

## Chernyshevsky's journalistic autobiographical pact in *Polemical Beauties* (1861) and his critique of his public image

### 1. Introduction

Did Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828-89) see himself as a priest-like figure? To his nineteenth-century nihilist followers and later Soviet readers, the answer was an obvious “Yes.” The son of a priest, he retrieved the legacy of Belinsky and wrote a biography of Lessing that presented Russian readers with re-booted accounts of literary icons or, in Belinsky’s phrase, “heads of literature.”<sup>1</sup> In their turn, his readers made Chernyshevsky himself into an example to be emulated, especially in the nihilist cult that emerged around his name after his arrest on unproven charges of political subversion in 1862 and his novel *What is to be done?* (1863), which provided a model of behavior that was in part inspired by the life of Nikolai Dobrolyubov, Chernyshevsky’s friend and colleague.<sup>2</sup> After the post-1917 inversion of the Russian canon, the nihilist view of Chernyshevsky’s priestly ideologue status was canonized, as Jochen Hellbeck has recently documented on the testimony of Soviet diary writers.<sup>3</sup>

That said, before his arrest Chernyshevsky critiqued the rise of nihilism following the publication of *Fathers and Children* (1862) by Ivan Turgenev, as Lydia Ginzburg has documented.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it is not disputed that he wrote *What is to be done?* as a polemic against both nihilism and *Fathers and Children*. But the Chernyshevsky myth triumphed over his own self-narrative in a case of followers of a given thinker claiming to the spirit of his doctrine in what they regarded as a logical, natural extension of its tenets. According to Lydia Ginzburg, nihilists were correct to interpret Chernyshevsky’s novel as justifying their emerging worldview, which reflected their attempts at legitimization. Yet their view however need not be taken for

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<sup>1</sup> See Alexei Vdovin’s PhD dissertation, *Концепт "глава литературы" в русской критике 1830-1860-х годов*, (Tartu, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> According to Irina Paperno, Chernyshevsky was “the most influential cultural figure and prototypical personality of his time,” *ibid.*, *Chernyshevsky and the age of realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford University Press: Stanford CA, 1988), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> With reference to the Soviet writer and diarist Alexander Afinogenov, Jochen Hellbeck commented “rooted in a tradition dating back to the nineteenth-century critics Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, Afinogenov knew that his priestly status as an ideologue who preached new historical life forms to his mass audience would be effective and legitimate only if he personally exemplified the path toward the new life.” Hellbeck further distinguished between the nineteenth century, when writers wrote the script, and the 1930s when Stalin was the “historical legislator,” see Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006), pp. 288-9.

<sup>4</sup> Before his arrest Chernyshevsky criticised nihilists in a passage that Lydia Ginzburg quoted in the 1970s, “Но вот – картина, достойная Дантовой кисти – что это за лица, исхудальные, зеленые, с блуждающими глазами, с искривленными злобной улыбкой ненависти устами, с немывтыми руками, с скверными сигарами в зубах? Это – нигилисты, изображенные г. Тургеневым в романе «Отцы и дети». Эти небритые, нечесанные юноши отвергают все, все: отвергают картины, статуи, скрипку и смычок, оперу, театр, женскую красоту – все, все отвергают, и прямо так и рекомендуют себя: мы, дескать, нигилисты, все отрицаем и разрушаем,” (X, 185), (Ginzburg: 1979, 52-3).

evidence of Chernyshevsky's own intentions in his writings. Instead it is necessary to re-read his works of the time, especially his journalism on the eve of his arrest, which has been overshadowed by the sensational effect of his novel. Using the evidence of his article *Полемические красоты* (hereafter *Polemical Beauties*, 1861),<sup>5</sup> this study seeks to trace his autobiographical narrative. It will be argued that his reflections on his emotions and personal relationships in *Polemical Beauties* presented an alternative public image of Chernyshevsky in contrast to portraits of him pushed by his opponents.

## 2. Chernyshevsky: on the boundaries of autobiography and journalism

In taking up the issue of Chernyshevsky's autobiographical narrative in *Polemical Beauties*, it is necessary to challenge stereotypes about his alleged nihilist credentials. The initial premise of the current study was that his autobiographical narrative deconstructed emerging nihilist accounts of his public image. Yet since the nihilist narrative had still not been constructed at the time that he wrote *Polemical Beauties* in summer, 1861, it follows that he could not have deconstructed what did not yet exist. After all, Mikhail Katkov, editor of *Russkii vestnik* and leading polemical opponent of Chernyshevsky, only argued that nihilism emerged as a current between 1860-2 retrospectively.<sup>6</sup> At the time, in such articles such as *Старые боги и новые боги* (hereafter *Old gods and new gods*, 1861),<sup>7</sup> his narrative of nihilism had still not matured. In terms of re-reading *Polemical Beauties* two conclusions thus arise: firstly, Chernyshevsky did not have the intentions that nihilists later attributed to him and, secondly, in 1861 he did not have the intention of critiquing such interpretations, which had still not become crystalized.

Such a re-assessment of Chernyshevsky's intentions has benefitted from the approach of the Cambridge School in the study of political discourse, which itself emerged in a similar polemic against anachronistic interpretations in history.<sup>8</sup> As early as 1969 Quentin Skinner, the leading light of the Cambridge School, argued that an author's intentions can be reconstructed through a study of their linguistic context. Continuity in the meaning of an idea from one author

<sup>5</sup> This article, which was originally published in two parts in *Sovremennik*, 1861, no. 6 pp. 447-478 and 7, pp. 133-80. It is included in Chernyshevsky's collected works in sixteen volumes, Н.Г. Чернышевский, *Полное собрание сочинений в 16 томах*, Москва, VII, 707-774.

<sup>6</sup> Thus, Katkov described Dmitrii Karakozov, a terrorist who unsuccessfully tried to assassinate Alexander II in 1866, as "создание тех зловредных действий, которые были направлены на нашу молодежь," and further noted that "эта адская работа, погубившая столько молодых сил, совершилась преимущественно в 1860, 1861 и 1862 годах. Годы эти были эпохой процветания нигилизма." Михаил Катков. *Власть и Террор, Политическая публицистика, собрание сочинений М.Н. Каткова*, том 3, Санкт-Петербург 2011, p. 256. Katkov also viewed *What is to be done?* as the bible of Karakozov's circle.

<sup>7</sup> *Russkii Vestnik*, February 1861, Отдел *Литературное обозрение и заметки*, 891-904.

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of the Cambridge School written especially for a Russian audience and two translated articles by John Pocock, a colleague of Skinner, see *Новое Литературное Обозрение*, № 134, 4, 2015, pp. 19-132. For a bibliography, including translated works into Russian, see pp. 41-44. In an interview, Oleg Kharkhodin specifically noted the implications for the study of Chernyshevsky's religious language, p. 124.

to another can only be demonstrated if it can be shown that the language and the usage of this language was constant over time. Since the language of nihilism had not been formed in 1861, then it is anachronistic for scholars to argue that Chernyshevsky had the intention of advocating nihilism at the time.<sup>9</sup> By the same token, Skinner argued that only by accounting for the polemical context is it possible to grasp what a given author such as Chernyshevsky “was doing” in a given text.<sup>10</sup> Here the general polemical context or “langue” is compared to the creative response of an author, as expressed in their unique language, or “parole”.<sup>11</sup> This framework serves to clarify the polemical context that Chernyshevsky was replying to in *Polemical Beauties* and his innovative response. Although Skinner was not interested in such extra-textual factors as personal feelings,<sup>12</sup> the hypothesis here is that a key element of Chernyshevsky’s creative reply was his use of autobiographical narrative, i.e. that his references to his own feelings and relationships were part of his parole.

