Time in Gončarov's Oblomov.

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Abstract

This analysis of Oblomov from the time point of view is aimed at establishing, first that Oblomov is a time novel, where characterization and plot depend on a particular experience of time; and secondly, that such a novel depends, for its artistic success, on the interrelation between the time experience described and the literary time patterns and devices, which are part of any work of fiction. Each part of the novel is analysed with this purpose in mind.

In Part I, the time devices used by Gončarov promote the characterization of Oblomov, as a man for whom changelessness is a way of life. In Parts II and III, they emphasize the negative aspect of Oblomov's experimentation with a life of action and change. Part IV, is considered to be the weakest in the novel, in so far as the devices used fail to illustrate the experience of change as slow erosion, which dominates Oblomov's life at this stage. The devices used, do however illustrate Oblomov's return to the time values of his youth.

The Appendix provides a comparison between Oblomov and Gončarov's other works.

G.T. LORRIMAN. TIME IN GONČAROV'S OBLOMOV

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PREFACE

The system of transliteration used throughout this thesis for quotations in Russian is the system adopted by the Harvard Slavic Studies, The Slavic and East European Journal, and The American Bibliography of Russian and East European Studies.

The names "Stolz" and "Olga" appear in transliteration in the quotations, but their common western spelling is used in the text of the thesis. The English form "Alexander," rather than the transliteration "Aleksandr," is used in the study of An Ordinary Story in the Appendix.

All passages from Gončarov's works are quoted from: I.A. Gončarov- Sobranie sočinenij (Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo xudožestvennoj literatury, Moscow, 1952), in eight volumes.

Material for this thesis has been obtained from the McGill University Library and the New York Public Library. I have also been able to use the libraries of Columbia University and New York University, for which privilege I would like to thank these institutions.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Professor J.G. Nicholson, for his patience and advice.

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INTRODUCTION

The first question raised by the title of the present study: "Time in Gončarov's Oblomov," is the definition of time in a literary work. Two approaches are possible. They are exemplified in recent literary criticism by two standard works: A.A. Mendilow's Time and the Novel,[1] and Hans Meyerhoff's Time in Literature.[2] They might be described in broad terms as the formalistic and the philosophical approach.

In the formalistic approach the emphasis is put on fiction as an art, which also happens to be a time art. A novel has to be read in time, its action unfolds itself in time, within this action the characters introduce their own psychological time, and so does the author in so far as he participates in or shapes the action. "As fiction is a time art, the problems of its structure, conventions and techniques form a veritable arabesque of different time values and factors."[3] This arabesque has been aptly called in Russian criticism "xudožestvennoe vremja." D.S. Lixačev, who has

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[1] A.A. Mendilow, Time and the Novel (London, 1952).

[2] Hans Meyerhoff, Time in Literature (Berkeley, 1968).

[3] A.A. Mendilow, op. cit., p. 31.

devoted the second half of his Poètika drevnerusskoj literatury[4] to this "artistic time" clearly states the formalistic, or as he calls it, aesthetic nature of this approach to time: "xudožestvennoe vremja" is "vremja kak xudožestvennyj faktor literatury. Imenno issledovanija ètogo xudožestvennogo vremeni imejut naibol'še značenija dlja ponimanija èstetičeskoj prirody slovesnogo iskusstva."[5]

The more philosophical approach looks beyond the time patterns of the novel to the final time effect produced, and tries to induce from it the author's personal understanding of time. It is well to make clear that what was above called the philosophical approach dissociates itself from all abstract theories on the nature of time be they philosophical or scientific. The sphere which is proper to literature, is what Georges Poulet has called "le temps humain."[6] This term is taken up and defined by Hans Meyerhoff: "time so defined is private, personal, subjective, or as is often said psychological. These terms mean that we are thinking of time as directly experienced".[7] H. Meyerhoff does not minimize the formal aspect of literature. But specific literary patterns, such as for instance continuity, or the development of events

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[4]D.S. Lixačev, Poètika drevnerusskoj literatury (Leningrad, 1967).

[5]D.S. Lixačev, op. cit., p. 214.

[6]Georges Poulet, Etudes sur le temps humain (Paris, 1949).

[7]H. Meyerhoff, op. cit., p. 4.

towards an ending are examined not as techniques but as indications of a particular understanding of temporal processes. At the extreme limit of the philosophical approach, as in G. Poulet's work for instance, the idea of literature as an art disappears completely. The author's aim is to define the essence of the private time world of the writers he examines. Quotations are produced from a variety of works and a variety of characters completely removed from their artistic context.

Both approaches can be used separately and applied to any work of fiction in any period. D.S. Lixačev traces the patterns of "xudožestvennoe vremja" in Ancient Russian literature ending his study with a few chapters on the 19th century. G. Poulet starts with Montaigne and ends with Proust, having examined sixteen other authors in between. These studies illustrate the assumption which lies at the basis of the theoretical works quoted earlier, that time, on the formal or the philosophical level is inherent in fiction, and can therefore be studied in any literary work.

However, the fact remains that some authors have been more interested than others in the problems of time, and it is quite natural that the study of such authors should be particularly rewarding. The two periods most often quoted are the English 18th century, with Henry Fielding and Lawrence Sterne, and the 20th century, with the modern psychological novels of James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner. Thus A.A. Mendilow selects examples from

Tristram Shandy and Orlando to illustrate his theory.[8]

Lawrence Sterne, who was particularly interested in time as a literary convention, lends himself well to the formalistic approach. The situation becomes much more complicated when the writer experiments with time techniques in order to convey a new time experience, as is the case in the modern novel. All the time patterns inherent in literary art acquire a new importance when a time experience is also the subject matter of the work of fiction. They may contribute to the illusion of the time experience the author is trying to create, or work against it, even add a new dimension to it. E. Muir, for instance, feels that the techniques used by the modern stream of consciousness novelists have failed to convey the impression of the ceaseless flow they were striving to express. "Floating thoughts which follow no progression as they omit the idea of causality are incapable of suggesting the idea of time."[9] "The flux coagulates into subject matter for characters and scenes."[10] H. Meyerhoff, referring to the modern novel implies that the technique adds a new dimension to the experience portrayed. The point made is that the artistic necessity of organizing the flux, reflects the continuity of the self in the midst of the chaos of immediate perception. [11] In the case of a novel which sets out to por-

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[8] A.A. Mendilow, op. cit., pp. 158-233.

[9] E. Muir, The Structure of the Novel (London, 1957), p. 130.

[10] Ibid., p. 131.

[11] H. Meyerhoff, op. cit., p. 37.

tray a time experience, it is therefore limiting to use exclusively either the formalistic or the philosophical approach. Time patterns and time experience have to be examined in their interrelation.

It is our contention that Gončarov's Oblomov is such a novel. Oblomov is neither modern - it was published in 1859[12] - nor experimental. Within its own conventions, it is, nevertheless, a novel primarily aimed at illustrating a time experience. It is the life history of one hero, Oblomov, whose characterization, taking up the whole of Part I, is based on the way in which he experiences time. The action of the following three parts develops from this characterization and revolves around a choice to be made between two ways of life each based on a different way of understanding time.

The analysis cannot be complete unless one draws on both approaches to time in literature. The interpretation of Oblomov as a time novel will have to be justified through an analysis of the time experience portrayed, and the examination of the author's own approach to it. But, as has been indicated above, literary time devices acquire in a time novel a vital importance. It is the unity, or one might say the co-operation between time device and time experience which will ultimately guarantee the success of the time novel. A main purpose therefore will be to show in Oblomov the interrelation between the time devices used and the time experiences on which the novel is based. Such a study has not been attempted before

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[12]In the journal Otečestvennye zapiski, I - IV (1859).

and represents therefore an original contribution to literary research.

Soviet criticism has recently begun to concern itself with the problems of time in literature. One may point in particular to the very well informed articles on time in the western novel by N.F. Rževskaja;[13] the term foreign novel might be preferable as she includes East German writers in her second study. T.L. Motyleva in a general study of the modern western novel,[14] has two chapters on time. The other favourites of time critics, Henry Fielding and Lawrence Sterne are not forgotten. They are examined by V. Šklovskij in his Xudožestvennaja proza.Razmyšlenija i razbory.[15] Sufficient attention, however, has not been paid to time in Russian literature. The one exception is the work of D.S. Lixačev, already quoted, whose great interest for the study of time in fiction is revealed in his study of Ancient Russian literature. As far as we can ascertain there has been nothing published in the Soviet Union on time in Russian literature since the study of D.S. Lixačev. He himself gives a very scant bibliography. Apart from the chapter on time in V. Šklovskij, he quotes a few pages on time in Tolstoj's

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[13] N.F. Rževskaja, "Izučenie problemy xudožestvennogo v zarubežnom literaturovedenii," Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta, V (1969).
"Koncepcija xudožectvennogo vremeni v sovremennom romane," Filologičeskie nauki, IV (1970).

[14] T.L. Motyleva, Zarubežnyij roman segodnja (Moscow, 1966), Chapter 3, sections 3 & 4.

[15] V. Šklovskij, Xudožestvennaja proza. Razmyšlenija i razbory (Moscow, 1959), pp. 305-318.

early works by B.I. Bursov,[16] early studies by A.G. Cejtlin on Dostoevskij[17] and V. Vinogradov on Puškin,[18] and one page in a study on Gorkij by Ja. O. Zundegovič.[19]

In the West, there is no major work on time in one particular Russian writer, of the calibre for instance of André Vachon's Le temps et l'espace dans l'oeuvre de Paul Claudel[20] (a philosophical study). There are two chapters on time in Tolstoj in Percy Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction,[21] and a few articles on time in Tolstoj, Dostoevskij and Čexov.[22] Studies on time in Gončarov will be examined separately. Time in Russian literature is still a largely unexplored field, in the West as well as in the Soviet Union. It is to be hoped that research will be stimulated by the

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[16] B.I. Bursov, Lev Tolstoj (Moscow, 1960), pp. 385-388.

[17] A.G. Cejtlin, "Vremja v romanax Dostoevskogo," Russkij jazyk v škole, V (1928).

[18] V. Vinogradov, "Stil' Pikovoj damy," Puškinskij vremennik, II (1936).

[19] Ja. O. Zundegovič, "Roman xronika Gor'kogo Delo Artamonovyx," Trudy Uzbekskogo gos.universiteta. Novaja Serija, vyp. 64 (Samarkand, 1956), p. 327.

[20] André Vachon, Le temps et l'espace dans l'oeuvre de Paul Claudel (Paris, 1965).

[21] Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (London, 1957), chapters 3 & 4.

[22] R.F. Christian, "The Passage of Time in Anna Karenina," The Slavonic and East European Review Vol. 45 (London, 1967), pp. 207-210.

R. Pletnev, "Vremja i prostranstvo u Dostoevskogo," Novyj Žurnal, No. 87 (New York, 1967).

W. Gareth Jones, "Chekhov's Undercurrent of Time," Modern Language Review, Vol. 64, No. I (1969).

great interest in time of D.S. Lixačev and N.F. Rževskaja. The present study is a small answer to a strongly felt need.

As far as time in Gončarov's work is concerned the strictly relevant bibliography is minimal. There is a study by W. Rehm on Gončarov and boredom which is more concerned with The Ravine, Gončarov's last novel, than with Oblomov.[23] It will be examined in the Appendix. For time in Oblomov we have to fall back on one chapter in D.S. Lixačev's Poètika.[24]

Lixačev's position is very close to the one adopted in the present study, since he points out the interrelation of time device and subject matter in Oblomov: "Predmet izobraženija i sposob izobraženija vremeni naxodjatsja v Oblomove v strogom sootvestvii."[25] But he sets both device and subject matter in a strictly historical perspective, quite in keeping with the aim of the time section of the Poètika, which is conceived as a historical survey of time devices in Ancient Russian literature, with a postscript on Gončarov and Dostoevskij, as representing two further stages of development. Oblomov interests him: "s točki zrenija problemy vremeni, rešaemoj v realističeskom povestvovanii, ispol'zovavšem uroki fiziologičeskogo očerka natural'noj školy."[26] The time values of the devices of typisation

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[23]W. Rehm, Gontscharow und Jacobsen, oder Langweile und Schwermut (Göttingen, 1963).

[24]D.S. Lixačev, op. cit., pp. 312-319.

[25]D.S. Lixačev, op. cit., p. 315.

[26]Ibid., p. 313.

borrowed from the sketch seem to him well suited to the description of the way of life of the land-owning class to which Oblomov belonged. This historical perspective tends to unbalance Lixačev's study as it leads him to confine his remarks, with one exception, to Part I of the novel only, where the influence of the sketch is the most strongly felt, and which contains most of the social characterization of Oblomov. However, the three other parts of the novel must also be examined. There are many time devices throughout the novel which, although they do not belong to the tradition of the sketch, nonetheless still illustrate a time experience. (Lixačev himself points in one instance to the use of the stream of consciousness in Oblomov, as will be shown in our later analysis). The analysis will reach beyond the historical context and examine Oblomov for its own sake, from the point of view of its artistic success as a time novel. One must however agree with Lixačev that this success is achieved to a large extent within the conventions of the period, and this is a point which will be taken up in the analysis.

There is no mention of time as understood in the present study in general works of criticism on Gončarov. The only aspect of time which is acknowledged is time as historical and social evolution. The extreme sociological approach which considers works of art as social documents or weapons in a social struggle, has been given tremendous momentum by the well-known article of N.A. Dobroljubov, "Čto takoe

oblomovščina?,"[27] written shortly after the publication of the novel. The emphasis on the social significance of the novel for a particular moment in Russia's historical development is still present to a greater or lesser degree in all works of general criticism on Oblomov. There is in one respect however, within the socio-historical orientation of Soviet criticism, a line of thought closer to that of the present study. Such critics as A.G. Cejtlin[28] and N.I. Pruckov[29] have looked beyond Gončarov's treatment of the issues of his time to his personal understanding of the processes of change and evolution. This is closer to the personal experience of time, and these critics will be discussed when this aspect of Gončarov's work is considered later.

It remains now to look to Gončarov himself for possible material for a study of time in his Oblomov. Gončarov's critical and autobiographical essays and his published correspondence do not prove very helpful. From the purely literary point of view, there is no sign of any awareness of the problems of "xudožestvennoe vremja." The only purely formal problems he mentions are those of general structure "arxitektonika" as he calls it.[30] The main literary question

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[27]N.A. Dobroljubov, "Čto takoe oblomovščina?," Sovremennik Book V, section 3, (1859).

[28]A.G. Cejtlin, I.A. Gončarov (Moscow, 1950).

[29]N.I. Pruckov, Masterstvo Gončarova romanista (Moscow, 1962).

[30]"Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," Russkaja reč', VI (1879), Sobranie sočinenij, Vol. VIII, p. 80 and p. 112.

which really preoccupied Gončarov was the nature of realism.[31] He defended the role of the imagination and feeling in the literary recreation of reality against the demands for stark objectivity of the new realist school. In "A Literary Evening,"[32] the subjects discussed by the guests include such well-worn questions as the purity of the Russian language, the subject matter best fitted for a work of fiction, the problem of "narodnost'," again the nature of realism and the meaning of "truth" in a literary work.

Time appears in Gončarov's critical work predominantly as historical time. Writing in 1879, ten years after the publication of his last novel, Gončarov tried in his "Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," to give a socio-historical interpretation of his work. He claimed that his three novels were in fact a trilogy illustrating the evolution of Russian social life from the forties to the seventies.[33] It is ironical that Gončarov should have laid claim to the one sense of time he did not possess. It is practically impossible to relate convincingly the social facts portrayed in his novels to the development of Russian society between 1840 and 1870. This problem has been studied in detail by Leon Stilman in his article "Oblomovka Revisited."[34] His conclusion is that: "Nothing is less justified than Goncharov's claim to have

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[31]"Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," Vol. VIII, p. 105.

[32]"Literaturnyj večer," Russkaja reč', I (1880).

[33]"Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," Vol. VIII, p. 113.

[34]Leon Stilman, "Oblomovka Revisited," The American Slavic and East European Review, VII (1948), pp. 45-77.

produced a gigantic panorama reflecting three decades of the life of Russian society. Goncharov was least of all an analyst of social transitions. His work is remarkable for lack of historical perspective."[35] The same point is made by C.A. Manning in an article with a telling title: "The Neglect of Time in the Russian Novel,"[36] ("neglect of time" meaning here absence of historical sense).

A. Mazon places Gončarov's historical "moment" at the end of the 1830's.[37] This is the period from which the author's imagination never stirred very far. No great emphasis therefore will be laid on time as historical development in Oblomov. It will be mentioned when it appears among the literary time patterns of the novel as a distant background. The private time experience of Oblomov is considered in this study to be the true subject matter of the novel; his acceptance or non-acceptance of a certain way of life is viewed here as a personal choice rather than the opposition between the "old" and the "new" in a historical perspective. This perspective is much more strongly perceived in the structure of the novel The Ravine, to be briefly considered later in the Appendix to the present work.

Another aspect of time which is found repeatedly in

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[35] Ibid., p. 49.

[36] C.A. Manning, "The Neglect of Time in the Russian Novel," Slavic Studies (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1943), pp. 109-113.

[37] André Mazon, Ivan Gontcharov. Un maître du roman russe (Paris, 1914), p. 375.

Gončarov's critical essays and in his correspondence, is the idea that only a settled way of life can be adequately reproduced in fiction.[38] His feeling was that the changing and the unstable was impossible to grasp, that only the familiar, which could have been observed over a long period of time could be artistically recreated. This contention, somewhat contradictory to the claim that his work portrayed society in transition, is much closer to the truth about his talent. We shall consider how the element of changelessness inherent in the devices used by Gončarov contributed to the success of Oblomov's characterization, and also how the same devices handicapped the author in the portrayal of development within the novel.

As far as the time experience portrayed in Oblomov is concerned, we find in Gončarov's essays an indication of its autobiographical origin. First of all it should be noted that Gončarov defined Oblomov as "Voploščenie sna, zastoja, nepodvižnoj mertvoj žizni-perepolzanie izo dnja v den'."[39] Gončarov did not expand on this definition, claiming that Dobroljubov had already done so to everyone's satisfaction. But one can point out the strong temporal connotations of the terms used, which show that time was inseparable from Gončarov's conception of Oblomov. Gončarov states that he

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[38] "Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," Vol. VIII, p. 80 and p. 101. Letters to Dostoevskij of 11 Feb. and 14 Feb: 1874, Vol. VIII, p. 456 and p. 459.

[39] "Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," Vol. VIII, p. 78.

first saw Oblomov's lazy image in himself and in others.[40] More specifically in his home town of Simbirsk, which he describes as the abode of "oblomovščina." "Samaja naružnost' rodnogo goroda ne predstavljala ničego drugogo, krome kartiny sna i zastoja."[41] Gončarov's autobiographical essays,[42] however, give very little information on the author's personal feelings. They are conceived as a series of portraits of people whom he met in his home town and of the professors who taught him at university. Some of these people, for instance the two friends of his godfather Jakubov, F.P. Kozyrev and A.G. Gasturin, have much in common with Oblomov.[43] In The Frigate Pallas, Gončarov's travel sketches, which will be examined as part of Gončarov's literary work, but which can also be considered as autobiography, many references are found to a time experience close to that of Oblomov.

There is enough evidence in Gončarov's works to reveal how familiar the author was with what he described in Oblomov. It is not intended to go any further in examining this aspect. In the first quarter of this century, the very close relation between Gončarov's literary work and his life

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[40]"Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," Vol. VIII, p. 71.

[41]"Na rodine," Vestnik Evropy, I, II (1888). Vol. VII, p. 242.

[42]"V universitete," Vestnik Europy, IV (1887). "Na rodine," op. cit.

[43]"Na rodine," Vol. VII, p. 240.

was very thoroughly documented by E. Ljackij[44] and in a more general way by A. Mazon. The present study, however, approaches the novel as a self-contained work of art, independently of its relation to the life experiences of its author. An attempt will be made nonetheless to clarify the author's attitudes, but only in so far as they are reflected in the novel itself.

The present study takes the form of a text analysis.[45] Each part will be examined separately and the novel as a whole will be looked at in the conclusion. This approach is justified by the structure of the novel. Each part corresponds very precisely to one phase of the hero's life exhibiting its own time patterns and illustrating a particular aspect of Oblomov's experience of time.

An Appendix on time in Gončarov's other works, will take the form of a comparison between Oblomov and Gončarov's three other major works: his two novels Obyknovennaja istorija and Obryv and his travel sketches Fregat "Pallada," as well as his few minor works. This study, while revealing the time devices which all these works have in common, will also underline the uniqueness of Oblomov in Gončarov's literary production.

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[44] E. Ljackij, Gončarov. Žizn'. Ličnost'. Tvorčestvo (St. Petersburg, 1912). Roman i žizn'. Razvitie tvorčeskoj ličnosti Gončarova. 1812-1857 (Prague, 1925).

[45] I.A. Gončarov. Sobranie sočinenij (Moscow, 1952), Vol. IV, 507 pages.

CHAPTER 1

OBLOMOV - PART I

Part I is the most self-contained of all the parts of the novel. It has even been published on its own by the first French translators of Oblomov.[1] This impression of wholeness which is produced by Part I, is created by the author's concentration on a single purpose: to impart to the reader an intimate knowledge of one man and his problems, to paint, stroke by stroke, a full-scale portrait of Oblomov.

This portrait has its own particular structure, which it is essential to examine in detail, as all the time values which are to be found in Part I, are linked to the different elements of this structure.

Two main modes of characterization are used in the portrait: characterization by the author and characterization

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[1] "Une journée de M. Oblomof," trans. P. Artamoff and Charles Duelin, Revue de France, t. IV (1872), t. V, VII, VIII (1873). Oblomoff: Scènes de la vie russe, trans. P. Artamoff and Ch. Deulin (Paris, 1877).

through the action.

The action in the portrait is strikingly dramatic. There is unity of place and time, both very restricted: one room in Oblomov's apartment, one day in his life. There is also unity of interest: Oblomov occupies the centre of the stage, mostly in bed. From this position he engages in dialogue with his servant Zaxar and with six visitors who enter successively and have each in turn their scene with Oblomov. Oblomov's inner life is dramatized separately in two brief sequences of the same chapter (chapter 8).

This dramatic action, though it may be called the framework of the portrait, represents only about half of Part I. There are 70 pages of dialogue, and 7 of inner life, out of a total of 150 pages. The other half of Part I is devoted to direct characterization by the author. No character appears on the stage without an introduction. Oblomov has three pages of introduction in chapter 1 (pp. 7,8,9.), but additional information is provided throughout Part I, in chapters 5,6,7 and 9. In fact, the author provides so much information on his characters, generally before we hear them speak, that the action, despite its vital framework function, becomes secondary, a mere dramatized illustration of the characterization provided by the author.

This characterization itself is composed of certain standard elements. These elements are found in the major portrait of Oblomov, but also in a small vignette like the

portrait of Tarant'ev, in chapter 3. They are: a descriptive portrait (for Oblomov, chapter 1 - for Tarant'ev, pp. 39 & 40), description of typical behaviour and biographical information (Oblomov, chapters 5 & 6 - Tarant'ev pp. 40 & 41), upbringing and social context (Oblomov chapter 9 - Tarant'ev pp. 42 & 43). The parallel with Tarant'ev shows that Gončarov used in his portrait a formula which was not created specially for Oblomov. This great diversity of methods of characterization, used in conjunction for the description of one object, is in fact typical of the formula used in the physiological sketch of 1840.[2]

As has been noted in the introduction, D.S. Lixačev placed the problem of "xudožestvennoe vremja" in Oblomov, in the particular context of the realistic novel influenced by the physiological sketch.[3] A. G. Cejtlin, in his work on the physiological sketch, Stanovlenie realizma v russkoj literature, also notes the indebtedness of Gončarov to the genre:

> Esli Turgenev ili Gercen otdali dan' vnimanija fiziologii tol'ko v načale tvorčeskogo puti, to Gončarov obraščalsja k ètomu žanru na vsem protjaženii svoej literaturnoj dejatel'nosti.[4]

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[2]A.G. Cejtlin, Stanovlenie realizma v russkoj literature (Moscow, 1965), p. 221.

[3]D.S. Lixačev, op. cit., p. 313.

[4]A.G. Cejtlin, op. cit., No. 1, p. 285.

Gončarov wrote novels and loved the lack of confinement of the form.[5] He did nevertheless within these novels use devices which can be directly traced to the sketch.[6] He also wrote a few sketches: Ivan Savič Podžabrin 1848, Slugi starogo veka 1888, Maj mesjac v Peterburge dated 1891, published after his death in 1892, which will be examined in the Appendix. It is perhaps indicative of Gončarov's natural affinity for the genre, that all these sketches were published after it was no longer fashionable, its heyday being around 1840.

It should be noted that although in Part I, Gončarov uses the methods of the sketch, the depth of the psychological analysis puts the portrait of Oblomov in an altogether different category.[7] Particularly in the portrayal of Oblomov's inner life, Gončarov goes well beyond the scope, and at the same time the methods, of the physiological sketch.

The general structure of Part I, remains nevertheless a formula, and it is within this conventional framework that the problems of time in the portrait will be examined. As each method of characterization carries its own time value the study of Part I will be divided into sections corresponding to each method used. Within each section we shall endeavour

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5 "Namerenija, zadači i idei romana Obryv," probably written in 1876, published in Russkij vestnik, No. I, Vol. VIII (1895), p. 211.

6 A.G. Cejtlin, op. cit., pp. 285-288.

7 A.G. Cejtlin, op. cit., p. 201, for the lack of psychological depth in the sketch.

to show how the time value of the device promotes the characterization of Oblomov, which we believe to be based on his way of experiencing time.

The analysis of Oblomov's time experience, has also to take into account a factor which adds complexity to the portrait, but from which, its deepest message is ultimately found to derive: this is the opposition which becomes apparent between the author's way of understanding, and, consequently, presenting Oblomov's time experience, and the attitude of Oblomov himself.

The portrait's general structure is considered first, followed by an examination of each of the elements we have enumerated.

Let us look first of all at the general structure of Part I. Does its fragmentary nature have any temporal consequences? We have the action on the one hand, with a clearly defined time span: it covers one day in Oblomov's life, more precisely the hours between 8a.m. and 4.30p.m.; on the other hand we have the author with certain information to give. Without going now into the temporal values of this information, let us ask simply: how is he going to fit what he has to say into Oblomov's day? There is one easy solution: the author can interrupt the action and suspend its time while he speaks. This is the case with Tarant'ev's characterization. "Are you home," shouts Tarant'ev as he comes in on p. 39, "Good morning,"

he goes on, on p. 44. Not a minute of action time has elapsed between the two greetings: the author has arbitrarily suspended time while he put in his five pages of information.

But this easy solution is an exception. Throughout Part I the author has tried, with unequal success, to integrate his voice into Oblomov's day. The best example of integration is right at the beginning of the novel in the descriptive portrait. It runs to three pages introduced by a single narrative sentence, stating that Oblomov is lying in bed, in Petersburg, in the morning. We shall see later whether the author actually describes what he sees at that particular moment or not, the question we ask now is: does he interrupt the action to do so? The answer is no, because there is no action to interrupt. All we have on the stage at this point is Oblomov's prostrate form. As he does not have to interrupt action, the author does not need to suspend time, he can speak while Oblomov dozes. Thus by using a stretch of action time left empty of action by Oblomov, the author integrates his speech into Oblomov's day.

A similar device is used for Zaxar's portrait, later in the same chapter (p.11). Oblomov calls his servant, and as soon as he walks in the author starts his description. At first we might think that we have here the ordinary interruption and suspension, but the illusion of integration is powerfully created with one sentence at the end of the description: "Il'ja Il'ič, pogružennyj v zadumčivost', dolgo ne zamečal

Zaxara." (p.12). "For a long time," Oblomov has been lost in thought and Zaxar has been waiting for orders. Here again we have both actors standing still, liberating a stretch of action time which we feel has just been used by the author for his description.

The next attempt to use the same method is perhaps not quite so successful. Just before starting on his three consecutive chapters of information, 5,6,7, the author, in the last paragraph of chapter 4, gives us a picture of Oblomov dozing off in his chair. A very expressive description of the movements of a man trying to adapt his body to the chair. We are fully convinced that Oblomov is "out of action" for a while and are ready to listen to the author. But he tries our patience with 20 pages of information. It is difficult imaginatively to include such an amount of irrelevant material into Oblomov's day. Moreover when he has finished we realise that only a few minutes of action time have elapsed. Alexeev is leaving as Oblomov is settling down, at the end of chapter 4, and Zaxar is locking the door behind him at the beginning of chapter 8. Oblomov himself did not in fact fall asleep in his chair but somehow managed to transfer himself back to bed. The small amount of action time is out of proportion with the lengthy author's piece, and the sleeping Oblomov is no more than an introductory trick, meant to create an illusion of integration difficult to sustain.

Sleep and the author's voice are associated again in Oblomov's Dream. This time the integration goes smoothly, it

is even measurable. It is 3p.m. on p. 98 when Oblomov falls asleep, and 4.30p.m. on p. 155 when he wakes up. The Dream takes up one hour and a half of action time. The ease of the integration is of course due to the fact that the author disguises his characterization of the society in which Oblomov has been brought up, as a dream of Oblomov himself. The device is artificial, but it does bring 70 pages into Oblomov's day.

We have seen that the author has opted for one particular solution to the temporal problem posed by the fragmentary structure of Part I. Does this solution, the integration of the author's voice into the action time, help in any way in the characterization of Oblomov? We believe that it does so indirectly, by making the reader aware of the amount of time Oblomov is capable of leaving bare of action and achievement.

The author's pieces have a measurable time value in terms of reading time. By integrating these pieces to the action the author puts this reading time to active use. As the author speaks only while Oblomov sleeps, his pieces become, first of all, a measure of the amount of time Oblomov is leaving blank. The longer the author speaks, the longer Oblomov seems to spend asleep. There is here a complete interrelation of character and device. The author does not arbitrarily put Oblomov to sleep in order to speak. Sleep is a way of life with Oblomov, we are told so from the very beginning (p.8),

so the character justifies the device. The device in turn highlights the character.

In a more general way, the reading time of the author's pieces comes to swell the reading time of the action pieces, to make up the whole of Oblomov's day. An illusion is created in the mind of the reader that his total reading time has been running parallel to the action time right through Part I. We are made to believe in other words, that Oblomov's day is 150 pages long. This lengthening of Oblomov's day in terms of reading time emphasizes its emptiness. Oblomov lives forever in memory as the man who takes eight and a half hours to get up; this effect is produced largely by the fact that it also takes him 150 pages to do so.

