

Introduction to World Literature
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Nikolai Gogol
Diary Of A Madman

Hello everyone, welcome to today's session of the NPTEL course titled introduction to world literature. Today I would like to introduce to you the text the short story "diary of a madman" written by Nikolai Gogol. Gogol was a Ukrainian writer, he wrote in Russian and his works are being translated into different languages including English. It is said that Gogol is one of the first writers who acquired an international celebrity status from among the Russian writers.

He is also said to be a very influential literary artist of his times who also laid the foundations of Russian realism. So many of the prominent Russian writers that we know of today they all had been immensely influenced by Gogol and in that sense it is a very(0:54) to consider Gogol as one of the starting point of modern Russian literature. And diary of a madman is one of his best told stories among the other very prominent ones such as the overcoat, the nose this work was published in 1835.

Though this is almost 2 centuries old now we continue to see that there is a relevance with which the text continues to be discussed especially within the context of a literature. And there is a certain universality about most of Gogol stories and diary of a madman is one such typical ones where we both get a sense of how the Russian bureaucracy works and we also get a sense of how certain universal emotions which are part of the bureaucratic frustrations that are also been portrait very in almost perfect manner.

Diary of a madman as the title implies, it is in the form of diary entries, diary maintained by protagonist Poprishchin and this is a diary which he interestingly maintains for himself and this is not meant for public reading as we would figure out as in when progress through the short story.

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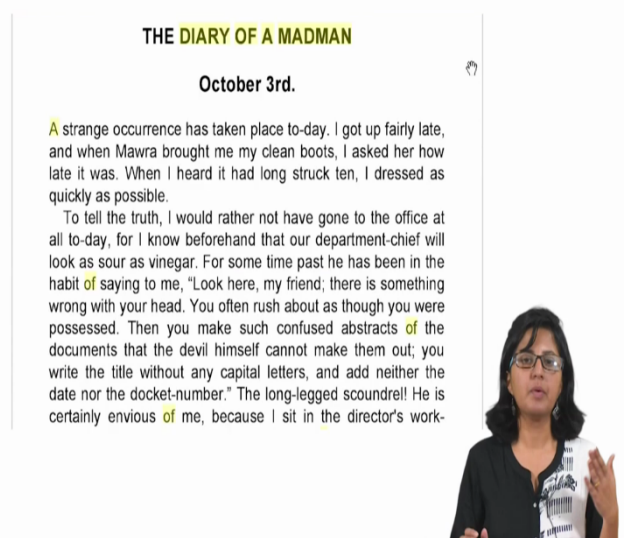


The slide displays the title "THE DIARY OF A MADMAN" in green. Below it is the date "October 3rd." followed by a paragraph of text: "A strange occurrence has taken place to-day. I got up fairly late, and when Mawra brought me my clean boots, I asked her how late it was. When I heard it had long struck ten, I dressed as

This is written in the form of different entries based on dates the first one being October 3rd. And the way he dates these occurrences that also gives us the sense into this man this protagonist state of mind. So if we try to summarize this in a single line this could be sad as the story about a man who gradually descends into complete madness.

So we get a sense of the progression of (())(2:34) empty when we look at the way in which he dates his entries amongst many other things and there is a section towards the end when he enters the year as year 2000 and the date as April 43 and so by then we get a sense that he has lost all comprehensions of time there is no true sense of time within which he positions himself and that the descent into madness is almost complete.

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The slide displays the title "THE DIARY OF A MADMAN" in green. Below it is the date "October 3rd." followed by two paragraphs of text: "A strange occurrence has taken place to-day. I got up fairly late, and when Mawra brought me my clean boots, I asked her how late it was. When I heard it had long struck ten, I dressed as quickly as possible." and "To tell the truth, I would rather not have gone to the office at all to-day, for I know beforehand that our department-chief will look as sour as vinegar. For some time past he has been in the habit of saying to me, "Look here, my friend; there is something wrong with your head. You often rush about as though you were possessed. Then you make such confused abstracts of the documents that the devil himself cannot make them out; you write the title without any capital letters, and add neither the date nor the docket-number." The long-legged scoundrel! He is certainly envious of me, because I sit in the director's work-

Right at the outset, I also read some excerpts for you from that. We get a sense of who this protagonist is. The diary of a madman October 3. A strange occurrence has taken place today. I got apparently late, and when Mawra brought me my clean boots, I asked her how late it was. When I heard it had long struck then, I dressed as quickly as possible. To tell the truth, I would rather not have gone to the office at all today.