Skinner’s juxtaposition between the linguistic or rhetorical and the biographical is a core theme in autobiography theory. Traditionally scholars have treated autobiography as a literary genre, in which the veracity of extra-textual factors is not a central issue, much in the spirit of the Cambridge School’s position. Most famously, Philippe Lejeune’s term “the autobiographical pact” has become widely used to describe how readers see the name of the author on the front cover of a memoir and accept the convention of the genre. According to this convention, the identity of the author is the same as the narrator’s “I” who is remembering their past in the text and the “I” whose life in the past is being recounted.<sup>13</sup> Lejeune accordingly discussed the retrospective nature of memoir narrative, which expresses the truth of the interpretation of the author at the time of writing rather than a factual, documentary truth. His take on the autobiographical pact was therefore attuned to the literary or fictional nature of claims for how events proceeded in the past. More recently though, scholars have sought to emphasize the authenticity of autobiographical narrative. This shift has been accompanied by an expansion in the corpus of autobiographical texts studied, especially so-called “ego-documents,” such as letters and diaries, in which authors may not be famous writers addressing a public audience.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a more substantive critique of nihilist interpretations of *What is to be done?*, see Professor Kantor’s treatment article “Голкофник versus Варавва. К полемике Чернышевского и Герцена о России” in Vladimir Kantor, *Любовь к двойнику: Миф и реальность русской культуры*, pp. 294-343.

<sup>10</sup> Покок, Джон. The State of the Art: (Введение к книге «Добродетель, торговля и история»), НЛЮ, № 134, 4, 2015 p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-9.

<sup>12</sup> See his interview, <http://www.artoftheory.com/quentin-skinner-on-meaning-and-method/>, retrieved on 24.12.2015.

<sup>13</sup> See Philippe Lejeune, “The Autobiographical Pact,” in *On Autobiography*, ed. Paul John Eakin, trans. Katherine Leary, Theory and History of Literature, volume 52 (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1990), pp. 1-31.

<sup>14</sup> See the “Ego-documents in History series,” especially vol. 3 *Controlling time and shaping the self: developments in autobiographical writing since the sixteenth century*, ed. Arianne Baggerman, Rudolf Dekker, Michael Mascuch. (Brill: Leiden, The Netherlands, 2011).

Ego-documents are therefore studied as sources of testimony for the extra-textual identities of their authors. In combining the public and private narratives within Chernyshevsky's autobiographical narrative, the current study attempts to reconcile the twin currents of the literary and documentary within autobiography theory.

Today, with the rise of the internet and the appearance of first-person blogs written for whoever is interested, scholars take more seriously the potential for public texts to contain first-person testimony. In Russian studies Tatiana Saburova and Natalia Rodigina have applied the prism of blogs to the circulation of letters among aristocrats in the 1830-40s as a form of uncensored journalism in a challenge to a binary opposition between private and public genres.<sup>15</sup> Such a hybrid account of both public and private genres underpins the current study of *Polemical Beauties*. Yet in contrast to many bloggers or the earlier practice of aristocrats writing for friends, Chernyshevsky was a professional journalist. In considering the issue of his social practice, the current study in particular draws upon the work of Gabrielle Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich, which provides a framework for understanding how Chernyshevsky's professional background as a journalist shaped his autobiographical narrative, as well as providing him with the opportunity of articulating his narrative in the press.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. The polemical context of *Polemical Beauties*

As its title suggests, *Polemical Beauties* demands careful attention to the polemical context that Chernyshevsky was responding to, which included above all his own earlier journalism. At the time of the great reforms he outlined his worldview in a series of articles in *Sovremennik*, such as *The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy* (1860). In line with his overall analysis, he supported the initiative of Dobrolyubov in launching the groundbreaking satirical supplement *Svistok*, the first six issues of which Dobrolyubov edited between 1859-1860, in a critique of liberal publicists, such as the merchant Vasilii Kokorev (1817-1889), who wrote for Katkov's *Russkii vestnik* in order to consolidate his commercial reputation.<sup>17</sup> In January 1861, the year of the emancipation of the serfs and a time of intense evolution in Russian journalism, Chernyshevsky wrote his first article for *Svistok*.

<sup>15</sup> See the recent article by Tatiana Saburova and Natalia Rodigina "From Diaries To Blogs: Cultural And Political Networking In Russian Autobiographical Practice," in *European Journal of Life Writing*, Vol. 4, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich. "From the Individual to the Person: Challenging Autobiography Theory," in *Mapping the "I": Research on Self-Narratives in Germany and Switzerland*, eds. Claudia Ulbrich, Kaspar von Greyerz, Lorenz Heligensetzer (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2015), pp. 15-33.

<sup>17</sup> А.А. Жук и А.А. Демченко, (Ed.). Свисток. Собрание литературных, журнальных и других заметок. Сатирическое приложение к журналу «Современник». 1859-1863. (Наука: Москва, 1981). Dobrolyubov's articles on Kokorev include "Материалы для нового сборника «образцовых сочинений» (по поводу статьи о «Сельском хозяине»)," *Svistok* №3, and "Опыт отучения от пищи," *Svistok*, №5, in *Svistok* (1981), pp. 66-76 and 117-135 respectively.

For all its mocking satire, *Svistok* was serious journalism and in his *Svistok* article Chernyshevsky concluded not with “свистом, а визгом стесненной груди.”<sup>18</sup> As the editors of the 1981 edition of *Svistok* noted, his melancholy lament on the constraints of censorship had a clear autobiographical content.<sup>19</sup> Later that month in January 1861 Katkov identified the shift in Chernyshevsky’s journalism<sup>20</sup> and blamed *Sovremennik* for the low tone of journal polemics in a passage that Chernyshevsky subsequently quoted in *Polemical Beauties*:

[...] и раздались объяснения более откровенные, прямее идущие к делу, открылись балаганы с песнями и без песен, со свистом и даже с визгом, как выразился недавно один из этих свистунов, (VII, 710).

Thus, on top of Chernyshevsky’s own frustration at censorship, Katkov further frustrated him with his taunting reply, which took Chernyshevsky’s writings completely out of context. Chernyshevsky summed up the underlying motive of reply in his epigraph to *Polemical Beauties*, which was taken from the Russian translation of *The Iliad* “гнев, богиня, воспой Ахиллеса,” (VII, 707).

