remains arid. However, several Russian literary texts bear witness to the interest of Russian writers in South Africa. Some celebrated 20th-century Russian and Soviet texts reflect events of the Anglo-Boer War, and express a strong sympathy towards, and affiliations with the Boers. In such diverse texts as *The Silver Dove* (*Serebrianyj Golub'*), the modernist novel of the beginning of the century (1922), by the symbolist Andrey Bely, and Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* (*Tikhij Don*) of 1925, by Stalin's prize laureate, Russians peasants sing "Transvaal is burning in fire".<sup>1</sup> Amongst K. Paustovsky's apolitical texts, highly esteemed in his country for their mastery of the short story narration, we encounter a Russian translation of the Transvaal song: "Transvaal', Transvaal' *strana moja - ty vsia gorish v ognе*". Paustovsky also confesses in his biography *A Story of One Life* (*Povest' o zhizni*) (1955) that his generation was brought up on the story of the heroic *Life of Pieter Maritz, a Young Boer from the Transvaal*. What unites all these accounts of the Anglo-Boer war is a sympathy towards the Boers, based on a vague parallelism between the Russians and the Boers on the one hand, in opposition to the pragmatic and pedantic English. In Paustovsky we read:

<sup>1</sup> In Andrey Bely's experimental symbolist novel we find the following account of the famous song:

And everything was smothered by the squeaking of an enormous accordion, played by a lad in a blue silk shirt, in a tilted cap, with a provocative face, and some drunken voices sang in accompaniment: "Traaa-nsvaal, Tra-a-nsvaal, my cou-ountry ... You-ou a-a-all a-are in fi-i-re bur-urning". (Bely 1922:65; my translation.)

Uncle Juzja left as a volunteer to join the Boers. This act, heroic and altruistic, greatly impressed his relatives. We, children, were deeply shattered by this war. We knew in all the details every single battle which took place on the opposite side of the world - the siege of Ladysmith, the battle near Bloemfontein, and the taking of Majuba. The most popular people amongst us were the Boer generals: De Wet, Joubert, and Botha. We despised the arrogant Lord Kitchener and mocked the English soldiers for fighting in red uniforms. We read enthusiastically the book *Pieter Maritz - a young Boer from the Transvaal*. Not only us - the whole civilized world - followed the events of the tragic drama that was taking place on the the veld between the Vaal and the Orange River, followed events of the unjust battle of a small nation against the world empire. Even Kiev organ-grinders, who up till now had played a romance "Separation", started to play a new song "Transvaal, Transvaal, my land, you are burning in fire". For this song we used to give them a shilling *piatak*, which we have saved up to buy ice cream. (Paustovsky, 1955:40-41; my translation.)

However, a much more acclaimed Russian text, which addresses itself to the nations of the Cape Province, belongs to the 19th century. This celebrated text is the book of travellers notes, *Frigate Pallada*, by Ivan Goncharov (1812-1891), the author of *Oblomov*,<sup>2</sup> considered to be the fourth greatest realist novelist in the line of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Turgenev.

### Travellers notes and the semiotics of Russian culture

In the history of Russian literary scholarship, the genre of travellers notes has received considerable attention at the hands of the Russian formalists<sup>3</sup> in the 1920's and 1930's, as a consequence of their preoccupation with the role that this genre played in the formation of the realist novel. Both Yuriy Tynianov (1969) and Victor Shklovsky (1983) treated the genre of travellers notes as crucial in their search for signs of the literary struggle against and polemics with the texts of the preceding epochs as important in the evolution of genres and in the formation of literary schools.