For I know beforehand at a Department will look as sharp as vinegar. For some time past he has been in the habit of saying to me, "Look here, my friend, there is something wrong with your head. You often rush about as though you were possessed. Then you make such confused abstracts of the document that the Devil himself cannot take them out, you write the title without any capital letters and add neither the date nor the document number".

The long legged scoundrel he is certainly envious of, because I sit in the director's workroom and mend his Excellency's ends. In a word, I should not have gone to the office if I had not hope to make the accountant, and perhaps squeeze a little advance out of his skinflint.

A terrible man this accountant. As for his advancing once salary once in a way-you might sooner expect the skies to fall. You may write and beseech him, and be on the verge of ruin-this grader will want much and think. At the same time his own cook at home, as all the world knows, boxes his ears.

I really don't see what could one gets by serving in our department. There are no plans there. In the fiscal and judicial offices it is quite different. There are some ungainly fellow sits in a corner and rights and rights, he has such a shabby and such an ugly mug that one would like to speed on both of them.

But you should see what a splendid country house he has rented. He would not condescend to accept a guilt porcelain cup as a present. You can give that to your family doctor "he would say. Nothing less than a pair of just not horses, a fine carriage or a beaver fur coat worth 3000 rubles would be good enough for him. And yet he seems so mild and quiet, and asks so I may believe please lend me your pen knife, I wish to mend my pen. Nevertheless, he knows how to scarify a petitioner till he has hardly a whole stage left on his body.

So we begin to get a drift of this short story right at the outset. Here is protagonist whose name you will get to know later Poprishchin who as a highly dissatisfied with the kind of job that he is doing. He does not seem to be eager to leave for work and he is very dissatisfied he is pretty much disgruntled about everything at work and we find that he continues to exhibit

the sense of have paranoia throughout this short story and his descent into madness is also very vigorously intertwine with a bureaucratic systems within which he is can.

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The Suffering Usurper: Gogol's *Diary of a Madman*

Richard F. Gaultson, Yale University

I

I am a salesman.

The "Diary of a Madman" is not simply the story of a poor insignificant clerk who is driven insane by the frustrations and humiliations received from the ranking figures in a powerful bureaucratic machine! Popriškin is not a passive Akakij Akakievich who can vent his anger only by a fantastic return from the dead. His evenings are spent not in copying documents for his own pleasure, but in writing a diary to justify himself and wreak his vengeance upon the world. Popriškin dominates the story as no other Gogolian hero does. The whole meaning of the diary is intimately connected with the personality of its author. The "Diary of a Madman" is psychological, rather than social or moral, in focus, almost unique in Gogol's work. It is the only first-person narrative the creator of *Dead Souls* wrote. We are asked to enter into the workings of a deranged mind, and we must do this through the words produced by that mind. The story falls into two parts, before and after the madman's ascent to the throne. There is little change, however, in the patterns of the insane clerk's personality? Let us now look at the author of the diary, the creator of this mad world, Aksemtij Ivanovič Popriškin.

Popriškin is angry. The world, he thinks, has done him wrong. All are against him, existing only to insult and injure him. He sees himself as a victim, suffering from the torments of an inhuman world. The chief of

So we come across a range of frustrating incidents and also humiliations that this protagonist is receiving from his authorities higher up. And there is a sense of vengeance that he begins to develop against the world and there are 2 ways in which he tries to vent his anger, one at his work place by writing out the documents and secondly by writing out his diary to himself. And we get an access to this diary and we also get a sense of what's happening inside his mind.

One is not too sure about the veracity of the incidents that are being recorded, for instance he talks about the dog and the letters written by a dog which also had to be destroyed for practical reasons. But we also get a sense that part of the things that he gets to narrate in that diary could also be fictional, it could be purely a figment of his imagination. But what we are certain about is a state of mind which is continually deteriorating in terms of descent into madness and by the time the story ends we get to know that he has been driven completely insane.