Back in January 1861, Chernyshevsky’s articles for *Sovremennik* had also incorporated a the polemical sharpness typical of *Svistok*, notably his anonymous review of the translation of the letters of American economist Henry Carey (1793-1879), in which he echoed *Svistok* in referencing the merchant Vasilii Kokorev.<sup>21</sup> Katkov’s influential intervention in his February article *Old gods and new gods* revealed that he was particularly incensed by the reference to Kokorev, which was so on his mind that he incorrectly attributed a reference to Kokorev in an article by Maxim Antonovich on philosophy.<sup>22</sup> Katkov insinuated that Chernyshevsky and other writers on *Sovremennik* sought the status of a “кумир” who encouraged his readers to uncritically accept his ideas. Within the framework of this attack on Chernyshevsky’s public image, Katkov took up what he described as “одно замечательное место” in Chernyshevsky’s

<sup>18</sup> His article, entitled *Ответ на вопрос или освистанный вместе со всеми другими журналами «Современник»*, appeared in *Svistok* issue seven under the pseudonym “Безвестный, но полезный труженик науки,” (*Svistok*, 218), *Sovremennik*, January 1861. It is also in his Collected Works, VII, 588-591 and in the Soviet anthology of *Svistok* articles *Свисток. Собрание литературных, журнальных и других заметок. Сатирическое приложение к журналу «Современник». 1859-1863.* ed. А.А. Жук и А.А. Демченко, 1981, pp. 217-220. On the issue of pseudonyms used in *Svistok*, see Zhuk and Pokusaev, *ibid.*, pp. 426-8. In part 2 of *Polemical Beauties*, he also revealed his authorship of his *Svistok* article.

<sup>19</sup> Alla Zhuk and Adolf Demchenko, the editors of the 1981 *Svistok*, saw in his lament one of “наиболее личных публицистических авто-признаний Чернышевского – трибуна и общественного бойца,” *ibid.*, p. 502.

<sup>20</sup> *Russkii Vestnik*, January 1861, pp. 478-484. *Zametki* replaced *Sovremennaya letopis’*, the historical section of *Russkii vestnik* that was turned into a stand-alone paper.

<sup>21</sup> His book review *Политико-экономические письма к Президенту Американских Соединенных Штатов Г.К. Керу* appeared in the bibliography section of *Sovremennik*, January 1861 (VII, 909-923).

<sup>22</sup> *Sovremennik*, February, 1861, pp. 249-280. Katkov claimed incorrectly that Antonovich regretted that the compilers of the *Philosophical Lexicon* had not denounced Kokorev and the system of tax-farming (“откуп”).

review of Carey's letters, in which Chernyshevsky first articulated his metaphor "the historical path is not the pavement of Nevsky Prospect."

Chernyshevsky responded to Katkov's charges after a lag of some months in *Polemical Beauties*. Since Katkov's charges had related to both *Svistok* and *Sovremennik* articles, Chernyshevsky's reply is interesting for its instability of genre and, more than that, for his use of autobiographical narrative in negotiating between conflicting genres. Although Chernyshevsky was not writing a memoir in *Polemical Beauties*, he concluded a journalistic autobiographical pact with his reader at the end of part one, section one, as if at the end of a preface:

*Думал я подписывать эти статьи каким-нибудь задорно-шуточным псевдонимом: но, судя по нынешнему, не одно шутовство в них не будет, и потому стану подписывать под ними свою фамилию.*

Н. Чернышевский (VII, 713)

While the reader could have spotted Chernyshevsky's name in the index of articles in the June edition of *Sovremennik*, it would appear that his reader was by no means expecting to see his name crop up here and was thus not used to the personal, confessional tone. This innovative use of the autobiographical pact is testimony to the fact that at a time of burgeoning journal readership Chernyshevsky had acquired a celebrity status due to his career in journalism, which underscores the importance of his social practice as a journalist to his autobiographical narrative. In what follows below, the conclusion of the autobiographical pact will first be charted with reference to sections one and two (VII, 707-713 and 713-714), where Chernyshevsky replied to Katkov's January article.

After reviewing how Chernyshevsky concluded his autobiographical pact, attention will turn to section three (VII, 714-721) of *Polemical Beauties* part one, in which he replied to *Old gods and new gods*. I will first explore how Chernyshevsky's use of the autobiographical pact in *Polemical Beauties* can contribute to our wider understanding of his Nevsky Prospect idiom, which was described as the Judith episode in his polemic with Katkov.<sup>23</sup> The final question that will be addressed is the debate concerning the literary (or ideological/rhetorical) versus the documentary (auto/biographical) nature of Chernyshevsky's writings. Thus Constantine

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<sup>23</sup> This question ties in with Skinner's advocacy of an intertextual approach to the study of authorial intentions. Since it is possible to disagree about an author's intentions from the information contained in any one text taken in isolation, Skinner recommended that researchers widen their net of reading to include other relevant testimony, such as letters and other publications that shed light on a given topic. See Pocock's summary of Skinner's method, *ibid.*, p. 48. Indeed, as things stand the main interest of researchers in this text is his reply to Mikhail Katkov on the question of philosophy, as noted by A.A. Demchenko in *Н.Г. Чернышевский: Научная биография*. (Саратов, 1978-92), vol. 3, p. 76. It should be stressed though that Chernyshevsky tried to sidestep the question of philosophy, at least in relation to Katkov's claims in *Old gods and new gods*.

Klioutchkine has described Chernyshevsky's literary self as a "narratable self" that could on occasion hint at his extra-textual identity, for example in passages that he was not fully in control of.<sup>24</sup> Or, as Tatiana Pecherskaya has argued, since he wrote his article to communicate ideas to readers, there is no reason to trust statements that were made for rhetorical affect.<sup>25</sup> As has been hinted above though, the familiar practice of writing blogs today challenges such a binary opposition between private testimony and public document. Chernyshevsky did undoubtedly use his authorial "I" to communicate his ideas more effectively, but it does not necessarily follow that his public "I" was unreliable as a result. On the contrary, as Paul John Eakin has documented, in everyday life people tell stories about themselves to make a point and help others relate to them, and in so doing create identity through the self-narratives they tell others about themselves. If there is something "fictional" or literary to the process of identity creation, this creative aspect need not necessarily be opposed to our everyday inter-actions.<sup>26</sup> I will bring these points together by charting his critique of his public image to clarify how Chernyshevsky employed his self-narrative to reconcile his private and public identities.

#### 4. Chernyshevsky's authorial emotion and his autobiographical pact

Chernyshevsky began *Polemical Beauties* by admitting the existence of splits on the editorial board of *Sovremennik* and identifying his support for *Svistok*. He had in mind the split with Ivan Turgenev, a former collaborator on *Sovremennik*. Chernyshevsky described the split as "прискорбный" but "естественный в журнале, не стыдящемся являться в одной обертке с «СВИСТКОМ»" (VII, 707). In passing, he mentioned that he was looking forward to the return from Europe of Dobrolyubov, who he referred to as "*Svistok*," thereby providing an extra-textual reference that defined him in relation to others (VII, 707). Then he switched to the mocking tone of *Svistok*. Now that the split was over he could speak out in answer to a campaign of unmasking and "заняться подбором полемических красот из многочисленных статей и статей, глубокомысленных изобличений [...] против «Современника»" (VII, 708), especially from *Russkii vestnik*, "лучшего из наших журналов," (VII, 709). Chernyshevsky quoted and mocked

<sup>24</sup> In commenting on Chernyshevsky and his colleague Nikolai Dobrolyubov Constantine Klioutchkine wrote that "to the extent that they were professional writers, the selves that emerged in their texts had to be narratable in a way that appealed to readers," Klioutchkine, Constantine, "Between Ideology and Desire: Rhetoric of the Self in the Works of Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Nikolai Dobrolyubov," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Summer, 2009), p. 538.

