An Account of Common Motifs in Gogol’s “The Overcoat”, Benedetti’s *The Truce* and Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivener”

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Forfatter

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A note on transliteration

In this project I am using the transliteration system used by the Library of the Congress for Russian names. The only exception will be the last name of Gogol, whose transliteration would be Gogol’. However I will not alter the spelling of Russian last names in the bibliography, or whenever I am quoting a work, which is the reason why a name may be spelled in two or more different ways.
A note on translation

In this thesis project the three works analyzed will be cited in their original languages: Russian, Spanish and English. All the Russian and Spanish citations will be translated into English, using translations whenever available. Mario Benedetti’s novel *The Truce* was first translated by Benjamin Graham and published in English by Harper & Row in 1969. In 1998 Sun & Moon Press offered Benedetti to publish again *The Truce*, an offer that the Uruguayan author rejected. Nowadays the few surviving copies of Graham’s translation are available for sale through the internet. One of them is being sold for 1323 USD. Public libraries do not have it either in their catalogues, neither in Norway, nor in other countries where I tried to find it through my contacts. A few days ago I found out that the University of Essex has a copy. However, it was too late to borrow it or to make a trip to Essex to consult *The Truce* in English. That is why the citations of *The Truce* in English in this project are from my own translation, and so are other citations of works by Benedetti.
1 Introduction

"Y he sacado mis cuentas
y no le pago
a nadie.
Ni al sastre que me hizo estas solapas
como alas de palomo."
―Aguinaldo‖, Mario Benedetti

To find common traces in the works of Nikolaĭ Gogol, Mario Benedetti and Herman Melville seems an unusual task. The three of them are universal writers widely recognized, often praised and overwhelmingly studied. Melville is one of the most widely read authors in the United States (Howard 1961: 5) while Benedetti is the best known Uruguayan author inside and outside of his own country (Miravalles 1988: 129). Notwithstanding, they belong to different stages in literature history: from the Russian romanticism to the Latin American boom. They wrote during rather different times in rather different places: the tsarist Russia, the nineteenth century in the United States and the decade of the 1950s in Uruguay.

However, these works as different as they seem, they have several features in common. One of them is their protagonists’ occupations. These characters are, like their creators, writers. These fictional character-writers seem at a first glance quite different from their authors. They write, but their work is not creative; this work not necessarily literature. They do not create anything new. They are copyists, office workers, public or private office employees whose main activity is to copy, to repeat the same work day after day, as if they were manufacturing words in mass production. While the authors’ work is to use words to create something new or even something aesthetically beautiful, these characters just write mechanically.

These three characters are Akakiĭ Akakevich, Bartleby and Martín Santomé, all of them protagonists in “The Overcoat” by Gogol, “Bartleby the Scrivener – A Story of Wall-Street” by Melville and The Truce by Benedetti respectively. One of the main aspects that these three characters have in common is their occupation. The three of them work in offices; Akakiĭ Akakevich is a government clerk and copyist, Bartleby obtains a job in an office of

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1 “I have made my calculations/ and I can’t afford to pay/ anyone./ Not even the tailor who made these slaps/ that look like dove wings”

2 For practical reasons, the title of Melville’s work will be shortened to simply “Bartleby” in the remainder of this work.
Master in Chancery in New York and Martín Santomé keeps the accounts of a company which imports car parts in Montevideo.

This thesis project will demonstrate the existence of several common motifs in these three literary works. In order to carry out this analysis, it will first be necessary to define exactly what a motif is. The term motif is usually confused with other terms in literary studies, such as motive and theme; that is why this project will start with a discussion on these terms and their practical application for this investigation.

The copyist is just one common motif in the three works. As it will be shown, there are other motifs that these three works share. Some of these motifs are closely linked to the protagonists of the stories, such as their passion for handwriting, their loss of an affection object, their sickness and their death.