We have seen the way in which a time device binding together the different elements of the portrait has been made to contribute to the characterization of Oblomov. The time value of each of the methods used by the author will now be analysed, and an attempt will be made to define the time experience which is at the basis of the characterization.

The characterization by the author will be examined first. It includes: a descriptive portrait, at the beginning of Part I; biographical information and samples of typical behaviour, in the two central chapters 5 and 6; and social typisation, in Oblomov's Dream. The characterization through the action of Part I will be examined last.

Two different time values contained in the descriptive portrait of Oblomov contribute to his characterization: the tempo of the description, and its setting in the changeless present. (chapter 1 pp. 7, 8, 9.)

The tempo of the description is leisurely. The author adopts the tone of an unhurried observer from the start. The opening words: "He was a man 32-33 years old," are followed by five more qualifying statements all included in a single sentence. Then comes a long involved metaphor containing no less than six clauses, and so it goes on. Not content with his own impressions, the author calls in some other hypothetical observers and reports their reactions. He goes through Oblomov's physique, his mental make up, his clothes and the furnishings of his room. This slow moving descriptive style has not been tailored exclusively for Oblomov. If we look for instance at the twin portraits of Rajskij and Ajanov at the beginning of Obryv, we find the same long sentences and outside observers (Vol. 5, pp. 7,8). In the description of Oblomov, however, there is a fond dwelling on the subject absent elsewhere. It is particularly noticeable in the long poetic metaphor where Oblomov's indolent thought flits around his face like a bird, also in the meticulous description of the dressing gown. The author does not let the reader play at 'guess the character from the clothes'; he jumps in ahead exclaiming how well the dressing gown suited Oblomov's effeminate body, and goes on to describe it with loving care.

Intentional or not, this type of description is eminently suited to Oblomov. This is a "portrait of a lying man." The observer need not hurry, in fact he helps create the impression of relaxation by indulging in his description.

Though Oblomov's prostrate form is the point of departure of the description and justifies its tempo, the author is not attempting to give simply an exact picture of what he sees; there is no description of the particular pose of Oblomov's body, or of the particular expression of his face as he lies in front of us. Rather we get the impression that the author is trying to capture the essential Oblomov, especially the essential inner man.

He starts almost immediately with the moral portrait, trying to convey to us the quality of Oblomov's mind and soul. He even hints at the value judgements we should be making; surely we would not wish to be identified with the "superficial" and "cold" observer, but rather with the "deep" and "understanding" one who knows how to appreciate Oblomov's soul. The notion that it is possible to capture and judge the essence of a personality, even on the first page of the novel and before the hero has had time to prove himself, shows a belief in the permanence of character on the part of the author. In fact Oblomov changes little in the course of the novel: indolence of mind balanced by goodness of soul, is how the author has seen him once and for all.

The physical portrait is of course more narrowly linked

to the present. The author is describing a 32 year old man. But even so, his description strays from the present moment. He speaks for instance of Oblomov's movements, although we know that at the moment he is motionless. The same applies even more strongly to the description of Oblomov's clothes and surroundings. Adverbs and adjectives suggest the habitual: "vsegda xodil," "nepremenno popadal," "on vse ležal," i vse postojanno v odnoj komnate," "vsjakij den'," "redkoe utro ne stojala ... tarelka." The author also tells us that Oblomov loved his dressing gown, and why; that lying in bed was his normal occupation; and that he barely noticed the disorder in his room. These are well established attitudes towards a habitual way of life. So we can say that the whole description encompasses more than the present moment. What the author is describing today is valid for any day in the immediate past, and is likely to be valid for an indefinite future. The changeless present is the temporal setting of the descriptive portrait.

Here again we have to point out that the changeless present has not been invented for Oblomov. The same use of adverbs of time implying permanence is found in Tarant'ev's portrait. Ingrained habit is a favourite means of characterization for all sketch portraits. But, because Oblomov makes a habit of immobility and changelessness itself, the changeless present is a particularly happy choice for his

description. "Ležan'e bylo ego normal'nym sostojaniem" we are told. When he gets up, the way he finds his slippers at the bottom of his bed shows, even more vividly, an economy of movement brought to a pitch by long practice. His room remains for ever untouched, and the paper on the shelf is last year's.

When the subject exudes immobility, and the device chosen for its description implies permanence, both of character and way of life, the reader is submitted to a double dose of changelessness, which creates a very powerful impression and becomes a fundamental feature of Oblomov's characterization.

In chapters 5 and 6, in the middle of Part I, the author introduces two new methods, biographical information and samples of typical behaviour, which involve two new time values.

Narration of biography is perhaps the least interesting of all methods of characterization. This is not the past still living within Oblomov, but rather as the author chooses to summarize it. Its link with the present is not vital but a matter of rational analysis. It has the advantage, however, of introducing the passage of time as a factor in building up the portrait of Oblomov.

On the other hand samples of typical behaviour, presented in the present tense, introduce a very special category of time into the portrait, as well as having the

advantage of relieving the boredom that might be induced by the author's voice. This device has its source in habit and is linked to the present of the action, but in a different way from that of the descriptive portrait. The author is not describing what is happening today and implying that it also happened yesterday. He is describing something that might have happened at any time, on any day, including today. Observation gathered over a length of time is distilled into a single enactment. For instance the author describes a typical day spent daydreaming, in the present tense:[7] (pp. 68-69) "On kak vstanet utrom ... obdumyvaet," "rešaetsja otdoxnut'." This sample day is put together from many similar days: "On neskol'ko let neutomimo rabotaet nad planom," "I skol'ko, skol'ko raz on provožal tak solnečnyj zakat." What the author is offering us is habit dramatized. But habit in this case is an abstraction, fabricated by the author from previous knowledge. Like all abstractions it has its being in a temporal no man's land, which can be called the timeless present.

The two devices used in chapters 5 and 6 seem to be contradictory. Biographical narration, which presupposes a historical approach to character, implies the importance of the passage of time. Samples of typical behaviour imply on the

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[8]Present imperfective or future perfective with the value of present imperfective.

contrary that time is of no importance: when you have seen one typical day, you have seen them all. When we examine the text however, it becomes clear that the two devices cover two different stretches of time in Oblomov's life. Narration by the author covers Oblomov's years of study and most of the twelve years of his life in Petersburg. The years immediately preceding the opening of the novel are condensed into samples of typical behaviour. So that we are led to understand that Oblomov, such as we see him now, has been the same for some time. The impression of changelessness which we gained from the descriptive portrait is given new emphasis by the timeless present of typical behaviour. This feeling of permanence is not destroyed by the introduction of a historical preparation. On the contrary, Oblomov's present state acquires a special aura of finality if it is seen as the product of an evolution which has come to an end some time ago.

This "end of the road" impression is powerfully summoned at the end of chapter 5 when a short passage points to the pathological overtones of Oblomov's present dislike of change, and to a disturbing irrational fear of the unfamiliar: "na nego napadal nervičeskij strax...u nego pobegut muraški po telu. On inogda bojazlivo kositsja na temnyj ugol ..." (p.63). The rest of the chapter prepares this image of typical behaviour, by recounting the gradual reduction of all activity, professional, social and physical over the

years. Chapter 6 deals more specifically with Oblomov's mental activity. Here again he seems to have reached the same dead end. Two passages in the timeless present indicate that Oblomov has given up all serious intellectual effort: he never reads a book (p.63); and all his mental and emotional energies are dissipated in sterile daydreaming (pp. 68 and 69). This, we gather from the author's narrative, is the end result of years of studies never very enthusiastically pursued.

It has just been seen how the time value of the devices of biographical narration and samples of typical behaviour reinforce the image of standstill which the author has been trying to create in the descriptive portrait. Chapters 5 and 6, while introducing new devices, do not therefore present a change in the author's point of view. But in these chapters, a valuable new point of view is nevertheless introduced, namely, that of Oblomov himself. It is found in the informative content of chapters 5 and 6 which we shall now examine.

We learn several things about Oblomov's attitude to his own life, all of which amount to a much less gloomy picture than the one so far offered by the author. Oblomov seems to have found a justification for retirement - an aim in life - and a formula for day to day living. The important factor, from our point of view, is that all three solutions are based on a temporal experience.

It might be said that Oblomov simply dislikes work, work and boredom are synonyms in his mind (p.58), and that he needs no further justification for retirement. He is however prepared at first to put up with work as an unpleasant necessity, as in the past he put up with study. What really horrified him was the hectic pace of life at work, the relentless rush from one job to the next (p.59). His justification for renouncing the world of work and achievement is the desire for a slower, more congenial pace of life, the longing for time to live. The great question he asks of life is "kogda žit'," twice repeated in these chapters (p. 59, and p. 64). Let us note how he formulates his question, it is not "how" to live, or "what for," but "when." It points to a simple desire for time to breathe and to relax, but also to the basic assumption that whatever "life" is, it is not in the struggle of the present, but somewhere beyond the struggle, and beyond the fleeting moment. This position is well illustrated by Oblomov's attitude to history: he finds it depressing, a perpetual struggle to win happy days which never last,

> - tut by xot' sama istorija otdoxnula: net, opjat' pojavilis' tuči, opjat' zdanie ruxnulo, opjat' rabotat', gomozdit'sja...Ne ostanovjatsja jasnye dni, begut - i vse tečet žizn', vse tečet, vse lomka da lomka. (p. 65).

Oblomov would agree to the struggle, if afterwards there were happy days to be enjoyed in a lull of time. From his point

of view, retirement is a first step towards these happy days, away from the trap of work and time.

The better life Oblomov is seeking is for him the concrete ideal of family life in the country, that much is clear (p.66). The problem lies in its temporal realization. Oblomov's ideal is set entirely in the imaginary future. "On vse sbiralsja i gotovilsja načat' žizn', vse risoval v ume uzor svoej buduščnosti..." (p. 58) this he did for ten years, and now?: "Čto že on delal? Da vse prodolžal čertit' uzor sobstvennoj žizni." (p.66). Oblomov is well aware that he has to take some steps to attain his ideal. He tries to work out a plan of reform for his estate (p. 68) and even contemplates a trip to the country (p. 67), but these efforts are too much for him. Laziness? Perhaps, but for Oblomov the experience is a temporal one. He does not see true life in the present moment, in this preliminary work to be undertaken now, he can only see it in a nebulous, timeless future.

However powerful his longing for timelessness, Oblomov has to live out his days in time like everybody else. How does he come to terms with the present moment? He manages to eliminate a great deal of the present through sleep, whilst he lives out the rest on the level of the stream of consciousness. This can be gathered from the description of his typical day: Oblomov's life in time is nothing but

a succession of ever changing moods, the movement of which is illustrated by the author through the metaphor of a storm. Oblomov's emotions build up, come to a pitch, then subside into boredom and indifference (pp. 68-69). The rhythm of his own inner stream becomes the only temporal reality of Oblomov's typical day, and he can completely disregard chronological time: "tak volnovalsja často po celym dnjam, i tol'ko togda razve očnetsja s glubokim vzdoxom ot obajatel'noj mečty ili ot mučitel'noj zaboty, kogda den' sklonitsja k večeru." (p. 70).

Two different views of Oblomov's experience of time emerge from the analysis of the central chapters 5 and 6. It can be looked at from outside and measured against the passage of chronological time. Oblomov is then seen to be at a standstill, incapable of using time as a medium of change or achievement. Alternatively we can look at Oblomov as he looks at himself (at least in these chapters, for he becomes aware of the other point of view later on). The notion of standstill is meaningless to him because chronological time as a medium of action is not a part of his experience, in fact he does not want it to be a part of his experience. He can live with dreams of timelessness within his own psychological time.

Though both points of view are valid and consistent, it must be noted that the author's is the dominant one. It

has the full support of the temporal values of the devices used in these chapters, while Oblomov's position can only be pieced together from the information provided.

We have just spoken of consistency, yet a note of ambiguity must be mentioned here which will link up later with other similar examples. At the end of chapter 6, the author refers to Oblomov's musings as the volcanic work of a fiery mind and a sensitive heart. (p. 70). Such a statement, charged with positive value, is difficult to accept in view of the previous characterization. Can we really believe in the volcanic mind of a man who cannot finish last year's newspaper, or in a loving heart which does not seem to feel the need for companionship?

The last piece of characterisation by the author is the famous: "Oblomov's Dream" (chapter 9).

Oblomov's Dream stands out in the portrait as a set piece. It has a title of its own, and was published separately in 1849, ten years before the novel. We shall analyse it first as a separate entity, then examine its role in Oblomov's portrait.

Its structure is fragmentary. First there is a general introduction by the author, which he calls the geography of Oblomovka, which includes a small peasant scene (pp. 102-110). At the beginning and at the end of the dream proper there are

scenes where the child Oblomov is the main character. The dream opens with a day in Iljuša's life (pp. 110-120) and ends with scenes of his life as a school boy (pp. 141-147). In the middle we lose track of Oblomov the child to concentrate on the life of the older generation. The voice of the author is dominant when commenting on the power of fairy tales (pp. 120-124), and on the attitude to life prevalent in Oblomovka (pp. 124-128). The inhabitants come to the fore in the next three scenes, which could be entitled: Mending the Gallery (pp.128-130), Winter Evening (pp. 130-138) and The Letter (pp. 138-141).

Such a type of structure, which mixes the author's comment and scenes of manners, "bytovye scenki" was common in physiological sketches, indeed A.G. Cejtlin can say: "Proslavlenyj son Oblomova javljaetsja v suščnosti širokoj fiziologiej russkoj usad'by."[9] But here, as in the portrait, the author makes use of the time values of standard devices to help in a characterization itself based on time.

In all the little scenes, except the Letter and the peasant scene of the introduction, the author uses a mixture of past imperfective and timeless present. The past tense indicates that what we see occurred in the past in relation to the sleeping Oblomov. The imperfective form stresses the habitual, and within this habitual past, the author uses the

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[9] A.G. Cejtlin, op. cit., p. 287.

timeless present of typical behaviour. We have already met it in Oblomov's portrait and defined it as an abstract time value in which many similar occurrences are distilled into a single enactment. What we see is any day in Oblomov's childhood, any winter evening in the life of his parents. As many similar days are necessary to distill the typical, it carries with it a feeling of changelessness.

The changelessness implied in the device matches well the temporal values of the subject described. Changelessness is a way of life in Oblomovka. It is axiomatic for its inhabitants that one day should be exactly the same as the next: "Vot den' to i prošel, i slava Bogu- daj Bog i zavtra tak" (p.120) "Ix zagryzaet toska esli zavtra ne budet poxože na segodnja, a poslezavtra na zavtra." (p. 137). Two little scenes stand out against this background of similar days. The main one is The Letter. The author does not use the timeless present to describe it, but the past perfective. This emphasizes the fact that such an unheard of event as the arrival of a letter could have happened only once. Here again the time value of the device helps in the characterization. The uniqueness of the event makes the changelessness of normal life in Oblomovka appear more complete by contrast. The same can be said about the short scene in the introduction where the peasants find a stranger lying in the ditch. This extraordinary intrusion is also dealt with in the past perfect.

Over what stretch of time does this changelessness extend? In theory it should be limited to the few years of childhood which Oblomov is reliving in his dream. He sees himself first as 7 years' old (p. 110), later at 14 (p. 124). Oblomov certainly witnessed the lack of change during that time as we are told at the end of Winter's Evening: "Vidit Il'ja Il'ič vo sne ne odin, ne dva takie večera, no celye nedeli, mesjacy i gody tak provodimyx dnej i večerov." (p. 136). But as we are shown the way of life of the older generation, we can assume that what we see is typical of their whole life, not only of the years in which they reared Iljuša. The time span covered by the dream is thus considerably enlarged. "desjatki let" (p. 137) are spent in exactly the same way. But when the author steps forward, the time span is stretched out even more. All pretence of dreaming is then abandoned and the author extrapolates at will. He talks of fairy tales created in the mists of time and handed down through centuries and generations "skvoz' veka i pokolenija." (p. 121). The norm of life in Oblomovka has also come down unchanged through countless generations: "Norma žizni byla gotova i prepodana im roditeljami, a te prinjali ee, tože gotovuju ot deduški, a deduška ot pradeduški." (p. 126). Changelessness over such a vast stretch of time becomes indeed phenomenal.

Not only does the author try to impress upon us the

lack of change in the way of life of the Oblomov family. He also points out the temporal attitudes which underline such changelessness. They can be summarized as follows: time in Oblomovka means the regular recurrence of certain pre-ordained phenomena, such as seasons (p. 104), feast days, births, marriages, deaths and births again (p.127 and p. 128). "Oni veli sčet vremeni po prazdnikam, po vremenam goda, po raznym semejnym i domašnim slučajam ne ssylajas' nikogda ni na mesjaca ni na čisla." (p. 133). Man's duty in life consists solely in the correct observance of the rituals prescribed for each particular recurring event (p. 127). The eternally recurring is recurring eternally, and a life based on its ritualization is of necessity devoid of change. Life in Oblomovka would be the same until the end of time unless the values of its people changed.

Time in Oblomovka is not the medium of change, neither can it be the medium of action for the same reason. Why strive if all that is required is to wait quietly for the next preordained event to come round? A great passivity is the necessary consequence of such a view of time and life. Gončarov expresses it in the metaphor of the flowing river:

> žizn' kak pokojnaja reka, tekla mimo ix; im ostavalos' tol'ko sidet' na beregu ètoj reki i nabljudat' neizbežnye javlenija kotorye po očeredi, bez zovu, predstavali pred každogo iz nix. (p. 127).

We also find in the dream an indication of how such a philosophy works on the level of day to day living. How

do they meet unexpected challenges in Oblomovka for instance? With "stoical immobility" (p. 128) replies the author. A problem is dodged and disregarded until it seemingly fades away. See Mending the Gallery, and The Letter. We must note here the use of postponement as a weapon against the unexpected. Needed repairs are postponed three weeks, then until spring, then for another month, then indefinitely. When the Letter arrives it takes one hour and a half to find the glasses, four days to open it, two weeks to decide to write back, but then there is the feast day, and a courier to be found, and finally the letter is forgotten. Anything not fitting into the pattern of recurrence is thus worn away through continual postponement.

How is the waiting lived from day to day between Christmas and Easter, christenings and marriages? We find an answer in Iljuša's day. Each day is organized on the same principle as life in general, around preordained recurring events, namely mealtimes. Between meals time is short and can always be filled somehow. In the morning one waits for lunch, in the evening one does nothing much and between lunch and tea comes the great midday rest. This period of sleep dominates the day, it is powerfully evoked by the author. The absolute stillness of the countryside is matched by the silence of the house. It is a sleep akin to death: "nad derevnej i polem ležit nevozmutimaja tišina - vse kak budto vymerlo...I v dome vocarilas' mertvaja tišina." (p. 116). This deathly

sleep can be taken as a symbol for the whole way of life in Oblomovka. It has been thus interpreted by D.S. Lixačev.[10] They do in effect sleep their lives away there, from meal to meal and from christening to funeral for generations on end.

An interesting sideline to life in Oblomovka is the importance of fairy tales. Religion is conspicuously absent from Oblomov's dream. There is a mention of morning prayers (p. 111), and the ever present ritual, but no trace of a deeper spirituality. The living faith of Oblomovka is faith in fairy tales and superstitious sayings (p. 124). The author has theories on the origins of fairy tales, but their important side lies in their relation to the ideal of life. The ideal of life in Oblomovka was simple: "Dobrye ljudi ponimali ee [žizn'] ne inače kak idealom pokoja i bezdejstvija." (p. 126). Within their own time experience this ideal was not out of reach, it meant no more than sleeping from meal to meal. But the fairy tale gave them a sublimated image of the same ideal, set out of time in a never-neverland flowing with milk and honey. (p. 120). Thus the spiritual food of Oblomovka was not transcendental, it was but a timeless disguise of very earthly longings.

What is the role of the Dream in Oblomov's portrait? First of all it provides Oblomov with a social background.

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[10] D.S. Lixačev, op. cit., p. 316.

There is no doubt that the Dream is a social piece, in the sense that it shows a group of people collectively. The author makes great use of general terms such as Oblomovka or Oblomovcy. It might even be described as critical realism, for this group of people is accused by the author of damaging Oblomov's personality.

As a social piece however, the Dream contrasts sharply with the rest of the portrait. It remains an alien piece, artificially included. With it the reader is transported: "v druguju èpoxu, k drugim ljudjam, v drugoe mesto." (p. 120). Vistas of a gentle countryside and a teeming household, suddenly intrude into the claustrophobic little room, where the rest of the portrait takes place. This is a different world and "a different epoch." Oblomovka is set in the past in relation to Oblomov. Oblomov has been living in Petersburg for 12 years, he has been to university before that. His parents are now dead and the estate is disintegrating. He has never gone back, and never will in the course of the novel. He no longer belongs to Oblomovka. Oblomov of course remains a land owner, as he owns what is left of Oblomovka and derives an income from it. What we want to say is that it is only Oblomov the child who is shown to us as functioning within a particular social context. Oblomov the adult is not described against a social panorama, the author concentrating on the individual. Oblomov stands remarkably

alone in the portrait, for he does not belong to Petersburg society, from which he has retired. The only social background Oblomov has is given to him in the distant past, and only a dream can make it come back to life.

But the Dream is not only a description of Oblomov's background in the past, it is also meant to be an explanation of Oblomov's character today. It is the answer the author gives to the question "počemu ja takoj" Oblomov asks before falling asleep (p. 102). The link of past to present is reflected in some complex time structures within the Dream. The scenes have an aura of actuality because of the use of the timeless present, though we remain aware of their setting in the past in relation to Oblomov, because of the simultaneous use of past tenses. At the same time the author relating the dream is looking into the future of the child, thinking of the man he will become. In the passage about fairy tales, the adult Oblomov is actually introduced into the Dream. He is described in the timeless present which is no longer set within the past but within the present of the portrait. The description starts in the future and ends in the present: "Vzroslyj Il'ja Il'ič, xotja posle i uznaet čto net medovyx i moločnyx rek ... on bessoznatel'no grustit ... on nevol'no mečtaet... (p. 121).

The past is further linked to the present by the author's remarks on the lasting effects of subconsciously

received impressions in early childhood (pp. 121 - 123 - 125), and by some concrete examples of overprotective upbringing, in the scenes where Oblomov appears as a child.

Certain devices, certain remarks provide the link between past and present in Oblomov's Dream. But what is characteristic of the author's method, is in fact the reliance he places on the reader's imagination. Past and present are set side by side in two portraits, Oblomovka and Oblomov, and the link between the two springs spontaneously in the reader's mind as he compares them. The field is thus open to any psychoanalytical or sociological theory that might occur to the reader at this point. But all that can safely be concluded, looking at the evidence of the two portraits the author gives us, is that they have an extraordinary family resemblance but do not overlap. They have many things in common, the sleep, the allergy to change and action, the skill of postponement, the timeless dreams of earthly bliss. But the central experience which gave consistence to the Oblomovka way of life, the link with the ever recurring, is missing from Oblomov's life. There are no seasons, and one imagines no feast days, in the little room in Petersburg. In Oblomovka the external temporal framework of life, in the particular form of recurring event is of the utmost importance, to the point of being confused with life itself. For Oblomov there is no time outside his own flow of consciousness. The

inhabitants of Oblomovka are not severed from outside reality as they understand it. Oblomov lives in a vacuum. His inner life has gained in intensity, yet he has lost a powerful stabilizing influence. It is as an individual in his own right that we view Oblomov. But the reader has constantly in mind the twin portrait of Oblomovka, which represents less an explanation than a picture perhaps, of inner necessity and fate.

Finally we come to the action of Part I, which covers everything that happens on the day the novel opens. It includes external action, dialogue, and Oblomov's inner life. As we have already seen, the author's voice constantly interrupts this action. These interruptions have been studied first, at the risk of artificially breaking the sequence of the chapters in Part I. This is because the action in Oblomov's portrait, as in other similar portraits (for instance Tarant'ev's), is a comedy of character illustrative of the characterization by the author. This applies even if the author lets Oblomov act first and gives part of his characterization later, in the middle of the portrait.

The problem faced by the author in the action is an unusual one. Having characterized Oblomov as a man at a standstill, he consequently has to present to the reader a picture of standstill in action, which is seemingly a

contradiction in terms. The author uses several techniques to overcome this problem.

The first technique is to set the action in a sort of dramatic timeless present, to emphasize once more the changelessness of the hero's habits. The day we see unfolding before our eyes could be said to be yet another typical day in Oblomov's life. This is particularly noticeable in the opening dialogue with Zaxar in chapter 1. At the end of the quarrel about Zaxar's slovenliness, the author himself underlines its typicality by commenting on it in the past imperfective and timeless present: "a Zaxar vsegda zavodil tjažbu, liš' tol'ko načinali trebovat'...on v takom slučae stanet dokazyvat'..." (p. 16). Other scenes seem also to be a repetition of what happens quite regularly: Zaxar's attempts to make Oblomov pay his bills (pp. 17 & 84), Tarant'ev's appearance at meal times (p. 46), his borrowing habits, and Zaxar's deep seated animosity (p. 56).

But Oblomov's day in the portrait of Part I has also another time dimension. The dialogue remains typical of Oblomov's character but no longer takes place in a typical day. It is after all the day on which the novel opens, to be precise: May 1st (p. 20) of Oblomov's 32nd or 33rd year (p. 7). It has even been worked out, using parallels with Gončarov's own life, that it may have been May 1st 1843.[11]

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[11] A.G. Cejtlin, I.A. Gončarov (Moscow, 1950), p. 163.

That particular day is in many ways most untypical of Oblomov's life. He has been beset by two misfortunes and wakes up very early as a result "protiv obyknovenija" (p. 10). He receives four invitations to go on a 1st of May ride and expects Stolz's imminent arrival. The continual string of visitors, six of them in quick succession, seems most unusual to Oblomov himself, who is heard exclaiming: "Čto èto segodnja za raut u menja?" (p. 32).

Why has the author depicted such an untypical day? Certainly to mark the heralding of a different life for Oblomov, which will be the subject of the novel. Certain events in the portrait's day do have far reaching consequences later: the two misfortunes, and particularly Tarant'ev's offer to help, as well as Stolz's long awaited visit. The rest of what happens on that day, especially the visits of four people who never reappear again (Volkov, Sud'binskij, Penkin, the doctor), can only be taken as artificial filling-out. This is another technique adopted by the author to solve the problem of presenting standstill in action: he simply skirts round it. A typical day would seem rather blank, with Oblomov lying on his bed, eating his meals off the corner of the table and exchanging a few words with Zaxar. To do him justice the author would have to switch to a representation of Oblomov's inner life which he obviously does not intend to do, even though we shall see a small

example of it in chapter 8. Oblomov never goes out, so the author brings six people in, which is an embarrassingly weak device.

Another device, which perhaps works against the illustration of stagnation, but which, nevertheless, has the immense advantage of making it possible for the reader to enjoy Oblomov's company, is the tempo of Gončarov's dialogue. According to the author Oblomov is slow, and sleepy. But this is not as he appears to the reader who sees him engaged in very quick, lively, and humourous dialogue. This effect is not believed to be intentional. Gončarov had a great gift for comedy dialogue, which could be lifted from the novel and set on stage. He keeps the dialogue very dramatic by not interfering at all in exchanges, which are short and follow each other rapidly. The author may indicate a movement or an expression but there are no comments, no asides, no glimpses into what the characters are thinking while they talk. As there is a great deal of dialogue, 70 pages out of 150, the impression of lightness and swiftness it produces counterbalances the boredom, which may be induced by the author's voice and the subject of his characterization.

But the author does not solve the problem of presenting standstill in action only by avoiding the issue. His most successful method is entirely justified by the characterization, and yet relies on a time device which

naturally belongs to action, namely: suspense. This is the last thing one would associate with Oblomov, and yet it is most effectively used to illustrate his incapacity to live in the fleeting present moment. Suspense is built up by combining a sense of urgency and a heightened awareness of the passage of time with a corresponding slowing down of the action, producing in the reader a feeling of tension and frustration. The suspense in Oblomov's day is not of the cliff-hanging variety. In fact this same device, depending on Oblomov's slow response to great urgency is also the mainspring of comedy in Part I, and as such is an unfailing source of humour. But examination of suspense in the action of Part I confirms it to be primarily a time device.

Throughout Part I the author insists on the inexorable passage of time. There is direct mention of the time of day and remarks such as "half an hour went by," and "ten minutes later." Translating all such remarks into clock time we have the following pattern: p. 10 - 8a.m., p. 11 - 9.30a.m., p. 12 - 9.45 a.m., p. 16 - 10.15a.m., p. 44 - 12 o'clock, p. 84 - nearly 3p.m., p. 98 - 3p.m., p. 155 - nearly 4.30p.m., so that Oblomov's day covers eight and a half hours, and during that time the clock never stops ticking.

Urgency is also pitilessly emphasized. Everything that Oblomov has to do must be done now, immediately. He has to pay his debts today, as it is the first of the month (p. 17

and p. 85); move out of his apartment tomorrow or the day after (p. 17); go for a ride this very day; and get ready while Alekseev is waiting (p. 34). Tarant'ev wants him to sit down and write a letter to the country this very minute (p. 53), and the doctor urges him to pack and go abroad without delay (p. 87). The author also lets us know that this is the final day of a long string of days in which action has been postponed. In the case of the elder's letter the situation has been allowed to deteriorate over a matter of years. Oblomov has received similar letters last year and the year before (p. 10). A neat parallel with Oblomovka shows that the present letter has also been lying around at the other end for some time (p. 38). It seems that Oblomov promised to move a month ago, now the landlord is threatening to call the police (p. 17). Today is the day the shopkeepers' patience has run out, though they have allowed Oblomov to accumulate debts before (p. 17).

Oblomov's response to this extreme pressure, is to seek yet more delay, which the reader knows is no longer possible. For the most part the dialogue hangs on Oblomov's attempts to postpone action: he will pay later, move in a few weeks, write to the country tomorrow. But Oblomov admits he is worried, so that he does not altogether dismiss action, and he reacts with panic everytime the clock strikes: "Čto èto? počti s užasom skazal Il'ja Il'ič - Odinnadcat' časov skoro a ja ešče ne vstal." (p. 16).