<sup>25</sup> Writing with the diaries and other first-person testimony of especially Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov in mind, Pecherskaya argued that "В таких текстах само понятие *достоверности* оказывается перегруженным целым рядом «метафизических допущений», в результате которых критерии, предъявляемые к документальным свидетельствам, заметно обесцениваются," Т.И. Печерская, *Разночинцы шестидесятых годов XIX века. Феномен самосознания в аспекте филологической герменевтики*, (Novosibirsk, 1999), p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> Paul John Eakin's *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 2008). While Eakin was interested in how people reconcile their past and their present in their self-narratives, which has a bearing on some of the section in *Polemical Beauties* where Chernyshevsky referred to his past, the focus of the current study is the opening part of the text.

Katkov's earlier mockery of his emotional lament at censorship in his *Svistok* article, which was noted above. Rather than defend himself from Katkov's accusations, including the claim that due to *Sovremennik* "забрасывались грязью все литературные авторитеты," such as Pushkin (VII, 711), Chernyshevsky accentuated Katkov's own hysterical language. Simply by quoting Katkov at length but in a different context, Chernyshevsky was able to undermine Katkov's over-the-top tirade.

When he arrived at the point where Katkov stirred up friction between Turgenev and *Sovremennik*, however, he proceeded differently. According to Katkov, talented writers published in *Sovremennik* "потому только осыпались льстивыми похвалами, что успех их в публике был выгоден для этих журналов" (VII, 711). Katkov backed up this claim with the following footnote:

*Так изменился тон Современника о некоторых писателях, в честь которых еще так недавно пламенели жертвенники в этом журнале. В последнем номере его напечатано между прочим элегическое стихотворение, в котором изливаются скорбные сетования на дороговизну произведений г. Тургенева (VII, 711).*

Katkov's claim that Chernyshevsky's editorial policy was guided by financial motives essentially described him as corrupt. The issue at stake was now the nature of Chernyshevsky's extra-textual identity and character. Chernyshevsky got so angry in response that he lost control of his argument in a shift in emotion that he referred to in making his autobiographical pact. He referred to Katkov's claim that he was guilty of "забрасывание грязью" in admitting his anger: "Да-с, после от ничего делать пошутим, посмеемся, изобличим, вознегодует, «втопчем в грязь», «завизжим»» (VII, 713). Only after concluding his autobiographical pact was he able to declare, "А вот пришло и другое расположение духа," (VII, 713) and provide his own account of his split with Turgenev. In a demonstratively calm tone he explained:

*Наш образ мыслей прояснился для г. Тургенева настолько, что он перестал одобрять его. Нам стало казаться, что последние повести г. Тургенева не так близко соответствуют нашему взгляду на вещи, как прежде, когда и его направление не было так ясно для нас, да и наши взгляды не были так ясны для него. Мы разошлись. Так ли? Ссылаемся на самого г. Тургенева, (VII, 713).*

This passage has the character of a memoir account written by a well-known person to defend their public reputation. Indeed, Chernyshevsky later quoted this very passage in his later memoir



account of his split with Turgenev in the 1880s (I, 735). Yet as well as its memoir character, it also has the flavor of an ego-document that provides source material for a later memoir account, much as the diaries of famous politicians do. In line with this documentary character, his tone could be described as “anti-memoir” in the way that he described himself from the outside, in contrast to the personal viewpoint typical of a memoir.

This appeal to objectivity, which was fused with his own personal and emotional narrative, is in fact an identifying feature of his self-narrative. Such objectivity mixed with Chernyshevsky’s own subjective emotion came to the surface in the interval between his two bites at the cherry in answering Katkov’s insinuations of financial motives behind his split with Turgenev. In reply he stressed how painful such splits could be and appealed to the experience of others:

*Эти разлуки бывали иногда тяжелы для сердца расстающихся, – по крайней мере, для некоторых из них. Сошлемся на опыт каждого, кто действовал в литературе благородно: кому из них не случилось говорить себе то о том, то о другом, близком прежде, соучастнике трудов и стремлений: «Мы перестаем понимать друг друга; мы стали чужды друг другу по убеждению, мы должны покинуть друг друга во имя чувства еще более чистых и дорогих нам, чем наши взаимные чувства.» Тот который пишет эти строки, начал свою литературную деятельность позднее почтенного редактора «Русского вестника»; но и ему пришлось уже испытать не одну такую потерю (VII, 712).*

In relating his own self-narrative in terms of the experience of others, Chernyshevsky’s mood shifted noticeably from anger to wistful sadness. His attempt to control his emotion was indicated in his description of Katkov as “почтенный,” which he added in after a second reading of his draft in an effort to avoid the personal collisions of a polemic and stress what he and Katkov shared in common.<sup>27</sup> He confessed that it had been a blow when he learnt that Katkov would not collaborate with him on the main question of the day, the emancipation of the serfs, and stressed that no financial motive was involved: “Что мне был г. Катков? Я его тогда не знал в лицо, он меня также,” (VII, 712). In making this statement, Chernyshevsky alluded to the fact that he did subsequently meet Katkov in person, which can be crosschecked with his personal correspondence and other documents and highlights the documentary character of his self-narrative. In March 1861, in the immediate aftermath of the emancipation of the serfs

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<sup>27</sup> The word “почтенный” was added in re-drafting the text, evidently as an after-thought. RGALI, fond 1, opis 1, ed. khr. 199, number one, p. 8 (reverse side).

decree, the state censorship committee resolved to close *Sovremennik* in the future for its use of “mockery” to undermine existing institutions, unless it changed its tune.<sup>28</sup> Other journals were also affected, which led Chernyshevsky to participate in a coalition lobbying for a more open press. As he reported to Dobrolyubov, he visited journalists in Moscow on March 27-28, 1861, at Katkov’s house, in spite of criticism from Nekrasov and Antonovich that he was wasting his time.<sup>29</sup>

The above emotional quotation, in which Chernyshevsky revealed nostalgia for lost friendships, clearly clashes with his angry polemical tone. Since the motivation of his polemic was precisely an angry one, Chernyshevsky admitted that he had gone off-topic:

*Нет, я не умею писать. К чему этот искренний тон, этот порыв чувства, которые сильнее и выше всех журнальных дразг? К чему этот неуместный пафос в статье с насмешливой мыслью и, правду сказать, с презрительной мыслью? (VII, 712).*

It is easy to doubt the genuineness of his “порыв чувства” and his reference to the feelings of a private citizen. Rather than journalists acting honorably (“благородно”), it now emerges that honor is juxtaposed to journal polemics. His mention of such qualities as honesty thus appear to have flowed from his own reflections, which he considered worthy of a private citizen: “И как теперь из этой сферы мыслей, хоть несколько достойных честного гражданина, перейти к журнальной полемике?” (VII, 712). In line with his honest feelings as a private citizen, rather than an angry publicist, he stated his willingness to collaborate with his opponents: “первый отрывок пусть и будет закончен надеждой на близость лучшего развития нашей литературной деятельности,” (VII, 712).<sup>30</sup>