Yuriy Tynianov (1969:192), in his analysis of Pushkin's travellers notes *Journey to Azrum* (*Puteshestvije v Arzum*), demonstrates that the notes contain elements of literary polemics with the school of Romanticism in general, and Karamzin's *Notes of the Russian traveller* in

<sup>2</sup> Goncharov served as a personal secretary to the Putjatin expedition (1852-1856) of the frigate *Pallada*, and his duties consisted of maintaining a written account of the expedition. The aim of the voyage was the following. The Russian Government had decided to undertake an expedition to Japan in the hope of opening commercial relations with that country. Admiral Count Putjatin was entrusted with Russia's attempt to break Japan's almost complete isolation from the outside world. The voyage turned out to be less successful and more dangerous than anticipated. Due to the Crimean War that broke out in 1854, the frigate was in danger of being attacked by the English and the French when sailing near the Saddle Islands. Japanese officials turned out to be unapproachable, and the frigate had to be sunk in 1856 in order to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemies. After spending three years on the frigate, which travelled to Chinese shores via England, Madeira, the Cape (1853), Manila, Indonesia and Japan, Goncharov made an overland journey from the Chinese shores to Petersburg, which took him another six months.

<sup>3</sup> In Western scholarship, Goncharov has been persistently received as a *homo unius libri*, as a creator of one masterpiece - the novel *Oblomov*. In the mid-seventies three monographs on Goncharov, authored by American scholars appeared: Setchkarev (1974), Ehre (1973), and Lyngstad (1971). Setchkarev's well-informed study contains a chapter on *Frigate Pallas*, and is centered around Goncharov's personal experiences during his journey. A point is made of certain differences between "the rosy text of the book" and the contents of Goncharov's letters to his friends in Petersburg. Ehre's book also has a chapter on *Frigate Pallas*. Ehre, who generally views Goncharov as a realist struggling against the romantic tastes of his youth, devotes attention to Goncharov's humorous treatment of the romantic clichés of travellers notes in general, and Karamzin's *Notes of a Russian traveller* in particular.

particular. The latter's Natur-philosophy and sensibility Pushkin rejects in favour of conciseness of form. Tynianov reminds us that "the correct hierarchy of subjects" in the I-form narration as well as the choice and distribution of the encountered material in the *Journey to Arzum* served as a school of narratological technique for Leo Tolstoy.

Victor Shklovsky, besides his work on Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*, in which he traces signs of polemics with classicism, also turned to Goncharov's *Frigate Pallas*, using this text to work out the essence of the genre of travellers notes as such. It is the writer's distinction between "important and unimportant material" encountered during the journey, and his relation to this material, which constitutes for Shklovsky the programmatic essence of travellers notes. In the 1970's and the 1980's the Soviet structuralists and the semioticians turned again to travellers notes in their culturological search for a national typology and the semiotics of behaviour. Lotman's latest semiotic teachings on the genre of travellers notes offer us an additional base in the search for national typology. In Lotman & Uspenskij (1984a:579) we read:

A journey is a convenient plot structure for bringing together not only various conflicting national and psychological types, but also different ideological concepts, which are put into juxtaposition, without bringing upon them a final judgment. (My translation.)

### The Oblomov-Stolz dichotomy

Goncharov was a slow writer in comparison with his contemporaries Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Nevertheless, he claimed that after his return from his journey around the world, during which he visited the Cape Province (March-April 1853), he created his masterpiece *Oblomov* in only a few months. In the history of Russian literature *Oblomov*'s two main protagonists - Oblomov and Stolz - have achieved the status of archetypes of the Russian national character. The essence of the antithetical disposition of these characters lies in the symbolic split of the Russian national psyche into the Eastern, mystical and inactive (Oblomov), and the Western, pragmatic and industrious (Stolz).<sup>4</sup> Which aspect Goncharov sympathized with has continued to baffle the novel's commentators until now.<sup>5</sup> At the time of its appearance (1861) the conflicting literary camps of the Slavophiles and Westerners attacked the two characters on ideological and economic grounds. Slavophiles were proclaiming Oblomov to be an innately Russian type which will withstand the mediocrity and material uniformity of bourgeois Europe, while Westernizers were proclaiming Stolz's capitalist inspiration to be the only salvation for prereformatory

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<sup>4</sup> A view on the necessity of the "parallel and contextual" reading of *Oblomov* and *Frigate Pallas*, which has not yet been systematically undertaken, is expressed by Yuriy Loshchitz, the author of the latest (1986) monograph on Goncharov. Loshchitz (1986:204-205) draws parallels between the descriptions of the English throughout *Frigate Pallas* and Stolz in the novel, and maintains that Oblomov's "orientalism" (his "Asian gown" is made of Persian silk, and his estate is situated "almost in Asia") is a result of Goncharov's acquaintance during his journey with the "passive and observative" nature of Eastern nations. Unfortunately, Loshchitz does not fully develop these observations.