The second motif analyzed here is the figure of a craftsman, namely the tailor. This motif appears in “The Overcoat” and in The Truce. The tailor in “The Overcoat”, Petrovich is a rather controversial figure that has divided opinions among scholars. Those arguments concerning Petrovich will be used in this project to present the features of this character as a motif. The second tailor, Mr. Avellaneda in The Truce is not as controversial as Petrovich. However, their similarities and differences will be used to delimit the characteristics of the tailor as a motif, and to comment how the same motif has been presented in literature.

Bremond (1993) in his essay “Concept and Theme” presents a method in which motifs can be analyzed. This method will be presented and followed in this project, although his study will be complemented with other theoretical work by Silan’tev, Sollors, Frenzel and others. At the same time the motifs will be commented using some of the vast specialized literature that exists on the three authors and their works. Some other literature, especially literature theory, will be also used to comment the motifs. The analysis and comments will not be limited to the three works mentioned. Instead this thesis project will additionally use examples of other literary works by the same authors and others, to demonstrate how these motifs are by no means isolated from world literature.
2 Conceptual Framework

2.1 Thematics

Among works of literary theory it is possible to find a great deal of criticism against the approaches of thematics (also known as thematic criticism). Yuri Shcheglov (1993: 60) points out that for his contemporary Russian critics “the word tema sounded positively unfashionable and unpromising, discredited as it was by its long use in pedestrian high school textbooks and loaded as it was with distasteful ideological connotations”. This negative view of course represented a great challenge for Shcheglov's work on thematics. Another thematics scholar, Werner Sollors (1993: xiii) in the introduction of an anthology on thematics he edited, comments on the condescending view which started among the Soviet critics and continued in the United States:

Thematics is simply considered “old” and hopelessly outmoded, and hence discussions of literary “treatments of” themes tend to call themselves by other names, [...] thematics is regarded so passé that it does not even seem to deserve a rationale for it undesirability.

Because of the great amount of works on the “treatments of” mentioned by both Sollors (1993a: xii) and Silan’tev (2004: 17), which apparently had no solid theoretical background, the view on thematics became so negative.

Despite the criticism against thematics, its theories and works have been lately present in the development of literary theory since the last century. Thematics has a focus on the work itself without isolating it from other literary pieces, since it makes constant use of intertextuality. In addition common themes and motifs are not exclusive to contemporary literature; they have existed in literature since its early beginnings. One could analyze immortality as a common motif in The Epic of Gilgamesh and Homer’s The Iliad, just to name an example.

2.1.1 Definition of concepts

As its name suggests it, thematics has themes as a central concept. However there are other central concepts used in thematics which will be used in this project. Besides theme, the two main concepts are motive and motif. Probably because of the negative view on thematic criticism it becomes difficult to find a general consensus and carefully defined concepts whose boundaries are clearly delimited in its literature. In this thesis project the central
concept will be *motif*. However it is necessary to define this concept and describe its relationship with *motive* and *theme*.

### 2.1.1.2 Theme, motive and motif

To define what *theme* is, Brinker (1993: 21) provides an example by asking what Lev Tolstoï's *Anna Karenina* is about. Then he gives two options. In the first answer Tolstoy's novel is “about Anna's love for Vronskiï, Levin's love for Kitty, Karenin's oversized ears [...]” and many other details from the story. The second answer given by Brinker is that this novel is “about a series of successive casual related events bringing about crucial changes in the lives or destinies of several human beings”. Apparently, none of the answers is more correct than the other. Nonetheless, the difference is that the first answer is exclusively true in *Anna Karenina* and its particular world, even though Brinker’s examples do not have the same level of relevance; love is definitely more crucial than oversized ears, at least in the case of this story. The second is a definition that may also be applied to other literary works, and it is so ambitious that it becomes vague and loses any attempt to determine any theme or motif. In order to find themes in a story, it becomes necessary to find elements that “might as well unite different texts” (Brinker 1993: 21). According to Brinker, this definition means that in order to have a theme, it must not only be a topic, such as an abstract noun (love, democracy, war, homosexuality, shoes, etc) but it also must be found in several texts, either by the same author or by others.