As his polemical reply underlined, however, his plans for collaboration came to nothing. The moment of transcending divisions had not yet arrived. *Russkii Vestnik* would not suspect “пишущего эти строки” of literary cowardice, and rightly so since: “в литературной полемике

<sup>28</sup> In his intellectual biography of Chernyshevsky, A.A. Demchenko chronicled the deliberations of the press censors in Saint Petersburg. On March 18, 1861, the main department of censorship passed a resolution opposed to *Sovremennik’s* “дух порицания всего существующего часто в виде насмешки над государственными, сословными, церковными отношениями.” The decision taken by the head censors was “сделать строгий приговор, а редакции сделать предостережение, что если она не переменит направления, то журнал подвергнется запрещению.” *Sovremennik* was closed down the following year after Chernyshevsky’s arrest. See A. A. Demchenko, *ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 85-92.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to Dobrolyubov, 27 April/9 May, 1861, XIV, 424-426.

<sup>30</sup> However, it does not follow that his desire for rapprochement led him to delay his polemic. If he did not read *Russkii vestnik* until early June that year, as he claimed (VII, 708), then he wrote and published his reply in a rush that very month. Yet it is more than likely that he would have been aware of *Russkii vestnik’s* line from the comments of his colleagues and it is possible that he delayed making a start on his reading of his opponents in the hope of some form of rapprochement.

он не слишком боится за себя. И примирения [...] он не ждет ни у «Русского Вестника» с «Современником», ни у кого другого журнала,” (VII, 713). Here he referred to Katkov as “*Russkii vestnik*” and himself as “*Sovremennik*,” just as he had earlier labeled Dobrolyubov as “*Svistok*.” By the same token, when Katkov insinuated that *Sovremennik*’s position was guided by financial considerations, his charge related to Chernyshevsky personally. Chernyshevsky therefore had grounds to make his autobiographical pact because readers were interested in the self-narrative of the leading writer on *Sovremennik*. He was not using his journal merely as a medium to communicate his self-narrative but, more fundamentally, he was recording how the responsibility of being a newspaper editor had shaped his self-narrative. And, on the other hand, he was trying to get across the idea that his own personal integrity, which was worthy of a private citizen, set boundaries to his polemical reply. Thus, he emphasized his sobriety in seeking to moderate his own anger, which explained his statement that rather than “Да-с, после от ничего делать пошутим, посмеемся, изобличим, вознегодуем, «втопчем в грязь», «завизжим», а теперь – как-то случилось разговориться так, что не то на уме” (VII, 713). He would not write satirical mockery but serious analysis that he could put his name to and be held directly responsible for.<sup>31</sup>

In summing up his move in concluding his autobiographical pact, it is striking how his narrative can be aligned with Quentin Skinner’s discussion of intentions. Chernyshevsky noted that he had been thinking of using a pseudonym, as he did when he wrote for *Svistok*. His desire to reply to Katkov’s attacks on him can thus be linked with his intention of writing a *Svistok* style mocking reply. However, his intentions changed once he started writing, which was reflected in a shift in language to a more serious tone. In itself though, this more serious tone of *Sovremennik* did not justify his autobiographical pact but it did create the possibility for conflict between the angry public position of a publicist and his wistful feelings as a private citizen. And in an effort to overcome this fluctuating tone between mockery and serious polemic, he clarified his clash of feelings by making his autobiographical pact.

##### 5. Chernyshevsky’s comments on reply to Katkov’s *Old gods and new gods*

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<sup>31</sup> These points echo with Pecherskaya’s analysis. For example, she stressed the importance of the selection of material as an indicator of a *raznochinets* author’s personality, “свободная мера перераспределения материала в зависимости от особенности развития тех или иных предметных суждений непосредственно соотносится с возможным восприятием личности автора.” Yet while Pecherskaya had a point in identifying the importance of self-criticism, she may have gone too far in denying the scope for direct first-person narrative “Столь же показательным и форма «саморазоблачения», не предусмотренного автором сознательно. Ситуация авторской гиперцензуры, направленной на запрет прямого высказывания о себе, приводит к тому, что малейшее ослабление самоконтроля пишущего позволяет обнаружить характерные способы утаивания, с помощью которых несказанное все же возвращается в текст,” *ibid.*, p. 25.

Since Chernyshevsky wrote part one of *Polemical Beauties* in June, he knew what Katkov had subsequently written in succeeding months after his January article, notably his influential article *Old gods and new gods*. In his critique of Chernyshevsky and *Sovremennik*, Katkov framed his argument with reference to the review of Maxim Antonovich (1835-1918) on the first two volumes of the *Philosophical Lexicon* produced by S.S. Gogotsky in Kiev. In reply to Antonovich, Katkov claimed that there were types of materialism that were compatible with myth, which he clearly hinted applied to *Sovremennik*. Chernyshevsky re-stated Katkov's thesis as follows:

*мы, по врожденному нам подобострастию, не можем не валяться на коленях перед какими-нибудь кумирами, и потому, низвергая прежних, мы становим новых, которые чуть ли не хуже прежних, и провозглашаем слепое поклонение им, VII, 714-5.*

Chernyshevsky accepted that Katkov's move ("оборот") was subtle ("ловкий") in a reply that clearly echoes with Quentin Skinner's term "move" (ход). In reply he merely added that the charge of *Sovremennik* defending superstition and undermining reason was not true to life, "только одно из условий остроумия не соблюдено: ведь нужно, чтобы выдумка имела вид правдоподобия," (VII, 715) and unmasked an example of plagiarism on Katkov's part.<sup>32</sup> Of course, it could be objected that Chernyshevsky "spun" Katkov's thesis, since Katkov was unequivocally claiming that in setting up idols, Chernyshevsky et al. were setting themselves as idols at the same time. However, in his reply Chernyshevsky challenged that he was setting himself up as an idol, making this a mute point.

Chernyshevsky ignored the polemic that Katkov launched against his article *The Anthropological Principle in philosophy*, which he dealt with in passing in a following subsection. Instead he quoted a lengthy passage in which Katkov described progress in his views in political economy. Katkov claimed that in contrast to his alleged "charlatanism" in philosophy:

*Г. Чернышевский, повидимому, главный вождь этой дружины, начинает уже говорить человеческим языком по предметам политической экономии. Il s'humanise, se monsieur.<sup>33</sup> В последних номерах этого журнала мы с удовольствием*

<sup>32</sup> Katkov had referenced the use of the gibberish word "kololatsy" by a mystic called Ivan Yakovlevich that had been reported previously in *Sovremennik*. As Chernyshevsky explained, "мы за наше бессмыслие сравниваемся с Иваном Яковлевичем [...] только зачем же заимствовать свое остроумие у таких бессмысленных людей, как мы?" (VII, 715)

<sup>33</sup> "Он становится более похожим на человека, этот господин."