As well as witnessing futile attempts at postponement, the reader watches as Oblomov tries to go through the preliminaries to any action at all, such as getting up, washing and sitting down at a desk. These moves are in Oblomov's mind the moment he wakes up, at 8 o'clock: "On kak tol'ko prosnulsja tot čas že voznamerilsja vstat', umyt'sja...voobšče zanjat'sja ètim delom ... " (p. 10). "Voznamerilsja" is an excellent word. Oblomov is constantly about to get up. The author follows his attempts to perform this simple action throughout Part I, and each strike of the clock reminds us that he has not yet made it. On p. 10, Oblomov nearly gets up, but not quite (8.30a.m.) - he thinks about it, on p.11 (9.30a.m.) - and again, on p. 12 (9.45a.m.) - he calls for water to wash, on p. 16 (10.15a.m.) - on p. 44 he sits up, (12 o'clock) - on p. 45 he moves to an easy chair - on p. 57 he dozes off in the same chair - on p. 78 he has somehow managed to get back into bed - on p. 81 he lifts himself up, and even stands for two full minutes - on p. 84 he sits down and writes a few lines - on p. 98 he is back in bed and fast asleep (3p.m.) until, on p. 156, (4.30p.m.) Zaxar loses patience and gets him up by force.

To impress more deeply upon the reader the slowing down of action the author decomposes each movement of Oblomov, it becomes quite literally a "slow motion" method: "On čut' bylo ne vstal; pogljadyvaja na tufli on daže načal spuskat'

k nim odnu nogu s posteli, no totčasže opjat' podobral ee" (p. 10).

> On bystro pripodnjalsja i sel na divane, potom spustil nogi na pol, popal razom v obe tufli i posidel tak; potom vstal sovsem i postojal zadumčivo minuty dve ... tut ruki stali u nego vytjagivat'sja k verxu, koleni podgibat'sja, on načal potjagivat'sja, zevat' ... " (p. 81).

The method of suspense works, as it is supposed to, on the reader's nerves. Zaxar's exasperation, on the last page of Part I, matches the reader's mounting frustration. His violent action is a release for both. The reader who has spent his reading time wondering whether Oblomov was going to make it out of bed, suddenly becomes aware of the disproportion between the suspense created and the triviality of the action which has actually been taking place. This shock, which is the result of the skilful use of a time device, convinces him, as nothing else could, of the enormity of the stagnation in Oblomov's life.

We have already seen that when he characterizes Oblomov as being at a standstill, the author adopts the point of view of time as a medium of action and change. In the action of Part I the method underlines this point of view. We have also already seen that Oblomov looks at time differently. His point of view is not neglected in the action. It is represented in the dialogue with the first three visitors in chapter 2 (pp.19- 31); and at the beginning, and again at the end, of chapter 8 (pp. 78 - 80, 98 - 102) in the passages describing his inner thoughts.

The three visitors who come to see Oblomov in chapter 2 are very clearly representatives of Petersburg society. They stand for three ways of life: we have Volkov the socialite, Sud'binskij the civil servant and Penkin the man of letters. As Oblomov has retired from Petersburg society, the author has no choice but to make it walk into Oblomov's room in the guise of three unlikely visitors, who have all suddenly felt an irresistible urge to take Oblomov out. One should not, however, insist too much on the artificial side of the device. The author himself gives the dialogue a very stylised treatment, each conversation starting with identical greetings, proceeding and finishing in exactly the same way, with a conclusion by Oblomov and a final remark by the author. These three dialogues are meant as a dramatization of attitudes and ideas. From the conversation we gather that Oblomov does not disapprove of his friends' occupations as such. He can appreciate the pleasure of ladies' company, he is interested in promotions, and has some very pertinent things to say about current literary trends. But his conclusion is always the same: he considers the rush which makes up these people's lives as dehumanizing. An attitude which ties up with Oblomov's justification for his retirement which we have already examined in chapter 5. There is a genuine ring to Oblomov's remarks, as there is to his cry "kogda žit'." That ring would not be felt if the author had not put it there.

But the author also caps each remark with an ironical note, reminding the reader that Oblomov's own way of life is no great example of blossoming humanity. Recovering from Volkov's chatter Oblomov thinks: "v desjat' mest v odin den'...gde že tut čelovek?" (p. 23) and the author concludes: "on ne mykaetsja, ležit vot tut soxranjaja svoe čelovečeskoe dostoėnstvo" (p. 23). After Sud'binskij's visit: "A kak malo tut čeloveka to mužno... a meždu tem rabotaet s dvenadcati do vos'mi v kanceljarii, a s vosmi do dvenadcati doma - nesčastnyj" (p. 27), to which the author adds: "(Oblomov was quietly happy), čto on s devjati do trex i s vos'mi do devjati možet probyt' u sebja na divane...čto est' prostor ego čuvstvam, voobraženiju" (p. 27). After Penkin has gone, Oblomov thinks: "vse kuda to dvigat'sja...kogda že ostanovitsja i otdoxnut'" - "on radovalsja čto ležit on bezzaboten...čto ne razbrasyvaetsja, ne prodaet ničego..." (p. 31). We feel that the author agrees with Oblomov that there is something contrary to human nature in the rush imposed by an active life, that man seems to need some other time in which to be truly himself. On the other hand, retirement from action as a means to find this enchanted time is no solution. Oblomov's life has even less human dignity than that of the people he pities. The author gives us no solution in Part I, but the problem is real enough to have universal human appeal.

We come now to chapter 8, and the illustration of

Oblomov's inner life on the particular day on which the novel opens.

In chapter 6 the description of Oblomov's typical day by the author implied that the continuous and varied flow of his dreams was the only time reality for Oblomov; now the reader is given a brief glimpse into his inner life which is shown actually unfolding on the level of the stream of consciousness.

In his study, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel, R. Humphrey states that the true subject matter of "stream of consciousness" writing is the pre-speech level of consciousness.[12] This is precisely the level that the author tried to describe in this chapter. In the two passages of inner life in chapter 8, we see first a sequence of day-dreaming (pp. 78-80) and at the end of the chapter the free wheeling of the mind in a state of semi-sleep (p. 102). It is interesting to note that the technique used by Gončarov to capture the flow of consciousness comes very close to the methods used by modern writers.

After a few token attempts at working out the reforms needed on his estate, Oblomov imperceptibly sinks into day dream (p.78). We are presented with a sudden vision, brought about by association. The organization of his greenhouses

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[12] R. Humphrey, Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955), p. 3.

conjures up the vision of fruit which in turn blossoms into a vivid picture of himself on the terrace of his country house some years in the future (p. 79). We note here two features of stream of consciousness writing, association and time shift.[13] Another common feature, which we find in these pages is the attempt at expressing the coexistence of the inner and outer life.[14] The author notes how exterior sensations penetrate Oblomov's dreams. The blinding light of the sun on the wall across the street, the noises that come through the window: vendors' cries, singing and dogs' barking. (p. 78). The vision of the future, which had completely possessed Oblomov's mind is shaken by more shouting from the street. These sensations are not integrated into Oblomov's thoughts, but there is nevertheless an attempt at creating that impression of heterogeneity typical of the stream of consciousness.

Having said this, it should be noted that the technique used remains that of description by the omniscient author. However, Robert Humphrey recognizes this technique as legitimate for the portrayal of the stream of consciousness, though it is very conventional by comparison with James Joyce's direct interior monologue.[15] A more fundamental objection is that the flow of Oblomov's inner life is not presented entirely

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[13] Ibid., p. 43, p. 50.

[14] Ibid., p. 50.

[15] Robert Humphrey, op. cit., p. 33.

at the pre-speech level of consciousness. Disconnected exclamations like "Bože, Bože!" (p. 80) or "Da, da!" (p. 81) can be accepted as part of the stream of consciousness, but Oblomov also bursts into very structured monologue explaining his longing for life in the country. A longing he here identifies for the first time, as a longing for the timeless bliss of an earthly paradise: "budet večnoe leto, večnoe vesel'e, sladkaja eda da sladkaja len'," "kogdaže nastanet rajskoe želannoe žit'e?" (p. 80).

At the end of chapter 8 we come to another sequence of inner life, which starts with a conventional analysis. In a rare moment of lucidity Oblomov is suddenly able to see himself as others might see him and as the author has been showing him to us all along. At first he again tries to escape the present moment and the threat of action. He simply removes his worries into the past: " ... dva nečast'ja ... postupali uže tol'ko b rjad bespokojnyx vospominanij" (p. 98), or to the distant future, with a new hope of postponement. But suddenly he is overcome by a sense of failure, which goes together with an acceptance of time as a medium of action: "utro tak i propalo" (p. 99). Oblomov's self-analysis is very far removed from the stream of consciousness It is but a pretext for a summing up of his case by the author himself. The tenor of the assessment is that "something" has prevented Oblomov from reaching his full potential. As

this passage leads to the Dream which immediately follows it, we know what that "something" may be, namely: the influence of the way of life experienced in his childhood. But while about to criticize this way of life, the author does his utmost to exonerate Oblomov himself. He insists heavily on his fundamental good qualities, talking of pure gold under a heap of dust. This emphasizing of Oblomov's hidden worth ties in with the favourable comments noted in chapter 6.

The interest of the passage lies in its last half page. (p. 102). Oblomov, true to character, is incapable of sustaining the effort of self-analysis, and begins to doze off. We are then faced with a mind free-wheeling in a state of semi-consciousness. His thoughts are disconnected, and reported in fragments punctuated by "...". They all more or less tend in the same direction, Oblomov is wondering why he is what he is. But suddenly, a sentence from a letter he read earlier in the day floats up in his mind: "Jako dve tysjači pomenee doxodu"...- skazal on vdrug gromko v bredu.- Sejčas, sejčas, pogodi..." (p. 102). The passage ends with an actual reference by the author to the slow and lazy "stream" of Oblomov's thoughts: "Son ostanovil medlennyj i lenivyj potok ego myslej" (p. 102).

However interesting it is for the present day reader to find something with which he is familiar, quite unexpectedly, in a portrait built up according to a formula now com-

pletely out of date, it would be very far fetched to mention Gončarov in the same breath as Joyce, (as does D.S. Lixačev, referring more specifically to a similar passage in Part IV).[16] Inner life takes only very few pages of Part I, the pre-speech level of the stream is diluted by some very conscious analysis, and in any case the presence of the omniscient author makes the technique very conservative.

Nevertheless, we find here an unusual experimentation on the part of the author. The illustration of the stream of consciousness cannot be described as part of Gončarov's standard methods of portraying the inner life. These have been accurately analysed by V.K. Favorin,[17] who incidentally does not point out any departure from the norm in the case of Oblomov. His object is to show what little difference there is between the character's interior monologue and the author's voice, as one is made to run imperceptibly into the other through the use of indirect speech. He also points out that the literary style of the character's inner speech, contributes to the lack of differentiation between interior monologue and the author's analysis. Both these features can be detected in the inner life sequences of chapter 8. But by contrast with

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[16] D.S. Lixačev, op. cit., p. 317.

[17] V.K. Favorin, "O vzaimodejstvii avtorskoj reči i reči personažej v jazyke trilogii Gončarova," Izvestija Akademii nauk SSSR., Tom IX, vypusk 5, 1950, pp. 351-361.

these unimaginative methods, the attempt at getting a little bit nearer to the reality of the continuous flow of the stream of consciousness becomes even more praiseworthy. We see once more how the author tried to adapt his methods to the necessities of his characterization.

The study of Oblomov's portrait which makes up most of Part I is now complete. It is complemented by other minor portraits, which are only small vignettes in the case of five of Oblomov's visitors. The slightly more elaborate portrait of Tarant'ev has already been considered from the point of view of portrait technique. The only other portrait which requires comment is that of Zaxar, which is the most important after Oblomov himself. It is built up with the same elements: a descriptive portrait (p. 11); a characterization by the author with samples of typical behaviour in the timeless present (chapter 7); and dialogue in which his role is mostly as foil to Oblomov. But Zaxar also appears in one chapter of dialogue with other servants, when Oblomov is not present (chapter 10). Although Zaxar is as lazy as his master, he is not characterized through time to the same extent. He comes to life mainly through his personal habits and his relationship to Oblomov as servant to master. Thus the one conversation Zaxar has with the other servants revolves entirely around Oblomov and illustrates Zaxar's attitude to his

master. But time also plays a part in his characterization, for he represents continuity with Oblomovka, and his descriptive portrait is based on this continuity. Zaxar is wearing a coat of a cut reminding him of the livery he used to wear in Oblomovka. He thinks of himself as the keeper of the traditions of the house of Oblomov, "edinstvennoj xroniki vedennoj starymi slugami, njan'kami, mamkami, i peredavaemoj iz roda v rod."(p. 12). Zaxar remains closer to Oblomovka than Oblomov himself, for he adheres rigidly to a time pattern based on recurring feast days. A rigidity he knows well how to use to fight off any criticism of his housekeeping.

" - Èto ja k Svjatoj nedeli ubiraju...

- Knigi i kartiny pered Roždestvom." (p. 14).

In formulating a conclusion, two side issues which tend to cloud the main lines of the characterization must first be set aside. One is the question "why is Oblomov as he is?" The author puts forward a personal explanation, that of paralysis of the will induced by upbringing, and this must be tested against his characterization of Oblomov. His explanation may well be true, for there are certainly disquieting overtones in Oblomov's behaviour, but such an explanation has an unfortunate effect on the portrait, making it appear narrower than it really is. Oblomov has more universal appeal than a pathological or sociological case.

In his characterization the author has gone deeper than the diagnosis, to show the reader what it really means to be so phenomenally lazy, particularly in terms of time experiences and conflicts. These seem to have retained enough relevance to hold the attention of the present day western reader, who is not vitally interested in the failings of a particular social class in mid 19th century Russia.

The other side issue which clouds the characterization is that of what Oblomov could have been, or still is, deep inside. The author seems determined to endow Oblomov with spiritual qualities which do not appear in the characterization. Oblomov's "clear soul" could, at a pinch, be considered a fair description, if it means that Oblomov is good natured, peaceful and without harmful intentions, such as may be gathered from the tenor of his day dreams. But the same source fails to provide any evidence of outstanding qualities of heart and mind. Oblomov's dreams revolve largely around personal happiness, meals on the terrace, and the naked elbows of serving girls; their timeless setting gives them a certain poetic elevation, but no particular moral worth. Not only does the author want us to take all these great qualities on trust, he also expects us to base our moral judgement of Oblomov on them. He presents Oblomov as a good and gifted man ruined by a character defect which, as far as the author is concerned, does not seem to carry with it any moral conse-

quences. This attitude is difficult to accept and has caused a great deal of controversy, which will be discussed in Part II.

At this point it is essential to establish the right level on which to study Oblomov's character, and the author does not make this task easy. Taking him as a pathological case narrows the portrait unduly, whilst looking for spiritual heights inflates it out of proportion. The right level seems to us to be that of "čelovečnost'," a notion much referred to by Oblomov himself in the dialogues of chapter 2, and which may be understood to mean the wholeness of the human personality.[18] On this level we can best place the conflict which emerges from Oblomov's characterization: that of two attitudes to time, each claiming to be closest to human nature. The author puts all his skill into a picture of stagnation and degeneration, thereby making a stand for the absolute necessity of seeing time as a medium of action and change. Oblomov on the other hand is very sensitive to the dehumanizing pressure that rushing time puts on the individual. He prefers to remove his ideals into a peaceful timelessness, and live within his own inner time. The author describes Oblomov's position with sympathy, which in this case, can be fully shared by the reader, because it is not based on false

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[18] A similar point has been made by N. Narokov in his article: "Opravdanie Oblomova," Novyj Žurnal No. 59 (New York, 1960), pp. 95-109.

pretences, but on a common nostalgia for the Garden of Eden. The fact that Oblomov's position is completely unrealistic and leads to the very destruction of personality which he is trying to avoid, does not make the conflict less genuine, but only more tragic.

The structural devices of the portrait are not original. They are used by Gončarov for portraits other than that of Oblomov, and they belong to the tradition of the physiological sketch. The portrait's originality, and its artistic success, derive from the match between the time experience portrayed and the time value of the device used. The character justifies the device and the device in turn promotes the characterization. Oblomov's total allergy to action and change encourages the author's leisurely descriptions, it justifies all devices of typisation as, for Oblomov, one day is truly like the next. In turn, the changelessness inherent in typisation devices reinforces the characterization. More subtle still, is the device of integration of the author's voice into Oblomov's day, for this involves not only the time experience of the character and the time device used by the author, but also draws for effect on the time of the reader. The author's constant interruptions are justified by the amount of time Oblomov leaves blank. These interruptions integrated into the action in turn create the illusion that the reading time of Part I corresponds in fact to the length of Oblomov's day.

The contrast between the amount of time spent reading and the amount of action covered, contributes to the characterization. Of the same order is the device of suspense used throughout the action. Here again we find it justified by the characterization. Time as a medium of action is so alien to Oblomov that we readily understand that any attempted action would mean a painful struggle with the clock. The author builds on this struggle to achieve an effect of suspense which finally shocks the reader into further realization of the enormity of Oblomov's stagnation. A brief excursion into Oblomov's inner life finds him living on the level of the stream of consciousness as could have been expected from the characterization. The author rises to this challenge and finds the techniques best suited for the description of the stream.

All these devices are so successful that it would be hard to hold against the author some others that are less justifiable, such as the padding of Oblomov's day with surprise visits. It would also be unfair to blame the author for the liveliness of his dialogue, since this helps the reader to keep up his interest in Oblomov, and in the whole venture of the portrait.

The twin portrait of Oblomovka opens a vast temporal perspective behind the portrait of Oblomov, giving it an aura of fatal necessity, thereby deepening the characterization.

The same devices of typisation in the description of the Oblomovka way of life, underline its changelessness, which is further emphasized by the symbolism of sleep and the uniqueness of the unusual. Changelessness in Oblomovka however differs from that in Oblomov's portrait in its emphasis on the ever recurring.

It is considered that the artistic success of the portrait is due to the interrelation, which has been shown to exist, between time experience and time device. The portrait is so powerful that it dominates the novel. It contains in the characterization, and in the conflict between two ways of understanding time, the seeds of the action of the next three parts.

CHAPTER 2

OBLOMOV PART II

Part II differs from Part I in one important respect: Oblomov is no longer alone in the centre of the stage. Two new characters are introduced in the novel: Stolz and Olga. These new characters bring with them certain time values expressed through certain time devices. Stolz dominates the first part of Part II. Chapter 1 recounts his childhood; chapter 2 is a portrait by the author; chapter 3, a dialogue with Oblomov; and this is followed, in chapters 4 and 5, by a more serious confrontation with Oblomov. Nothing fundamentally new, in terms of time values or devices, emerges until after the opening of chapter 5. A turning point occurs on the third page of chapter 5. It is brought home to the reader by a time device not used previously, the flash forward, offering a glimpse of a transformed future. The advent of Olga at this point in the novel brings with it totally new time values and devices, which come to light in the following 7 chapters of Part II.

The time setting of Part II follows the same pattern. There is little change up to chapter 5. May 1st, which was the setting of Part I, also provides the setting for Stolz's portrait. More precisely, the dialogue of chapter 3 takes place on May 1st, but the introductory chapters 1 and 2 are not integrated into that day. There is no time lapse between the greeting, at the opening of chapter 3, and the appearance of Stolz at the end of Part I. Time shifts slightly in chapter 4, which takes place a week later, and again at the beginning of chapter 5, which takes place the next day. It is only after the meeting with Olga that the time setting suddenly expands to cover the next three months of Oblomov's life.

It may at first seem controversial to state that Stolz does not bring into the novel any new time values. After all, conceived as the opposite of Oblomov in every respect, his time values are bound to be different from those of Oblomov. But these opposite time values were already implicit in what was defined as the author's attitude in Part I. By describing Oblomov's case as one of standstill, the author implied that he himself knew that time had to be used as a medium of action and change. An attitude implied in the way the author treated his subject in Part I, is embodied in Part II in the character of Stolz. This is partic-

ularly apparent in the confrontation between Stolz and Oblomov in chapters 4 and 5. The conflict of values between active life and retirement, which was already noted in Part I, is here brought into the open and presented as a conflict between two personalities.

Stolz appears therefore, as the embodiment of an attitude to Oblomov, of that part of the author which is acutely aware of the degenerating effect of standstill. As such Stolz has a limited positive purpose: that of a practical antidote to the specific ills with which Oblomov is afflicted. Unfortunately he is made to carry heavier burdens, which he is unable to bear. Stolz, as a character, is a failure.[1] Despite all the weight of the author's unconditional moral approval, he does not acquire true independence, let alone any stature as a positive hero.

There is thus a flaw in the very conception of Stolz, but the failure is partly due, as we shall see, to the fact that the author does not create any new time devices for Stolz's portrait to show us this man of action in action, except for one minor instance, at the end of chapter 3.

Stolz's childhood, briefly related in chapter 1, clearly shows that he is meant to serve as an antidote to standstill. The methods of Stolz's father's upbringing,

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[1] Gončarov himself agreed with his critics on this point. "Lučše pozdno čem nikogda," Vol. 8, p. 89.

which make up most of the narrative, are expressly designed to promote a spirit of independence and mobility unknown to the indulgent parents of Oblomovka.

In his description of Stolz's childhood, the author uses time devices similar to those of Oblomov's Dream to establish an impression of close correspondence between the childhoods of Stolz and Oblomov, while contrasting the time values of the two ways of life. Stolz first appears aged eight (p. 158), whilst Oblomov was seven at the beginning of the Dream (p. 110). Further on, Stolz is seen as a boy of fourteen or fifteen (p. 160); Oblomov is also thirteen or fourteen towards the end of the Dream (p. 124). There is also a time perspective in this picture of Stolz's childhood, similar to the one in the Dream, though not quite so vast. It only extends over three generations. Stolz receives a certain norm of life from his father, who in turn inherited it from his father. When Stolz's father thinks about the future he adds on a couple of generations more, and draws an uninterrupted line from his own grandfather to his grandson (p. 164). But although the values prized by the Stolzes are transmitted from father to son, the way of life to which these values are attached is far from changeless. In this the Stolzes contrast sharply with the immobility of Oblomovka. Their lives are characterized by change and mobility. Andrew's father moved from Germany to Switzerland and then to Austria,

before settling in Russia (p. 164). Andrew himself is encouraged to leave Verxlev and make a life for himself in Petersburg (p. 165).

The time devices used in the description of Stolz's childhood, apart from the deliberate similarity with the Dream, are without great interest. They are a conventional mixture of past imperfective and perfective, with brief passages in the timeless present.

In the next chapter, which is a portrait of Stolz as he is now, the author once more establishes a correspondence between Oblomov and Stolz by a reference to their ages: they are exact contemporaries, both in their early thirties (p. 167). But this is the only similarity they have. The standstill of Oblomov's life is contrasted with the extreme mobility of Stolz's: "on besprestanno v dviženii," he travels on business, goes out, reads, "kogda on uspevaet, Bog vest'" (p. 167).

The author further endeavours to present Stolz's life as a continuous progress by the constant use of the verb "idti." The paragon Stolz has achieved perfect balance between the practical and the spiritual: "dve storony šli parallel'no" (p. 167); later we find: "On šel tverdo" (p. 167); "A sam vse šel da šel uprjamo" (p. 170); "sam on šel k svoej celi" (p. 170). The repetition of the adverb "poka" throughout two paragraphs expresses his ready adaptation to change: "poka šel dožd' ... poka dlilas' skorb' ... poka on ne uvjal" (p. 168).

Time is the medium of all this activity, change and progress, and we are not surprised to find in Stolz a heightened awareness of the value of each passing day: "On šel tverdo ... starajas' tratit' každyj den', kak každyj rubl', s ežeminutnym, nikogda ne dremljuščim kontrolem izderžannogo vremeni" (p. 167). Stolz's experience of time is seen here as an absolute antithesis to that of Oblomov. Oblomov either ignores the passage of time, or makes totally ineffectual attempts to keep up with it. Stolz on the other hand, is so attuned to it, that he is able to use it as a commodity for his own ends. The time referred to here is objective, chronological time, the true time of action. Stolz refuses to know any other. He deliberately rejects an inner life which could lure him into a different awareness of time, such as the inner time of day dreams or the timelessness of poetic visions, so dear to Oblomov. Imagination, for Stolz, is a two-faced enemy, lulling his victims to sleep (p. 168); day dream is a secluded hermitage, a grotto to be entered only for a specified length of time, in other words only under the express condition of not losing contact with the time of external reality: "znaja čas i minutu kogda vyjdeš' ot tuda" (p. 168).

This particular emphasis on the dangers of imagination reinforces Stolz's role as an antidote for Oblomov's ills, and undermines his stature as the ideal man, or even as a character in his own right. For why should Stolz, this level headed,

balanced man of action, fear imagination "above all things": "Bol'še vsego on bojalsja voobraženija ... on bojalsja vsjakoj mečty." (p. 168).

Loss of contact with outside reality could hardly qualify as the chief worry of businessmen. But the author justly feels that such loss of contact is a matter of life and death for Oblomov. In order to be saved from degenerating standstill Oblomov should emulate Stolz's activity, his self-control, and "above all things," his firm grip on outside reality and on the time of outside reality. Here Stolz's usefulness ends. He collapses completely as a model for mankind, for although it is absolutely clear that Stolz is on the go and in touch, he is quite incapable of telling anybody where he is going. We are at a loss to understand exactly what is meant by such vague statements as:

> Prostoj, to est' prjamoj, nastojaščij vzgljad na žizn', vot čto bylo ego postojannoju zadačeju (p. 168), or: xotel videt' ideal bytija i stremlenij čeloveka v strogom ponimanii i otpravlenii žizni (p. 170).

The total mystery surrounding all Stolz's activities is well illustrated by the statement: "On učastvuet v kakoj-to kompanii otpravljajuščej tovary za granicu" (p. 167).[2]

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[2] N.A. Dobroliubov makes a great deal of this point in his article "Čto takoe Oblomovščina," op. cit. quoted from I.A. Gončarov v russkoj kritike (Moscow, 1958), p. 90.

We have called Stolz an antidote. Pisarev called him a prescription to be sent to the pharmacy.[3] Such comparisons are made because of the artificial conception of Stolz's character, and also, to a great extent, because of the way in which the author presents his portrait. Chapter 2 does indeed read like a prescription. It is a monotonous listing of virtues, set out in brief paragraphs of equal length, each starting with "on" or "u nego." The result is that Stolz the man of action, whose life is infinitely more varied than that of Oblomov, is associated with a feeling of intense boredom, which his sleeping counterpart never produces. We have here an example of where the device used, far from helping the characterization, contributes to its failure. No new time devices specifically suited to Stolz's way of life are used in his portrait. The contrast with Oblomov's portrait is brought out only by the absence of all the devices used in Part I. There is no fond dwelling on details and the physical portrait is almost a caricature "on ves' sostojal iz kostej, muskulov i nervov" (p. 167). There are no long drawn out metaphors, and, in particular, no samples of behaviour in the timeless present.

The dialogue of chapter 3 between Stolz and Oblomov follows the same formula as the dialogues of Part I, but with

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[3] D.I. Pisarev, "Pisemskij, Turgenev, Gončarov," Russkoe slovo No. 11 (1861). I.A. Gončarov v russkoj kritike, p. 135.

a different ending. Stolz is made aware of the pattern of Oblomov's life, hears about his two misfortunes, and faces Oblomov once more with the necessity of immediate action. He creates a sense of urgency by insisting that Oblomov goes abroad with him within two weeks, that he apply for his passport straight away, that he get ready to go to the country on his return (p. 176), and finally that he must dress and go out that very evening (p. 177). Oblomov tries halfheartedly to apply his usual delaying tactics, but there is no build up of suspense this time, because the initiative is with Stolz who is the very incarnation of urgency: "-Nu Il'ja, skorej že, skorej ... Skorej, skorej! - toropil Štol'c" (p. 178). We find here, at the end of the chapter, at least one instance where a time value is used, which effectively supports Stolz's characterization, after it had suffered a great deal from the portrait of chapter 2. We catch a glimpse of Stolz in action, like a whirlwind, finally uprooting Oblomov from his room and propelling him into time.

Chapter 4 is a chapter of discussion between Stolz and Oblomov which enlarges on ideas already touched upon in Part I. At the same time it marks a small movement towards a speeding up of the action. So far, for 178 pages, the time span has been limited to a single day, every hour and minute of which has been accounted for. Even the time spent sleeping

has been filled in by the author's voice. Now for the first time something has been left out: "Celaja nedelja promel'knula nezametno" (p. 179). We have advanced to the beginning of the second week in May.

Chapter 4 opens as a follow up on chapter 2 of Part I, where Oblomov expressed his feelings about Petersburg society. (pp. 179-181). The standard applied here by Oblomov is the same as in Part I: the wholeness of the human personality. "Gde že tut čelovek? Gde ego celost'?" (p. 179). But whereas in Part I Oblomov objected solely to the rush people were subjected to in various professions and in social life, in this chapter he takes a moral stand. It is a conventional and somewhat pompous denunciation of the vanities and hypocrisies of worldly pursuits. The only point of interest is the fact that Oblomov refuses to accept as "life" the futile agitation of society, likening it to a sleep deeper than his own. "A naša lučšaja molodež'," "čto ona delaet? Razve ne spit xodja?" (p. 180); "Vse èto mertvecy, spjaščie ljudi xuže menja" (p. 179); "skvoz' èti kriki viden neprobudimyj son" (p. 181). This is a somewhat ambiguous statement, as sleep here has to be understood in a moral, figurative sense, whereas Oblomov's own sleep is to be taken quite literally. However, the point Oblomov is making is quite clear: He is once more putting forward a justification, this time on moral grounds, for his retirement from active life. We remember how a similar justi-

fication was repeatedly deflated by the author in chapter 2 of Part I where he pointed to the lack of wholeness in Oblomov's own life. The same criticism is made here by Stolz (p. 181), and we are left, as in Part I, with two unsatisfactory alternatives: empty active life in the world or degenerating standstill.

But these two alternatives, are not the only ones proposed in chapter 4. The second part of the discussion between Oblomov and Stolz introduces two new alternatives. These are basically the same two opposite ways of life based on different attitudes to time, but seen at their optimum. Oblomov enlarges on his daydream of life in the country, already seen in chapter 8 of Part I, and Stolz counters with his own life, which is supposed to be active without being futile.

Oblomov's ideal life is presented through a device already much used by the author: a day in the life of Oblomov. It starts with his getting up in the morning and ends in the evening (pp. 184-186). This day, set in the future, shows a way of life more sophisticated than the Oblomovka of the past, and less divorced from outside reality than Oblomov's present life. Yet it resembles them closely, at least in one respect: a changelessness in time. This changelessness once again is reflected in the devices used by the author to describe Oblomov's day in the future. The author uses the conditional

and infinitive of wishfulness, but mostly he goes back to the timeless present, to indicate that this typical day is one of a lifetime of identical days.