And what drives him insane is the bureaucratic system, the frustrations of being caught within a system out of which he cannot come out. And the focus of the story rather than being a social critique rather than being a moral commentary on the ethics of workspace or the relationship between the person and his workspace it is more psychological in nature. It also

needs to be notice that amongst Gogol's work this is the one which is written in the first person narrative.

It also gives us a sense of a very personal details, very intimate details about the protagonist it of mind. If this one emotion which we find rather static from the beginning till the end of this story that Poprishchin the protagonist is angry, he is frustrated with the world. He thinks that the world has done him wrong and he also thinks that everything around him, every human being around him, every system within which he is placed they are all there to incite him, to injure him and he is unable to get out of this paranoia.

And he sees himself increasingly as a victim from the beginning and he is also seeing himself as someone who cares suffering in the hands of this cruel world. And to all of this you can only respond with a vengeance which is all pent up within him. Look at the various space in which he response to these people who are around him. For instance the section chief is reduced to something less than a human being, this is how the section chief is described he has a face like (())(8:37)bottle and he is also called a dam (())(8:40).

And the cashier on the other hand is attacked with rumor which we still do not know whether it is true or not. The madman Poprishchin who is the protagonist, he reports that at home his cook beats him and everybody knows it. And even a sense of humor we find it is very very aggressive and he has only enjoyment in life we get to know that is like from theatre.

He goes to watch place and he laughs at this amusing plays that he goes to watch and there he also finds that the others make chats with lawyers, Collegiate registrars, merchants and journalist and this is the kind of thing that he wants to do as well because he is very unhappy with the systems within which he is placed and he wouldn't miss a chance to laugh at them. But he's also caught in this vicious circle of paranoia.

And he blames his feeling of frustration on others and he sees threats everywhere even when there is none and as we saw in that excerpt in the first entry on October 3. Even when he wakes up that's a first thought that comes to his mind whether he should go to his office or not he would rather not go had it not been for the advance that he wanted to get from the cashier.

So he wakes up with this paranoia, wakes up with this negativity that things are bound to go wrong that he is going to be insulted and humiliated at his workplace. And underneath this paranoia and underneath this aggression which often is very very passive to, we find that

there is intense jealousy, he is always coveting some possession of power and therein lies the irony of the whole situation.

Why he finds himself being bogged down by various figures of authority? While he sees himself as a victim of this bureaucratic hierarchy, he also wishes to be at the top, he also wishes to be in that possession from where he can dominate others. And this feeling of superiority which he thinks authority will automatically bring to him, he is continuously coveting that.

Which is why towards the end he begins to see himself as the King of Spain which gives him an ultimate sense of authority, ultimate sense of superiority and throughout the story we find that this man who is gradually but very steadily descending into madness he is always craving for a sense of dignity, for a sense of authority and this incidentally is also accompanied by a compensatory fantasy of dignity and authority.

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humor is aggressive.

Of course, the madman is caught in the vicious circle of paranoia. He blames his feelings of frustration on others and sees threats even where there are none. The aggression he feels toward all becomes projected onto others. Underneath the aggression, however, lies envy. He covets a position of authority or at least the feeling of superiority he senses in the lackeys. Typically he projects his envy onto others. The section chief, he believes, envies his alleged favored position as head pencil-sharpener for the director (457). Even the dog Medzi is jealous of him (464).

Popričkin's need for dignity and authority is accompanied by a compensatory fantasy of dignity and authority. He insists upon his own nobility and associates himself with glorified figures of authority. His initial reaction to the director is awe: "And just look into his face! Aie! what importance in his eyes!" (456.) The clerk imagines that he has a position of special importance to the director, acquiring dignity, as it were, by associating with it. Most important of all, however, is the fantasy "newspaper world" in which he lives. His own life, even in the first half of the story, is intimately associated with the great rulers and governments of Europe: France, England, Austria, Spain. He reads the news of the world in *The Northern Bee* and projects his own life into the historical events of the day (456). The Emperor of Austria, Polignac, and the Dey of Algiers are his fantasy associates. The transformation into the King of Spain takes place after the clerk has read of the vacant Spanish throne in the newspapers. In solving this political problem, he solves for a moment his own personal one.