<sup>5</sup> Much later, after the novel was published, in 1978, Goncharov characterised Stolz as pallid and weak in his critical comments "Better late than never". This can be seen as a further instance among many of Russian writers justifying themselves in the face of criticism (cf. the famous case of Turgenev changing the end of *Rudin* to suit liberal clumsy contradiction to the writers' own texts).

Russia.<sup>6</sup> Notably, Stoltz in the novel is a Germano-Russian and his pragmatism is ascribed to his German descent.

The classification of the Russian national psyche into an antithetical dichotomy of two irreconcilable types did not quite fit into the typology of character of the 19th-century Realist novel. And indeed two decades later a symbolist theorist Merezhkovsky called Goncharov a "first spontaneous symbolist, who turns from observations of *concrete* matter towards observing the *eternal*".<sup>7</sup>

Bearing the content of the Stolz-Oblomov dichotomy in mind, the irreconcilable dichotomy of patriarchal values versus pragmatism, of the old world versus the new, we now return to Goncharov's treatment of the two nations of the Cape Province in the chapter on the Cape Province in *Frigate Pallada*. Russian formalist and semiotic teachings on the genre of travellers notes will form a theoretical base for this investigation, which has as its aim a search for a national typology in comparison and contrast.

### *Frigate Pallada* and the Cape Province

The singling out of a particular chapter has been the general practice amongst the book's commentators. This practice can be justified by the fact that each chapter of *Frigate Pallada* is structured according to an identical formal plan. Each chapter opens with a description of the ocean and the routine life on the ship, and as a new shore approaches, a

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<sup>6</sup> Grigoriev (1859) and the Slavophiles conceived of Oblomov as a positive type: Druzhinin (1859) maintained that "overdeveloped Oblomovism is an unbearable thing, but one must by no means treat its free and moderate development with hostility"; a revolutionary democrat, Dobrolyubov (1859), in his "What is Oblomovism?" considered Oblomov to be yet another representative of the "superfluous man", along with Rudin, Belto, etc.; in Milyukov (1859), Stolz too received a harsh treatment: "In this antipathetic figure, under a mask of education and humanness and the striving for reforms and progress, lies concealed all that is so repulsive of the Russian character and view of life" (Goncharov, 1952, vol. 8:23; my translation); and Chekhov wrote: "Stolz does not inspire me with any confidence. The author says he's a splendid chap, but I don't believe it. He's a crafty rogue, he thinks a lot of himself, and he's complacent. He is half fabricated and three quarters stilted" (Goncharov, 1952, vol. 8:22).

<sup>7</sup> In the radical sphere Oblomov continued to be perceived as a national type also during the post-Revolutionary epoch. Before the October Revolution, Lenin spoke of Oblomov as "a landowner in favour of serfdom, to whom statute labour or corvée secured a reliable income without any risk on his part, without any capital outlay, without any alterations in the age-old routine of production". In the post-October period the Oblomov type is used by Lenin for the castigation of unskilled and lazy workers. In his report "On the international and internal position of the Soviet republic", delivered on March, 6, 1922, Lenin said: "It is enough to look at us, how we meet and how we work at these commissions, to see that the old Oblomov is still with us, and we must wash and clean, swindle and shear him, in order that some sense may come out of him" (quoted from Goncharov, 1952, vol. 8:27; my translation). In his "One step forward, two steps backward", he said "To people grown used to the loose-fitting dressinggown and slippers of domestic Oblomovism, formal regulations seem narrow, constricting, burdensome and enslaving, in the free process of the ideological struggle" (p. 27). In the "vulgar sociological" period of Soviet literary criticism, Oblomov was yet again re-evaluated in Petrov (*I.A. Goncharov - A critical bibliographic study*, 1952): "Oblomov has great vitality, finding expression in fear of the new, in habits and prejudices ... which are a dangerous enemy of socialism", and: "Soviet literary criticism has cast away the deeply erroneous interpretation of the author's work as being apolitical. One must not consider the writer who with such enormous strength exposed Oblomovism as the consequence of serfdom, to be apolitical and indifferent to social questions" (p. 27).