"- I ves' vek tak? sprosil Štol'c?
- Do sedyx volos, do grobovoj doski," replies Oblomov (p. 186). But we go deeper here into this desire for changelessness than we have done so far, as Oblomov's daydream clearly defines his ideal of life.

This ideal is best described as a permanent state of enjoyment. Life as a state of happiness is well illustrated by Oblomov's wish: "sčitat' minuty ščast'ja, kak bienie pul'sa" (p. 184). These minutes that go by are compared to the even and constant beating of the pulse, which sustains life but does not carry with it any idea of development or evolution. Life as a state of enjoyment, especially when presented as poetic (p. 184), and free from evil (Oblomov insists on the lack of hypocrisy, on simplicity and goodness of heart among his future friends, p. 185), naturally conjures up the image of earthly Paradise. Oblomov himself boldly states that the pursuit of an earthly Paradise is everyone's concern: "Da cel' vsej vašej begotni ... ne stremlenie k ètomu idealu utračennogo raja?" (p. 187). Taken literally Oblomov may be wrong in attributing to everyone a desire to live in the slightly reformed Oblomovka which is his version of the Garden of Eden; but he appeals here to a much deeper and universal longing; the longing for a life which would be

a permanent state rather than a continual and painful development through time.[4] The depth of this longing is borne out by Christian tradition, according to which life was a timeless state of happiness and innocence before the fall, and is meant to be an eternal state of beatitude after death. Oblomov bears witness to this longing and finds a ready response in the reader.

Unfortunately Paradise is well and truly lost, and with it have gone timelessness and innocence. Without these two necessary conditions, any attempt at recreating life as a permanent state only ends in stagnation and the denial of responsibility.

As a practical proposition Oblomov's ideal deserves Stolz's scorn. To qualify it he invents a general term which was destined for great popularity: "Oblomovščina." It is a deprecative term, the root of which is Oblomov and, by implication, everything he stands for; it encompasses his past in Oblomovka, his present and his ideal. In the eyes of Stolz it represents standstill. He sets out to fight it, first with Oblomov's youthful ideals, which were based on service, mental curiosity and personal achievement (pp. 187-188); then with his own ideal of life for work's sake (p. 189). Oblomov's past ideals seem to be a great deal more inspiring

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[4] A similar point is made by R. Poggioli in his collection of essays on Russian literature: The Phoenix and the Spider (Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 44.

than the ideal of Stolz, but as the simplest antidote to standstill, work is not a bad idea. "Von ty vygnal trud iz žizni na čto ona poxoža?" (p. 189). Here again it can be said that Stolz has a limited usefulness as a practical cure of Oblomovism, but that he fails as a model for mankind, because there is little attraction in an ideal of work for work's sake without any thought of purpose, or of justification, be it social, moral or religious.

It is interesting to note that Stolz, like the author in Part I, does not tax Oblomov with lack of social or moral responsibility. In fact it is Oblomov's "clear" and "childlike" soul, which first attracted him and was at the origin of their friendship (p. 121). This question of Oblomov's goodness has already been touched upon. Whether the reader believes in it or not, depends in the last resort on whether his own idea of the meaning of goodness coincides with that of the author. Opinions range from total rejection,[5] to claims of sainthood.[6] This disparity of view stems from the controversial nature of the conception of goodness which the author is trying to make us accept: an idea of natural

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[5]N.A. Dobroljubov, op. cit., Quoted from: Gončarov v russkoj kritike, p. 88.

[6]Yvette Louria and Morton I. Seiden, "Ivan Gontcharov's Oblomov: The Anti-Faust as Christian Hero," Canadian Slavic Studies, III, No. 1 (Spring 1969), pp. 39-68.

goodness divorced from moral responsibility. It is a limited understanding of goodness which coincides entirely with that of Oblomov himself. It permeates the ideal Oblomovka, and is perfectly consistent with Oblomov's vision of earthly Paradise, where timelessness and innocence go together. The adjectives "clear" and "childlike" applied to Oblomov's soul convey this sense of innate goodness akin to innocence. It seems therefore that the author has stopped halfway in his indictment of Oblomovism. He has seen through the illusion of an attempt to restore timelessness, and has shown the stagnation it leads to in practice; but he does not consider as an illusion an ideal of goodness based on innocence rather than moral responsibility; in fact, he has made this ideal his own in his judgement of Oblomov.

The confrontation between Stolz and Oblomov seems to end with the triumph of Stolz's ideal of life over that of Oblomov (p. 189). Though we shall see, at the beginning of chapter 5, that the question is by no means closed, and Oblomov is still weighing the two alternatives in his mind. But chapter 4 ends with the triumph of Stolz and his challenge to Oblomov to change his way of life, "now or never." These words are to be repeated six times over the next five pages (pp. 189-193). We see that here again, as in Part I, the author seems to be opting for the device of suspense. There

is the necessary element of urgency and last chance in Stolz's challenge. But this time it is suspense on a much larger scale. We are no longer concerned with this or that particular decision to be taken, but with the direction of the whole of Oblomov's life. The reader catches his breath, wondering how Oblomov will respond. However, despite the emphasis put on the "now or never" at this particular point, suspense is not sustained in the course of the novel as consistently as in the action of the portrait of Part I. The words "now or never" are sufficiently impressed upon the reader to colour his attitude to subsequent events, but the action itself does not move forward with the impetus of Stolz's challenge. Stolz, who could have been a source of tension and a living reminder for Oblomov, is removed from the action until Part IV, when "never" is already a fait accompli. Oblomov himself, as becomes clear in chapter 5, is not really convinced of the desirability of a change of life, now or at any other time, and when his life does actually change abruptly, it is not in answer to Stolz's challenge, but in answer to the irresistible call of love. We are inclined to see Stolz's challenge therefore, not as an action moving device and a true source of suspense, but rather as a comment on Oblomov's situation such as the author himself could have made.

Oblomov's immediate reaction to the urgency contained in Stolz's challenge is wholly predictable. It is retreat and

postponement. Oblomov seeks to hide behind the vision of himself as a psychological and sociological case. This diagnosis, the validity of which has already been examined in Part I, proves very useful here as an excuse: "Net, žizn' moja načalas' s pogasanija" (p. 190), "naše imja legion" (p. 191). Excuses are followed by panic and postponement, on the same pattern as in Part I: "Ty vse zavtra! - vozrazil Oblomov" ... "Čto èto bratec, čerez dve nedeli, pomiluj, vdrug tak!..." (p. 191).

After the first moment of panic, however, Oblomov settles down, in the first two pages of chapter 5, to a quiet evaluation of Stolz's challenge. These pages, 192-193, can be taken as a conclusion of Part I and Part II so far. They show clearly that a call to action such as Oblomov has just received from Stolz, but also such as he had previously received when he left Oblomovka, involves for him not only an effort of will, but also a conflict of values. The psychological and sociological side of the issue is not touched upon in these final pages. Oblomov goes to the root of the problem and finds himself facing a dilemma "deeper than that of Hamlet" (p. 193). "Teper' ili nikogda!" "Byt' ili ne byt'!" (p. 193). There is certainly a touch of satirical exaggeration in this comparison between Oblomov and Hamlet. And yet in Oblomov's hesitations there is the same element of

hopelessness as in those of Hamlet. He can see only too clearly the drawbacks of both alternatives. The active life promoted by Stolz appears to him as a relentless, "eternal" rush " i tak vsju žizn'," "tut večno plamja ... " (p. 193). In Part I, Oblomov had already stressed the dehumanizing character of this rush (chapter 2); here, probably still remembering his vision of an earthly paradise, he sees it primarily as divesting life of all poetry. Despite Stolz's sermons, this alternative once more elicits from Oblomov, the agonized cry "kogda že požit'." (p. 193). Oblomov does not seem to have changed his position from Part I. For him, true life is still to be found only after, or outside, the rushing time of action. But contrary to Part I, where he only had one brief moment of lucidity, he is now able to see clearly through the illusion that a blissful, timeless state of happiness could be attained by retreating from action and change. This illusion was exposed by the author in Part I, but now Oblomov himself sets against the dehumanizing, depoeticizing rush of action, the equally unattractive alternative of degrading standstill.

The conflict seems without solution. And so it is, unless Oblomov changes his way of looking at life, and especially of looking at time. For a man like Stolz, with a different philosophy, such a conflict does not exist, for he does not see in the rush of action a violation of the human

spirit, but rather its fulfillment. Oblomov, however, seems rebellious to conversation. "Èto kakaja to kuznica, ne žizn'" (p. 193), is a damning description of Stolz's philosophy of life.

The portrait of Part I has been enlarged and deepened in these first chapters of Part II by presenting Oblomov in confrontation with Stolz. The characterization part of the novel ends in chapter 5 with an unresolved conflict of values. What is to come next? The combination of philosophical wavering and psychological handicap seems to make it almost impossible to envisage a different life for Oblomov, especially as Stolz's direct influence is removed within two weeks through his departure for England (p. 193).

And yet in the same chapter 5 we witness an abrupt change in Oblomov's life, and in the course of the novel.

This change is not due to any firm decision on Oblomov's part to take up Stolz's challenge. We hear no more about Oblomov's thoughts after the conflict has been formulated. We only see some halfhearted preparations to go abroad, which culminate in Oblomov missing his boat because of a swollen lip - just as one might have expected. The abrupt change is due to Oblomov's meeting of Olga, and it is the author's skilful use of time devices which impresses upon the reader the extent of the transformation wrought by love, and enables him to adjust to a new phase of the action of the novel.

The transition is made in chapters 5 and 6 through a dislocation of the chronological flow of the novel, which picks up again in chapter 7. Suddenly, from the beginning of May, we are brought three months forward, to August (pp. 194-195). What has happened? The author builds up suspense by asking and answering hypothetical questions. Oblomov has not left, is he then back at his old tricks? - No. To inform the reader, the author gives him a glimpse of yet another Oblomov day in the timeless present, which implies that what is described now is the new, well established pattern of Oblomov's life. It is a picture of an active life in a new place, the country, with a newly married Zaxar, and illumined by the presence of Olga.

By way of explanation, we jump back from this glimpse of a totally different life, taking place in August, to the first meeting with Olga at the beginning of May - when Stolz was still there (pp. 195-199). From that first meeting, we then jump ahead again for another look at its far reaching consequences (pp. 199-200). This time the forward jump does not take us as far as August, though the exact date is not mentioned but it is not too far away from the first meeting, as time can still be counted in days "proxodili dni za dnjami," (p. 199), and Oblomov seems to have only just moved to the country. Possibly it is at the very end of May. From there we go back again to the second meeting with Olga, the day after

the first, which is sometime at the beginning of May(pp. 200-204). Then comes the fateful musical evening when Oblomov first speaks of love, which takes place three days after the second meeting (pp. 204-209). The next pages (209-212), are taken up by the author's analysis of Oblomov's and Olga's views on love. We also learn that Stolz has left and, "in the meantime," Oblomov has moved into the country. It is difficult to tell how much time has elapsed since Oblomov's first confession of love. The next episode takes place in the country, after Oblomov has been there three days (pp. 212-218). There is talk of lilac and lilies of the valley, so we are probably still somewhere around the end of May.

We have now almost caught up with the time of the second flash forward. From now on, the novel is set on its new course, and we watch Oblomov's and Olga's love affair develop chronologically, eventually reaching and passing without notice, the time of the first flash forward. The transition has been made. The reader, jumping forwards and backwards in time accepts Oblomov's transformation without asking too many questions. This is very reminiscent of the device already used in Oblomov's Dream: the juxtaposition of two images distant in time. The resulting flash of intuition takes the place of explanation. How did Oblomov suddenly manage to move himself into the country, how and why did Zaxar get married, how did Oblomov feel the first awakenings of the

will to action and how did he react to them? All these questions are left unanswered. But this does not really matter, and the measure of the author's talent is that the questions are never asked. We see Oblomov "before" and "after" and accept Olga as the magical agent in between.

Oblomov's return, to what may be termed a more "normal" way of life, is made immediately apparent in the general temporal framework of the second part of Part II.

The first obvious point is that the action moves much faster. Part II, from chapter 5 on, is almost all action. There are only twelve pages of direct characterization by the author, and those are not lengthy set pieces, but short passages of two or three pages each: on Oblomov's and Olga's views on love (pp. 210-212, 280-282); on marriage; about Zaxar (p. 223); and the portraits of Olga's aunt and her friend the baron (pp. 227-231). There is no detailed portrait of Olga and we are only given information on her views of love, and on the sort of relationship she has with her aunt, in the aunt's portrait. This action moves much quicker through time than Part I. There, thanks to the method of integration of the author's voice, 150 pages were made to cover eight hours of Oblomov's life. In Part II, counting from chapter 5, 102 pages cover three and a half months.

Another point is that the action moves very smoothly

through time. There is a lack of tension between chronological and psychological time. In Part I, Oblomov fluctuated between total immersion into the stream of consciousness and a frantic scramble to meet the demands of the ticking clock. In Part II a deliberate harmony is created between the passage of time, very loosely chronicled, and the love affair in progress. Oblomov and Olga meet in May, and become aware of their love among the lilac blossoms (chapters 6,7,8). Chapters 9 and 10 take place some time in June, as Olga mentions she has known Oblomov for a month (p. 253). In chapter 11, the height of the love affair corresponds to the height of Summer, at the end of July (p. 275). Soon it ripens together with the berries, presumably in August (p. 281), and culminates in a proposal in chapter 12, which ends Part II.

This harmonious unfolding through time is made possible by the fact that the author never delves very deeply into the inner life of the two heroes. Each new phase of their love is externalized into an episode, an event, usually at the rate of one per chapter. Chapter 5: first meetings; chapters 6,7,8: three episodes around a symbolic branch of lilac; chapter 9: Olga's three "I love;" chapter 10: Oblomov's letter; chapter 11: Olga's moment of weakness and a meeting with Sonia; and chapter 12: the proposal. These episodes are treated predominantly in dialogue form with a brief account by the author of whatever feelings Olga and Oblomov may be

experiencing. But at no point do we lose ourselves in the heroes' inner world. If this had been the case, there would certainly have been more discrepancy between chronological time, and time as inwardly experienced. This is very noticeable in the case of Olga. For her, first love means an extraordinary, instant ripening of the personality "Ona kak budto slušala kurs žizni ne po dnjam a po časam." (p. 234). But her inner development is not explored by the author, it is only observed, through Oblomov's eyes: "slovom, on točno ne videl ee s god, i ona na god sozrela." (p. 232). We are only aware of the day that has elapsed, but the year Olga has lived in that time remains a mystery.

In the transitional chapters the reader has witnessed a transformation of Oblomov, and the general temporal framework of Part II bears out this transformation as we watch Oblomov live in time as a medium of action and change. With the enthusiasm of love, he seems to have opted for the alternative "now," "Skol'ko novogo dviženija vdrug vtesnilos' v nee [v žizn'] zanjatij! Ljubov' - pretrudnaja škola žizni!" (p. 245).

But what of the doubts Oblomov used to have about the life of action and change? They are still valid. While using the general temporal framework to convey the impression of fast moving life, the author, through other devices, emphasizes the destructive relentlessness of change. A growing

love could be treated as a joyous crescendo, but changes in Oblomov's love are viewed with dismay as, one after the other, significant moments fade and become meaningless in the face of new demands. Though the reader is aware that the next moment brings a deepening of love, his attention is nevertheless deliberately attracted to the inexorable fading away of the moment which has just been. The episodic structure of Part II helps to create the impression of inexorable change, because of the regularity with which particular stages of the love affair, crystallized into unique events, succeed each other.

In the first stages, chapters 5,6,7,8, the episodes make their own point, as with each new encounter between Oblomov and Olga, something vital changes in their relationship. In chapter 9 however, when love has been acknowledged on both sides, the author steps in to point out the relentlessness of change:

> Moment simvoličeskix namekov, znamenatel'nyx ulybok, sirenevyx vetok prošel nevozvratno. (p. 247)
> I potomu v mel'knuvšem obraze Kordelii, v ogne strasti Oblomova otrazilos' tol'ko odno mgnovenie, odno èfemernoe dyxanie ljubvi, odno ee utro, odin prixotlivyj uzor. A zavtra, zavtra blesnet uže drugoe, možet byt' takoe že prekrasnoe, no vse taki drugoe... (p. 254).

It should be noted here that the author's comments in chapter 9 are independent of Oblomov's own attitude to change, which we might expect to be hostile. They prove that the author himself is not without wistful regret at the passing away of the moment.

In chapter 10, the relentlessness of change finally hits Oblomov. The fact that Oblomov, carried away by love, has not up to now stopped to consider what his new life means, makes his new awareness more dramatic, for he is already fully commited. He suddenly sees himself living the alternative of active life, experiencing time as a medium of change and also, just as he had feared, finding the trap of ceaseless change intolerable.

This new awareness of Oblomov's is expressed by the author with the help of heavy symbolism: everything passes and withers like the lilac branch of the first intimations of love.

> - Sireni...otošli, propali! - otvečala ona. - Von, vidite, kakie ostalis': pobleklye!
> - Otošli, poblekli! - povtoril on, gljadja na sireni.- I pis'mo otošlo! - vdrug skazal on. (p. 269).

The symbol is first formulated by Olga, but Oblomov seizes on it eagerly, and applies it to the whole course of his love and to life itself. The words "otxodit'" and "pobleknut'" are used again and again, six and seven times respectively, to drum the symbol into the reader's mind. "Bože! Sireni poblekli, - dumal on, gljadja na visjaščie sireni, - včera pobleklo, pis'mo tože pobleklo, i ètot mig lučšej v mojej žizni, ... i on poblek."(p. 272).

> Sireni otošli, - opjat' dumal on, - včera otošlo, i noč' s prizrakami, s uduš'em tože otošla...Da! i ètot mig otojdet, kak sireni! No kogda otxodila segodnjašnjaja noč', v èto vremja uže pascvetalo nynešnee utro..." (p. 273).

The final paragraph of chapter 10 sums up the feelings of Oblomov in the midst of change, just as it sums up the mood of Part II.

> Čto ž èto takoe? - vslux skazal on v zabyvčivosti.- I - ljubov' tože...ljubov'? A ja dumal čto ona kak znojnyj polden', povisnet nad ljubjaščimisja i ničto ne dvignetsja i ne doxnet v ee atmosfere: i v ljubvi net pokoja, i ona dviženetsja vce kudato vpered... "kak vsja žizn'," govorit Stol'c. I ne rodilsja ešče Iisus Navin, kotoryj by skazal ej: "Stoj i ne dvižis'." Čto ž budet zavtra? - trevožno sprosil on sebja, i zadumčivo, lenivo pošel domoj. (p. 273).

This vital paragraph requires a closer examination.

First we notice Oblomov's surprise, in the two opening questions, which might in turn surprise the reader. Through the use of various time devices, which have already been studied, the author has shown Oblomov living love as change. It appears now that this is not at all what Oblomov had expected and that the transformed Oblomov was transformed quite unintentionally. There has been no true conversion, only a misunderstanding, and Oblomov has let himself be carried away by love because he had quite a different conception of what love would be.

Very typically Oblomov expected love to be a timeless, changeless state. And it is interesting to find here a simile with the motionless midday heat which dominated Oblomovka. This attitude was already apparent in the few remarks made by the author in chapter 6, at the beginning of the romance with Olga. In that chapter the author noted that

Oblomov shunned the ups and downs of passion, preferring the quiet permanence of marriage. The adjective "večnyj" is used abundantly: "večnoe i rovnoe tečenie čuvstva," (p. 210), "večno napolnennaja žizn'," "večnyj sok žizni," "večnoe nravstvennoe zdorov'e." (p. 211). Oblomov always thought of love in timeless, "eternal" terms. And yet, the reality he has come to experience is completely different: everything moves, everything changes in time, even love.

What is Oblomov's reaction to this newly understood reality? It is wistful, halfhearted acceptance, anxiety about the future, and a passionate wish for the moment to stop. The author uses a biblical reference to formulate this wish: Joshua's command to the sun to stop in its course (Joshua X.13). But the reader may also be reminded of Faust's wager never to desire the moment to stop. In this case Oblomov could rightfully be called an "anti-Faust." A great deal has been made of this proposition in a recent study published in Canada.[7] The authors' thesis however is far fetched and totally unconvincing. Each character in Oblomov and each part of the novel is supposed to correspond, in reverse, to a character and a part of Faust. Nevertheless, "anti-Faust," as a term of description for Oblomov, seems particularly apt in view of his wish for the moment to stop, which reflects a deeper wish for life to be a state, rather

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[7]Yvette Louria and Morton I. Seiden, op. cit.

than a ceaseless, faustian, "striving."

We can conclude from this paragraph, that there has been no fully conscious commitment on the part of Oblomov to a life of action and change, but rather a regretful acceptance of the inevitable, which conflicts with a deep longing for a different reality. Hamlet's question in chapter 5, has found no true answer in love.

Yet for a brief moment at the end of Part II it seems that a resolution of the conflict is in sight. The inevitable development of the love affair is speeded up: chapter 11 covers July, "Ijul' proxodit, leto v samom razgare" (p.275); and chapter 12 covers the end of the summer, presumably August, "Leto podvigalos', uxodilo ... Ne tol'ko sireni, i lipy otcveli, jagody otošli." (p. 281). Two more episodes: the hot summer's evening and the meeting with Sonia, finally convince Oblomov of the necessity of proposing marriage. Suddenly the insidious secret dream of Oblomovka (p. 282) comes close to realization. Although Oblomov is pushed almost reluctantly into a proposal by the relentless course of events, the vision of Olga as mistress of Oblomovka fuses dream and reality, for one glorious moment: "I vdrug oblako isčezlo, pered nim raspaxnulas' svetlaja kak prazdnik, Oblomovka, vsja v bleske, v solnečnyx lučax ... " (p. 284).

The novel could have stopped here if, according to literary tradition and Oblomov's wishes, united lovers could

live happily "ever after." The proposal brings a temporary resolution to Oblomov's problem, but it cannot be final. It is nevertheless a culminating point in the novel, a brief and unique moment of fulfillment.

To sum up on Part II, it can be said that in its first part, up to chapter 5, it brings a new depth to Oblomov's portrait. The side issues examined in the conclusion to Part I, are somewhat clarified. The psychological and social aspect of Oblomov's portrait is classified once and for all under the generalized term of "Oblomovščina." Oblomov's goodness, a source of confusion in Part I, becomes easier to understand when it is seen in relation to Oblomov's ideal, which presupposes a conception of moral worth as mere absence of evil. The central problem, which has its source in Oblomov's attitude to time, remains the same as in Part I: the necessity of a choice between two equally unsatisfactory alternatives, degenerating standstill or dehumanizing rush of action. This necessity is now consciously acknowledged by Oblomov himself. This central problem acquires a deeper philosophical basis, as Oblomov's objections to a life of action are seen more clearly to stem from a belief that true life should be a timeless state of innocent enjoyment, from a nostalgia in fact, for earthly Paradise. A new character, Stolz, is there to make the point, inherent in the author's

attitude of Part I, that an attempt to restore such a Paradise would lead to stagnation.

This central question remains open and without solution, despite the new development of the action in the second part of Part II, after chapter 5. Oblomov is not converted by Stolz as his change of life does not come about as a result of Stolz's challenge. Neither is he converted by Olga. Oblomov is thrown into an active life through a misunderstanding, unaware, until it is too late, that he is living through time a love he had expected to be timeless. Only the proposal, at the end of Part II, brings a brief illusory resolution of the problem, as for once, progress through time seems to Oblomov to have worked towards, and not against, his ideal of timeless bliss.

In the first part of Part II, the time devices used are largely similar to those in Part I, as the author fails to introduce new devices in support of his characterization of Stolz. We find again the creation of a sense of urgency, contrasting with Oblomov's procrastinations, and the changeless present of yet another typical day, this time in the ideal Oblomovka of the future. With Stolz's challenge the author tries to create suspense, a most successful device in Part I, but he fails to do so as the challenge is never in fact taken up.

New devices mark the new turn of the action after

chapter 5. The transition between the two parts of Part II is made entirely with the help of the flash forward. The transformation of Oblomov's life is conveyed through such temporal devices as acceleration of action and deliberate harmony between psychological and chronological time. The way in which Oblomov experiences his transformation is also conveyed through time devices, namely: the emphasis on the relentlessness of change, through the episodic structure of the account of the love affair; and the heavy symbolism around the idea of passing away, wilting and withering.

We see once again, particularly in the second part of Part II, how skilfully the author matches his time devices to the experience of time he is trying to describe.

An interesting factor of Part II, which can be examined in conclusion, is the contrast which is revealed between the author's own attitude to time, in Part I and in Part II.

In Part I, all time devices used by the author were in support of his characterization of Oblomov as a man at a standstill. This way of describing Oblomov implied that the norm for the author was a view of time as a medium of action and change, for only against such a view could Oblomov be said to be at a standstill. Oblomov's own attitude to time was not neglected but offered only as information, without the support of time devices except in a few paragraphs of

stream of consciousness. In Part II all new time devices are used to illustrate Oblomov's experience of time as a medium of action and change. We have noted the negative colouring of this illustration, reflecting Oblomov's uneasiness at the relentlessness of change, his regret at the passing of the moment. The time devices used in Part II are in support, therefore, of Oblomov's objections to time as a medium of action and change, which would seem to indicate the author's agreement with these objections. This impression is corroborated by the author's own wistful remarks in chapter 9 and by his failure to create time devices illustrative of Stolz's view of time as a positive force. It seems therefore that the painful choice between two unsatisfactory alternatives, which Oblomov has to face, has also been faced by the author. From his treatment of Part I, and his creation of Stolz, it can be guessed that he is fully convinced of the destructive power of the longing for timelessness, and yet his treatment of Part II reveals a fundamentally negative attitude to the reality of time as a medium of action and change. The author's greater emphasis on the pitfalls of standstill point to his personal solution: a resigned acceptance of the second alternative, which is far from the enthusiasm attributed to Stolz. Oblomov's solution will be the subject of Parts III and IV.

CHAPTER 3

OBLOMOV - PART III

Part III is a transitional part. Parts I and II were each built around a central time experience, standstill, and time as a medium of change, respectively. Oblomov's transition from one to the other was made very unobtrusively with the help of a time trick. After a couple of flashes forward, the reader took Oblomov's new life for granted. In Part III we see another transformation of Oblomov's way of life, back from the magically imposed activity of Part II, to his old ways of Part I. But this time the transformation is not so sudden, it is the subject of the whole of Part III.

The main disruptive factor, which is going to contribute to the destruction of Olga's regenerative influence over Oblomov, is dramatically introduced in the very first chapter of Part III: it is the intrusion of the outside world into the intimate pattern of life which Olga and Oblomov have established during the idyllic Summer months.

Tarant'ev's unexpected visit, his vulgarity and demands for money, have the effect of a cold shower after the euphoria of the proposal. Financial and social problems are not, properly speaking, time problems. But the pressure these problems create builds up with the passage of time, as more and more people become aware of Oblomov's love affair, as more and more money is needed and as it becomes more and more imperative to reorganize Oblomovka in order to obtain that money.

The device of putting Oblomov under pressure has been used repeatedly by the author. In Part I and at the beginning of Part II, urgency was the keynote. Oblomov had to act this minute, today or tomorrow. In the second part of Part II, Oblomov was submitted to the relentlessness of change. In Part III, the author devises an even better instrument of torture. In chapter 2, Olga imposes secrecy on Oblomov: the engagement is not to be made public until Oblomov's affairs are in order (p. 303). Oblomov therefore now has to race not against the clock, but against the inevitable discovery of his engagement to Olga by his immediate circle and society at large. The situation becomes nightmarish as the author mercilessly alternates incidents of disclosure with hopeless financial entanglements, which make the wedding more and more problematic.

In chapter 2, Olga draws up a plan of action for

Oblomov; but in chapter 3, it is already obvious that he will not be able to implement it. In this chapter Oblomov meets the shifty brother of his landlady for the first time, and is faced with exorbitant demands for money. In chapter 4, Oblomov goes househunting and finds out he cannot afford to move out of his lodgings. He begins to doubt the possibility of an early wedding, just as the discovery of his engagement becomes imminent. During an evening at the theatre he hears gossip among Petersburg society, and as he returns home, he finds the servants talking of his approaching wedding. In chapter 5, Oblomov's meeting with Olga at the Summer Garden is overshadowed by the fear of discovery. In chapter 7, the danger is intensified by Olga's daring visit to Oblomov's lodgings. In chapter 8 it transpires that Olga's visit has not been kept as secret as Oblomov had hoped. As it becomes more and more difficult to hush up the relationship between Oblomov and Olga, the wedding recedes further and further into the future. In the same chapter 8, a letter arrives from the country bearing such bad news, that marriage can no longer be contemplated for "at least a year" (p. 368). In chapters 9 and 10, Oblomov's financial situation deteriorates a little more as he puts himself into the hands of the landlady's brother. In chapter 11 the impossible situation finally culminates in a broken engagement, which leads to Oblomov's complete

breakdown in chapter 12.

The action of Part III is the story of Oblomov's total failure to stand up to the pressure put on him by the outside world: in broader terms, it is also the story of the complete fiasco of his experiment with time as a medium of action and change.

Oblomov is confirmed in his negative attitude to time as a medium of change by the unfortunate course of events. There was a wistful note in Part II, even when change seemingly brought Oblomov nearer to the fulfillment of his dreams. Now that the passage of time brings nothing but new problems, wistfulness turns to despondency. The theme of the destructive power of change links Part II and III into one whole. But whereas in Part II, one romantic moment disappeared only to be replaced by a fuller one, in Part III, romance is killed for ever by the demands of the outside world which Oblomov is incapable of meeting. The same symbolic words: "otošlo, pomerklo, pobleklo," are used by the author in Part III to emphasize the destruction wrought by time, but they are more poignant now because the destruction is final. It is perceived as such by Oblomov at the very beginning of Part III, in chapter 2:

> On čuvstvoval, čto svetlyj, bezoblačnyj prazdnik ljubvi otošel, čto ljubov' v samom dele stanovilas' dolgom, čto ona mešalas' so vseju žizn'ju, vxodila v sostav ee obyčnyx otpravlenij i načinala linjat', terjat' radužnye kraski. (p. 301).

Regret and anxiety again grip Oblomov after the disastrous conversation with Zaxar in chapter 4, when the servant prematurely mentions the wedding:

> A on ne tak sebe voobražal razgovor s Zaxarom ... Vse vspomnil, i togdašnij trepet sčast'ja, ruku Ol'gi, ee strastnyj poceluj...i obmer: "Pobleklo, otošlo!" - razdalos' vnutri ego. (p. 336).