Associated with the fantasy of power is the imagined love quest. Popričkin is a knight errant in search of his beloved. Sofi is wondrously idealized. She is a dazzling beauty, dressed sumptuously in white, as are most Gogolian women. She carries a handkerchief which exudes the aroma of nobility. Her lips are sugary sweet, her eyes flash like the sun. She is a swan, a canary. She lives in elegance; her rooms are filled with mirrors and china and bottles of perfume scenting the air with the fine fragrance of femininity. In her boudoir, as Popričkin imagines, "there must be marvels . . . a paradise, such as is not to be found in the heavens" (439). To this paradise the madman has no entrance. Sofi is unattainable, as courtly ladies should be. All Popričkin can do is gaze upon her (the Gogolian theme of voyeurism), lie



So halfway through the story we begin to see as he also descends into madness that there are a lot of fantasies that he begins to indulge himself in. And the diary entries it also becomes more and more problematic as it becomes harder to differentiate between the real thing is that he is going through and the things that he is fantasizing. But that set right at the beginning the sense of paranoia which gets conveyed through these various entries it also tells us about the innate element of insanity that the protagonist always already had.

And in the beginning and even in the first entry which is from October 3 when he assumes that the others are jealous of him because he is working with the director. We find a sense of

awe some appreciation for the director and he begins to covet that sort of a position thinking that things would get better when he is higher up in this ladder of hierarchy.

When he has a sense of authority which he can use on the others who are below him. And there is a seamlessness with which he reads news reports and he also superimposes those incidents which happens in different parts of the world in to his own life for instance when he reads this news about the vacant Spanish throne he begins to assume that he has transformed in to the King of Spain.

And here is where we find real historical and political incidents coming intertwine with the personal fantasies and that also accelerates his descent into madness. And in solving what he sees as a political problem by transforming himself into the King of Spain and thereby occupying that vacant position of the throne, he also solves his personal crisis at least momentarily in his mind he assumes this powerful position which is that of the King of Spain and he gets a sense of authority, a sense of superiority which temporarily he feels will also solve the problem.

And while the reader can see through the paranoia and his descent into complete madness we find that at a personal level it is also very very gratifying for Poprishchin. And there is an imagined love quest alongside with this. He is in real-life presented as someone who has had the any appeal in terms of his love relations. But when he is beginning to imagine a sense of authority and a sense of superiority which these elements of fantasy also brings in into his life.

There is an imaginary love quest that he begins to pursue as well and he in his mind, in his fantasies he becomes night and then search of his beloved and Sophie one of the other characters is also idealized over here.

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The political and erotic fantasies are both compensatory. They arise from Popriščin's need to bolster his ego, to prove himself. Humiliated by the drab realities of his everyday existence, the clerk attempts to correct them by associating himself with a dignified world and, when that fails, by proving himself sexually, if only in fantasy. Throughout the story the madman tends to alternate between these two fantasy worlds. Reality is assiduously avoided.

However hermetically sealed the first-person world of the madman is, reality has a way of creeping in. In his naïveté Popriščin has a penchant for quoting the derogatory statements of others. For example, he reports in his diary the following unflattering words of his section chief:

Come, think what you are about! Why, you are over forty. It's time you had a little sense. What do you imagine yourself to be? Do you suppose I don't know all the tricks you are up to? Why, you are philandering after the director's daughter! Come, look at yourself, just think what you are! Why, you are a mere and ordinary clerk! Why, you haven't a penny to bless yourself with. And just look at yourself in the mirror—how could you think of such a thing! (467.)

Popriščin takes this assessment as an aggressive attack and responds with his own assault ending with "I spit on him" (467). The difference between the director and the section chief lies in the fact that the director remains silent and the section chief speaks out. The director is awesome in his distance, the section chief menacing in his penetration into Popriščin's world.

The most striking exposure of reality comes in the dog's letters which the madman copies into his diary. Here the clerk learns that his great idol, the director, is no different from the rest of God's growling creatures; he too is ambitious. Once exposed, the idealized figure of authority becomes menacing and is attacked; he is a Mason, a cork (465, 468). Of course, for Popriščin ambition is the greatest sin; this one fault taints the image of his



And there are 2 kinds of fantasies that we find the protagonist indulging himself in, one is overtly political and the other is erotic. And we find that both are compensatory the political fantasy and the erotic fantasy. And both of them arise from the need to bolster his own ego, Popriščin's ego which is in a very precarious condition when the story begins and he is humiliated by the (())(23:10) of history existence and there are rejections.

