

# A hero of our time: a short analysis of human complacency with suffering and pain...

[People](#)



Jeremiah Morales Morales 1 IB World Literature Ms. Gibbs December 21, 2011 A Hero of Our Time: Human Complacency with Suffering and Pain Throughout A Hero of Our Time, Mikhail Lermontov speculates greatly the validity of human friendships. Through his protagonist, Grigory Alexandrovich Pechorin, Lermontov reveals friendship to be a parasitic sort of relationship, one member of the unit of friendship always exploiting the other to some degree.

Pechorin himself is the manifestation of this idea throughout the course of the novel, interacting with other people only to achieve his own means and never when it would be unbeneficial to him. Pechorin inflicts emotional trauma of some degree upon all the people he meets; as a result of Pechorin's presence, suffering is introduced into the lives of those around him. Also, despite Pechorin's malign intentions & the suffering he brings to those near him, these people about him continue to lionize and honor him, neglecting to sever their ties with him even when the relationship they shared became unhealthy.

The most profound example of vampirism in the novel, however, lies within the relationship shared between Pechorin and Bela, a young Circassian princess whom he would kidnap and later abandon. Through the recurring notions of suffering, Lermontov reveals the penchant of the human heart for the infliction and reception of pain, however inadvertent it may be. As Lermontov reveals through Bela and her submissiveness to her captivity, people silently allow others to inflict pain upon them, offering no true struggle against their oppressors.

In the Caucasus, Pechorin crosses paths with Azamat, a young Circassian prince with a particular interest in Karagyozy, the horse of an old acquaintance of Pechorin's, Kazbich. Pechorin comes to fancy Azamat's sister, the lovely Bela, whom he had danced before him during a wedding party. Pechorin proposes a bargain to Azamat; if he could kidnap Bela and bring her to Pechorin's dwelling, Pechorin would procure Kazbich's famed horse for him. Both parties fulfill their ends of the deal, and Bela soon was within the walls of Pechorin's home. Once in Pechorin's home, Bela hides "behind [her] door" (20).

Bela is deeply frightened and emotionally wounded by her kidnapping, fearful of those who abducted her. She no longer sings or dances as she did before; she only "sits in a corner, wrapped in a shawl" (21), holding herself in a sort of fetal position. "She isn't talking" (21) and "isn't looking up" (21), refusing to actively observe her surroundings or absorb the reality of what was happening about her, for she is "as frightened as a wild chamois" (21), "shuddering" (21) when spoken to, her senses of stability and communication greatly distorted by the mental suffering she had undergone as she was abducted from her home.

She "pines" (21), "her head hanging down to her chest" (21), reveling in her misery and distancing herself from her surroundings. Bela is miserable, longing desperately for the familiarity of her former home, and expressed her unhappiness without abandon. She would not, however, act on her emotions, silently allowing herself to remain in captivity. She would sit in

silence, not offering a word of protest and not making any attempts to escape.

Pechorin would try to elicit responses from her, entering the room that had been set aside for her and attempting to assuage her defensiveness by assuring her he meant no harm. Bela “ nods her head in a sign of agreement” (22) as he demands she be more cheerful, obediently capitulating to his will and “ smiling affectionately” (22), offering a fabricated smile to please him. Pechorin takes her hand and advances towards her, attempting to kiss her, and despite her “ trembling” (22), she does not offer any substantial resistance, saying “I am your captive, your slave.

Of course you can force me” (22). Despite the great emotional trauma that Pechorin inflicted on her by kidnapping her, Bela makes no true endeavor to escape or defy him; she instead submissively and obediently offers herself to him, allowing him to do as he pleased without regard to the suffering it brought her. Bela’s willingness to remain in captivity and tolerate her suffering reveals that, even in relationships today, women will be able to romanticize pain and abuse when they are afflicted by these things through an oppressive or vampiric relationship.

Through Pechorin’s indifference to Bela’s suffering, Lermontov reveals to us the ultimate selfishness that men are capable of and their ability to wholly ignore the suffering of others for the sake of achieving their own means.

Pechorin had a talent for manipulating women, feeding off their infatuation until he became displeased with the relationship. Bela, however, “ pines”

(21) for her old life and does not succumb to his various charms initially, and so Pechorin makes a sport of winning her affection.

Pechorin had noticed that, after giving her many gifts, Bela began to grow less emotionally resistant and more familiar with him, and Pechorin had begun to tell Maxim Maximych, his partner in travel, that he would without doubt win Bela's affection. He speaks of her as if she was game, saying that she was "not a woman" (22), separating her from the classifications of human beings, as if she were rather an animal to be hunted. He says to Maxim that on his "honest word, she will be [his]" (22), and when Maxim shakes his head in doubt, Pechorin proposes to "bet on it" (22) and that "in a week's time" (22) she would give in.

Pechorin made her out to be as an animal to be coaxed out of its protective shell so that it might be captured; rather than pitying Bela and taking note of her intense suffering and sadness, he made a game of the situation, and even offered to gamble with Maxim as to what the outcome of the game would be. Pechorin does eventually warm her heart, winning her love short deep into a pathetic list of procedures carefully executed through plans engineered to manipulate Bela and distract her from her suffering. Pechorin himself, however, would become distracted himself, immersing himself in his love for the hunt.

He "loved hunting with a passion" (30). As he came to enjoy hunting more and more, he was seen less and less at home, and Bela was left alone, "the poor pale thing so sad" (31). She would often "cry" (31), brought to deep despair by the notion that "he does not love [her]" (31). However, if Bela

continued to “ pine” (31), Pechorin “ would grow tired of it” (31) and leave her. Pechorin was not interested in her feelings or how awfully they were damaged as a result of his indifference; he cared only that she acted in the manner that he pleased.

If she would not do that, the relationship would no longer be something worthy of his investment. Out of Pechorin’s sight, however, Bela would continue to wallow in her anguish, “ falling down on [her] bed and covering her face with her hands” (31) as she wept in despair. Despite the emotional suffering that Bela had been subject to, Pechorin would offer no comforting, as what mattered to him was his own pleasure. Through Bela’s death and Pechorin’s ability to easily cope, Lermontov reveals the ultimate complacency humans find in their suffering.

Kazbich attempts to steal Bela away from Pechorin and Maxim, binding her and riding away with her on his horse. Pechorin and Maxim chase him fervently, and in an attempt to stop Kazbich and save Bela’s life, a horrible irony occurs - the bullet with which Maxim intended to target Kazbich and save Bela actually proves to have pierced through Bela herself. Bela grows fatally ill after taking this shot, and she now suffers physical trauma in addition to her emotional instability. She suffers from “ delirium” (39), and often “ lies motionless and pale” (39). It was barely possible to see her breathing” (39), and she is “ dying” (39). She begins “ lamenting” (39) all the sadnesses of her past, moved to utter and complete despair by the intense physical pain and the knowledge that her life was now virtually over. Bela now suffers in both physically and emotionally shattering ways, and yet does

not curse Pechorin or Maxim for the great physical and emotional traumas they had brought her. Pechorin expresses very mild forms of concern, but ultimately would easily be able to allow her passing, Maxim “ never once [having] noticed a tear on his lashes” (39).

Bela would be kidnapped and murdered by two men whom she had never known, and would not express any operative resentment; in the same respect, Pechorin’s actions would ultimately lead to Bela’s death, and yet he would offer no signs of remorse. Through the theme of suffering, and the passive ending of Bela and Pechorin’s relationship, Lermontov reveals the ultimate tolerance for the infliction and reception of pain that humans have allowed to form within their natures. (Word Count: 1, 491)