And again at the very end of the affair, in chapter 11, the same note is sounded, this time by Olga: "Ja plaču ne o budušče̊m a o prošedše̊m ... ono "pobleklo," "otošlo" ..." (p. 381).

In Part II, the changes in the love of Oblomov for Olga were described against a background of corresponding seasonal changes: spring for the blossoming of love, and high summer for its fulfillment. The same device is carried on in Part III, and quite naturally, as late summer turns to autumn and winter, the seasons themselves reflect the gathering gloom that the passage of time brings to Oblomov's life. The months are not specified except for late August at the beginning of Part III, in chapter 3: "V konce avgusta pošli doždi" (p. 311). Presumably the action covers the next three months, September, October, November, as the leaves are gone from the Summer Garden in chapter 5 (p. 338), the Neva freezes in chapters 6 and 7, and the first snow fall in the final chapter 12, signals the end of all hope.

The destructive pressures brought by time confirm Oblomov in his hostile attitude to change; they also feed his hostility towards the ceaseless rush, which seems to be the condition of an active life. The activity imposed by love on Oblomov in Part II was an immense improvement on his behaviour in Part I. At least he was dressed and walking about, reading books and sleeping only at night. But such activity in absolute terms would not seem too exacting to a normal man. In Part III, Oblomov has to face difficulties which necessitate a real effort. Anyone would balk at the task of reorganizing the neglected Oblomovka, or of extricating oneself from the contract thought up by the landlady's brother. Oblomov simply cannot make this effort. His only solution is to pass on the burden to someone else. First, to his neighbour in the country, and when this fails, to the untrustworthy brother and his associate. Oblomov's failure can be explained by the incapacity for action implanted in him by his upbringing. When parting with Olga Oblomov himself refers to "oblomovščina" as an explanation for the curse that made him unable to face the responsibilities of love (p. 383). Without minimizing the psychological factor, we would like, once again, to draw attention to Oblomov's lack of philosophical motivation as a main cause of failure.

At the beginning of chapter 2, even before his immediate troubles start, Oblomov realizes that by committing

himself to Olga, he is committing himself to a life of ceaseless action. He sees beyond the wedding nothing but an endless succession of tasks and duties, sowing, reaping, manufacturing, local elections...(p. 302). "Razve èto Žizn'?" he asks once again. The eternal open question is still open for Oblomov, just as it was in Part I and Part II. He is still not convinced that a life of action is indeed the true life. He is also lucid enough to contrast himself with Olga on that point:

> Kakaja strannaja èta Ol'ga! Ona ne ostanavlivaetsja na odnom meste, ne zadumyvaetsja sladko nad poètičeskoj minutoj, kak budto u nej vovse net mečty, net potrebnosti utonut' v razdum'e! Sejčas i poezžaj v palatu, na kvartiru-točno Andrej! Čto èto vse oni kak budto sgovorilis' toropit'sja žit'? (p. 304).

As pressures mount with the passage of time, Oblomov becomes more and more unsettled, and less than ever able to accept them as the norm of life. Once more, as in Part I, he seeks escape in dreams of a timeless future, and of what will be one day, later on, when the rush is over:

> A on uglubitsja v xaos myslej i živet vperedi, gorazdo dal'še" (p. 312). " [on] ložilsja, bez vedoma Ol'gi na divan ... mečtat' o nej, igrat' myslenno v sčast'e i volnovat'sja, zagljadyvaja v buduščuju perspektivu svoej domašnej mirnoj žizni. (p. 328).

But pressures build up relentlessly, until finally it seems that the open question at the centre of Oblomov's life has become less open than it used to be. Oblomov now brings into question the value of his whole experiment with love and time as a medium of action and change:

> Gospodi! začem ona ljubit menja? Začem ja ljublju ee? ... I čto èto za žizn', vse volnenija da trivogi! Kogda že budet mirnoe sčast'e, pokoj? On s gromkimi vzdozami ložilsja, vstaval, daže vyxodil na ulicu i vse doiskivalsja normy žizni, takogo suščestvovanija, kotoroe bylo by i ispolneno soderžanija, i teklo by tixo, den' za dnem, kaplja po kaple, v nemom sozercanii prirody i tixix edva polzuščix javlenjax semejnoj, mirno xlopotlivoj žizni. Emu ne xotelos' voobražat' ee širokoj, šumno nesuščejsja rekoj s krutymi volnami kak voobražal ee Štol'c. - Èto bolezn' - govoril Oblomov, - gorjačka ... (p. 348)

We feel that Oblomov has even ceased to consider active life as a possibility and has finally dismissed it as "an illness." The real problem which is tormenting him is how to make viable the alternative of "a peaceful life"; how to reduce life to an almost imperceptible experience of the passage of time, and yet to keep it meaningful, and safe from the pitfalls of standstill.

The question he now faces is therefore confined to one particular way of life, and the choice between different alternatives no longer seems relevant.

In Part III, therefore, Oblomov does not find the necessary conviction to pursue the course he chose, or was pushed into, in Part II. On the contrary he moves further away from a philosophy of life based on time as a medium of action and change.

All the factors contributing to Oblomov's failure which we have so far examined, his psychological weakness, his negative attitude to change, and his philosophy of life

and time, are not new. We have met them already in Parts I and II, and they only find new expression under the particular circumstances of Part III. But there is one new factor in Part III, which contributes to Oblomov's choice of "a quiet life," and this is the growing influence of his new landlady, whom he meets for the first time in chapter 2. It becomes immediately apparent that the way of life of Agaf'ja Matveevna is very near to the way of life of Oblomovka. Although translated to a different social class, where the landlady has to be both mistress of the household and worker, the time values on which this life rests are unmistakable. In chapter 2 she reveals an awareness of time as regular recurrence, as she speaks of the few yearly events which limit her horizon:

> "v Il'inskuju Pjatnicu na Poroxovye Zavody xodili" (p. 307) "Dvadcat' četvertogo ijunja bratec imeninniki, tak obed byvaet" (p. 308), "ja c det'mi tol'ko u muzninoj rodni v Svetloe Voskresen'e da na Roždestvo obedaem."(p. 308).

From day to day her activities are firmly anchored to household routine, where meals are the prominent, ever recurring events. "Segodnja voskresen'e, u nix pirog pekut" (p. 314),"Rabota vsegda est' - skazala ona, utrom obed gotovit', posle obeda šit' a k večeru užin."(p. 324). In the last chapter of Part III, many symbols are used to convey the death of hope and the triumph of the quiet life, such as the shroud of snow and the reappearance of the

dressing gown. But deadening domestic routine, in the guise of the Sunday pie, is given the prominence of the closing sentence: "Segodnja voskresen'e, govoril laskovo golos, - pirog pekli; ne ugodno li zakusit'? No on ne otvečal ničego: u nego byla gorjačka." (p. 384).

The new influence of Oblomov's landlady dominates Part III filling the reader with foreboding and intensifying the feeling of hopelessness, already created by the inexorable approach of winter and the mounting pressure of outside circumstances. Though Part III is still the story of Oblomov's affair with Olga, it is looked at entirely from Vyborgskaja storona. We are told repeatedly of Oblomov's regular visits to Olga, but those visits are rarely described, with the exception of a visit to the theatre in chapter 4 and of the meeting in the Summer Garden in chapter 5, whereas in every chapter the reader is treated to details of the way of life in Oblomov's lodgings. Oblomov is seen leaving and returning, with only brief indications as to where he has been. This device, which deliberately gives an unbalanced account of Oblomov's life, convinces the reader of the importance of Agaf'ja Matveevna's influence, and minimizes that of Olga, who fades away simply through not being kept in the reader's eye. This is not a time device, but can be considered relevant in so far as it stresses the importance of the influence of a way

of life, which is based on a very specific time attitude already made familiar to the reader in Oblomov's Dream.

But we can also find in Part III two instances of true time devices. These are used to show the nature of the influence exercised on Oblomov by his landlady and by Olga. In chapter 4 the reader senses danger, as he is faced once again with the familiar device of yet another day of Oblomov, duly set in the timeless present of habit: "Il'ja Il'ič vstaet utrom časov v devjat'..." (pp. 323-324). In sharp contrast with this timeless present is the actual present, which the author switches to in chapter 7, after Olga's visit to Oblomov. This is no longer the present of leisurely routine, but the present of an intensely lived moment, when Olga, very briefly, triumphs completely over Vyborgskaja storona:

> Da segodnja ona u nego, on u nej, potom v opere. Kak polon den'! Kak legko dyšitsja v ètoj žizni, v sfere Ol'gi ... On xodit, točno letaet; ego budto kto to nosit po kommate. - Vpered, vpered! govorit Oblomov. (p. 364).

The present used here expresses the intensity of life in the present moment which is associated with the image of Olga, and also the brevity of Olga's vistory. "Today" Oblomov is elated, "today" he can do anything, tomorrow unfortunately the disastrous letter arrives from the country, and Oblomov's new found strength vanishes. The present of the intensely lived moment loses out to the present of gentle routine, already turning into a habit.

We have now studied all the factors leading to Oblomov's defeat in the face of hostile circumstances, the time experiences they imply and the time devices used for their illustration. We have left until last the detailed temporal framework which binds all the elements together, and which, in itself, conveys the idea of the gradual dying out of the relationship between Olga and Oblomov. Mounting pressure might have led us to expect a device of suspense similar to the one in Part I. But suspense is only possible if there is at least some doubt as to the outcome of the crisis in the reader's mind. In Part III the author endeavours to create a mood of hopelessness from the very beginning. The depressing effect of Tarant'ev's visit, combined with Oblomov's disillusionment with the active life, and the onset of the rainy season, all in the first 15 pages, fill the reader with discouragement, even before the real difficulties start. In Part III, the author sets up a time and space framework, which is particularly effective in conveying a process of unravelling, of gradual loss of impetus. This is just the opposite of the build up of tension produced by the ticking of the clock in Part I.

As Olga and Oblomov return to town, the affair is automatically slowed down by the fact that they can no longer see each other every day:

No osenie večera v gorode ne poxodili na dlinnye,

> svetlye dni i večera v parke i rošče. Zdes' on už ne mog videt' ee po tri raza v den'; ... I vsja èta letnjaja cvetuščaja poèma ljubvi kak budto ostanovilas', pošla lenivee, kak budto nexvatilo u nej soderžanija. (p.311).

Also every visit by Oblomov means a long drive from the other end of town and across the river: "A ezdit' emu kakaja dal'! Edeš', edeš' s Vyborgskoj storony da večerom nazad - tri časa!" (p. 312). A change of pace is inevitable. The author uses the device of brief diary-like entries to illustrate the switch from intense every day and all day courting, to formal visits twice a week. This diary covers Oblomov's first six days back in town. (p. 312). The first three days he has dinner at Olga's house; on the fourth day he feels uncomfortable about it and does not go; on the fifth day Olga goes out; on the sixth, Olga engineers a meeting in a shop, and, much to Oblomov's relief, devises a new routine of twice-weekly visits, on Wednesdays and Sundays. (p. 313). For an indefinite length of time, may be about two months after the initial six days, Oblomov is seen leading a double life. A well documented, comfortable existence under the wing of his new landlady, interrupted twice a week by two elusive, but always ecstatic, days with Olga: "zato v položennye dni on žil, kak letom." (p. 326).

But this precarious double life cannot hold against mounting difficulties. The routine of the set visiting days, which was conceived as a first step towards the cooling off of the affair between Oblomov and Olga, is now deliberately

disrupted to create a mood of further disintegration. From chapter 5 until the end of Part III, the author takes us through three harrowing weeks, in which Oblomov struggles to find excuses for missing his Wednesdays and Sundays, while Olga keeps devising impromptu meetings until she finally gives up. The temporal framework is made to reflect the gradual collapse of Oblomov's love affair.

The first sign of real trouble comes with Oblomov's decision, through fear of gossip, to miss one of his Wednesday visits (p. 337). At the same moment the impatient Olga decides not to wait till Wednesday and summons Oblomov to a secret rendez-vous at the Summer Garden on the Tuesday, (p. 337).[1] This meeting only increases Oblomov's fears of social exposure, so that he resorts to faking illness to get out of the following Wednesday and Sunday visits (pp. 348-349). The following week the Neva freezes up and Oblomov is marooned on the other side. A source of grief for Olga but a good excuse for Oblomov to miss his Wednesday date. By Sunday, bridges are laid across the ice, but Oblomov decides to stay home (p. 352), while

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[1]A slight discrepancy should be noted here, though it is of no particular interest, except as an indication of a certain carelessness. It appears in the sentence "prišlo i poslezavtra" (p. 337) referring in the context to Wednesday, whereas in the next paragraph, Olga's letter arrives fixing a rendez-vous for Tuesday. We therefore go back a day, as all subsequent events are narrated starting from that Tuesday.

Olga eagerly awaits his arrival (p. 353). On Monday she waves aside social conventions and drives to Oblomov's lodgings (p. 355). Briefly elated by her visit, Oblomov spends Monday evening and the whole of Tuesday at her house (p. 365). But when he returns home on Tuesday evening he finds a letter with bad news from Oblomovka, and on Wednesday morning, at a loss for a solution, turns to the landlady's brother (p. 369). That same afternoon the last meeting with Olga takes place. She realizes she will never be able to stir Oblomov to action and breaks the engagement (p. 382). After sitting up all night Oblomov collapses into bed and wakes up towards noon the next day suffering from high fever (p. 384). The day should be Thursday, but the voice of the landlady is heard saying: "It is Sunday today, we have been baking..." (p. 384). This final slip certainly indicates carelessness in writing. But we feel it also shows that the closely worked out timetable of the previous three weeks was a time device meant to create a sense of gradual unravelling. In itself the timetable is of no particular interest, and once the affair is ended, the author forgets its sequence and reaches for a different time device for his punch line. In this case, the recurring event, in the guise of the Sunday pie, is the symbol of a whole way of life based on domestic routine.

CHAPTER 4

OBLOMOV - PART IV

Part IV, the final part of the novel, differs from the other parts in the amount of time in Oblomov's life which it covers. Part I was confined in its action to one day. All excursions into the past were artificially included by the author, as dream or biographical information. Parts II and III each covered three months. Part IV deals with the eleven remaining years of Oblomov's life, and a few years after his death.

We may wonder at the greatly differing time pattern of the four parts. It certainly upsets the reader's sense of balance. The relatively short action of the novel seems squeezed between an overextended introduction and a too lengthy epilogue. The novel as a whole suffers from a lack of homogeneity. But we have seen how, within each part so far, the particular time pattern chosen fitted the time experience described. The typical day of Part I was well suited to a portrait based on the illusion of changelessness. The relentless pace of change, accompanying the ups and downs of love,

was reflected in the faster moving time of the two central parts, which was recorded week by week and day by day. The particular time experience of Part IV, however, could only be illustrated over a number of years.

We do not have to go searching very far for a definition of the new time experience. It is brilliantly described by the author himself in the opening paragraphs of the first chapter. (p. 385):

> God prošel so vremeni bolezni Il'i Il'iča. Mnogo peremen prines ètot god v raznyx mestax mira: tam vzvolnoval kraj, a tam uspokoil; ... tam mir usvoil sebe novuju tajnu bytija, a tam rušilis' v prax žilišča i pokolenija...
>
> I na Vyborgskoj storone, v dome vdovy Pšenicynoj, xotja dni i noči tekut mirno ... no žizn' vse-taki ne ostanavlivalas', vse menjalas' v svoix javlenijax, no menjalas' s takoju medlennoju postepennost'ju, s kakoju proisxodjat geologičeskie vidoizmenenija našej planety: tam potixon'ku osypaetsja gora, zdes' celye veka more nanosit il ili otstupaet ot berega i obrazuet priraščenie počvy.

In this original metaphor, the pace of change in Oblomov's life is contrasted with the more spectacular upheavals of the world around him, and is then likened to the infinitely slow pace of geological evolution. This description of what the passage of time means on Vyborgskaja storona, applies, primarily, to that first year after the break with Olga, which is covered in chapter 1. But, as Oblomov never leaves his lodgings, it can be assumed to apply also to the remainder of his life. A further clue, confirming the impression that the opening paragraph of chapter 1 can be taken as a keynote

for the whole of Part IV, is found in chapter 9, where the author once again uses a geological metaphor. In this case he contrasts the sound of thunder, across the mountains and heavens, and in a mouse hole, thus implying the difference in scale between Oblomov's life and that of the world at large. (p. 488). If geological time is going to be the time by which Oblomov is going to live the rest of his days, then we can easily accept that thirteen odd years is not too long to make the imperceptible change perceptible.

A.G. Cejtlin in his book on Gončarov makes a great deal of this notion of geological time. He goes so far as to say that it is:

> podlinnoe zerno ego xudožestvennogo metoda"[1]
> "on neoslabno sledit za medlennoju postepennost'ju žizni neulovimo menjajuščej svoi kontury"[2]
> "Glavnoe vnimanie svoe Gončarov otdaet imenno ètoj organičeskoj èvoljucii počvy v tex ee slojax, do kotoryx ne doxodit zabirajuščej po poverxnosti plug.[3]

Cejtlin thus recognises evolutionary time as the source of Gončarov's inspiration. But his statement that imperceptible change is the "seed" of Gončarov's "artistic method" cannot be accepted without some reservations. It would certainly be difficult, on the evidence of Part IV, to call Gončarov a master at rendering imperceptible change. In fact we are

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[1] A.G. Cejtlin, op. cit., p. 327.

[2] Ibid., p. 327.

[3] Ibid., p. 328.

inclined to regard it as the weakest part of the novel, precisely because the author has been unable to create a method adapted to the process of slow erosion which he described so well in chapter 1.

Let us examine first of all therefore, the device which the author uses to show the changes in Oblomov's life and the life of his dependents, over the period from the break with Olga to the end of Part IV, some thirteen years later. A look at the general structure of Part IV reveals the method adopted to be one of regular stocktaking at various intervals over the years. It takes the shape of visits paid by outside observers, Stolz or the author himself, to Oblomov and later to his widow, and includes a chance meeting with his old servant, several years after Oblomov's death.

In chapter 1 the author takes a look at Oblomov a year after his illness. Six months later, in chapter 2, Stolz pays a visit to Oblomov on his name-day. A year and a half later, in chapters 5 and 6, Stolz pays his second visit. Five more years elapse before Stolz visits Oblomov for the last time, in chapter 9. Five years later, and three years after Oblomov's death, the author comes to gaze at the old house, in chapter 10. Stolz's chance meeting with Zaxar in chapter 11 takes place at an undetermined date, maybe not long after chapter 10.

The author's method of indicating the passage of time is of the perfectly straightforward "a year went by" type:

"God prošel so vremeni bolezni Il'i Il'iča" (p. 385).
"Goda poltora spustja posle imenin" (p. 436).
"Pjatyj god pošel kak my ne videlis'" (p. 494),
"Prošlo let pjat'" (p. 498).

One might have expected the few chapters surrounding the visits to Oblomov to deal with the intervening years. But this is not the case. Chapter 3 takes place the day after Stolz's first visit and tells of a new scheme hatched by Ivan Matveevič and Tarant'ev. Chapter 4 describes the lives of Stolz and Olga and does not concern Oblomov at all. But even in chapter 4 the basic method is the same. The chapter starts with a chance meeting of Stolz and Olga in Paris a few months after the break with Oblomov. This amounts to a stocktaking of Olga's situation. We must remember that Stolz has not seen her since his departure from Russia in May, some nine months previously. Chapter 7 takes place the day after Stolz's second visit, and tells of the final discomfiture of Ivan Matveevič and Tarant'ev. Chapter 8 is devoted to Olga's married life with Stolz.

From this examination of those chapters not directly dealing with visits to Oblomov it can be seen that it is only the visits themselves which show what has been happening to Oblomov over the years. To take up the geological metaphor, it can be said that the author, rather than trying to show the mountain being eroded, has preferred to present views of it at

different stages of erosion.

These different views have a very familiar aspect. They are made up of description of what the observer sees, dialogue taking place during the visit, and background information by the author; in fact, the old portrait formula of Part I. The information supplied in this case is meant to fill the gap between visits, so that the intervening years are not altogether neglected.

Leaving aside for the moment the chapters dealing with Stolz and Olga, and Zaxar, let us examine the visits to Oblomov in chapters 1-2, 5-6, 9 and 10.

The first visit differs from the others, in that the background information supplied by the author in chapter one, precedes the actual visit by Stolz, which occurs in chapter 2. This in itself helps to create an impression of continuity, as, after the initial "a year went by," the author immediately tells us of the developments during that year. He also pursues his geological metaphor throughout the chapter, to stress the gradual nature of these developments. The metaphor is applied twice to Oblomov (pp. 385-386), once to Anis'ja (p. 388) and once to Agaf'ja Matveevna (p. 389). The author also uses double adverbs to indicate gradual change "malo po malu," twice on p. 386, and "vse bolee i bolee" (p. 394). Nevertheless, the fact remains that continuity is stressed strictly within the convention of direct information by the

author. We are allowed to share his godlike pedestal and scan at a glance a whole year of Oblomov's life. The author's pedestal has recently become very unpopular, but even if we accept the validity of the device, its use by Gončarov is overemphasised. The author never lets the reader forget his presence. For example he makes extensive use of hypothetical questions, eagerly answered by himself, as in the prolonged debate with imaginary doubters, who have to be convinced of Agaf'ja Matveevna's love for Oblomov: "Otčego ona s nekotoryx por stala sama ne svoja? - skažut možet byt' ... - Xorošo. A počemu..." etc. (pp. 389-390). These questions and answers are repeated four times. The very artificiality of this device gives the style a certain liveliness. But this liveliness disappears completely when Gončarov uses the method of short paragraphs, lined down the page, all starting with "on" or "ona" - a method already used, disastrously, in the portrait of Stolz in Part II.

No ona ne znala...
Ona kak budto...
Ona sama...
Ona mogla... (p. 391).

On každyj den'...
On sbližalsja...
On posle obeda...
On oxotno... (p. 394).

However interesting the information, this drumming in soon becomes tedious. Gončarov is not at his best when imparting information, and it is unfortunate that his choice of presenting

a series of mountain views, forces him to convey the gradual nature of the changes in Oblomov's life primarily through straight information.

As we get nearer to the time of the visit, change comes temporarily to a stop, and the picture presented is that of a settled way of life. This is immediately apparent in the use of the timeless present of habit, as in the last two pages of chapter 1 (pp. 395-396): "Sidit i kurit i gljadit kak ona š'et, inogda skažet čto nibud' ... Nikakix trebovanij ne pred"javljaet Agaf'ja Matveevna..." etc. The chapter ends with an illustrative dialogue, which sums up the new relationship between Oblomov and his landlady. When Stolz arrives in chapter 2, he takes in a well established situation, confirmed by a brief description of Oblomov's name-day celebrations. Oblomov, thoroughly at home, is sitting down to a gourmet meal shared by the whole household. (p. 398).

In this first visit the logical and chronological order is maintained, and because the author provides information before describing Oblomov's settled way of life, we are left with the impression of gradual change. But in subsequent visits the order is reversed. In chapters 5, 9 and 10, without any preliminaries, we are faced with a description of a way of life. Each time the present of habit testifies to the fact that this way of life is well established. Far from stressing the element of continuity, the author plays

deliberately on the contrasts generated by the changes which have taken place since the previous visit. This is particularly true of chapter 5, which starts with a dramatic exclamation: "Bože moj! kak vse mračno, skučno smotrelo v kvartire Oblomova" (p. 436). The reader, duly surprised, is then treated to a detailed description of Oblomov's appearance, clothing and eating habits, which have all deteriorated to an unbelievable extent. Clothes and curtains are all in tatters, after the relatively short time of a year and a half (p. 436). The author may well ask "Čto že èto značit?" (p. 437). An explanation follows, giving all the necessary facts, but it becomes obvious that the author was more interested in the effect of shock through dramatic change than in trying to follow the stages of gradual impoverishment.

Oblomov's way of life, such as it is described at the beginning of chapter 9, is very different from that of chapter 5, but because his circumstances have changed back to normal, the contrast is not as sharply felt. All is now peace and plenty at Vyborgskaja storona. Nevertheless, the author has not given up the element of dramatic surprise, but in this case he achieves his effect by doing away with information altogether. The description of Oblomov's way of life, depending extensively on the use of the present of habit, and including a final illustrative little scene, goes right up to Stolz's arrival on p. 494. It is interrupted it is true by a

brief account of Oblomov's stroke. An event, it is to be noted, which in itself is sudden and unexpected, at least for Oblomov; like a real stroke of lightning in the "mousehole" of Vyborgskaja storona: "Vdrug vse peremenilos'" (p. 488). But the former way of life, with a few alterations, is quickly re-established, as we can see from the return to the present, after a brief narrative in the past perfect "Vot Il'ja Il'ič idet medlenno po doroge" (p. 489).

We are led to believe that since Stolz restored his wealth five years ago, nothing worth noting has happened in Oblomov's life, except the stroke. But the author is keeping a real surprise up his sleeve. The reader cannot have failed to have noticed a new member in Oblomov's household, a little boy aged three "kakojto rebenok let trex" (p. 490); yet no explanation is given for his presence, and the author waits until Oblomov's dialogue with Stolz, to make a dramatic revelation:

> - Èta ženščina...čto ona tebe...
> - Žena! - pokojno proiznes Oblomov
> Štol'c okamenel
> - A ètot rebenok - moj syn! (p. 497).

The author has deliberately kept the reader in the dark in order to effect a melodramatic surprise. What is more, no information follows the revelation of this crucial change in Oblomov's life, and we shall never know more than the bare facts, that Oblomov married his housekeeper, and had a son. Here, more than anywhere else, we are led to question the

author's reputation as a portrayer of imperceptible change. Surely it is through a process of slow erosion, and gradual growth of feeling, that Oblomov and Agaf'ja Matveevna came first to be lovers, and then man and wife? Yet the maturing of the relationship is not documented. And indeed we do assume, from what we know already, that Oblomov and Agaf'ja Matveevna must have gradually developed a close relationship over the years. We are therefore quite ready to accept their marriage, and the surprise is in the telling, rather than in the fact itself. That this assumption comes naturally into our imagination is proof rather of the author's literary skill, than of a study of erosion.

Chapter 10, which could be entitled, 'A last visit by the author to Oblomov's house,' follows the same pattern as chapter 5. First we have the picture of a totally unfamiliar way of life, but one that has already become settled and well established, as is gathered once more from the use of the present of habit. The author is again trying to convey change through shock and surprise. "A vnutri domika kakie peremeny! Tam vlastvuet čužaja ženščina, rezvjatsja ne prežnie deti" (p. 499). And again, the reader's bewilderment is reflected in the author's questions: "Čto že stalo s Oblomovym? Gde on? Gde? - Na bližajšem kladbiščе pod skromnoj urnoj pokoitsja telo ego, meždu kustov, v zatiš'e."(p. 499). We should note here the most effective contrast between the

rhythmic flow of the answer, reflecting the peace of death, and the frantic questioning preceding it. The author has risen above simple melodrama through his artistic gift; but his intention is still to be melodramatic, and the shock of revelation has been carefully prepared, by the unfamiliar scene and the anxious questions.

In the case of Oblomov's death the reader is not denied background information. After the initial shock, the author gives a full account of the circumstances of Oblomov's death, and of Agaf'ja Matveevna's life since her widowhood. The imparting of this information follows the usual pattern. On page 502, five paragraphs, each starting with "ona" tell us about the widow's state of mind; but, on page 503, the author tries to convey gradual change through the use of comparative adverbs: "S letami ona ponimala svoe prošedšee vse bol'še i jasnee i taila vse glubže, stanovilas' vse molčalivee i sosredotočennee."

We have been trying to show in this study of the portrayal of change in Oblomov's life, that Gončarov has used methods strangely inappropriate to the experience of change as slow erosion. He seems to relish the dramatic element in change, and to enjoy stunning the reader with vivid portraits of contrasting ways of life; so that, even in a situation which clearly resulted from slow erosion, he saw a potential for melodramatic revelation. But, from the point of view of

readability, Gončarov's methods certainly have their merits. Surprise and curiosity keep the reader's interest alive, foiling the tedium of information. This can be appreciated when these chapters dealing with Oblomov are compared with those devoted to the lives of Stolz and Olga (chapters 4 and 8).

There are no vivid pictures of the way of life of Stolz and Olga. It is described in the most general and abstract terms: their house "is permeated with" life, intellectual curiosity and good taste (p. 460); they do nothing in particular, but they do it without boredom or apathy (p. 465). Stolz's occupations remain as mysterious as ever, but his views on life and love are ponderously expounded, in a style reminiscent of his portrait. His awesome virtue seems to deter the author from his usual lively intrusions: there are no hypothetical questions, or dramatic answers. The only outstanding feature of these chapters is the story of Olga's maturing. In chapter 4 we see her growing love for Stolz and her struggle with the memory of Oblomov; and chapter 8 tells of her maturing in marriage, up to the exalted level of her husband, and it has been hinted, even beyond.[4]

We find therefore, that the experience the author tried to convey in the chapters on Stolz and Olga is one of gradual change, somewhat like that of Oblomov, or, more

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[4]N.A. Dobroliubov, in the final passage of "Čto takoe Oblomovščina," is of the opinion that Olga will eventually leave Stolz.
I.A. Gončarov v russkoj kritike, p. 93.

particularly, Agaf'ja Matveevna. But the elimination of all elements of description, of contrasts, surprise, and the author's active participation, does not seem to make for a better rendering of gradual change. We are simply left with unrelieved information, which in each chapter, culminates in a long dialogue of confession by Olga and sermon by Stolz - not a very promising combination.

Perhaps the happiest formula for the portrayal of change in Part IV is achieved in chapter 11, as a sort of postscript to the novel, describing a chance meeting with Zaxar some time after Oblomov's death. The elements are the same as in the other chapters, except for the absence of the author.

It starts with the usual surprise effect: the "normal type of beggar," pointed out by Stolz to his literary friend, turns out to be Zaxar. But the description is cut to a minimum, and goes no further than Zaxar's appearance (p. 504). Moreover it is not necessary to go further, for Zaxar moves and speaks like the beggar he has become. There is a marked improvement in the imparting of information, which is left entirely to Zaxar himself. He describes, in his own inimitable style and with his own interpretations, the events which have led to his present condition. It is up to the reader now to draw his conclusions from what he hears and sees, for the author is no longer at his elbow.

In fact the author is out there, talking to Zaxar, and

in a last flourish, playing for a completely gratuitous effect, Gončarov reveals that Stolz's literary friend is in fact himself. The long tale of Oblomov has been told to him by Stolz, after the meeting with Zaxar. Time has come full circle, as we are thrown back in imagination to the beginning of the novel. This is a well worn literary device, meaningless in itself and indeed almost unworthy of an author who has used some much subtler devices in the course of the novel.