He associate himself with a dignified world but when that fails he has to take resort in this imagined world, in this world of fantasy and he thinks that only if he proves himself sexually even if that's in a fantasy he's entry into this world of authority and this world of superiority will be complete.

So throughout the story this madman Popriščin, he tends to Alton between these 2 fantasy worlds one very political and deeply historical and the other personal and erotic. And the reality within which he is placed it is assiduously avoided as well. And that is one of the key features which also endears this text to us, this fierce need to move away from reality, so that one would feel comfortable in the fantasy world that one had created for oneself and that is what Popriščin does to himself.

And this by extension one can say that these fantasy worlds, these timeslots that he gives himself in some unreal world they also seem to do a lot of good to him in terms of bolstering his ego. But on the other hand it also takes him down this part of descent into complete madness which does not seem to bother him in anyway because he does not really realize that he is descending into insanity.

And I would like to make a quick remark the use of the first person narrative here. The use of the first person narrative also in multiple ways it quarantines reality and by using the first person narrative, the narrator and by extension the author figure is also directing the heart grow which the reader is supposed to Travers and there is no way in which we can get into the character except through the ways in which the character is taking us through.

So here we find that we get a glimpse of Poprishchin's life and the many emotions that he is going through to the diary entries but in spite of that there are certain glimpses of reality that we are in love to for instance when he talks about the dog and the letters that the dog had written which obviously is a figment of his imagination and the letter gets destroyed as well.

It gives us a sense of the kind of reality that he is trying to grapple with and it also tries to convey a certain symbolic act. The story through this diary entries we get know that Poprishchin gets the dogs letters and he has to destroy them and the destruction of the dogs letters is a highly symbolic act and he associates the dog with a certain form of intelligence or a certain form of knowledge which is available to men.

To read an excerpt from the short story "I have long suspected that dogs are far more intelligent than men. They are extremely politic, they notice everything, every step and takes. Dogs are clever creatures they understand all diplomatic relations. So what Poprishchin in this process is trying to do, is to recover the knowledge that supports a leader dog has, this is obviously a figment of imagination as we would get to know without any further guess.

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ciated with the political theme: "Dogs are clever creatures, they understand all diplomatic (*politicheskie*) relations" (460). Poprištin hopes to discover himself in the midst of the political world the dogs know so well. Ironically,

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he does, but it is not the world he wants or needs. Rather Medji, in telling of her own anomalous life, speaks in terms which seem to be a grotesque of the madman's fantasy affair with Sed: "I must confide to you that I have a number of suitors. . . . One is a very clumsy mongrel, fearfully stupid, stupidity is painted on his face; he walks about the street with an air of importance and imagines that he is a distinguished person and thinks everybody is looking at him." (463.) The clumsy mongrel resembles the clerk, just as his title (*dvorzjanskij* 'mongrel') resembles Poprištin's own (*dvorzjanskij* 'nobleman'). In the reality of the dog world the madman is a mongrel. Poprištin's response to this letter is ironically revealing: "How can anyone fill a letter with such foolishness! Give me a man: I want to see a man. I want spiritual sustenance—in which my soul might find food and enjoyment." (463.) He refuses to accept the truth and attempts to destroy it by tearing up the letters of the "stupid dogs."

In reality, we must assume, the letters never existed. They are a figment of the madman's mind, part of him, just as they are part of his diary. But they proceed from that area of his mind which has still retained some touch with reality. After all, in part one the mad clerk still functions in the real world: he works at the office, attends the theater, and keeps track of the

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But ironically even though he always seems to get a hang of the real world out there, he seems to be interested in the world of politics, in the world of history, in the conjugated world of bureaucracy out that even though he wants to be in authority in a position of authority which would also give him a sense of superiority. One begins to suspect whether he really wants that world or not whether it's a world that he really really needs.

Which is why the destruction of the dogs letters which is again something very very symbolic, the destruction of these letters it conveys a lot to us that in some way Poprishchin is quickly blocking any of the ways in which he will be forced to go back to reality because the dogs letters would also contains this sort of a witch which also can possibly function as a bridge between this fantasy world and the real world of politics out there and by destroying that bridge operation is also telling the reader that he is contented, he is happy to live in this world of fantasy, in this mad world rather than reaching out into the real world.