description of newly perceived nature is given. As new people and nations are encountered their customs are evaluated, usually in comparison and contrast to Russians customs. Descriptions of nature are built on the antithesis of Natur-philosophy: under the exotic luxury of extravagant nature as it appears to a foreign eye, a hidden world of danger exist. This hidden world takes the form of snakes, tigers, and poisonous trees. The same antithetical disposition is applied in parallel fashion to the life of humans. The topos theme of *Frigate Pallada* is the image of a colonial Englishman that is present in Africa, India and China, and stands as an emblem of expanding civilization. The latter is put in conflict with primitive mankind.

The account of the Cape Province follows this format. The difference is in the very nature of the antithesis, which was dictated to Goncharov by the unique reality of the Cape Province. It was only the Cape Province that provided him with the coexistence of two colonial nations, the Boers and the English. These were put by Goncharov into contrast. Subsequently, the semantics of the antithesis of colonial civilization versus primitivism acquired a new meaning. The English remain on the civilization side of the antithesis, as in the rest of the book, while the other pole is occupied by the Boers. They stand, not for primitive mankind, but for the old, patriarchal, feudal way of life for which Goncharov was as emotionally nostalgic as he was for the old estate Oblomovka. Thus, the content of the antithesis is changed, the form is preserved. Goncharov introduces the antithetical disposition of the two nations in the very first pages of the chapter. Through a descriptive analysis of the differences in *byt*,<sup>8</sup> the furnishing of hotels, the presence or lack of comfort, etc., Goncharov comes to a synthesis of his introductory impressions that allows him to group the nations into opposite types. Descriptions of pictures displayed in the hotel rooms run by the English and the Boers serve as emblems of the essences of the two nations.

On the walls some bad drawings were hanging - an unavoidable component of stations and inns all over the globe, as I have now become convinced. And here it is the same. Here on one picture, for example, a fight between soldiers and smugglers is depicted: the heroes are slaughtering and stabbing one another, but their faces preserve such an expression of serenity, which even the English shown here could not have had in a similar situation, that it constitutes the true comic element of such a depiction. On the other pictures an obstacle course is depicted: horses head over hooves, people up to their necks in water. On the evidence of these drawings I concluded, without even having seen the owners, that the hotel was English. With the Dutch, the horse-races are not depicted, however you will see tiger hunts and fox hunts everywhere, and after that, portraits of queens and kings. And there one is fascinated by their peculiar incongruities: a snow leopard has sunk its teeth into a hunter's leg, but the hunter is lying in the reeds, looking aside and laughing. As a rule one can tell English and Dutch inns apart at first glance. With the English, comfort, or a pretence to it, can be seen everywhere; with the Dutch - a patriarchal character, manifesting itself in antique furniture, turned black by time, but perfectly maintained, especially those wooden big-bellied writing-desks and cupboards with old-fashioned porcelain, silverware, and so on. From the condition of these single inns one can correctly conclude that the Dutch fall behind, the English stand head and shoulders above them in this country. Of the former everything looks dull and neglected; of the latter gay, new and fresh. (Goncharov, 1952, vol. 5:114)<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Still today, the concept of *byt* - day by day existence - occupies a very important place in discussion on the differences in life style between the West and Russia.