We have seen that the author uses predominantly a method of regular stocktaking in his portrayal of Oblomov's life over the years, in which gradual change is mainly conveyed through background information. Nevertheless a pattern of change also emerges from both the juxtaposition of the different pictures of Oblomov's way of life, and the dialogues with Stolz. Looking now at the content of Part IV we shall try and define the nature of these changes.

The most obvious pattern of change which emerges from the juxtaposition of the descriptions of Oblomov's way of life is change due to outside circumstances. Oblomov is robbed twice by Ivan Matveevič and Tarant'ev, and is saved twice by Stolz who appears from nowhere to restore his fortunes. This change is quite arbitrary, but it acquires a wider meaning through its link with the transformations of the distant Oblomovka, much talked of, though never seen. Oblomovka is

neglected under Oblomov, then exploited under Ivan Matveevič, until, finally, Stolz puts it in order, and brings it into the mainstream of progress.[5] This particular pattern of change can best be understood as corresponding to the first part of Gončarov's geological metaphor: the passage of time as it is felt in the world, made up of incessant ups and downs. We even find a parallel between the author's reference to new life piercing through the old, in the first paragraph of chapter one (p. 385), and Stolz's final words, promising to take Oblomov's son to the new Oblomovka as he says goodbye to the old one, personified by Oblomov himself. (p. 498).

These changes, brought in by the outside world, have very little effect on Oblomov. Poverty means little more than a switch from oysters to mutton, and as for Oblomovka, Oblomov's lack of interest is such that it even discourages Stolz from mentioning to him the great transformation which has taken place (p. 498). Cejtlin's "plough," preparing for new life, is quite unable to touch Oblomov. It is only due to the methods chosen by the author, that external change, which is only a background to Oblomov's slower pace of development, acquires such prominence.

Oblomov's own pace of change, once again because of the

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[5] A. Mazon particularly noted the feeling of the passage of time produced by the fluctuations of Oblomov's fortunes and the transformations of Oblomovka.
A. Mazon, op. cit., p. 146.

method chosen, is more taken for granted than actually portrayed. The overpowering impression, is that of a way of life in which such a pace of change would be natural, rather than of change itself.

This is the Oblomovka way of life, as is explicitly pointed out several times by the author: "Zdes' ta že Oblomovka, tol'ko gaže," says Stolz (p. 401). Agaf'ja Matveevna herself becomes the incarnation of the spirit of Oblomovka:

> V Agaf'e Matveevne, v ee večno dvižuščixsja loktjax ... voploščalsja ideal togo neobozrimogo kak okean i nenarušimogo pokoja žizni, kartina kotorogo neizgladimo legla na ego dušu v detstve, pod otečeskoj krovlej. (p.394).

Oblomovka is recognizable immediately by its time values. It is life pinned down to recurring events, the most important of all being mealtimes; in fact everything revolves round the kitchen on Vyborgskaja storona. There are then the seasons, and the special occasions:

> Ivanov den'
> Il'in den'
> Na maslenice i na Svjatoj...ezdili na guljan'e. Letom otpravljalis' za gorod, v Il'inskuju na Poroxovye Zavody, i žizn' čeredovalas' obyčnymi javlen'jami. (p. 488).

But if time, as the medium of the ever recurring, is the basis of life in Oblomovka, time as a medium of change cannot be entirely dismissed. Although the seasons come and go as in the previous year, erosion was at work, says the author in chapter 1. Life goes on. But in the very comparison chosen by the author lies a clue to the attitude to change in

Oblomovka, which helps to make it almost imperceptible. It is an attitude of total passivity. When change is looked at in the same light as a geological process it can only be endured, for the consideration of change deliberately initiated, or steered towards a goal, cannot occur in such a context. It certainly did not occur to the inhabitants of the original Oblomovka, who sat passively on the banks of the river of life, waiting for things to happen (Part I, p. 126). When change is reduced to the unavoidable, and when it amounts to no more than imperceptible erosion, it can be comfortably ignored and the cherished illusion of permanence can be maintained. More dramatic change, like Oblomov's stroke, is regarded in the same light, as a natural disaster; a bolt of lightening, is the author's expression (p. 488). The only response can be that of passive endurance, followed by a prompt return to a stable routine, now slightly altered to accommodate the disability.

The reader's familiarity with the Oblomovka of Oblomov's childhood, plus the evidence he has now acquired that Vyborgskaja storona is simply another Oblomovka living by the same time values, induces him to accept, on trust, the slow pace of change in Oblomov's life. In so far as the author actually traces out the progress of this slow change, it can be seen to follow a gradual acceptance over the years of the values of Oblomovka. This is best illustrated by comparing

the three dialogues with Stolz, which take place in chapters 2, 5 and 9.

The first dialogue, in chapter 2, is a repetition of all the dialogues with Stolz in Part II. It follows the previous pattern: pretence on Oblomov's part that he is still working on his plan (p. 399), Stolz urging him to immediate action, and Oblomov stalling for time "Kak že vdrug na toj nedele" (p. 401). Once more Stolz repeats his message of 'work for work's sake:' "Ax esli by prožit' let dvesti, trista! skol'ko by možno bylo peredelat' dela!" (p. 403). In this typical statement the whole purpose of life seems confined to the understanding of time as a medium of action. Such a limited view can only be explained, as it was in Stolz's portrait, by the author's overriding desire to offer an antidote to stagnation, at the expense of broader considerations, such as the purpose of action.

It seems that we are back where we were before the incident with Olga. And yet we know that the chances now of Oblomov ever trying a life of action again are practically nil. He made his choice at the end of Part III; but it seems that a year and a half later he is still trying to deceive himself on the finality of his choice, and he does not want to accept Stolz's diagnosis of his situation "Stalo byt' nikogda?" (p. 399).

In the second dialogue with Stolz, another year and a

half later, Oblomov recognizes that no other life is possible for him. He has accepted the finality; but not without bitterness as it appears to him the result of failure rather than choice: "Bojus' zavisti; vaše ščastje budet dlja menja zerkalom, gde ja budu videt' svoju gor'kuju i ubituju žizn'; a ved' už ja žit' inače ne stanu, ne mogu" (p. 447).

Five years later, in the last dialogue with Stolz, Oblomov's attitude has changed again. He has accepted his way of life as final, but by now, he has taken it up as a deliberate choice, fully aware of what he has lost, and as a result has grown in dignity:

> "Ne delaj naprasnyx popytok, ne ugovarivaj menja: ja ostanus' zdes'"- Stol'c s izumleniem pogljadel na svoego druga. Oblomov pokojno i rešitel'no smotrel na nego" (p.495).
> "Ne napominaj, ne trevož' prošlogo: ne vorotiš'!" govoril Oblomov s mysl'ju na lice, s polnym soznaniem rassudka i voli. (p. 496).

Oblomov, understanding fully the shortcomings of the life he is leading, nevertheless accepts it as the one best suited to himself, such as he is "S tem mirom, kuda ty vlečeš' menja, ja raspalsja na vsegda...Ja priros k ètoj jame bol'nym mestom: poprobuj otorvat'- budet smert'." (p. 496). Oblomov seems to have found his balance in the new Oblomovka, and has even come to an approximation of his ideal of life, albeit without much poetry (p. 486). In the face of Oblomov's relative happiness, Stolz's shouts of "pogib," "pogib" become very much a matter of opinion.

Stolz's opinion is clear enough: Oblomov is finished,

totally destroyed; so much so, that he never wants to see him again.

The same cannot be said about the author. He too seems to have undergone imperceptible change. At the end of Part IV, there is a softening of the hard, hamletic questions of Part II, and a more lenient attitude towards the values of Oblomovka than there was in the Dream. Can the quiet life be a meaningful life? And what about the dehumanizing effects of standstill on the personality? There is little trace of them in Oblomov as he appears at the end of his life.[6] He has gained in dignity, and all taints of the pathological have disappeared. But then, life in Oblomovka, as has already been pointed out when studying Part I, has a big advantage over Oblomov's life as depicted at the beginning of the novel: it is not entirely severed from outside reality. The pace may be slow, and the illusion of changelessness powerful, but the experience of time is not limited to the inner flow of consciousness.

The author does not change his attitude without some reservations. He tells us that Oblomov has neglected "the stern demands of duty and purpose," and "dug the grave of his

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[6] A.V. Družinin, in his article "Oblomov," Biblioteka dlja čtenija, XII (1859) stresses the disparity between the portrait of Oblomov in Part I and in the rest of the novel. He attributes the more negative aspect of Part I to the influence of the "natural" school, but goes too far in his apology of the later Oblomov.
I.A. Gončarov v russkoj kritike, pp. 168-169.

other self" (p. 488). But such pompous and vague statements carry little conviction. The general impression is that if Oblomov's life is not the best that man can aspire to, it is at least a possible life, which can have a meaning of its own.

The author humourously refers to the new found philosophy of "the Plato of Oblomovka," which leads Oblomov to reflect that: "Žizn' ego ne tol'ko složilas', no i sozdana daže predznačena byla tak prosto, nemudreno, čtoby vyrazit' vozmožnost' ideal'no pokojnoj storony čelovečeskogo byt'ja." (p. 487).

So Oblomov sees himself as living proof of the possibility of ideal peace in human life. Everybody may not want such peace. Stolz certainly does not. The author himself may feel that the sacrifice of all other potential is too high a price to pay, but he does not deny Oblomov the right to make his claim. His conclusion seems to be that there is a place for Oblomovka in human experience, if only as a response to a deep seated longing for a timeless earthly paradise of peace, innocence and plenty.

It is in a dream of such a paradise, that past and present become fused, and the return to Oblomovka is finally consumated. (p. 493). This waking dream, which occurs just before Stolz's arrival for his last visit, is one of the most

interesting passages in the novel.[7] It was not included in the study of the structure of Part IV, because it is the exception in Gončarov's methods. Gončarov rarely portrays the inner life. Whatever we know of the character's thoughts, philosophy or emotions, we learn from the edited version supplied by the author. The interesting point is that on the rare occasions when he does portray the inner life in Oblomov, he does it in the form of the stream of consciousness. This was noted in Part I, and we now find here another example of the same approach. The introductory paragraph perfectly describes the state of semi-sleep in which the mind is free-wheeling and at the same time registering sensual perceptions:

> Eta zadumčivost' byla ne son i ne bdenie: on bespečno pustil mysli brodit' po vole, ne sosredotočivaja ix ni na čem, pokojno slušal mernoe bienie serdca i izredka rovno migal, kak čelovek, ni na čto ne ustremljajuščij glaz. (p. 493).

What goes on in Oblomov's mind is still narrated by the author, but he keeps his comments to a minimum. A sense of immediacy is created through the use of the present, which is not here the present of habit, but the actual present of the experience being lived out before the reader. The experience depicted is a time experience, the feeling of déjà vu, in which past and present are fused.

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[7] This is the only passage outside Part I quoted by D.S. Lixačev, when examining the importance of time in Oblomov, and the one which prompted his reference to Proust and Joyce.

The author follows the process step by step. In a state of half slumber, images of the present, such as Agaf'ja Matveevna sewing, and noises like the snapping of bitten off thread, suddenly seem overwhelmingly familiar. Time and space become so confused that the mind desperately gropes for bearings among intimations of "something," seen "somewhere," "sometime" before:"Ego osenjaet kakaja-to, byvšaja uže gde-to tišina ... i iz glubiny ego vospominanij voznikaet znakomyj gde-to vidennyj im obraz. On dobiralsja kogda i gde slyšal on èto." (p. 493). Finally, the past asserts itself, Oblomov sees his mother and her guests sewing in the dark living room of Oblomovka. At this point the fusion is complete: "Nastojaščee i prošloe slilis' i peremešalis'." (p. 493). It is a new experience in which images and sounds of the present take place, quite naturally, in the past. Thus it is without surprise that we see Oblomov's old nurse point to Agaf'ja Matveevna, and call her "Militrisa Kirbit'evna," the fairy tale princess, dispenser of love and riches. The barking of the real dog outside, makes Oblomov wonder whether Stolz has arrived with his father from the nearby village; and as real steps come nearer and nearer, he calls out "Andrew" to the child of his dream. The sight of the adult Stolz standing in front of him, startles Oblomov back to the present. This last twist is perhaps a little too neatly contrived. What a coincidence that Stolz, absent for five years, should time his arrival to fit exactly into the sequence

of Oblomov's dream.

There is a striving for effect apparent in the ending, and, it might be said, that the whole of the day-dream is also contrived to identify Oblomov's way of life with Oblomovka, and beyond, with the longed for land of milk and honey. Quite obviously, this is a day-dream with a message; and we can only wonder at how well the device fits the message. The similarity between Oblomovka and Vyborgskaja storona is hardly a surprise revelation. It has been noted how this point has been repeatedly emphasized by the author. But in the day-dream we actually see Oblomov's old and new life fused into one. The day-dream is also an ideal way of making tangible the meaning of Oblomovka as an earthly paradise. For only in a state of half slumber could Oblomov actually feel that he had reached the land of milk and honey, and actually see the transfiguration of Agaf'ja Matveevna, the homely housewife, into the fabled Militrisa Kirbit'evna.

So we can conclude that although some reservations must be made regarding the methods used by the author to convey gradual change over the years, we can only admire the way in which, with the use of a further time device, he has illustrated the final stage of Oblomov's life: his return to Oblomovka and his complete surrender to the ideal of timeless earthly paradise.

Changes associated with Oblomov's life, are not the

only ones portrayed in Part IV. This part differs from the others in the number of characters it contains. Part I was built around a central character; Part II around a couple; in Part III Agaf'ja Matveevna was introduced as an outside influence; in Part IV, she becomes a character of equal weight with Oblomov himself, and as a couple they are balanced by the couple Olga-Stolz.

In these two couples, it is the women who undergo the most noticeable changes. Oblomov's attitudes change over the years, but there is no momentous upheaval of his personality. Stolz is immovable, set in perfection from the time of his portrait to the end of the novel. Agaf'ja Matveevna and Olga, on the other hand, grow and develop perceptibly over the thirteen years of Part IV.

It has already been noted that information by the author was the main, but unsatisfactory method by which this gradual change was conveyed. We also noted the similarity between Agaf'ja Matveevna and Olga. Their rate of development is the same, although their ways of life are very different. It seems as though the time values inherent in their ways of life were irrelevant to this reality of a different order: the blossoming of women under the influence of love.

This blossoming follows its own unpredictable pace. It was very sudden for Olga in Part II, when she matured overnight and Oblomov could hardly believe his eyes. Stolz is

equally surprised when he meets her in Paris after the end of the love affair, and can hardly recognize her (p. 410). But after this meeting we can only assume that her development is gradual, as there is no mention of sudden changes. In the case of Agaf'ja Matveevna, we are told that her development was gradual and unconscious, and it could therefore be fitted into the pattern of slow erosion typical of Oblomov's life.

Though both women react in the same way to the stimulus of love, their pattern of development follows different lines.

Agaf'ja Matveevna's is the most vividly portrayed. This is due mainly to her strong physical presence. In her concern for Oblomov she participates with her whole body to the fluctuations in his life. His sickness and recovery, and the ebb and flow of his fortunes make her alternately lose and gain weight, just as she blooms or withers as her household expands or shrinks. The "zenith" of her life is the few happy years of peace and plenty before Oblomov's death. She is then a picture of fulfillment: "Ona popolnela; grud' i pleči sijali tem že dovol'stvom i polnotoj ... Ona po prežnemu ne xodit, a plavaet ot škafa k kuxne, ot kuxni k kladovoj..." (p. 486).

Agaf'ja Matveevna's inner growth is motivated by love alone, and by a wisdom of the heart she acquires on her own. Fittingly enough, Oblomov's role in her development is purely

passive. His mere presence in her house, gentle, considerate, well mannered and white of skin, opens her eyes to a world different from that of her scheming brother and coarse husband. (p. 392). It is her own love for Oblomov, rather than his influence, however, which promotes her growth. As she nurses Oblomov after his illness, her life acquires a new meaning: the peace and comfort of Ilja Il'ič (p. 391). When Oblomov is stripped of his income, her horizon is further enlarged, and she learns to worry about other things than undercooked fish (p. 440). But it is after Oblomov's death that she reaches her full stature, dignified in her sorrow, and quietly aware of the rare happiness she had known. (p. 503).

Olga is a much paler figure in Part IV than Agaf'ja Matveevna, or than she was herself in Part II. This is due mainly to the fact that her development is treated very abstractly by the author. It is not pinned to any particular outside events, nor does it entail any physical changes. Her inner growth does not come from the heart, but is prompted by Stolz. Though love is undoubtedly at the source of her unbounded confidence in his guidance, her development is intellectual and spiritual. We have already noted how vague the author could be when stating positive values, the same vagueness and abstraction pervade Olga's growth.

Stolz sets to work immediately after meeting Olga again. First he feeds her mind, with amazing results "Èto

ditja, Ol'ga! - dumal on v izumlenii.- ona pererastaet menja." (p. 414). After their marriage he proceeds not only to broaden her mind further, but also to reform her character, correcting a certain lack of discipline (p. 464). He next sets her an ideal to be attained in time, something very high-minded he is unable to define himself, a sort of creative motherhood (p. 486). Though of course there is always the danger that she might not actually make it: "on s bojazn'ju zadumyvalsja, dostanet li u nej voli." (p. 468). The underlying assumption of male superiority in intellectual matters is so ingrained, that there is little danger of Olga's total emancipation. As already mentioned, a theory, based on Olga's dialogue with Stolz in chapter 8, has it that Olga eventually outgrows Stolz, and leaves him. This sounds like wishful thinking, and there is no reason why Stolz's explanation of Olga's restlessness should not be accepted. He feels that Olga's experience of "angst" simply proves that she has now matured enough to see the limits of man's happiness. She must learn to live with the discomfort of unanswerable questions, just as Stolz himself, and everybody else.[8] She does eventually grow "higher and higher," but

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[8]For Gončarov's own indifference to metaphysical questions, see:
A. Mazon, op. cit., p. 267.
A.G. Cejtlin, op. cit., p. 327.

only in the direction given by Stolz:

> Ona rosla vse vyše, vyše...Andrej videl, čto prežnij ideal ego ženščiny i ženy nedosjagaem, no on byl ščastliv i blednym otraženiem ego v Ol'ge: on ne ožidal nikogda i ètogo. (p. 477).

As for leaving Stolz, there is evidence to the contrary in the text itself: "Meždu tem i emu dolgo, počti vsju žizn' predstojala ešče nemalaja zabota podderživat' na odnoj vysote svoe dostoinstvo mužčiny." (p. 477). Olga, an alert and demanding pupil, keeps Stolz on his toes "nearly all his life," which seems to indicate that she never leaves her mentor. Had she left Stolz, it would only have been for another guide; just as, had she married Oblomov, she would have left him for "an eagle" "kotoryj ešče silnee i zorče ee." (p. 479).

Change, as it affects women appears, from what is learnt in Part IV, as a positive force. It is the only example in the novel of change understood as progress. It is completely different from the depressing, destructive agent of Parts II and III, and from the natural phenomenon, passively born, but best forgotten, which is change for Oblomov and the inhabitants of Oblomovka. Love and lover, working in time, make women blossom and expand to the limits of their personality. Love can work miracles, bringing maturity over night; and, over the years, a new awareness of life and self. But on the evidence of Part IV, it seems that the author also believed that only the man they loved could

guide women successfully towards more lofty intellectual or spiritual ideals.

We have found in Part IV, three different patterns of change, and one passage in which past and present are fused into one. Although this single passage is most successful, on the whole, Part IV is the weakest of all the parts of the novel in terms of time devices fitting time experiences.

The change pattern best illustrated by the methods used, is that of arbitrary change, the surprising ups and downs of life. This makes for readability, but it is a pattern which is in fact secondary, and should not overshadow what we take to be the main pattern, and the one peculiar to Oblomov: change as slow erosion. The author has no satisfactory device to convey this change directly. It is implied in static descriptions of a way of life, and stated by the author or guessed by the reader from the juxtaposition of successive scenes. Neither has the author found a satisfactory method, beyond the supply of information, to illustrate the third pattern of change, that of the gradual development of women under the influence of love. It runs parallel to the other patterns, and, in the case of Agaf'ja Matveevna, it is woven into the pattern of erosion.

Part IV, as the concluding part of the novel, also leaves the reader dissatisfied. The open time questions, which

were made to seem so vital, are eluded. Part IV offers a personal solution, valid for Oblomov only, to what were stated as universal questions: Oblomovka is right for Oblomov. It suits him better than the total stagnation of Part I, or the hectic pace of Parts II and III. It does not seem to destroy his personality. At the same time, it is obvious that the author does not recommend this solution for the whole of mankind.

The solutions offered by Stolz and the women in Part IV, are equally inconclusive.

For Olga and Agaf'ja Matveevna time is a positive medium of progress, but only because the author happens to believe that all women are very much in need of development. Their happy experience of time cannot therefore be universally relevant. It is significant that while both heroines grow and change throughout Part IV, Stolz and Oblomov remain the same. For them formative years are a thing of the distant past.

Stolz offers a straightforward solution in the unconditional acceptance of time as a medium of action and change. But this again is a personal solution, and as such does not represent a satisfactory answer to the time conflict described in Parts I and II, for the simple reason that Stolz has always been unaware that such a conflict existed.

Part IV, therefore cannot be considered as a satisfactory conclusion to the novel. Only the examination of the

novel as a whole can bring to light the universal message of Oblomov. Such an examination will be attempted at the end of the conclusion to this study.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Oblomov's four parts is now completed, and the first step of the conclusion will be to look at the novel as a whole. The novel presents the full story of Oblomov's life, from his childhood to his death, and the main time characteristic of this story is that its development is not continuous. One can in fact apply to the novel as a whole, the remarks made earlier about Part IV: the author's methods in conveying change, over a long period of time, do not promote an impression of continuity. They consist in presenting, at different moments in time, separate pictures of a settled way of life, contrasted in such a way as to indicate change and, when possible, to provoke curiosity and surprise. The time gap between these pictures is then filled in by the information provided by the author, which is particularly obvious in Part IV, where the device is used repeatedly and melodramatically; but it is also apparent in Parts I and II.

Oblomov's Dream is a picture of his way of life up to the age of fourteen; it is juxtaposed to the portrait in Part I which is that of an adult aged thirty-two. The

author gives some information on the eleven years preceding May 1st, when we first meet Oblomov. But the time gap between leaving Oblomovka and taking up employment is left largely undocumented, except for a little information about the university years which comes out in conversation with Stolz in Part II.

The author's attachment to the device of contrasting portraits is fully revealed in Part II, where he actually creates a time gap quite artificially, through a flash forward, in order to give us a picture of Oblomov's new, altered way of life, which is totally different from that of the portrait of Part I. As has been noted, this method has advantages, as the stunned reader asks no questions, and the author can fill the time gap without unduly dwelling on development. In the case of Part II, however, it could be argued that the technique is justified by the well known power of love to work miracles.

The author is much better at conveying continuity over a short period of time, as is seen in the portrayal of the growth and disintegration of Oblomov's love affair with Olga, in Parts II and III. But even in these parts, some reservations must be made. Part II consists of little episodes, and as each one replaces the other, the effect striven for is still that of contrast between what is now and what has been. This effect is important in the illustration of

Oblomov's negative attitude to change, but it is also indicative of the author's methods. Each episode is symbolic of the state of the love affair on one particular day. The next day we are presented with a new state symbolised by another incident. On a very small time scale this is not so different from the juxtaposition of portraits of a way of life over the years.

Part III is perhaps the only part where the author painstakingly traces a gradual development, which is in this case a gradual unravelling of a relationship. Nevertheless one must note the importance in Part III of the picture of the settled way of life on Vyborgskaja storona. The picture of Oblomov's day at Vyborgskaja storona is so powerful and attractive, that Olga and the demands of action could not possibly have triumphed over it.

The author's fragmentary approach to change in Oblomov's life may help explain the complete anarchy in the temporal framework of the novel. As has already been seen, Part I represents a single day of action time, but eighteen years of Oblomov's life, and centuries of the life of his ancestors. Parts II and III, on the other other hand only cover three months each of action time and also of Oblomov's life, whereas Part IV expands again, to accommodate eleven years of Oblomov's life plus a few years of the life of his family. The author is more concerned with the creation of a

unified picture of a particular phase of Oblomov's life, rather than with the unity of the novel as a whole. It has also been noted that the temporal framework of each part is one among the many time devices which the author puts to work, to illustrate the experience of time characteristic of each particular phase of Oblomov's life.

Another feature of Gončarov's methods, which hinders the promotion of a smooth development through time is the manipulation of time for the author's own convenience. One can point to the integration of the author's voice into the action in Part I, to the flash forward of Part II, also to the attempt at closing a time circle at the end of Part IV. This is achieved by the use of the artificial device of introducing the author into the narrative in the last paragraph, so that Stolz can tell him the story of Oblomov, "which is recounted here." (p. 507). The same closing of the time circle is also achieved through a much more subtle device, which is a time experience in itself: Oblomov's waking dream. Past and present are fused together, and time is seen to have gone full circle. This happens to correspond to a reality of Oblomov's life, as Oblomovka and Vyborgskaja storona are one and the same; but it is also a neat conclusion to the novel.

The author's direct addresses to the reader also contribute to the disruption of the feeling of continuity. This device belongs to the past, since it was much used by

Karamzin and Pushkin. The author tries to dissociate himself, as author, from his own narrative. The consequence, from the time point of view, is that the reader is not carried along in imagination on the flow of Oblomov's life. He is invited to hop about in time, with the same impunity as the author, travelling to the distant past in Oblomov's Dream, or accompanying the author on his periodic visits in Part IV, and always sharing in the author's surprise. "Where are we?," (p. 102) and "What has happened to Oblomov?" (p. 499) are remarks which do not add up to an effect of continuity.

The methods used by the author to convey continuity in Oblomov raise the problem of Gončarov's contribution to the development of the Russian novel.

In literary criticism, the novel of the 1850's, is generally considered to reflect a search for the epic. Thus, for instance, the standard work Istorija russkogo romana, states:

> Literatura mučdalas' i v inyx bolee spokojnyx, èpičeskix formax povestvovanija, vo vseoxvatyvajuščem analize i ob"jasnenii dejstvitel'nosti i vosproizvedenii vsej polnoty žizni, vzjatoj v istoričeskom dviženii i izmenenii.[1]

In this definition of the epic, the fullness of life is linked with the fullness of the flow of time. In this perspective, the works of Turgenev and Gončarov are seen as paving the way

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[1] Istorija russkogo romana (Akademija nauk SSSR, 1962), Vol. 1, p. 390.

towards the ultimate epic of Tolstoj:

> Gončarov, kak avtor "Oblomova," pošel inym čem Turgenev putem, bolee blizkim k xudožestvennoj sisteme Gogolja ... Na ètoj osnove, no rešitel'no ustranjaja gogolevskuju satiričeskuju ekspressiju, avtor "Oblomova" sozdal zakončennuju èpičeskuju formu romana.[2]

Strictly from the point of view of the flow of time, however, this statement can only be accepted with reservations, as all the methods which have been enumerated point away from the epic inspiration.

The truly epic dimension of Oblomov appears only in the very distant background to the main events of the novel. Life does flow on somewhere outside Oblomov's secluded quarters, as Oblomovka declines and prospers and enters a new era. A bright future is already taking shape somewhere in that outside world, as Stolz takes over the upbringing of Oblomov's son. The story of Oblomov himself however, which is the true subject matter of the novel, has not been treated in the epic vein.

The view of the novel as an epic of Oblomov's life can therefore be left aside, as the least satisfactory of its time aspects.

The novel, as conceived by Gončarov, is dominated by the portrait in Part I. Some features of this portrait give rise to a philosophical conflict, and this is the mainspring

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[2] Istorija russkogo romana (Moscow, 1962), p. 393.

of the action of the following three parts, in which three stages of Oblomov's life correspond to three different stages of the conflict. The interest of the novel, from the time point of view, lies in the fact that both the portrait and the conflict are based on particular ways of experiencing and understanding time. The author's literary merit lies in the interrelation to be found between the time devices he uses and the time experience he is trying to portray. This point has been made repeatedly in the analysis of the novel and can only be summarized once more in this conclusion.

The novel as a whole is undoubtedly dominated by the portrait of Part I, the portrait of a man who refuses to accept time as a medium of action and change. This portrait is backed up in Oblomov's Dream by the portrait of a whole society devoted to sleep, and the ritualization of the ever-recurring. It is a society, however, to which Oblomov no longer belongs. Oblomov's own state of sleep and stagnation differs from that of Oblomovka, in that his is totally divorced from outside reality. An original feature of the portrait is the introduction of the experience of time as stream of consciousness, the only experience left for Oblomov, who has excluded change and action from his life.

To illustrate Oblomov's stagnation the author uses a ready-made formula, that of the physiological sketch. The outstanding success of the formula, in this particular case,

resides in the fact that the time values inherent in it, such as changelessness and timelessness, become an important tool in the characterization of Oblomov. Gončarov also uses some pure time devices, such as suspense, and the integration of the author's voice into Oblomov's day. Among the author's achievements in Part I, we must also mention the fact that he manages to keep the reader alert, throughout a portrait of stagnation, by portraying such action as there is with the help of attention-binding devices, such as fast-moving dialogue and suspense, which themselves contribute to the characterization.

The philosophical conflict on which the novel is based is already evident within the portrait of Part I. It is made clear that Oblomov's way of life is justified, in his own eyes, by a philosophical attitude to time, which is measured against the universal standard of "čelovečnost'." This philosophy can therefore be judged on its own merits, quite independently from the fact that Oblomov's own adherence to it may not be the result of a free choice, but of sociological conditioning and psychological illness. Oblomov feels deeply that the ceaseless rush in time, which goes with active life is destructive of the wholeness of the human personality. True life for him is only possible after the rush is over, in a longed for, timeless Paradise; an earthly paradise, equated, in his mind, with life in the country.

Already made obvious by the whole treatment of the

portrait of Part I, the opposite side of the conflict gains weight through the portrait of Stolz, at the beginning of Part II, and is crystallized in the discussions between Stolz and Oblomov: to refuse to accept time as a medium of action and change means stagnation, and the very destruction of the personality Oblomov is trying to avoid. Oblomov, like Hamlet, has to make an impossible choice between two equally unsatisfactory alternatives. Love saves him from this necessity by hurling him into a life of moderate action and ceaseless change, which is depicted in the rest of Part II.