So the letters that he claims to have got the dogs letters that is perhaps that last bit of connection that he had with reality and with the destruction of these letters we find that even that last bit of touch that he retained with reality is completely destroyed and that too wilfully destroyed.

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everybody is looking at him. (who.) the cunning mongrel resembles the clerk, just as his title (dvorjansk 'mongrel') resembles Popriškin's own (dvorjansk 'noblemans'). In the reality of the dog world the madman is a mongrel. Popriškin's response to this letter is ironically revealing: "How can anyone fill a letter with such foolishness! Give me a man! I want to see a man. I want spiritual sustenance—in which my soul might find food and enjoyment." (463.) He refuses to accept the truth and attempts to destroy it by tearing up the letters of the "stupid dogs."

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The destruction of the truth-revealing letters is followed immediately by Popriškin's so-called rebellion:

It's always a court chamberlain or a general. Everything that's best in the world falls to the court chamberlains or the generals. If you find some poor treasure and think it is almost within your grasp, a court chamberlain or a general will snatch it from you. God damn it! I'd like to become a general myself, not in order to receive her hand and all the rest of it; no, I should like to be a general only to see how they would wriggle and display all their court manners and epoquees and then to say to them: I spit on you both. Oh, damn it! (463.)

But is this a rebellion against the system? Is this Popriškin's attempt to assert his humanity in the face of bureaucratic oppression? First of all, Popriškin merely wants to find a better station within the system; there is no Dostoevskian rebellion against the whole order of things. Secondly, the madman ostensibly rebels because he has lost Sof's hand to the court chamberlain. Surely, however, Popriškin, as a human being, had little to offer a young lady of society; his protest is one of sour grapes. Finally, in his anger the clerk forgets himself. He wants to become a general "not in order to receive her hand." He wants revenge. Popriškin wants to wield his power over those who he imagines are oppressing him. The victim wants to be the victimizer. The madman's interest in Sof was never really amorous.



And there is another interesting thing in this narrative that we come across, through this descent into complete madness he continues to work in a very real setting there is a fantasy world where he is playing different roles including a role of the King of Spain, including this erotic adventurer but on the other hand he continues to work in the office, he attains the

theatre, he keeps track of the days and when he destroys the letters that is when we find the story taking a complete turn altogether.

He destroys his one last bit of sanity I may read out this act of destruction which is also seen as an act of rebellion over here. It reads like this “it’s always a court chamberlain or a general. Everything that’s best in the world falls to the court chamberlain saw the generals. If you find some poor treasure and think it is almost within your grasp, a court chamberlain or a general will snatch it from you. God dammit! I would like to become a general myself, not in order to receive her hand and all the rest of it, no, I should like to be a general only to see how they would wriggle and display a court manners and equivoques and then say to them I spit on you both. Oh dammit!

And this rebellion happens right after the destruction of those imaginary those fantasy letters and this rebellion one begins to wonder whether this is against the system altogether, about we also get to know that it’s not that Poprishchin is fantasizing to be a part of this imaginary world, he wants to be there, so that he can get a sense of that authority, he can get a sense of that superiority and then wilfully reject it which is what the last part of this excerpt also tells us.

I spit on you both oh dammit. Of course there are 2 major reasons for this rebellion, one is that he perhaps just seeks a better station for himself within the existing audit of things. And the 2nd was that maybe he is rebellion because he has lost Soviets hand to the court chamberlain and this in multiple ways it accelerates the kind of disgruntlement and the kind of paranoia that he had in the presence of anything bureaucratic.

And on the one hand in this excerpt where he is actually venting out his and because he has lost Sophie’s favor, we begin to see that he totally loses perspective as well and of course it is a madman and we cannot expect too much of an act of rationality from his side but at the same time the resentment which began with the rejection of the object of his love. We begin to see that his protest very soon becomes one of sour grapes because then he wants revenge and then he wants to yield power over the ones who are oppressing him.

So we begin to suspect all the sincerity of the emotions that he has been trying to convey right from the beginning and we also see this in ancient desire within him to transform from being a victim towards being a victimizer and his interest in Sophie incidentally was never amorous.

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His erotic desires were aroused by his feelings of humiliation and his need to assert himself. Sofi was his one last chance to prove himself a man.