<sup>9</sup> There is unfortunately no complete English translation of *The Frigate Pallada*. In 1965 The Folio Society of London published a short excerpt from the work (two books in the original), based on the abridged 1949 Moscow edition by Muravejskij. All translations in this paper are made by Lucas Venter, from the Russian original edition of Goncharov's collected works in eight volumes, Volume 5 and Volume 6, *Pravda*, Moscow 1952.

The quoted passage illustrates the descriptive nature of Goncharov's art, which, it is often said, is akin to the art of Flemish painting. But it is not only creation of typologies through the realism of psychological detail that is interesting about this description. The quoted passage also contains a, for us, important antithetical disposition of the two nations on the basis of the opposition:

old ways	---	new ways
Under this antithesis fall such categories as		
static	---	dynamic
portraits of kings and queens)		(horses, races)
and		
solidity	---	comfort
(old-fashioned furniture and porcelain)		(modern furniture)

In "The role of dual models in the dynamics of Russian culture (till the end of the eighteenth century)", Lotman & Uspenskij (1984b:4) makes the following classification of the role of the "old --- new" opposition in Russian culture:

One of the most persistent oppositions contributing to the structure of Russian culture throughout its whole history from the introduction of Christianity into Russia until the reforms of Peter I is the opposition "old" ways [*starina*] --- "new" ways [*novizna*]. It proves to be so vigorous and significant that from the subjective standpoint of a bearer of the culture at various important oppositions of the type "Russia --- West", "Christianity --- Paganism", "true faith --- false faith", knowledge --- ignorance", "the social top" --- "the social bottom", etc.

Goncharov transfers this dual model of Russian cultural history to the antithetical split between the two nations of the Cape Province. The English can develop only within the framework of the "new ways", i.e. along the lines of comfort, prosperity, and industriousness. The Dutch, who have been declining in prosperity and who lead a patriarchal, feudal existence, will continue their political and economic decline in the future, thus filling the "old ways" role of the model.

### The Boers and the English

After Goncharov has spent approximately two weeks travelling in the Cape Province, he finds himself able to confirm his introductory impressions of the antithetical arrangement of the two nations, with the prosperity of the English offset by the decline of the Dutch:

The Englishman is master here, whoever he may be: he is always elegantly dressed, and coldly, with scorn does he issue orders to a Black. He sits in his spacious office, or in his shop, or at the exchange. He bustles about on the wharf. He is a builder, engineer, planter, bureaucrat. He gives orders, administers, works. And he rides in a carriage, or on horseback. He enjoys the cool breeze on the balcony of his villa. He hides in the shade of a vineyard". (p. 121.)

Goncharov's sympathies nevertheless lie with the Dutch, for whose patriarchal values he feels an intense nostalgia. Goncharov admires the capitalist industriousness of the English on pragmatic grounds, since they constitute a desirable pattern for imitation by mid-nineteenth century Russian society on the eve of the emancipation of the serfs. The Stolz-type of the English represents a possible solution to the needs of Russian society, yet the way of life of the Boer is as dear to Goncharov as the old Oblomovka:

We went into a big hall from where cool air wafted on us. At the door of the drawing-room we encountered three new phenomena: the woman of the house in a white bonnet with a narrow little frill, wearing a brown dress; her daughter, a pretty little girl of about thirteen years looking at us so youthfully, so freshly, with the shy curiosity of a child, wearing the same outfit as her mother; and another woman, guest or relative. They invited us with gestures to come into the drawing-room. I could not believe my eyes: Could these really be farmers, peasants? The drawing-room was even bigger than the entrance-hall; inside semi-darkness reigned, like in a fashionable boudoir; in the middle stood a massive walnut table, piled with various curiosities, like shells and other similar objects. In the corner brooded heavy but beautiful antique sofas and arm-chairs; in the middle of the room some brocade-covered settees were grouped; there were indeed lots of cupboards and crockery. Over the windows and doors hung thick silk draperies from a material that they do not make any longer; the cleanliness was unbelievable: it was a pity to tread with your feet on these varnished floors. I was afraid of sitting on the settee; it seemed that nobody had ever sat on it; it was evident that the rooms were swept out, cleaned, shown to guests, then swept out again and locked. At first we were silent, examining each other closely. We could see that our guests would for nothing in the world start a conversation themselves.