For Wolpers (1993: 80) a literary motif “may be any imaginative unit based on perception, sensation, and/or feeling”. Shcheglov (1993: 50) also mentions perception as a first step towards finding a theme, explaining in other words that one should start by following “the impression of déjà-lu”. By this first step he means that is one must experience the feeling that while reading something, one feels one has read it before, because of the connection between ideas in the first and the second text. Both Wolpers' and Shcheglov's definitions mean that when reading a second or a third text, some elements in these texts resemble elements of the first. The connection might be obvious; *Pamela’s* virtue in Richardson's epistolary novel can be connected with *Justine's* virtue in the novel by Sade, implicit even in the titles of both novels: *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* and *Justine or The Misfortunes of Virtue*. This “impression of déjà-lu” could also be the result of a more meticulous reading; one might wonder whether there is a connection between the fourth floor where Raskol’nikov commits his murders in *Crime and Punishment* and the fourth floor
where Margarita calms down a crying child after destroying Latunskii’s flat in Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*. These elements which may be found in different texts could be in a first level, according to Wolpers (1993: 81), “actions, people, things, places, feelings, or even ideas that carry specific information”, and in a second level the “significance as general characteristics of human experience” of the elements of the first level. This definition of a second level of a motif is probably what Brinker loosely defined in his second answer on what *Anna Karenina* is about, and therefore both Brinker and Wolpers attempt to reach the point where theme and motif are defined. Nevertheless, based on Brinker’s and Wolper’s definitions, theme and motif have so similar meanings that it could be difficult to tell them apart. Notwithstanding, using those definitions as a starting point, it is possible to affirm that a theme stands in a more complex, and universal level than a motif. In order to avoid confusion despite the definitions used by different authors, in this project motifs will be treated as simple elements, again in Wolpers’ words “actions, people, things, places, feelings, or even ideas”; and themes as compound elements: the same actions, people, things, and so on, but placed in a more concrete and universal context.

What Wolpers calls a *literary motif*, Silan’tev (2004: 17) calls a *narrative motif* (*motiv povestovatelniĭ*). Silan’tev’s narrative motif describes the same elements mentioned by Wolpers. He exemplifies this by mentioning crime as a motif, which could be obviously found in a great number of works, let us mention for example in Dostoevskiĭ’s *Crime and Punishment*, Pushkin's “The Queen of Spades” or García Marquez’s *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. The crime itself is the narrative or literary motif, and this motif can also be analyzed using several different approaches (psychological, moral, legal), and not exclusively the literary. All those approaches are of “significance as general characteristics of human experience”, so they can be relevant for any chronological or spatial point in literature, and for other humanities or sciences. Silan’tev refers to this more significant level as the *psychological motif*, which according to him is the equivalent of the term *motive*. In this theoretical analysis on these three works by Dostoevskiĭ, Pushkin and García Márquez, crime is our *motif*, a more concrete treatment would be a *motive* and in order to turn it into a *theme* it should have even a more universal relevance. As mentioned before, *motive* and *theme* can be easily confused, as the limits between them are unclear. Still, none of them could be confused with *motif*. Since *motif* and *motive* are words that even look similar and thus might cause confusion, *motive* will be avoided so that the remaining concepts of theme and motif can be clearly distinguished.
If someone had the task to write a project to analyze crime as a motif, this project may be titled “Crime as a Motif in Crime and Punishment, “The Queen of Spades” and Chronicle of a Death Foretold”. A project whose attempt were to treat crime as a theme should contain a more concrete and more universal approach, for example “Confessed Crime and Guilt in the Subconscious in Crime and Punishment...”, or “Psychological (or moral, legal, religious, etc) consequences of crime in Crime and Punishment...”. This theoretical title for a project would agree with the practical considerations mentioned by Wolpers (1993: 90) when delimiting a theme. According to him “[in a] genuinely literary theme […] the wording should not be limited to an abstract noun, but should consist of an abstract noun […] and at least one qualifying adjective or verbal modifier”. In this theoretical case simply “crime” or “virtue” compared to “confessed crime”, “Christian virtue” “moral consequences of crime”. By this Wolpers explains that this adjective or modifier would define more carefully the discussions and analysis between different themes, motifs or plots.