Once the erotic fantasy fails, Popričkin turns back to his newspaper world. He begins to wonder whether his dreams of power and glory might not have some foundation in reality:

Why am I a titular counselor and on what grounds am I a titular counselor? Perhaps I am not a titular counselor at all? Perhaps I am a count or a general, and only somehow appear to be a titular counselor. Perhaps I don't know myself who I am. How many instances there have been in history: some simple, humble tradesman or peasant, not even a nobleman, is suddenly discovered to be some sort of powerful personage (*se'nože*) and sometimes even a ruler (*psodar*). If a peasant can sometimes turn into something like that, what may not a nobleman turn into? (65.)

The dividing line between reality and fantasy begins to fade: the madman no longer knows who he is. The stage is set for the metamorphosis. Popričkin has only to turn to the newspapers and discover that the Spanish throne is vacant. Interestingly enough, the insane alternation of the political and erotic fantasies comes to the fore in Popričkin's pondering of the Spanish problem: "It seems to me extremely peculiar. How can the throne be vacant? They say that some Donna is supposed to ascend the throne. A Donna cannot ascend the throne, she cannot possibly. There ought to be a king on the throne." (66.) The clerk spends the next few days *lying on his bed* and thinking about the Spanish question: the sexual motif is replaced by the political one. Only in part two of the story will the two fantasies merge.

Popričkin is concerned for his social image and his self-image. He feels alienated both from the world and from his own being. His fantasy quests for power and love represent his search for a public and private identity. His inability to achieve these, he believes, arises from his social status. He remembers that he is a titular counselor (ninth rank); his section chief is a court counselor (seventh rank). Popričkin is lower down on the scale of being. Like most Gogolian heroes, the insulted and injured clerk sees the assigned ranks in the service as symbols of real value, a way of defining a person. They are an absurd categorizing of humanity into good and bad, a menacing judgement of men. That the madman thinks this way is clear from



And his erotic desire as we noted from the beginning they were, those erotic desires very aroused by his feelings of humiliation and also to as himself and from his need to prove his superiority to the others. So Sophie in his mind was his last chance to prove that he is a man, to prove that he can be superior to others, to prove that he can assert himself.

So the descent into madness becomes quite complete with this event of him losing Sophie as well. And towards the end are dividing line between reality and fantasy begins to fade and the madman no longer knows who he is. And then the status set for a sort of metamorphosis and that's when he has this complete descent into madness where he begins to fantasize, he begins to imagine himself as the King of Spain.

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His erotic desires were aroused by his feelings of humiliation and his need to assert himself. Sofi was his one last chance to prove himself a man.

Once the erotic fantasy fails, Popričkin turns back to his newspaper world. He begins to wonder whether his dreams of power and glory might not have some foundation in reality:

Why am I a titular counselor and on what grounds am I a titular counselor? Perhaps I am not a titular counselor at all? Perhaps I am a count or a general, and only somehow appear to be a titular counselor. Perhaps I don't know myself who I am. How many instances there have been in history: some simple, humble tradesman or peasant, not even a nobleman, is suddenly discovered to be some sort of powerful personage (*se'nože*) and sometimes even a ruler (*psodar*). If a peasant can sometimes turn into something like that, what may not a nobleman turn into? (65.)

The dividing line between reality and fantasy begins to fade: the madman no longer knows who he is. The stage is set for the metamorphosis. Popričkin has only to turn to the newspapers and discover that the Spanish throne is vacant. Interestingly enough, the insane alternation of the political and erotic fantasies comes to the fore in Popričkin's pondering of the Spanish problem: "It seems to me extremely peculiar. How can the throne be vacant? They say that some Donna is supposed to ascend the throne. A Donna cannot ascend the throne, she cannot possibly. There ought to be a king on the throne." (66.) The clerk spends the next few days *lying on his bed* and thinking about the Spanish question: the sexual motif is replaced by the political one. Only in part two of the story will the two fantasies merge.

Popričkin is concerned for his social image and his self-image. He feels alienated both from the world and from his own being. His fantasy quests for power and love represent his search for a public and private identity. His inability to achieve these, he believes, arises from his social status. He remembers that he is a titular counselor (ninth rank); his section chief is a court counselor (seventh rank). Popričkin is lower down on the scale of being. Like most Gogolian heroes, the insulted and injured clerk sees the assigned ranks in the service as symbols of real value, a way of defining a person. They are an absurd categorizing of humanity into good and bad, a menacing judgement of men. That the madman thinks this way is clear from



And here there is a replacement at the motive level as well, a sexual motive gets completely replaced by the political motive.