At last Posietie started speaking in Dutch, apologising for the unexpected and perhaps indiscreet visit. The old man leisurely, without protestation or affection, answered that he was "glad to have visitors from afar". And it was obvious that he was really glad. Good God! What a long time it had been since I saw such a way of life, such simple and good people, and how glad I would have been to have stayed here a bit longer! "Well, are they going to give us breakfast?" the baron whispered to me with curiosity. "Hospitality requires it." "But you have just had breakfast." "You call coffee breakfast? That's a joke," he retorted. "I had in mind beefsteak, cutlets, venison. There is probably lots of game here, and there should be quite a bit of 'cattling'", he concluded, mimicking the phrase of our companion Wehrich. (pp. 164-165.)

Needless to say the feast follows, and the Dutch hosts are able to treat their Russian guests in the lavish tradition of the Oblomovka estate.

Nature in the Cape Province pleases Goncharov on those instances when it appears to have been arranged by a human in a harmonious order. The Botanic Garden in Cape Town attracts him immensely, because it reminds him of the Letnij Sad in Petersburg, notorious for its classicist arrangement:

What a delight this garden is! It is not large: it hardly amounts to half of the Petersburg Letnij Sad, but to make up for it, all the flowers and trees growing in the Cape and in the colony are gathered in it. Everything is planned in a specific arrangement, according to kind. (p. 119.)

Goncharov describes untamed nature in the Karamzinesque tradition of *Natur*-philosophy:

The sun spilled its rays onto Table Mountain; at the top a cloud was suspended at one spot and lay there so serenely, not stirring, like a lump of snow. The verdant sides of the Lion [Lions' Peak] seemed even greener. (p. 119.)

Table Mountain might be totally covered by a blanket - they (the South Africans) are not afraid. But disaster will strike when the lion wears a bonnet. Afterwards I myself would have occasion to verify this through personal observation. (p. 120.)

In this attitude towards the non-white population of the Cape Province, Goncharov reveals himself as an enlightener. The black and coloured populations do not fall into

Goncharov's definition of a type as a historical formed unity, and therefore they are not classified as nations. In his description of the coloured women, Goncharov strangely enough draws parallels with Russian peasant women:

Three black women were walking with us along the same road. I asked one from which tribe she was. "Fingo!" she said. "Mozambican!" she then shouted. "Hottentot!" All three started to guffaw loudly. More than once would I have occasion to hear that impudent laugh black women have. If one just goes past them ... nothing happens; but just ask a black beauty about something - her name, or the road, for example - and she will tell a lie and straight afterwards the boisterous laugh of her and her friends (if they are there) will ring out. "Bechuana! Kaffir!" an old peasant woman went on shouting at us. Yes, really - a peasant woman. She was dressed like our Russian peasant women; a scarf on the head, near the waist something like a skirt, as with a sarafan, and a shirt on top; sometimes there is a scarf around the neck, sometimes not. Some of the women from the brown tribes are startlingly similar to our old country women when they are sunburnt; the black women, on the other hand, are similar to nothing. (pp. 112-113.)

The parallelism between the coloureds and the Russian peasantry is not limited to similarities of appearance. A further parallelism manifests itself in a possible solution for the development of non-whites in the Cape. Both have to be taught to appreciate the fruits of civilization and learning, in order to narrow the gap between them on the one hand and the educated classes on the other. It was precisely issues of this nature, i.e. the need to elevate the educational level of the Russian peasant class, that were at the centre of debate in contemporary Russia. These issues come through Goncharov's rhetorical questions on the subject of the Enlightenment of the native population:

Will this situation continue for long? Will the Europeans soon pave the unswept way to the distant refuge places of the savages, and will the latter soon throw off this shameful title? Will the efforts of the Europeans be rewarded, will they succeed ... to extricate from the ungenerous soil all that only it can give man for his labour? Whether he will perfect the products and industries by all the means that nature possesses? Whether he will elevate the natives to a level of systematic work? (p. 135.)