*прочли статьи за его подписью; в них уже нет тех бессмыслиц, которые выдавал он прежде, (VII, 716).*

*[...] Но если прежняя дичь остерегается заглядывать в те статьи г. Чернышевского, которые подписаны его именем, то она еще отзывается в других, им не подписанных. Там еще тоном шарлатанской иронии говорится о великих русских экономах, гг. Вернадском, Бунге, Ржевском, Безобразове, к которым причисляется г. де-Молинари, а наконец Каре (или, как у нас пишется, Кери) и Бастиа. (VII, 717).*

The point of Katkov's objection was that even though Chernyshevsky did not sign his name to the article in question, namely his review of the letters of American economist Henry Carey, Katkov could still identify his authorship due to his charlatan tone. His alleged "charlatan irony" was distinctive to Chernyshevsky and, thus, part of his "parole." Firstly, then, his tone was therefore recognizable. Secondly, since Katkov would not bother to criticize it unless it was influential, his objection was testimony to the influence that Chernyshevsky had acquired as a publicist. Katkov's public discussion of Chernyshevsky's name – and perhaps also his claim that comprehensibility was linked to writing in "a human voice" – thus facilitated Chernyshevsky's move into an autobiographical mode and his decision to stress the use of his signature in concluding his autobiographical pact.

It may seem too obvious to mention, but part of Chernyshevsky's reply to Katkov was precisely his extensive quote from the end of Katkov's article, from which the above citation is only a fraction. Admittedly, Chernyshevsky did skip Katkov's paraphrase of the passage he related about the heroine Judith, a figure from the Old Testament whose story was being portrayed on the Saint Petersburg stage in January 1861. In an attempt to demonstrate that self-sacrifice was necessary in politics, Chernyshevsky gave the example of Judith, who damaged her reputation and became immoral in the eyes of her friends in order to become the mistress of an Assyrian military leader, who she then killed in order to rescue the Jewish people. Chernyshevsky returned to directly quoting Katkov at the point where Katkov quoted Chernyshevsky's explanation of the Judith passage, which employed the following image:

*Исторический путь не тротуар Невского проспекта, он идет целиком через поля, то пыльные, то грязные, то через болота, то через дебри. Кто боится быть покрыт пылью и выпачкать сапоги, тот не принимайся за общественную деятельность, (VII, 717).*

Katkov claimed that the Judith episode (including the Nevsky prospect passage) was poetry that could not have appeared “если б ее не призвало само сердце писавшего. Она могла сказаться только из глубины души, она могла прорваться только неудержимой силой невольного откровения. Сколько слез и нежности в этом рассказе, который явился неожиданным оазисом среди пустыни протекционных пошлин, где веет совсем иной дух, сухой и суровый!” (VII, 717). Katkov was not being ironic here. He assumed that Chernyshevsky chose Judith as an example of moderating one’s behavior for a wider good because her story said something about a feeling of injustice that he identified with himself. Such a premise justified Katkov’s conclusion that Chernyshevsky had no need to present himself as a victim figure: “О, господа, не пятняйте себя понапрасну! Не приносите ненужных жертв! Не оправдывайте себя подвигом: никакого подвига не имеется. Вы и себя обольщаете и обманываете других,” (VII, 717).

Katkov’s commentary on this passage therefore asked the same central question as Lejeune did later in his research into autobiography: did Chernyshevsky as author affirm the unity of author, narrator and hero in his Nevsky Prospect metaphor? Katkov assumed that such an identity was in place and that in writing “кто боится” Chernyshevsky had himself in mind. Much like Klioutchkine’s claim for a clash between Chernyshevsky’s worldview and his personal feelings, Katkov claimed that Chernyshevsky was riven between a lyrical, poetic authorial “I” and his alleged “charlatan irony.” There was a logic to Katkov’s position. In his review of Carey’s letters, Chernyshevsky moved from general political analysis to the question of personal agency by drawing an analogy with our everyday personal life. On the question of political programmes and forming alliances, he stated: “Старайтесь только выбирать, какой факт, какая программа заключает в себе наименее неправды и наиболее справедливости – и выбрав, уже прилепляйтесь к ним всей душой: как в частной жизни, если вы не бездушный человек, любите ж вы горячо некоторых людей, хотя в каждом из них наверное есть не совсем нравящиеся вам стороны,” (VII, 921). Here Chernyshevsky was inviting readers to assume that he as author was providing an example in which he invested his own emotions. Moreover, he invoked the style of a writer of a private letter confiding in his reader by introducing the figure of Judith as if she was a real, everyday person “вот можно рассказать вам, что я видел вчера” (VII, 922).<sup>34</sup> Moreover, Chernyshevsky did not appear to disagree with Katkov’s comments, noting that:

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<sup>34</sup> Since the play was running in Saint Petersburg at the time, he may even have seen the show the night before, though it is possible that this reference was fictional, which would represent an example of the “narratorial self” that Klioutchkine referred to.

*Эпизод о «Юдифи» действительно годился для того, чтобы посмеяться над ним [...] тут насмешка вполне удалась «Русскому Вестнику». Да и патетический тон эпизода о Юдифи действительно очень забавен своим не совсем удобным помещением в статейке о сухом предмете, тарифе и Керу» (VII, 717).*

He then admitted his authorship of his review of Carey's letters and moved straight on to a brief memoir-like justification of his record on political economy (VII, 717-718).

However, his memoir-style justification of his record on political economy, in which he stressed that his ideas were the same whether he signed his articles or not, has a bearing on his reply to Katkov. Up until 1860 he had explored specific questions “наиболее интересовавших меня”, namely questions “которые мне казались особенно плохо излагаемыми у писателей господствующей экономической школы,” (VII, 718), i.e. his analysis of the emancipation of the serfs and rural land relations that he could not discuss openly due to censorship. In contrast, beginning in 1860 he published a translation of John Stuart Mill's study of political economy,<sup>35</sup> which was the corpus on political economy that Katkov praised in the citation above. Work on this translation had allowed him in an abstract, theoretical form to discuss such topics as Mill's call for the nationalization of the land in Britain, although in his reply to Katkov Chernyshevsky downplayed his scope to explore progressive policies through commenting on Mill. Instead he limited himself to stating that if before he was writing on issues on that he disagreed with other economists on, then “в переводе Милля имею целью изложить все, что надобно думать о предмете, – и то, в чем я не согласен, и то, в чем согласен с вами,” (VII, 718). The question that arises is: if Katkov was so wrong on economic questions, as Chernyshevsky insisted, how was it possible for him to make a telling criticism of Chernyshevsky's review of Carey's letters?