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the throne." (106.) The clerk spends the next few days lying on his bed and thinking about the Spanish question: the sexual motif is replaced by the political one. Only in part two of the story will the two fantasies merge.

Popriščin is concerned for his social image and his self-image. He feels alienated both from the world and from his own being. His fantasy quests for power and love represent his search for a public and private identity. His inability to achieve these, he believes, arises from his social status. He remembers that he is a titular counselor (ninth rank); his section chief is a court counselor (seventh rank). Popriščin is lower down on the scale of being. Like most Gogolian heroes, the insulted and injured clerk sees the assigned ranks in the service as symbols of real value, a way of defining a person. They are an absurd categorizing of humanity into good and bad, a menacing judgment of men. That the madman thinks this way is clear from his treatment of the male figures: none is named, but everyone is given a title, a state in life above or below Absentij Ivanovič Popriščin, titular counselor, nobleman. He dreams of being a collegiate counselor (sixth rank, higher than his section chief), a general (second to fourth rank), or "even something higher." He wants to raise himself on the ladder of being. But in doing so his anger comes forth: he seeks revenge. Unlike the Underground Man, Popriščin does not see that in attempting to gain revenge he is asserting the very values of the system which he believes is so oppressive. He cannot

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rebel against the system because he knows no other. He is caught in his own

So this story is also about a sense of identity, about concern for social image and self-image, we find that Poprišchin feels alienated socially as well as personal level and he feels alienated from the world within which he is placed, he also feels alienated from his own being and his fantasy quest for power, for love all of these represent his search for a public as well as a private identity because there is no place where he feels at home, where he feels he is in control.

Both in the public and private realms he feels that he is no longer in control, he feels that he never could assert himself. So through the political fantasies and through the erotic fantasies what he is trying his best is to assert himself as a man, to ascertain all as someone who is completely in control of the things around him and the sense of vengeance and the sense of paranoia and the sense of every single emotion that he begins to develop is all a result of this.

So of course the starting point is the frustration with a bureaucratic systems within which he is placed but we also begin to see that there could be other deep rooted issues psychological issues which the text partially deals with leaves it open for the reader's imagination to a very large extent.

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rebel against the system because he knows no other. He is caught in his own self-centered, solipsistic world of diaries, masturbation fantasies, and dreams of glory. The steady drum beat of the first person pronoun, often accompanied by the obsessive phrase "I am a nobleman," becomes his death knell.

II

That king am I.

Part one progressed in three stages marked by the month in which the entries were written. The October entries treat Poprishchin in his noble job, dreaming of his love for Sofi. In November the dream and the fantasy are shattered: the section chief speaks out the truth and on 13 November the letters appear. The December entries mark the period of adjustment to this intrusion of reality. The movement is toward the end of the year.

Part two, which opens with a statement verbally reminiscent of the opening of part one,¹ begins with the entry 43 April 2000. The other entries are progressively more fantastic, including days with no dates and months that do not exist. It is significant to note, however, that the entries jump to spring (Medli sensed that spring was coming) and that they move backwards to February and January. The delusion of grandeur ends in failure, and in the last entry, which hovers between February and January, Poprishchin is overwhelmed by the reality he neatly avoided in the December entries. Part two moves backward to the point where the madman made his



And we also find that he is, it is very difficult for a reader to like his character to like Poprishchin, we do not feel much of a sympathy for him, on the other hand he comes across as this man, a madman is caught in his own self-centered and solipsistic world of diaries and his masturbation fantasies, his dreams of glory and everything is part of a fantasy for him.

And even that little bridge the little connection that he has with reality, he doesn't want to acknowledge them, he would rather destroy that which completely. And there is also this obsessive phrase that he keeps writing "I am a noble man" and eventually we see that, that also becomes his death knell. So today we wrap up this lecture with these introductory notes.

In the next session we should also take a look at some of the other diary entries in detail to see how Gogol as use this technique of realism and how he has used the first person narrative to convey something which could be later seen as quite universal as well. So with this we wrap up this lecture, thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next session.