Further parallels between the newly encountered society of the Cape Peninsula and mid-century Russia can be identified. The dichotomy between the English and the Dutch could be perceived by Goncharov as an echo of the conflict between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles. The former saw the future of Russia in a development along the lines of Western European civilization, while the latter idealised the patriarchal society, with its emphasis on kinship values, as it existed before the reforms of Peter the Great. But whether it is the Stolz-Westernisers-English model, or the Oblomov-Slavophiles-Boer paradigm, both stand for the typology of character that already has fixed position in history, each in its own context, the very essence of which predetermines their future. That future is prosperity for the former, and further decline for the latter. There is no intersection of the two, no interaction between them, nothing which is unpredictable. They present the typological material which Goncharov uses for conveying, not only the so-called reality which he encountered, but also for portraying the eternal conflict between progress and retrogression: "old ways" --- "new ways"

The extent to which Goncharov intended to present the dichotomy between the English and the Boers not merely as a dichotomy of national typologies, can be seen in the parody on the typology of national identity in the chapter under analysis. A local doctor is fascinated by the opportunity to meet the Russians from the *Frigate Pallada*, since he is interested in phrenology, the art of identifying the intellectual and psychological characteristics of a type on the basis of the shape of the skull. However, the Russian delegation presents him with such a diversity of phrenological types, that the doctor ends up in total confusion in his attempts to identify a so-called Russian type.



The doctor ... spoke French fairly well, and explained frankly that he had heard and read so much about the Russians, that he had not been able to overcome his curiosity, and had come to get acquainted with us. "I've been studying the natural sciences a bit - geology; and the not so natural ones - phrenology; I also like ethnography. Therefore it is very interesting for me to look at the Russian type", he said, glancing with the greatest attention at the baron Kidner, at our doctor Weirich and at Posiette: but not one of the three was of Russian descent. "So here's the type for you!" he said, continuing to look at them. We could hardly restrain ourselves from laughing. "And what type is that?" I asked, pointing at Zelyony. "That's ..." he peered at him for a long time. "That's ... Mongol." We were about to burst out laughing, but the doctor, it would seem, was right. Zelyony really has Tartar features. "Well, and this one?" we pointed at Goshkevich. He thought for a long time. "He lived in China for ten years" someone remarked about Goshkevich. "Well of course he looks like a Chinese!" remarked Verstveld. We roared with laughter, and he with us. Goshkevich was from the Ukraine. Zelyony and I were the only pure Russians. "Yes, the Russians are strong. Oh! I have heard lots and lots about them!" He seemed to be expecting Hercules, or perhaps people of slightly brutish appearance, and was surprised when he learnt that Goshkevich also studied geology, that we have many scholars, and a literature. (pp. 161-162.)

Besides the parody on early social anthropology with its preoccupation with phrenology and craneology (Carus and Gall were widely read by Lermontov, Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Leontiev, and Tolstoy politicised with Lombroso's deterministic criminology in *Resurrection*), this fragment is interesting for the presence of two motifs. It tells us how in the perceptions held by foreigners of a "Russian type" during travels in the middle of the 19th century, Russians were identified both with the "naturalness" and the "Hercules" motifs.

### The inversion model

In his "Poetics of everyday behaviour in Russian eighteenth century culture" Lotman & Uspenskij (1984b:240) makes a distinction between the semiotics of behaviour of Russian nobility when abroad and when at home. He divides the poetics of behaviour into the "usual, everyday", learned by the bearer of culture in a way his native language is learned, and the "ceremonial, ritualised", learned as a foreign language.