The answer is that Katkov may not have made such a telling criticism after all. A closer reading of Chernyshevsky's review reveals that he could consistently unmask Katkov's ignorance of economic issues and agree with his comment that the poetry of the Judith passage contrasted with the topic of protectionism. What Chernyshevsky did not clarify was that in the rest of his article he did not actually discuss the dry matter of protectionism, which Katkov failed to see precisely because he was not well versed on what an article on free trade versus protectionism should actually involve. On the contrary, Chernyshevsky used protectionism as a marker for the side of the North in America after the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860 and the looming outbreak of the American civil war. The play “Judith” was itself

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<sup>35</sup> His translation and commentary of Mill's story of political economy is found in volume IX of his collected works.

associated with the struggle of Italian national liberation against Austrian rule, which hinged on the military and heroic imagery of the Old Testament story.<sup>36</sup> It is therefore highly likely that Chernyshevsky was directing this familiar image to the subject of the forth-coming war in America.<sup>37</sup> If this is the case, his reply to Katkov showed that Chernyshevsky was not interested in clarifying his position on the American civil war, which by the summer had developed into a full-scale military conflict that demanded heroism from both soldiers and civilians alike. The question that thus arises regards why Chernyshevsky chose to quote Katkov at such length if he had no intention of clarifying the argument in his review on Carey's letters. The evidence presented in *Polemical Beauties* does not allow for a clear answer but the least that can be said is that while formally Chernyshevsky seemed to distance himself from his earlier metaphor in his comments, the very fact that he quoted himself highlights that he must have liked his metaphor to justify his repetition of it.

Without pretending to provide a definitive answer on the biographical versus literary nature of Chernyshevsky's narrative "I," there is mileage to be gained from considering the inter-section of his self-narrative and his journalistic practice. In particular, it is possible to rephrase Katkov's question concerning the incompatibility of poetry and protectionism in terms of autobiography and more formal genres of journalism. In contemporaneous Victorian Britain it would have been unthinkable for an author to jump from Carey's letters to an account of a play they might have seen the night before. But in Russia it was still possible, much in the manner of blogs today. The boundaries between public journalism and private self-testimony were not clearly opposed. The days when aristocratic friends could circulate letters as a form of private journalism, as described by Saburova and Rodigina, were still fresh in the memory. And as the journals entered into new territory, first with the unmasking campaigns and then with the impact of *Svistok*, Chernyshevsky's reputation from his articles on political economy gave him a launchpad to reflect on his feelings in his public self-narrative.

In sum, there is little reason to doubt that Chernyshevsky was genuinely emotional in writing his review of Carey's letters, since the question at stake was the abolition of slavery. If it is possible to take anything for granted, the likelihood that Chernyshevsky felt passionately about the abolition of slavery would be a prime contender. Indeed, not only would such passion

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<sup>36</sup> In writing this article, I was stimulated to return to Chernyshevsky's review of Carey's letters, which I have analysed in line with Skinner's methodology for the forthcoming bulletin on Chernyshevsky studies published in Saratov. Evidence that the Judith play was part of the "langue" of the Italian independence movement comes from an 1858 article written by Engels in the second edition of the Marx and Engels collected works, vol. XII, pp. 673-4.

<sup>37</sup> In his political review of the same month, January 1861, he had described the war as de-facto breaking out already.



explain the idiosyncrasy of his narrative, but it would also explain the historicism that underpins his Nevsky Prospect metaphor, which is premised on the practice of people in their everyday lives being able to fight for a cause, if the situation demands it. For Chernyshevsky, conviction and passion were not whims that can be attributed to his authorial style, but very much the topic of his journalism.

#### 6. Chernyshevsky's critique of his public image

Chernyshevsky's autobiographical pact and his concern with presenting before the reader feelings, both his own and those of the examples he gave, all shaped the construction of his public image. In addition to these specific facets of his public image, Chernyshevsky moved on to suggest that one reason for Katkov's anomalous praise of his political economy may have been a result of the fact that "моя репутация увеличивается," (VII, 718).<sup>38</sup> The question of his public image brings us to the claim of Tatiana Pecherskaya that *raznochinets* writers such as Chernyshevsky experienced a distance between their "я-для-других," where the writer could come across as an integrated personality, and "я-для-себя," where an author experienced various complexes, particular in the cases of leaders, such as Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov.<sup>39</sup> Was there really such a contradiction between his concern with his public image and his own self-conception?

The proposed answer is that there was not such a gap on the grounds that Chernyshevsky's public image was made up of his private account of himself, including his own personal feelings (e.g. his autobiographical pact) and his insistence on linking general ideas to personal feelings (the Judith episode). In contrast to authors of literary memoirs of the sort that Philippe Lejeune studied in theorizing the autobiographical pact, Chernyshevsky engaged in reflections about his public image in order to challenge Katkov's claims about his celebrity, "priest-like" ("кумир") status. Due to the low level of Russian public opinion he could mention his fame "не прикидываясь скромным, потому что не слишком горжусь своей литературной деятельностью," (VII, 718). Here he referenced Katkov/*Russkii Vestnik* to the effect that Russian criticism was still in a pathetic "school position" (VII, 718) in a sober assessment of Russian journalism that stressed his isolation and critical distance from others. He thus challenged, rather than justified, readers who admired his analysis, and deconstructed the

<sup>38</sup> The fact that Katkov was so bothered by Chernyshevsky's articles on political economy does, to one degree or another, corroborate Chernyshevsky's claim here.

<sup>39</sup> Pecherskaya noted that this distance "в многом определила особый характер рефлексии разночинского самосознания. Интенсивность рефлексии связана с увеличением этой дистанции, что наиболее свойственно идеологическим вождям поколения, то есть люди, наиболее цельными с точки зрения современников," *ibid.*, p. 12.

image of senseless thinker who chased after the idol of public opinion that Katkov was pushing.<sup>40</sup> Chernyshevsky declared proudly:

*Я мертв поэтому к похвале и к порицанию тому, что я пишу; я сам судья, произнесший и себе в числе других приговор, который не поправишь и не испортишь ничем. И на то, как думает обо мне публика, я смотрю точно так же, как на толки о какой-нибудь т-лле Ригольбош,<sup>41</sup> (VII, 718-9).*

However, he added with regard to himself: “Но я не все сказал, сказав, что к своей литературной репутации я мертв. К себе, к человеку, я не могу быть мертв” VII, 719. As for himself, his attitude to himself was mediated by his self-conception as a publicist able to contribute to the development of Russia. This seems a contradiction in terms because he has just said that he is dead to his literary reputation, but his points make sense when they are placed in an evolving trajectory: he was indifferent to his reputation in the present, but still had hopes for the future, which continued to motivate him. His self-narrative here merits careful scrutiny:

*Но я не все сказал, сказав, что к своей литературной репутации я мертв. К себе, к человеку, я не могу быть мертв. Я знаю, что будут лучшие времена литературной деятельности, когда будет она приносить обществу действительную пользу и будет действительно заслуживать доброе имя того, у кого есть силы. И вот я думаю: сохранится ли во мне к тому времени способность служить обществу как следует? Для этого нужна свежесть сил, свежесть убеждений. А я вижу, что уже начинаю входить в число «уважаемых» писателей, то есть писателей истаскавшихся, отстающих от движения общественных потребностей. Это горько. Но что делать? Лета берут свое. Дважды молод не будешь. Я могу только чувствовать зависть к людям, которые моложе и свежее меня. Например, к г. Антоновичу. Что ж? разве я стану скрывать, что действительно завидую им, завидую с оттенком оскорбляемого их свежестью самолюбия, с досадой опережаемого? (VII, 719)*

If the title and author were not already given, and one had to guess the provenance of this passage, there would certainly be a case for it to be a diary passage or a letter to a close friend, not a polemical article. Firstly, the author described their still-to-be-realized hopes, which are not

<sup>40</sup> He further claimed with regard to himself: “я, как литератор” that “мое чувство к литературе, в том числе к моей доле в ней, имеет жестокость, ничем не смягченную,” (VII, 718).