This experience is a negative one for Oblomov. All the time devices used in Part II, its episodic structure, the background of seasonal change, the repetitive use of key words referring to wilting and passing away, emphasize the relentlessness of change.

Oblomov's experimenting with time as a medium of action and change, already unnerving in Part II, turns into a nightmare in Part III. Several elements combine to consumate the end of the experiment, and with it, the end of Oblomov's love affair with Olga. Once more the author makes use of appropriate time devices. Mercilessly building up pressure, he underlines seasonal change, this time into the bleakest months of the year, and creates a powerful impression of disintegration by keeping an exact diary of Oblomov's hopeless struggle. A device already used in Part I, namely,

Oblomov's day at Vyborgskaja storona, as well as references to Agaf'ja Matveevna's attitude to time, establish her house as a haven of peace, and a humbler edition of Oblomovka. In Part III, Oblomov has already made his choice for the quiet life, preoccupied only with the problem of giving it some meaning.

Part IV describes the quiet life Oblomov enjoys with Agaf'ja Matveevna until the end of his life, in terms of a return to Oblomovka and to its time values. This return is expressed through a time device which is also a time experience: Oblomov's waking dream. It is also expressed through devices, similar to those of Part I, which are used to describe Oblomov's new way of life - a life characterized by the avoidance of all change. The unavoidable, and hardly perceptible, change of universal evolution, thus becomes the only time reality of Oblomov's life with Agaf'ja Matveevna. This aspect of Oblomov's life, however, is not adequately illustrated by the devices used by the author in Part IV.

The portrait of Part I, and the ensuing philosophical conflict, establish Oblomov as a time novel.

The final interpretation of the novel, however, must take into account the author's own position, in relation to the problems he describes. Which solution does he seem to recommend?

This question is not easy to answer, because of the lack of consistency in the author's attitude, which shifts considerably from one part to the next.

He is at his most critical in Oblomov's Dream. Behind the gentle humour of his description, there is a strong indictment of a society capable of smothering and maiming a perfectly healthy child, and offering him no future, other than sleep and ritualized routine. All interpretations of Oblomov as a novel of social indictment could find a certain justification in Oblomov's Dream, although it stands apart from the main body of the novel. In A.G. Cejtlin's words: "Fiziologičeskij analiz vydeljaet son Oblomova iz obščego korpusa romana i vmeste s tem delaet ètu glavu ideologičeskim centrom vsego proizvedenija."[3] But why should this independent sketch be raised to the status of an ideological centre, except for the reason that it is the one and only example of critical realism in the whole novel?

In the rest of the portrait of Part I, one finds the author is looking at Oblomov from a slightly different angle. His attitude is still critical, but his criticism is now directed at Oblomov, an individual who is searching for the wholeness of the human personality, in the wrong way of life. This way of life is not wrong because it may

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[3]A.G. Cejtlin, Stanovlenie realizma v russkoj literature (Moscow, 1965), p. 288.

be attributable to conditioning by a morally criminal social class, or to psychological illness, but wrong simply because it is destroying what it seeks to preserve. The author shows that he sympathizes with Oblomov, but his emphasis on destructive stagnation throughout the portrait implies that, for him, there can be no truly human life, without an acceptance of time as a medium of action and change.

In Part II, the author delegates his role of defender of time as a medium of action and change to Stolz, emphasizing how vital it is to make a stand against stagnation, by drawing up the portrait of Stolz as an antidote to Oblomov's ills. But once Stolz's portrait is drawn, the author seems to feel relieved of the responsibility for making the same stand himself. From Part II onwards, the author makes an official, consistent representation in favour of the active life, in the person of Stolz, whilst privately voicing his doubts and sympathy for Oblomov. In Part I, Oblomov's credibility was intentionally undermined, as he was described preaching human dignity, while lying prone on his couch. But in Part II, the author seems to agree with Oblomov's definition of the time problem as a choice between two equally unsatisfactory alternatives. This agreement is even voiced openly in the second half of Part II, when the author, in his own wistful comments, refers to the painful, relentlessness of change.

Part III is transitional, but in Part IV, Oblomov has made his choice for one of the unsatisfactory alternatives, that of the quiet life. Here the author's official and private voices diverge completely. Stolz remains adamant in his condemnation. But the author refuses to condemn. He seems no longer interested in promoting or condemning a particular way of life. In fact one finds in Part IV the greatest shift in the author's position as he quietly retires into subjectivism. The problem of choosing the most truly human way of life becomes irrelevant. Oblomov's dignity is shown to reside not in the way of life he leads, but in his consciously assuming the only sort of life for which he was fitted. Making the best of it, he testifies to one aspect of human nature to the exclusion of all others: the love of peace, the dream of timelessness.

To the confusion caused by the author's ambiguity must be added the confusion derived from his moral assessment of Oblomov. His general position is, that whatever may be said of Oblomov's attitude to time, his moral integrity is beyond doubt. The moral standards established by the author rest on a conception of goodness equated with innocence. Gross neglect of personal or social responsibility never appears to the author, or to Stolz, as a moral issue. On the other hand, they both greatly admire Oblomov's crystal-clear soul, and his dove-like qualities. These

standards of goodness could be Oblomov's own, so well do they fit in with his ideal of a timeless earthly paradise, in which good-hearted enjoyment is never clouded by any thought of responsible action. Only confusion can arise when the author borrows Oblomov's moral standards, yet condemns, as a dangerous illusion, the ideal of which they are an integral part.

The author's ambiguity helps us to understand the great variety of interpretations that have been put forward for Oblomov: from pathological case to saint, and from apostle of the patriarchal way of life, to its living condemnation. It is indeed difficult to offer a clear, all-embracing interpretation, when the author keeps changing his point of view from part to part.

A clear, streamlined solution to the central dilemma of the novel can be found in the person of Stolz. But, in his role of official mouthpiece, he represents the author's wishful thinking on the problems of time, rather than his assessment of reality. Certainly, the best solution would be to have no problems with time at all, to love it for the ever-renewed opportunity for action which it offers, and to see life as a joyous forging ahead. Yet it is difficult to give Stolz the final word in the novel because the author urges his view of time on Oblomov, without quite believing in it himself.

But if one dismisses Stolz's solution as too simple, one is left with the two unsatisfactory alternatives of Part II. Oblomov chooses the second alternative, that of the quiet life. The two versions of the quiet life, which are offered in Part I and in Part IV, represent two different ways of looking at Oblomov, and naturally lead to different interpretations.

On his own terms, as he is presented at the end of Part IV, Oblomov bears witness to man's deep-seated longing for a timeless earthly paradise, for an escape from the trap of perpetual change and perpetual rush. Oblomov's ideal remains enshrined for ever in the poetic timelessness of the Oblomovka of his dreams. One must also conclude that he succeeds in approximating to his ideal by reducing his life to the humble proportions of the house on Vyborgskaja storona, and living time at its slowest possible pace.

But if one looks at Oblomov, not on his own terms, but from the point of view of a possible universal solution to the problems of time, as the author does in Part I, the conclusion has to be that his alternative is not viable. The quiet way of life reduces human potential. The thought of a Russia full of Oblomovs naturally distressed Gončarov's contemporaries. But the author goes even further than loss of potential in his indictment of Oblomov's way of life. He

shows that it carries with it a danger of destruction of the personality. If man seeks an escape from time in sleep he destroys himself.

It is impossible to dismiss the strong case made for time as a medium of action and change in Part I. The final conclusion must be therefore that the author backs the alternative of the active life as the only realistic solution. It is a solution however, which is seen by the author as a necessary compromise with his deepest longings. In this respect the author stands very close to Oblomov. It is significant that he is closest to Oblomov in Part II, where Oblomov is struggling to keep up with a life of action and relentless change. His wistful remarks in this part echo Oblomov's misgivings.

The final message of Oblomov is a pessimistic commentary on the human condition, for the novel offers no hope of easy harmony between man and time. Gončarov does not see life in time in terms of Stolz's joyous striding forward. It is for him a painful struggle with the ever-frustrated desire to find rest at the end of the road, accompanied by the gnawing feeling that something precious in man is lost under the ceaseless pressure of relentless change.

The lasting interest of the novel is to be found in the setting of the problems of man's life in time, and in

the character of Oblomov, who is seen as knight and victim in a futile struggle.

The novel's continued popularity however, cannot be attributed entirely to the universality of its content. It rests, in the last resort, on its continued impact as a work of art. As such, its success depends on the well proven concept of unity of form and content. In the words of A.A. Mendilow: "The content of a novel could not become itself without technique, and it becomes what it is because it has been caught in a particular way; the artistic worth of a novel resides largely in its being caught in the only way inevitable to it."[4]

The study of the interrelation of the time devices used in the novel with the time experiences depicted, can only lead to the conclusion that Gončarov's Oblomov is indeed a great work of art.

[4] A.A. Mendilow, op. cit., p. 234.

APPENDIX - TIME IN GONČAROV'S OTHER WORKS

The purpose of this Appendix is to examine, briefly, Gončarov's other works, in the light of the study of Oblomov. The original time patterns of each work will be defined, and a comparison made between the time devices and time experiences found in Gončarov's other works, and those already examined in Oblomov.

I. Obyknovennaja istorija

Obyknovennaja istorija,[1] as Gončarov's first novel, is of special interest as it sets Oblomov in the perspective of Gončarov's earlier work, showing the author's development between the two novels.

Let us note however, that from the time point of view, there could never be a true comparison between Oblomov, and An Ordinary Story, because An Ordinary Story is not a time novel, in the sense that the time experience is not part of its subject matter. Although the hero, Alexander Aduev, comes from the same background as Oblomov, he has not been affected in his attitude to time. In this novel the author points to another aspect of the same upbringing: the fostering of a romantic view of life. Such a view could have a time dimension, if only in the inclination to daydream, but this side of the romantic character is not touched upon. Instead, the author concentrates on the unduly high expectations the young romantic has of love, friendship and artistic creativity. In Oblomov the interrelation of time devices and time experiences depicted, also creates a complexity, which is absent from An Ordinary Story. Nevertheless, like any other work of fiction, this

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[1] Sovremennik, III, IV (1847).
I.A. Gončarov - Sobranie sočinenij (Moscow, 1954), Vol. I, 314 pages.

novel unfolds in time, and it depicts the development of the hero in time: two features it has in common with Oblomov, and on which a comparison can be based.

Time factors cannot be dissociated from the general structure of the novel, which has to be defined before those factors can be studied. An Ordinary Story is undoubtedly the most contrived of Gončarov's novels, built on a pattern imposed by the author. This pattern could be rejected as too "schematic" or "dogmatic," as it was by A. Grigor'ev.[2] Alternatively, it can be admired as "classical," a term used by A. Mazon in his general conclusion. He sees in An Ordinary Story:

> Une inspiration essentiellement realiste, toute saturée de la médiocrité des hommes et de la vie, mais disciplinée par certaines habitudes intellectuelles d'ordre, d'arrangement de proportion et de sobrieté en un mot un sujet réaliste, traité par un disciple inconscient des classiques.[3]

The classics referred to here are Puškin and Karamzin. Similar terms, such as "harmony" and "symmetry," are also used by N.I. Pruckov in relation to An Ordinary Story.[4] An Ordinary Story, however, lacks the subtlety of Puškin's true balance, and sobriety. If the term "classical" is to be used, it must be used much more loosely; and in fact

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[2]A. Grigor'ev, Polnoe sobranie sočinenij (Moscow, 1918) Vol. X, pp. 35-36.

[3]A. Mazon, op. cit., p. 321.

[4]N.I. Pruckov, op. cit., p. 38.

A. Mazon earlier in his study uses it in this fashion, to indicate a certain deliberate simplification, and ordering of the subject matter:

> Il [le talent d'observation] l'a conduit à concentrer son attention toute entière sur un seul objet pour réduire en idées claires le jeu complexe de nos pensées et de nos sentiments et construire suivant une formule limpide un roman admirablement logique, pareil au drame le plus ingénieusement agencé. Il lui a presque imposé, en un mot, un système de composition tout classique, un peu factice à vrai dire.[5]

Some reservations could be made as to the logic of the novel's development. Belinsky found Alexander's conversion in the epilogue quite inconsistent with his characterization.[6] On the whole however, it has to be agreed that the formula of the composition is indeed "crystal clear." It is evident in the neat opposition of the two main characters, the ultra romantic nephew, Alexander Aduev, and his ultra practical uncle, Petr Ivanyč Aduev. It is evident in the kind of experiences Alexander undergoes in Petersburg, which being both logical and artificially contrived, are specifically designed to destroy all of Alexander's illusions one by one. They can be listed, as disappointment in love, disappointment in friendship, disappointment in literary ambition and disappointment in life

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[5] A. Mazon, op. cit., p. 77.

[6] V.G. Belinskij, "Vzgljad na russkuju literaturu 1847 goda," Sovremennik, III, section 3 (1848). Gončarov v russkoj kritike (Moscow, 1958), p. 51.

in general.

A. Mazon feels that in Oblomov, and in his subsequent works, Gončarov has moved away from the artificiality of An Ordinary Story: "L'auteur desormais ne dominera plus son inspiration, il la subira et cette inspiration subie se créera elle-même sa propre technique ... le sujet se developpera de lui-même comme un organisme vivant."[7] The close relation of technique to subject matter in Oblomov corroborates this assessment of Gončarov's development as a writer. There is however, no watershed between An Ordinary Story and Oblomov, and some artificial features are very prominent in the latter novel. We only have to think of the contrast Oblomov-Stolz. The examination of the time of the action in An Ordinary Story also reveals that some of the devices which are here part of the artificial mould of the novel, have also been used in Oblomov.

One of the time characteristics of An Ordinary Story is the author's determination to keep within the present of the action. This contributes to the unity of the composition and, consequently, to the neatness of the whole scheme. Unfortunately, a lack of flexibility, and too much "logic" in the furtherance of this aim, leads to the use of devices, which only emphasise the artificiality of the

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[7] A. Mazon, op. cit., p. 329.

general structure.

Of the methods used, some are justifiable. In An Ordinary Story, there is, certainly, what might be called a classical restraint in time. The author describes eight years of the hero's life, contained between his departure from, and his return to, the country, where he spends a further two years. The epilogue takes place four years later, so that fourteen years have been covered in all. The author never steps outside the confines of these fourteen years, so that the hero has no past and no future, and neither have any of the people who cross his path. The one exception is Julija Tafaeva, whose literary education has a direct bearing on her love affair with Alexander. (pp. 199-204). There is no general flow of life outside the main line of the narrative, and we are strictly confined to Alexander's adventures. More surprising, perhaps, is how seldom the author strays from the present of the action, into the timeless present of the typical. His portraits are concise, being limited to a few physical and moral features. There is, again, one exception: the full-scale portrait of Anton Ivanyč, complete with description of habitual behaviour and social assessment. (pp.16-17).

There are no descriptions of a way of life which, in its changelessness, would include time beyond that of the action. There is a striking contrast in this respect, between the country scenes of An Ordinary Story (Part I,

chapter 1 - Part II, chapter 6) and "Oblomov's Dream." Here, a particular way of life is expressed, solely through dialogue and incident directly connected with the action of the novel, in this case, Alexander's departure and return. An Ordinary Story is not, however, without its one little physiological sketch, which could have been entitled: "First impressions of a provincial visitor to Petersburg." It starts with the characteristically generalized statement: "Tjažely pervye vpečatlenija provinciala v Peterburge," (p. 37) and goes on for two pages in the timeless present of the typical.

Oblomov is much less limited in time than An Ordinary Story. The scale is larger, taking in Oblomov's life from the cradle to the grave, as well as that of his ancestors, and a glimpse at his son's. A flow of life background is given by the ups and downs of Oblomovka, and above all, extensive use is made of the timeless present of habit. There is a fullness of time in Oblomov, which is absent from An Ordinary Story.

But the author was quite entitled to keep within the time of the action, simply by not straying out of it. What is less excusable is his attempt at inserting, for this purpose, elements into the action which do not naturally belong there. One device favoured by the author is the letter. The reading of the letter takes place as it were, on stage, within the present of the action. The author can thus pretend that he is not stopping the action when he has information to provide or

comments to make. These are simply worked into the content of the letter which is being read. Some letters are more justifiable than others. The three letters received by Petr Ivanyč, which complete the author's picture of country life, do have some sort of connection with Alexander's visit. (pp. 26-31). The two letters which Alexander writes from the country at the end of the novel, are a way of presenting an analysis of his state of mind, but then he might have wanted to write such letters. (pp. 292-296). It is more difficult to accept the letter dictated to the nephew by the uncle (pp. 50-51), which is in fact a self-portrait in the present of habit. This is supposed to contradict another portrait, found in another earlier letter, written independently by Alexander (pp. 44-45). Yet another letter, supposedly from the editor of a journal to whom Alexander's literary work has been sent, is used to expound the author's views on literature. (pp. 178-179).

Another device is the disguise of philosophical statements into dialogue. The uncle and the nephew have interminable conversations about life and love, which admittedly are fitted neatly into the present of the action. But the artificiality of these conversations destroys their purpose. The reality of the present of the action is undermined when the action is interrupted for so long, for such abstract discussions. In Part I, chapter 2, the dialogue between uncle and nephew takes up 21 pages out of 37; in chapter 3, 17 pages out of 21; and in

chapter 4, all of its 17 pages. In Part II, the discussions are somewhat less prominent, as Alexander, understandably enough, has learned to avoid his uncle. In chapter 1 there are 11 pages of dialogue out of 25, in chapter 2, 8 pages out of 15, and in chapter 5, 11 pages out of 16.

In Oblomov the author has not completely outgrown this sort of artificial manipulation of the time of the action. But a device like the integration of the voice of the author into the present of the action in Part I is not used in Oblomov for its own sake; it contributes to the characterization, by emphasizing the periods of inaction in Oblomov's day.

The second time factor to be examined in An Ordinary Story is the role time plays in the development of the hero. As the title of the novel implies, it is quite "ordinary" for a young man to be a romantic at twenty, and to marry for money at thirty-four. This is all part of growing up, a process which naturally requires a certain amount of time for its completion. The passage of this time is duly recorded by the author: Alexander is twenty when he leaves home (p. 10). Two years go by between chapters 2 and 3 (p. 63). Another year elapses between the end of Part I and the beginning of Part II (p. 147). Then the uncle announces that Alexander has been in Petersburg for six years (p. 157). Finally, when he leaves, he has been there eight years (p. 266). He spends about two years in the

country (p. 291), and when we meet him again in the epilogue, another four years have elapsed (p. 297). Alexander is now in his thirty-fifth year (p. 305).

The mandatory number of years between youth and middle age have elapsed. But the novel does not create a feeling of continuity. According to its scheme, the hero has to put in a certain number of prescribed disappointments, but they are not really linked to each other in a true continuity in time. Alexander's three love affairs are arranged in a logical chronological order, but the disappointments in friendship and in literature are highly contrived, and could be fitted anywhere in between the love affairs. One feels that years are also fitted in at random in between the experiences. There is no particular reason, for instance, for two years to elapse between chapters 2 and 3. Alexander has changed, but only outwardly, he is really just the same as he was when he first arrived. In fact it seems highly unlikely that in his excitable state he should have waited two years before falling in love.

Alexander is depressed by his unfortunate experiences, but the real change in his character occurs during the four years between the end of Part II and the epilogue. This crucial development is never explored. Alexander walks in halfway through the epilogue, and author and reader are equally startled: "Kak on peremenilsja! Kak popolnel, oplešivel, kak stal rumjan! S kakim dostoinstvom on nosit svoe vypukloe brjuško i orden

na Šee!" (p. 307). This is all we are ever told of his transformation.

It is easy to recognise in this last surprise effect the favourite device of Oblomov Part IV. It seems that the author has not been cured of his evasion of development. Change is for him grasped in the contrasting portrait.

The episodic rendering of Alexander's life in Petersburg, also recalls to mind, Oblomov Part II, where the whole of Oblomov's affair with Olga is built on a succession of episodes. But as in the case of the integration of the author's voice, a device, which in An Ordinary Story is just part of an artificial design, has been used in Oblomov to emphasize a particular point of the subject matter. In Part II, it is the relentlessness of change, which is underlined, as one episode succeeds another and memory after memory fades away.

The comparison between An Ordinary Story and Oblomov, reveals a greater harmony between form and content in the latter novel, as certain time devices, artificial in An Ordinary Story, actively contribute to the illustration of time experiences in Oblomov.

The devices themselves however are the same, and as they are part of what, in An Ordinary Story, might be termed a "classical" structure, they point to Gončarov's indebtedness to the past.

II. Fregat "Pallada"

Gončarov wrote four major works: three novels and The Frigate Pallas, which is a collection of travel sketches describing his round the world voyage of 1852-1855.[8] A time study of these sketches would have to be very detailed to do justice to the complexities of the time element in travel as a genre.

Time is part of the very nature of travel, as the writer sets out to record a movement through space and in time. But, as the plain recording of the distance covered in a particular number of hours or days is of little literary interest, this measurable time factor is interwoven, in travel memoirs, with all the other time values also found in fiction. In the extreme case of a very subjective traveller, the chronological time of the actual movement from place to place can completely disappear, to be replaced in the dynamics of the memoires, by

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[8] The first complete edition appeared in 1858, though excerpts were published previously in various journals. I.A. Gončarov - Sobranie sočinenij (Moscow, 1954) Vols. II and III, 326 and 472 pages respectively.

the fluctuations of the writer's emotions.[9] The author's asides can introduce new temporal vistas, which confuse the recording of the actual travel with memories of the past, dreams of the future or intimations of timelessness. The tempo of the recording also interferes with the measurable facts of time and space, as the reader can be made to travel at any arbitrary speed quite unrelated to that of the traveller, slowed down by lengthy comments and descriptions, or urged along by a lively style.

Without going into a detailed study, only the main characteristics of the time structure of The Frigate Pallas can be defined. Any direct reference to time experiences will also be noted.

The first time characteristic of The Frigate Pallas is that the author adheres strictly to the framework of a diary. Each entry in the sketches is dated, and the entries follow each other in chronological order. This framework is slightly

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Such an attitude to time was characteristic of the sentimental traveller made popular by Lawrence Sterne (A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy, 1768). This point is made by Leo Stilman in his introduction to a translation by Florence Jonas of Karamzin's Letters of a Russian Traveller (Columbia University Press, 1957). He also points out that Karamzin, in this respect was not an orthodox sentimentalist, as throughout his letters, he kept to a framework of measurable time. This should be remembered when Gončarov is contrasted with Karamzin as a traveller. (Notes Vol. III, p. 459). They do not differ greatly in their approach to travelling time. The same of course cannot be said of their interests and reactions, but these do not come within the scope of a study of time.

complicated by the fact that the diary is presented in the form of letters written to friends. These letters are also dated, but the time of sending does not always correspond to the time of the events described. In the first letter for instance, the author covers events which occurred in November 1852, but the letter is supposedly written in June 1854. This dating of the letters, however, does not interfere with the general impression of a day to day diary, which the author is striving to create.

This day to day diary in letter form is, of necessity, incomplete and uneven. Amusing incidents and fresh impressions likely to interest Gončarov's friends, are obviously much more abundant during visits on shore, than during long weeks at sea. This leads to a certain temporal distortion in the reader's mind. Ten hours on Madeira, for instance, take up 14 pages (Vol. II, pp. 92-106), whereas forty days at sea are covered in 10 pages (Vol. II, pp. 122-133). Moreover these forty days are presented through the device of a typical day in the present of habit, much used in Oblomov. This device, while underlining the monotony of life at sea, also condenses a very long spell of time into one short example. As a result, the reader loses all sense of proportion. He can of course find out exactly how long the author spent at sea by computing the dates provided, but imaginatively he is never made really aware of the very long time spent actually sailing.

Perhaps another consequence of the strict adherence to

diary form is the absence, in The Frigate Pallas of comprehensive portraits. The reader gets to know Gončarov's companions and his sailor servant, from the repeated noting of their reactions to various incidents. The author never stands back to give a rounded portrait. This would mean an expanding of the diary to include the fruit of observations made over the whole length of the voyage. There is a difference in this respect from the later additions to The Frigate Pallas, Twenty Years Later (1874), and In Eastern Siberia (1891). The first contains a portrait of the priest attached to the expedition (chapter 5), the second a whole gallery of characters belonging to a distant settlement.

Once only does the fiction writer overpower the diarist, and in this one instance Gončarov presents a set of twin portraits, whose typicality, caught in the present of habit, completely brings them out of the temporal context of the travel sketches. Gončarov paints a picture of the way of life of the "new Englishman," which is contrasted with a picture of the way of life on a Russian provincial estate. (pp. 66-72). The portrait of the Englishman could almost be justified as a summing up of Gončarov's impressions of England, which he was visiting at the time. In any case, it only takes up one page. But what of the intrusion of Oblomov and Oblomovka, who impose themselves and their unchanging habits over five full pages, and completely disrupt the author's careful diary? This is quite

exceptional in The Frigate Pallas, and it is interesting to note that only Oblomov, or someone very like him, had enough power over the author's imagination to cause such disruption.

The pace of the diary is another major time characteristic of The Frigate Pallas. Gončarov appears to the reader as an alert and humourous observer, taking a leisurely cruise around the world. He does not rush; there are no exclamation marks and sudden bursts of enthusiasm, typical, for example, of Karamzin's style. But he keeps moving, providing the reader with a constant renewal of impressions. This is quite deliberate on the part of the author. He repeatedly warns his readers, and, one suspects, potential critics, that he does not intend to supply background information and weigh down his narrative with facts and figures (First Introduction, 1855, Vol. III, p. 450; Vol. II, p. 106, Vol. III, p. 217). This does not mean that he is not occasionally carried away, and his diary is slowed down by social and historical comment. A lengthy example of this being the historical notes on the Cape Colony (Vol. II, pp. 167-184). But these are the exception rather than the norm. On the whole, the author strives to keep his sketches light, humourous, and constantly moving. He does not indulge in lengthy descriptions of nature or of his own feelings. He jots down what he sees, and what happens, and limits his own reactions to a general sense of wonder or amusement.

Time references in the content of The Frigate Pallas are very few. There are some philosophical musings and some allusions to the particular feel of time at sea. These offer interesting parallels with Oblomov. In fact the only time experiences mentioned are those made familiar by Oblomov.

One point is striking: the equanimity with which the author accepts the monotony of life at sea. Admittedly there is always a lot to do, as he points out in a letter,[10] but the real secret is to be found in a comparison Gončarov makes between life on board ship in the Tropics, and life in provincial Russia: " ... dni tekli odnoobrazno. V ètom spokojstvie, uedinenii ot celogo mira, v teple i sijanii, fregat prinimaet vid kakoj-to otdolennoj stepnoj russkoj derevni." (Vol. III, p. 125). The way the author describes the short walks on the deck, the talks about meals, and above all, the great midday stillness only interrupted by the occasional crowing of a cock, really brings the reader back to Oblomovka; and suddenly, there is nothing unfamiliar or unusual about this life suspended in time.

Real boredom is not felt by the author in the quiet routine of the ship, but rather when this routine is disrupted during a storm. He is deeply upset that even the natural alternation of night and day lose their meaning: "Rjadom s

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[10] To N.A. Majkov and his family, 17-29 March 1853. Vol. VIII, p. 251.

obyknovennym, prirodnym dnem, javljaetsja kakoj-to drugoj, iskusstvennyj, nazyvaemyj na beregu noč̌ju, a tut polnyj zabot, rabot, vozni. Tomitel'nye sutki šli za sutkami." (Vol. II, p. 88).

This preference for a quiet routine is not the only similarity between the author and his hero Oblomov. We find in him the same longing for a timeless earthly Paradise, a state of peace and happiness to be enjoyed some time after all the storms and upheavals. These thoughts come to the author's mind as he watches the sun setting in the Tropics:

> ...ax, esli b vsegda i vezde takova byla priroda, tak že gorjača i tak veličavo i gluboko pokojna! Esli b takova byla i žizn'! ... Ved' buri, bešenye strasti ne norma prirody i žizni, a tol'ko perexodnyj moment, besporjadok i zlo, process tvorčestva, černaja rabota - dlja vydelki spokojstvija i ščastija v laboratorii prirody. (Vol. II, p.130).

On a visit to the Loo Choo Islands, Gončarov almost believed he had found the longed for Paradise, the timeless patriarchal society: "Zdes' kak vse rodilos' tak kažetsja i ne menjalos' celye tysjačeletija. Zdes' ešče vozmožen zolotoj vek." (Vol. III, p. 193). Unfortunately he was disillusioned by the less than flattering account of native customs given by the local missionary. (Vol. III, p. 205).

These parallels with Oblomov show the author's deep affinity with the time values of his hero Oblomov. It is revealing to find that the author was unimpressed by storms and felt more at home in the stillness of the tropics, dreaming of

a peaceful Golden Age.

Certain time devices used in the sketches also reveal a similarity with Oblomov. Such are the typical day and the typical portrait in the present of habit, which the author uses whenever he has to describe a way of life similar to that of Oblomov or Oblomovka.

Apart from the similarities with Oblomov, however, Gončarov's travel sketches afford a general literary interest by illustrating an instance in which the form adopted by the author has influenced his choice of content.

. . . This form relies heavily on time, as it aims to be a straight-forward, day to day diary, dependent for success on a certain pace, which the author intended to be leisurely, yet fast enough to be entertaining. For the sake of this form the author confined himself to superficial observations and amusing incidents, refusing to get involved in facts and figures and background information. Also for the sake of this form, which undoubtedly corresponded to the happier side of his temperament, he concealed the mental and physical anguish he felt during most of the voyage. He felt ill and a prey to melancholia, but did not want his miserable state to affect the style he thought was most appropriate for the entertainment of his readers. Writing to I.I. Lxovskij on 22 July 1853, he concludes: "Zabočus' bol'še o zriteljax i slušateljax neželi o sebe. Kak že ja

postojanno budu zvučat' im v uši na ton kotoryj razdaetsja v moej duše?[11] For the sake of this form, the author also chose not to mention certain disturbing facts about the voyage of the frigate Pallas. According to V. Šklovskij, this voyage was one of the most perilous in naval history.[12] The vessel was old and could hardly stand up to bad weather, it had to be repaired in every port. To the danger of storms was added the danger of war. One thing Gončarov does make clear is the omnipresence of the English on the seas. Russia was then at war with England and the Frigate had to be ready for an encounter it could not possibly face. All these dangers are hardly mentioned in The Frigate Pallas, though a glimpse of peril at sea is given in two short sketches published later for a children's magazine.[13]

V. Šklovskij's conclusion is that Gončarov adhered strictly to his chosen form because this form in itself was the message of The Frigate Pallas: "Forma nevozmutimogo spokojnogo opisanija služit dlja vypolnenija opredelennyx ideologičeskix zadač."[14] The "ideological aim" was to emphasize the peaceful nature of the Frigate's diplomatic mission. Whether Gončarov had this political aim in mind or not, it can be safely

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[11] Vol. VIII, p. 259.