When abroad, "an inversion" of the antithetical types of behaviour of a Russian traveller can be taken for "normal", "natural", or "typically Russian". As an example, Lotman uses Peter the Great's behaviour during his frequent travels to Europe. When abroad, at European courts, the emperor, so ceremonial at home, "de-ritualised" his behaviour, leaving an impression of spontaneity and easiness on the foreigners. As far as the "Hercules motif" is concerned, Lotman qualifies it as a variant of the "warrior" (*Bogatyr*) masks of behaviour of the Russian nobility. A Russian nobleman would choose a role derived from ordinary behaviour by a quantitative exaggeration of its characteristics or by "turning them inside out". Stories of the monstrous appetite and digestion of Count Potemkin are viewed by Lotman in their relation to the spirit of Rabelais which completely lost its political overtones on the Russian soil. The Russian Hercules mask was rooted in the popular Russian print "He ate gloriously and drank to his heart's content" (Lotman & Uspenskij, 1984b:242).

The inversion which Goncharov demonstrates is quite remarkable: he ridicules the doctor for expecting to find Hercules amongst the Russian crew but at the same time attributes Herculean features to the representatives of the Boers, as demonstrated in the previously quoted passage describing the hospitality of the Dutch farmers serving a truly Rabelaisian breakfast. Thanks to the notion of inversion we may now confirm our earlier postulate that

the contrast between the English and the Boers is valid not so much as an objective description of the reality of the Cape Province, but as a manifestation of the eternal typologies<sup>10</sup> of Stolz and Oblomov, "old ways" --- "new ways". At the same time we must not read the antithetical disposition of the two nations of the 19th-century Cape Province as a deterministic paradigm, where "old ways", i.e. the English, are destined for eternal prosperity. Lotman's dual cultural model operates by inversion (a further culturological extension of Tynianov's and Shklovsky's theories of literary evolution and defamiliarisation), where the inversion involves a shift in the deep structure of a culture, resulting in a new culture still dependent on the previous cultural model.

The antithetical model of Boers vs. English also continued in 20th-century Russian texts - an antithetical model with clearly cut boundaries which addresses the question of national typology within the historical confines of the Anglo-Boer War. But in this conflict the antithesis of "old ways" --- "new ways" became inverted, and the English were placed by Russian observers into the "old ways" pole of the antithesis, while the Boers were moved into the "new ways" of the dichotomy. Thus, the English were aligned with Oblomov, and the Boers with Stolz.

But what has happened to the sympathy and affiliations of the Russians? To which pole of the dichotomy do they belong today? As far as the "Stolz-Oblomov" antithesis is concerned, the latest trend under *Perestroika* (in a new culturological re-reading of the 19th century texts) has been to re-evaluate Stolz as a "Russian capitalist", and to condemn Oblomov's national inertia as responsible for the economic misfortunes of Russia and the USSR.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Setchikarev (1974:100) notes that "Goncharov paints a picture of the universality of the human character's basic contrasts - happiness and sorrow, fervid activity and sloth, intelligence and stupidity". Yet he makes no more than occasional direct reference to it. Some of these references are quite abstract: "... intelligence is identical everywhere; despite differences in nations, dress, language, religion, and even world outlook, all intelligent people - like all the fools - have certain characteristic traits in common", and "It has been said that carelessness is a characteristically Russian trait. Not at all! Carelessness is characteristically human."

<sup>11</sup>A new reading of formerly unpublished texts (such as Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*) as well as of some classical texts has been an essential component and manifestation of Glasnost. Under this new reading also fell the novel *Oblomov*. If in the monograph *Ivan Goncharov*, by the Slavophilic Brezhnevite Yu. Loshchits, patriotism took the form of making a positive hero out of Oblomov, and at the same time presenting a xenophobic portrayal of the non-Russian Stolz, then in the latest lengthy article on *Oblomov* by Kantor (1989:149), the opposite, pro-Western, Gorbachevian approach is applied. The positive-negative hero is reversed, and Stolz is now viewed as a pattern for imitation. See Mondry (1990).

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