<sup>41</sup> M-lle Rigolbosh was a dancer whose real name was Margarita Babel (VII, 1039.)

usually a fit subject for a journalist to confess to – why should the reader be interested? Secondly, there is a strong motif of the passage of time, a key area of interest in the study of ego-documents. Thirdly, in reflecting on how things are turning out, the author mentioned another person, namely Maxim Antonovich, who Chernyshevsky had already mentioned in passing in connection with Katkov’s attack on his review of the *Philosophical Lexicon*. A reading of Chernyshevsky’s diary underlines the importance of the names in his entries. He very obviously identified himself in relation to the people whose interaction with him he recorded. With regard to Antonovich, two reflections will suffice. Chernyshevsky identified him as being worthy of envy because he had qualities that Chernyshevsky liked, e.g. he was young, fresh etc., thereby combining a preference for Antonovich with envy. In doing so, he defined himself horizontally and made a statement about himself.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, he reflected on how Antonovich and other young intellectuals viewed him, and especially how they might come to view him, which underscored his anxiety about whether he was old news. These points all tick the right boxes for ego-documents, conjuring up images of an author writing in the privacy of their home, confiding in their diary or private letter thoughts that they could not otherwise express because, frankly, who would be interested? Perhaps also for memoirs the subject matter is right, but the text is in the present and future tenses, and, it seems, would only suit a memoir preface or concluding chapter.

One would not expect this intimate, confessional passage to be written in public by a journalist and definitely not by a journalist who was so successful that he could reflect on his personal feelings in public in the knowledge that readers would be interested. For all his influence, Chernyshevsky considered himself to be of modest use to society because, as he had just stressed in a further echo of his lament at the end of his *Svistok* article, Russian journalism was still in a poor state. In answer to Katkov’s mocking question in his comments on the Judith episode as to what his intentions might be, Chernyshevsky clarified that they were to “приносить обществу действительную пользу.” Yet despite his influence, he could not fulfill these intentions. His role was limited due to censorship and the new institutional architecture that was forming at the time, which Chernyshevsky felt would be detrimental to Russia’s future.

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<sup>42</sup> G.E. Tamarchenko noted Chernyshevsky’s praise for Antonovich in her introduction to an anthology of the latter’s literary and aesthetic writings. See *Русская критика. М.А. Антонович. Литературно-критические статьи*, ed. Г.Е. Тмарченко, Москва, Ленинград, 1961 p. vi. The above analysis echoes Pecherskaya’s observation that Chernyshevsky’s statements about others reveal a lot about himself: “Другой даже априорно не может быть предметным центром разночинского сознания. Таковым оказывается только собственное Я, объектированное тематической формой воспоминаний о другом (мемуары), обращением к другому (письма), суждением о другом (статьи, названный сюжет),” *ibid.*, pp. 23-4. Ultimately though, the current study offers a less solipsistic interpretation of Chernyshevsky’s identity than Pecherskaya’s, which flows back to the claim that Chernyshevsky’s personal emotions were integrated with his objective stance towards the world. The interplay of subjective and objective poles in his writings is a topic that requires more extensive treatment in connection with his memoir writing, including the retrospective glimpses he provided in other sections of *Polemical Beauties*.

Thus, rather than his recognition of his rising reputation appearing as a bridge to his later nihilist cult, Chernyshevsky stressed that he was entering a circle composed of “писателей истаскавшихся, отстающих от движения общественных потребностей.” There is therefore a distinction to be made between feelings, such as conviction and brutal honesty, which he did advocate and provided an example for, and Chernyshevsky’s own overall autobiographical example, which arguably he did not present as a model for emulation because he was not actually fulfilling the role he wanted to fill.

Rather than being a priest-like figure who had influence over public opinion, Chernyshevsky stressed precisely the limits of this influence. Despite his “rising reputation,” he did not seek to present a unified, fictional public image that contrasted with his auto-conception. On the contrary, because he viewed himself in terms of the role he could play socially, his critique of his public position had a direct knock-on effect on his own self-conception. And in its turn, his critical, qualified account of his public image was incompatible with the construction of the later nihilist retrospective narrative that supported his subsequent canonization.

## 7. Conclusion

This study has charted Chernyshevsky’s use of a journalistic autobiographical pact in *Polemical Beauties* in a reply above all to Katkov’s *Old gods and new gods*. Due to the rupture in Chernyshevsky’s career triggered by his arrest in 1862 and the radicalization of assessments about him, of which both nihilist and Katkov’s anti-nihilist views are examples, *Polemical Beauties* has a particular value in revealing what Chernyshevsky thought before his name became over-shadowed by the reception of his novel. As has been shown, Chernyshevsky defined himself as a journalist, who specialized in political economy, in contrast to later retrospective claims that others made in relation to his literary legacy. It has been further argued that his self-narrative revealed how his journalistic practice re-fashioned his identity, notably in shaping how he responded to his rising reputation by deconstructing claims of him as a priest-like figure who sought to manipulate the ignorance of his readers.

There are perhaps two conclusions that deserve to be stressed in conclusion. One of them concerns the importance of autobiographical narrative to the “langue,” the general polemical context of Russian letters in the second half of the nineteenth century, for example in Dostoevsky’s *Diary of a Writer* and Tolstoy’s *Confessions*. Clearly, this wider current had other sources than Chernyshevsky’s contribution, notably a Romantic foundation, which is especially visible in Herzen’s *My Past and Thoughts*. Yet Chernyshevsky’s text is of interest as a journalistic polemic, rather than a memoir, which explains why the genre of journalism reconstituted the memoir style that Chernyshevsky embraced in mounting his defence of his

reputation. Thus, it is possible to add further weight to calls for more research into ways that Chernyshevsky may have influenced the writings of contemporaries.<sup>43</sup> If it is the case that autobiographical narrative formed part of the “*langue*,” then certain modifications will have to be made to the approach of the Cambridge School, which arose in the study of earlier periods in European intellectual history when autobiography had not emerged as a distinct and familiar genre. Finally, the other main conclusion is that there is a need for more research into Chernyshevsky’s legacy in the field of political economy, the area that he felt his record was most worth defending.

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<sup>43</sup> Thus, Alexey Vdovin has noted “Формирование прижизненной и посмертной репутации, их соотношение с авторефлексией оказываются, таким образом, ключевыми аспектами современных исследований. Совершенно ясно также, что без продолжения всестороннего анализа литературных полей и быта 1850-60-х годов построение как биографии Чернышевского-публициста в его взаимоотношениях с современниками (Герценом, Писемским, Достоевским и т.д.), так и истории литературного процесса середины века вряд ли возможно,” “XXX Международная конференция «Чернышевский и его эпоха»,” retrieved on 24.12.2015 at <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2009/96/vd41.html>

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