[12] V. Šklovskij, Zametki o proze russkix klassikov (Moscow, 1955), p. 244.

[13] "Dva slučaja iz morskoj žizni," Podsnežnik, II-III (1858).

[14] V. Šklovskij, op. cit., p. 242.

concluded that through the use of a literary time device - a diary of a certain pace, he managed to ensure that posterity will remember the voyage of the frigate Pallas, as a leisurely cruise to distant places.

III. Obryv

Obryv, Gončarov's last novel,[15] strikes the reader with a first impression of a very temporal nature: it seems interminable. Its great length, five parts totalling 796 pages (as against Oblomov's 506), combines unfavourably with a very slow moving action and strains the reader's attention.

We have seen how portraits, information provided by the author, and lengthy dialogues, slowed down the action in Oblomov, although, in Part I, the author managed to use this slowing down for his characterization of the hero. Without a similar justification, the same devices are used in The Ravine, and used profusely. Moreover, they are automatically multiplied because of the number of characters involved. The Ravine is by far the most populous of Gončarov's novels. There are four main characters, Rajskij, the grandmother Tat'jana Markovna, and her two young wards, Marfen'ka and Vera. The suitors of the girls, Voloxov, Vikent'ev and Tušin are slightly less prominent. These seven characters are surrounded by a whole crowd of minor participants in the action. Kozlov and his wife Ul'jana are the more important of the secondary figures; then come Sophia Belovodova, Tit Nikonyč, Krickaja, and the servants; and finally, completely incidental characters like Ajanov,

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[15] Vestnik Evropy, I,II,III,IV,V (1869).
I.A. Gončarov - Sobranie sočinenij (Moscow, 1954) Vol. V, 366 pages and Vol. VI, 430 pages.

Nataša, Tyčkov, Openkin and others. One might forgive a slowing down of the action for the portrait of a main character like Rajskij, who monopolizes most of Part I, but the author lavishes his attention on the most insignificant characters. Ajanov, never to be seen again, opens the novel with a full length portrait on four pages. Sophia Belovodova, also never to be seen again, has the benefit of five chapters of Part I (chapters 2,3,4,14,18) which include a description of her apartments, her relations, her childhood, and her philosophical dialogues with Rajskij. A visit to Kozlov takes up five chapters of Part II (chapters 4,5,6,7,8). The author describes the little town where Kozlov lives, gives a portrait of Kozlov, and of his wife, tells the story of their marriage and finally records the dialogue that takes place with Rajskij. Openkin (Part II, chapter 19) and Tyčkov (Part III, chapters 2,3), are included for no better reason than "Pod ruku popalsja" (Vol. 6, p. 26).

Another factor in the slowing down of the action are lengthy explanations of the characters' feelings by the author (Rajskij, Part IV, chapters 4 and 5; Vera, Part V, chapter 6), and rhetorical dialogues on life and love, similar to those of An Ordinary Story (Rajskij-Belovodova: Part I - 14, 18; Rajskij-Mark: Part II - 15; Rajskij-Vera: Part III - 8, Part IV - 9,11; Vera-Mark: Part IV - 1,12).

The slow moving action is more or less contained within

the present, except for excursions into the characters' past and elements of timelessness introduced by the portrait-making device. But once more, the author includes in the present of the action, elements not rightfully belonging to it. The story of Nataša, for instance, which took place in an indeterminate past and was previously recorded in a note book, is now read by Rajskij within the present of the action (Part I, chapter 15). So is the story of Belovodova's "faux pas" which is described in a letter read by Rajskij (Part IV, chapter 7).

All these features have been noted before. There is however one characteristic of The Ravine which is absent from the other novels: this is the deliberate raising of certain characters to the status of universal symbols,[16] which means that they are raised above the present of the action into timelessness. Such is the vision of the grandmother, first among historic figures (Vol. VI, p. 324) and finally as a personification of Russia (Vol. VI, p. 430). Symbolic of the awakening of womanhood, are the two visions of Belovodova and Vera, as statues suddenly blossoming into life (Vol. V, p. 154; Vol. VI, p. 277). Gončarov seems to have been carried away beyond the humanly typical into the mists of allegory; although, strictly speaking, these visions belong not to him, but to

[16] D.S. Merežkovskij went so far as to associate Gončarov with the symbolist movement. O pričinax upadka i o novyx tečenijax sovremennoj russkoj literatury (St. Petersburg, 1893), pp. 133-160.

Rajskij's artistic imagination.[17]

From the point of view of time as medium of development of the characters, we note a significant difference between The Ravine and Gončarov's other works. A neglect of the careful noting of the passage of time seems to go together with a greater concern for the continuity of psychological development.

The time setting of The Ravine is very vague. We know that Rajskij reckoned to spend about a month on Belovodova's portrait (Vol. V, p. 40), and that he left Petersburg on completion of this portrait at the end of May (Vol. V, p. 125). So the action starts, like that of Oblomov, at the beginning of May. Rajskij leaves Malinovka shortly after Marfen'ka's wedding, which we know was scheduled for the autumn (Vol. V, p. 147). The action therefore takes about six months. These are all the definite time indications in the novel. The development of the characters proceeds smoothly through time, without the sudden blanks, followed by an indication of how much time went by, so common in An Ordinary Story and Oblomov Part IV.

The development portrayed in The Ravine is not development of character. All the characters are complete from the moment they are introduced and do not change in the course of

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[17] In his essay Lučše pozdno čem nikogda, Gončarov admits that he felt a little uneasy about these "unrealistic" visions, and deliberately attributed them to Rajskij (Vol. VIII, p. 99).

the novel. It would be better to speak of development of relationships. Vera goes from passion, to renunciation of Mark; from apparent coldness, to closeness to her grandmother. Marfen'ka, from playful romance, to married love for Vikent'ev. As for Rajskij, true to his artistic nature, he experiences a variety of emotions, with a build up of passion for Vera and a transformation of this passion into deep friendship. Unfortunately most of this development is revealed not through action, but through the already familiar devices of information by the author, and lengthy dialogues.

If The Ravine is without time blanks and magical transformations of the characters from one chapter to the next, it is not without its special surprise effect, involving a time device. The surprise stems from the delayed revelation of the identity of Vera's lover. From the time of her appearance towards the end of Part II, Vera is a mystery. It becomes increasingly obvious to the sensitive Rajskij that she is in love. The suspense becomes more and more acute as Rajskij's infatuation for Vera grows, and she on her side ceases to conceal signs of passion, without however, revealing the name of the man she loves. The revelation only comes at the end of Part III, when Rajskij is driven frantic by jealousy and curiosity, as Vera rushes away to a rendez-vous from his very side: "Bože moj - v otčajannoj zavisti vskriknul on, -Kto on,

kto ètot ščastlivec...?" (Vol. VI, p. 169). To this the author replies "A nikto drugoj kak Mark Voloxov" (Vol. VI, p. 169). This reply however is addressed to the reader. Poor Rajskij has to live through another whole part, before he is enlightened at the end of Part IV. The reader, now relaxed, has plenty of time to enjoy Rajskij's prolonged suspense and a second revelation of a secret he already knows. This particular timing device can be put down to Gončarov's love of melodramatic effects, so evident in Oblomov Part IV. The shocking nature of the revelation is made even more shocking, by the way it is revealed. After the careful, prolonged suspense, comes the bombshell: Vera's lover is no other than the unexpected, unsuspected, outrageous Mark Voloxov. The author clearly enjoys his effect for he goes on wondering for a whole paragraph, how could she?...the pure, the sheltered, the refined Vera. After the revelation, the author explains in retrospect how Vera met Voloxov (III, 23), although an analysis of the relationship is not given until Part V, chapter 6, after the love affair has ended. Although there is no time gap in the action itself, the device is similar to the ones in Oblomov, as the author likes to make his effect first, and then fill in the reader on what led up to the particular situation he reveals. In this case, the time gap being filled occurred before the start of the action. There is a second similar revelation in The Ravine, though less dramatic than that of the identity of Vera's lover:

the revelation of the grandmother's "sin." There is a build-up of suspense in the grandmother's strange behaviour and mutterings after she hears of Vera's fall, and in the sudden sending away of Tit Nikonyč; but thankfully, the actual confession of the grandmother to Vera is treated in a very low key (Part V, chapter 10). The filling in of the time gap, this time far away in the distant past, comes ten chapters later (Part V, chapter 20), rather unconvincingly, through a rumour circulating in the town.

We have now examined certain time features of the structure of The Ravine, which are immediately obvious to the reader, like the slowing down of the action, the mystery surrounding Vera's lover, and the timeless symbols. These features are a consequence of the method of narration adopted by the author, and do not reflect any attitude to time that might be expressed in the novel. But the time experience is not absent in The Ravine. A certain attitude to time is part of the way of life at Malinovka, part the author's evaluation of this life, and, most important for the whole structure of the novel, part of Rajskij's characterization. These attitudes will now be examined together with the devices which might reflect them.

In his previous two novels, Gončarov dealt with psychological problems caused by a country upbringing, but the main

setting of the action was Petersburg. The Ravine is the only novel entirely set in the country (except for Part I), and it would be natural to wonder whether echoes of Oblomovka are to be found in Malinovka.

The aspect of sleep is not absent from the characterization of Malinovka. It is expressed, as usual in the present of habit, in the description of the small provincial town, deadly still under the midday sun:

> Bylo za polden' davno. Nad gorodom ležalo ocepenenie pokoja, štil' na suše, kakoj byvaet na more, štil' širokoj, stepnoj sel'skoj i gorodskoj russkoj žizni. Èto ne gorod a kladbiščе, kak vse èti goroda. (Vol. V, p. 187).

It is interesting to note the metaphor borrowed from life at sea. It is a reversal of the comparison found in The Frigate Pallas, between the stillness of the tropics and the Russian countryside (Vol. II, p. 125).

Another close parallel with Oblomovka is to be found in the description of the seemingly endless sunny days, which are at once both the setting and the symbol of a peaceful way of life:

> Tixo tjanulis' dni, tixo vstavalo gorjačee solnce i obtekalo sinee nebo, rasprosterševsja nad Volgoj i ee priberež'em. (Vol. V, p. 251)
> Takim že monotonnym uzorom tjanulas' i žizn' v Malinovke, Rajskij počti ne čuvstvoval čto zivet. (Vol. V, p. 252).

This aspect of sleep, or even more strongly, death, does not escape Rajskij, through whose eyes the reader sees life in the country. But what impresses him most is the fact

that the inhabitants of Malinovka themselves do not feel their life as sleep; this is not because they are narrow-minded, but because they seem to possess certain moral values which give meaning to their monotonous life:

> Rajskomu nravilas' èta prostota form žizni, èta opredelennaja, tesnaja rama, v kotoroj prijutilsja čelovek i pjat'desjat - sest'desjat let živet povtorenijami ne zamečaja ix. (Vol. V, p. 228).

In The Ravine the author shifts from the indictment of sleep and changelessness in country life so apparent in "Oblomov's Dream," to admiration for the "simple life." The grandmother, heart and soul of Malinovka, is characterized despite her limitations, as a tower of strength; and apathy simply does not enter into the picture. Marfen'ka is unenlightened, and Rajskij speaks of sleep in connection with her character (Vol. V, p. 190), but she makes up for intellectual sleep with a goodheartedness and a lively disposition, which are most admired by the author.

What the moral values are which immunize the inhabitants of Malinovka against monotony and bring fullness to their lives, is not a problem directly relevant to a study of time. Moreover, the author's vagueness in the definition of positive values, is as apparent here as it is in Oblomov, and was rightly castigated by Saltykov Ščedrin.[18] What concerns us, from the time point of

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[18] M.E. Saltykov Ščedrin, "Uličnaja filosofija," Otečestvennye zapiski, VI (1869). Gončarov v russkoj kritike (Moscow, 1958), p. 218.

view, is the historical perspective given to these values, within the novel. The philosophical conflict of The Ravine, underlining the tragic love of Vera and Voloxov, is a conflict between the "old" truth, of which the grandmother is the guardian, and the "new" truth preached by Voloxov, a member of the young generation. The author deliberately presents the problem as a clash between past and present. Gončarov's other novels have been interpreted in such a way, but such interpretations are largely external to the work as it stands. In An Ordinary Story a clash of temperaments is depicted, at most, a conflict of the mature with the immature. In Oblomov the central problem is one of personal philosophical choice rather than a conflict between an old and a new way of life.

In presenting the problem in The Ravine as a confrontation between past and present, Gončarov started endless discussions among critics as to the fairness or unfairness, clarity or confusion, of his presentation.[19] But having thus posed the problem, the author abandons the historical perspective altogether in the final resolution of the conflict. For Vera, after the crisis, there is no longer a "new" truth and an "old" truth, but only one, eternal truth and momentary deviations from it (Vol. VI, p. 317). This is quite different

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[19] See: M.E. Saltykov Ščedrin, op. cit.
A.M. Skabičevkij, "Staraja pravda," Otečestvennye zapiski, X (1869).
N.S. Šelgunov, "Talantlivaja beztalannost'," Delo VIII (1869).

from saying that the past has triumphed. The resolution of the conflict is not to be found in a "new" life or an "old" life, but in the return to a preordained, even flow of life, the norms of which are not dependent on historical change. Recent critical works on Gončarov generally subscribe to this interpretation of his position,[20] on the strength of the oft quoted passage:

> Proxodili dni, i s nimi opjat' tišina, povisla nad Malinovkoj. Opjat' žizn', zaderžannaja katastrofoj, kak reka porogami, prorvalas' skvoz' pregradu i potekla dal'še, rovnee. (Vol. VI, p. 347).

We have not in fact strayed very far from the banks of the river of life already made familiar in "Oblomov's Dream." (Vol. IV, p. 126). But what was considered there as a regrettable feature of Oblomovka psychology, has now become symbolic of the way the author himself looks at all the events he has described in The Ravine. Marc Voloxov disappears as a bad dream, or an unfortunate accident, and life goes back to its normal, even course in time.

This shift of position is characteristic of the author's new attitude towards life in the country. Changelessness ceases to be a sign of sleep and stagnation, to become a sign of profound harmony with life itself, expressed in the acceptance of certain eternal values.

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[20] A.G. Cejtlin, op. cit., p. 327.
N.I. Pruckov, op. cit., p. 270.
Istorija russkogo romana (Moscow, 1962), Vol. II, p. 180.

Such harmony however, is not given to everybody. One character in the novel does not belong to Malinovka, and for all his admiration for its values, finds himself incapable of sharing its way of life. Boris Rajskij, artist and writer, declines the grandmother's and Vera's invitation to stay in Malinovka for ever:

> -Bojus' ne vyderžu - voobraženie opjat' zaprosit idealov, a nervy novyx oščuščenij, i skuka s"est menja zaživo! Kakie celi u xudožnika? Tvorčestvo - vot ego žizn'! ... Proščajte! skoro uedu, - zakančival on obyknovenno svoju reč', i ešče bol'še pečalil obeix i sam čuvstvoval gore, a za gorem grjaduščuju pustotu i skuku. (Vol. VI, p. 339).

This passage sheds light on a particular side of Rajskij's personality which is of special interest. The threat of boredom seems to be his main preoccupation. He rejects country life because it cannot provide the constant stimulation of his artistic imagination, which is his only weapon against boredom. But he is without illusions; he knows that the boredom he fears to find in the country, will be waiting for him when he leaves. With boredom at the heart of Rajskij's personality, we also find a time experience at the heart of The Ravine.

An interesting study by Walther Rehm[21] goes so far as to select The Ravine, as an example of a novel devoted to boredom (p. 28). His approach is philosophical: he defines boredom as "Kontinuität im Nichts," (p. 3) the emptiness experienced, being the void left in man by the denial of God (p. 7). His

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[21] Walther Rehm, op. cit., pp. 1-92.

interpretation of The Ravine is formulated through a play on words. Rajskij has been influenced by western enlightenment, and is no longer in tune with the patriarchal life and its values; as a consequence, his experience of time has been corrupted, and the healthy "lange Weile" of country life becomes for him a destructive "Langweile:" "Dann wird das als bittere, alles verkehrende und entfremdende Langweile empfunden, was bislang als mild, ruhig und langwährende Weile, als selbstverständlicher Besitz des Daseins erschien" (p. 24). According to Rehm, the problem in The Ravine is whether Rajskij can be cured when he comes into contact with country life; unfortunately the answer is negative (p. 62). From the literary point of view, Rehm points out the difficulty, in portraying a time experience which is in all respects contrary to the feeling for time necessary for the epic form, and praises Gončarov for overcoming it (p. 82).

There is no reason to reject Rehm's interpretation of Rajskij's difficulties. But a much more careful assessment is needed of the exact place of the theme of boredom in the general structure of the novel, and of the means used for its expression.

The theme of boredom comes into the novel through Rajskij. It is therefore important to define Rajskij's role in The Ravine. This role is complex, as he participates as a character in the action and at the same time provides its unifying framework.

Rajskij's role as a character in the novel is not very consistent. He dominates Part I in his own right, and he appears in Part II as a sort of leading observer; but in Parts III, IV, and V he is only allowed to watch from the sideline, and to participate as a secondary actor in the major events. Looking at Rajskij's place as character in the novel as a whole, it would therefore be difficult to maintain that The Ravine is 'about' his struggle with boredom, rather than 'about' the grandmother and the values of patriarchal life, or Vera's conflict with Voloxov. The theme of boredom is only a theme among others, and a secondary one at that.

But Rajskij is not only a participant in the action. He has a major role in the structure of the novel as a unifying factor; and this role itself is not without complexity, for the author uses Rajskij to provide a framework for the action, and at the same time uses that framework to deepen his characterization.

This is very obvious on the level of Rajskij's literary activities. Everything that happens, as well as all the portraits described in The Ravine, are also supposed to be part of a novel Rajskij is writing. The device is flexible, Rajskij is not present at all the events described, for instance Vera's rendez-vous with Voloxov, but we know that eventually, this too, will be included in Rajskij's novel. Allusions to this novel are numerous: Vol. V, pp. 124, 155, 189, 192, 235, 246, 252, 292, 335 - Vol. VI, pp. 28, 48, 95; and

The Ravine ends with an actual reproduction of the opening pages of Rajskij's work. This framing device has great advantages for the author, who can thus include in The Ravine any irrelevant portrait or incident he wishes, simply by pointing to its presence in Rajskij's notes. This same device, however, also helps in Rajskij's characterization, as it emphasizes his incapacity to dissociate life from art.

On the deeper level of Rajskij's struggle with boredom, the same pattern is followed. Everything that happens, all the impressions and emotions described in The Ravine, stimulate Rajskij's artistic imagination, and, consequently, are as many "distractions," in the Pascalian sense, which keep him from feeling his inner emptiness, and time as an unbearable burden. This framework is superimposed on the framework of Rajskij's novel, which comes about naturally, as creative activity is Rajskij's main weapon against boredom.

In Part I Rajskij feels impelled to paint Sophia Belovodova's portrait, but at the same time he admits that this task will mercifully take about a month, and that much will be gained on boredom (Vol. V, p. 40). As Rajskij begins to tire of Belovodova, he remembers another episode of his youth, the story of a girl, Nataša, too pale a character to make a decent sketch and too meek to save him from boredom (Vol.V, p. 119). Depressed by his memories, and no longer stimulated by Belovodova, Rajskij feels the onslaught of boredom, (Vol. V, p. 124), but is saved by an invitation to the

country. New impressions stimulate Rajskij's imagination, and he is ready to write an idyll (Vol. V, p. 165), and a popular drama, (Vol. V, p. 246). Boredom is defeated and Rajskij even manages to adapt to the local attitude to time. He is lulled by the quiet routine and endless sunny days and "počti ne čuvstvoval čto živet" (Vol. V, p. 251). This of course could not last; lacking in stimulation, Rajskij experiences a severe attack of boredom. This is the only time in the novel when boredom itself is described, rather than its antidotes (Vol. V, p. 292). At this point, in chapter 16 of Part II, the action picks up as Vera appears on the scene. She provides a focal point for the novel Rajskij is writing and a hope of passion, the very best cure imaginable for boredom. In Part III, Rajskij pleads with Vera to cure him through love (Vol. VI, p. 66). Vera cannot respond, but Rajskij manages to work himself up into a state of passion nevertheless. He can now carry on independently, saved from boredom by his inner emotions: "U nego uxodilo vremja, sila fantazii razrešalas' estestvennym putem, i on ne zamečal žizni, ne znal skuki, nikuda i ničego ne xotel." (Vol. VI, p. 199). This is just as well, as events bypass him completely in Parts III and IV. After the crisis, in Part V, Rajskij's love for Vera cools to friendship. Although his imagination is fired for a while by the grandmother's new stature, friendship and admiration are not enough, and Rajskij flees the country for fear of boredom,

headed for new distractions, this time a journey to Rome, and a new career as sculptor.

The framework of Rajskij's flight from boredom is less artificial than that of his novel. It makes the integration into the action of such heterogeneous elements as the episodes of Belovodova and Nataša, more convincing. It also justifies the demotion of Rajskij from main character to secondary participant: events can bypass him when he is not dependent for survival on their stimulation.

This framework, while unifying the novel, deepens Rajskij's characterization. The extent of his fear of empty time can be measured by the amount of stimulation - the whole action of the novel - he is prepared to seek, in order to escape it. The fact that the whole framework of the novel contributes towards his characterization, automatically increases Rajskij's importance, and that of the theme of boredom.

The complex interrelation between Rajskij's boredom and the structure of the novel, has important temporal consequences. Rajskij's touch-and-go existence, his frantic grasping at one stimulating experience after another, is reflected in the way the novel unfolds. The action slackens when Rajskij is bored and picks up again when he is rescued by some new development. The time of the novel, therefore, can be said to be Rajskij's time, the time of boredom.

This time of boredom is never described directly, except

in Rajskij's brief monologue of Part II. The action takes place in the time which has been saved from boredom. The author simply impresses upon the reader, that the time, well-filled by the action of the novel, would have been unbearably empty for Rajskij, had this action not occurred. This is the way in which the author solves the problem pointed out by Rehm: how to portray the negative time of boredom, while using the epic form, which implies a fullness of time.

This technique has already been used in Oblomov. A parallel could be drawn with Part I, where the time, left blank by Oblomov, is filled by the author's voice, and the length of the author's interruptions becomes a measure of the extent of Oblomov's apathy.

From the time point of view, The Ravine stands somewhere between An Ordinary Story and Oblomov. Interest in time is not totally absent, as it is in An Ordinary Story, but it is not as central as in Oblomov. The nearest The Ravine gets to Oblomov, is in the person of Rajskij, who is characterized by an attitude to time, which makes him an outsider among his Malinovka relatives. As in Oblomov this characterization is deepened through a time device: the way in which the action unfolds over the six months of the novel. Similarly too, a basically negative time experience is not expressed directly, but through the filling of time, which would otherwise have been empty. But Rajskij is different from Oblomov, in that the

time experience is only half of his characterization. He is described throughout the novel as an artistic nature, and a great deal of attention is devoted to the relationship of art and life, which is quite independent of the problem of boredom.

The originality of The Ravine is that one character's attitude to time shapes the time of the whole action. The action itself, except where it concerns Rajskij, is not dependent on a time problem. It deals mainly with the development of various love relationships. In this respect we noted a greater awareness of continuity than in Oblomov. In so far as a particular way of life is depicted, it has been noted that though its time values were similar to those of Oblomovka, these values no longer interested the author for their own sake, but rather as part of a harmony of a moral nature. This represents a shift of position, indicative of a more positive attitude to these values than was the case in Oblomov. It has also been noted that some time features of The Ravine stem from devices similar to those used in Oblomov, but in the later novel they do not illustrate a time experience. Such is the slowing down of the action, the streamlining of the present of the action through artificial means, the use of suspense and surprise, and the filling in of time gaps in retrospect. Original to The Ravine, is the use of timeless symbols verging on allegories.

IV. Minor Works

Gončarov's minor works, if we exclude his articles of literary criticism and his autobiographical notes, mentioned in the Introduction, consist of a short story, Sčastlivaja ošibka;[22] three sketches, Ivan Savič Podžabrin,[23] and Slugi starogo veka;[24] and Maj mesjac v Peterburge,[25] published after his death.

Sčastlivaja ošibka is Gončarov's very first work of fiction. It presents the time characteristics of the adventure story:[26] a plot hinged on a chronological sequence of events, which depends on coincidence. The lucky coincidence is given a delayed explanation in the very last pages of the story, when the mistake made by the hero is revealed to both him and the reader. A Lucky Error provides a link between Gončarov's

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[22] Written for the almanach Lunnye noči, in 1839. First published by E. Ljackij in his book I.A. Gončarov, third edition (Stockholm, 1920).
I.A. Gončarov - Sobranie sočinenij (Moscow, 1954), Vol. VII, pp. 427-465.

[23] Sovremennik, I (1848).
Vol. VII, pp. 7-77.

[24] Niva, I, III, XVIII (1888).
Vol. VII, pp. 316-383.

[25] Nivy, II (1892).
Vol. VII, pp. 409-426.

[26] A point made by A.G. Cejtlin in "Sčastlivaja ošibka Gončarova kak rannej ètjud Obyknovennoj istorii," Tvorčeskaja istorija, (ed.) N.K. Piksanov (Moscow, 1927), p. 143.

work and the adventure story popular in the 1830's, and this may help explain his predilection for the surprise effect and the delayed revelation, which has been noted in all his major works.

But A Lucky Error does not keep strictly to the chronological sequence of events. This sequence is constantly interrupted by the author's generalized comments, which introduce the timelessness of the typical into the tightly woven and temporally confined plot. The author's comments range from humourous musings on the delights of twilight (p. 427) and the advantages of the hairdressing profession (p. 446), to more pointed social observations on the conventions of love in the upper classes (p. 439). The flippant aside, reminiscent of Puškin, does not appear in Gončarov's later work. But the social generalization, made popular by the physiological sketch, will be found in all of Gončarov's novels, as an ingredient of the portrait, particularly obvious in the case of minor characters.

The influence of the physiological sketch is apparent in all of Gončarov's other minor works. Ivan Savič Podžabrin is a sketch, of the comedy of manners type. It is confined to the present of the action by heavy reliance on dialogue of the humourous, fast moving kind, made familiar by the exchanges between Zaxar and Oblomov. Slugi starogo veka also falls into the comedy of manners category, but it is more complex from the

time point of view, as the little scenes between master and servant take place in the past, in the reminiscences of the author. They sum up the essence of the time of employment of the servants, several years in the case of Valentin, a few months for Anton, two years for Stepan and his family and over six years for Matvej. The incidents reported occurred at a particular time in the past, but are specially selected in order to build up a timeless, typical portrait. The author gives these portraits an even wider, timeless meaning through his own comments on servants in general in the Introduction, and on the curse of drink among them. The title itself shows a generalizing intent.

Indicative of Gončarov's loyalty to the physiological sketch is Maj mesjac v Peterburge, published after his death, which was written according to formula, fifty years after the heyday of the genre. It depicts a day in a large Petersburg apartment house with portraits of its various inhabitants, meant to be a typical building, on a typical day, in a typical month of May. But the interest of May in Petersburg lies less in its outdated form, than in the few remarks made by the author in the epilogue, where he takes another look at the same building a few years later. The tone of these remarks, that of wistful regret at the relentlessness of change, is very reminiscent of Oblomov Part II: "Žizn' vse žizn', vse ponemnogu dviženetsja, kuda-to idet vse vpered i vpered, kak vse na svete, i na nebe i na zemle..." (p. 426). Even the seemingly settled

Ivan Ivanovič, the manager of the building, is not immune from this: "Net, vidno izmenilsja i on, i ego žizn' idet kuda to vpered kak vse na belom svete..." (p. 426). These remarks counterbalance the impression of permanence created by the sketch itself, where one day in May stands for any day in any May. In his last work, the author is still juggling, as he did in Oblomov, with notions of permanence on the one hand and relentless change, on the other.

The first conclusion to be drawn from the examination of Gončarov's other works in relation to Oblomov, is that this novel is unique in its reliance on time for plot and characterization. Only in The Ravine do we find some similarity with Oblomov in this respect. But the theme of boredom which is part of Rajskij's characterization is only one theme among many, and The Ravine could never be called a time novel.

Oblomov is unique as a time novel, but this does not mean that attitudes to time expressed in Oblomov are not found elsewhere in Gončarov's works. His travel sketches indicate how close these attitudes were to his own. They reappear in The Ravine, in the way of life of Malinovka, and again in Gončarov's very last work, May in Petersburg.

Oblomov is unique in the interrelation established between time experiences and time devices, but the devices in themselves are not original to this novel. The study of

Gončarov's other works shows them to be part of his literary method. The one exception is the experiment with the description of the stream of consciousness, which is not repeated elsewhere.

The striking feature of the time devices favoured by Gončarov, is that they belong to traditions already outgrown by Russian literature at the time Gončarov was writing. Strictly from the point of view of time devices, Gončarov does not appear as a great innovator.

The classical conception of form, as an artificially imposed order, is evident in Gončarov's determination to keep within the present of the action by means of artificial devices. His predilection for suspense and delayed revelation can be traced to the adventure story popular around 1830. But the most important influence felt in all of Gončarov's works, is that of the physiological sketch of the 1840's. It is apparent in the frequent use of description in the timeless present of habit and of the device of the typical day.

Sketch devices generally slow down the action, but can be very successful in the illustration of a changeless way of life. The same devices, however, become a handicap when the author uses them to convey change over a period of years, for the juxtaposition of contrasting portraits, distant in time, fails to promote the illusion of continuity.

A last word should be added on dialogue in Gončarov's works. Two kinds of dialogue are used by the author, with

very different consequences for the tempo of the action. Rhetorical discussions can slow down the action beyond the reader's endurance. On the other hand, dialogues between master and servant are humourous and fast moving. They speed up the action and increase the illusion of immediacy.

From this brief summary of Gončarov's methods, it can be seen that they are very heterogeneous. The reader is lulled into the contemplation of the timeless typical, then suddenly jolted by some surprise time effect. He falls asleep listening to philosophical discussions, and wakes up in the middle of a fast moving comedy. The faithful reader has to get used to this uneven pace, which is a constant feature in all of Gončarov's works.

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