2.2 Bremond’s method

The next steps after perception, as described by Bremond (1993: 50-51) are position and conceptualization. Once the common elements, the motifs, in the literary works have been perceived, they can be compared to each other. Since the stories are different, it is obvious that the way those motifs are presented will vary, even though one of those texts could have obtained its inspiration directly from another. The motifs would have different connotations, symbolism and relevance. Those common motifs could be for example the relationships between generations in García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude and the biblical Book of Exodus; or the figure of the “humiliated and offended” in Dostoevskiĭ’s Poor People and Gogol's “The Overcoat”. The common ground details would be somehow similar but they would necessarily contain variations, and that is what enriches the analysis and leads to the last stage, which is conceptualization. In this last stage, Bremond (1993: 50) instructs to isolate this element by “working [on] a definition that keeps the common characteristics of […] [the] stories”. To illustrate the previous points schematically, Bremond's table is reproduced here:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>story a</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>story b</td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>story c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>story d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>story e</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table does not represent any concrete works, but it is used to illustrate Bremond’s point. In the table there are five different stories are being represented. *Story a* contains the motifs A, B, C and D; *story b* contains B, C, D and E, and so on. After the process of perception, the motifs in the stories are being positioned in this kind of scheme so that it becomes possible to find out the common motifs among all the stories, and then it is possible to conceptualize motifs A, B, C, etc., by giving them a name. If some of these stories do not share common motifs like in the case of *story a* and *story e*, it would not mean that they are not useful in this analysis. They actually help to illustrate the common points in the stories b, c and d. Silan’tev (2004: 18-19) presents a similar scheme with concrete examples, presented here and slightly adapted to fit in with Bremond’s scheme.

Silan’tev compares three stories, namely Pushkin’s *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, Lermontov’s homonymous work and the novella “Atala”, by René de Chateaubriand. I am including another example, John Smith’s *The Generall Historie of Virginia*, in which he relates his own story and his encounter with Pocahontas. Smith’s account is in fact historical, rather than fictional. Nonetheless, the narration contains similar motifs.
Silan’tev presents the comparison among the motifs in the different works, which could also lead to the formation of different themes, if the modifiers mentioned by Bremond are added to make them more universal: "Experiences of War Prisoners" or even by using two of those motifs: "Relationships between War Prisoners and a Foreign Women". The motifs are isolated and then can be commented and analyzed as units that can result in different approaches. They become more universal and they can even be used in a metaliterary context. This is what Silan’tev calls the psychological motif, a theme that can be used in different areas of human knowledge: literature, psychology, sociology, law, medicine. A good example is the themes in Dostoevskiĭ ‘s works. His texts have been used not only in literary studies, but they have been used in several of the areas aforementioned.

### 2.2.1 Perception

One of the first questions on the choice of the three texts discussed in this project is why exactly those texts have been selected. Following Bremond's method (1993: 46-59), the first procedure is perception. A potential reader can think that “The Overcoat”, The Truce and “Bartleby” are somehow similar or that some parts of the stories resemble one another. At a first sight, the three stories are different. The first story is about a Russian clerk in need of a new overcoat, the second one about a Uruguayan clerk who is looking forward to retire and falls in love with one of his colleagues and finally the third one about a copyist in New York
who all of a sudden “prefers not to” copy or follow orders anymore. The first reason to choose these three texts was without any doubt perception. However it might be weak or superfluous and little academic not to explore beyond simple perception: the protagonists work in offices, there is a tailor; all of them have urban settings. As superficial as perception might be, this is used as the first necessary step, which would be the start of a more complex analysis.

Frenzel (1963, cited in Vanhelleputte 1993: 93-93) warns that one should not be tempted to use simple semantic elements such as “wall”, “eye” or “trousers” as it is not possible to consider them as motifs. In order to make a motif, for example, out of Martín Santomé’s suit, Akakiĭ Akakevich’s overcoat, and Boris Godunov’s mantle in Pushkin’s poem, those elements would need a more complex formulation, despite that perception could at a rather basic level find a common trait, in this case overcoat, mantle or suit. To this kind of elements Frenzel gives precisely the name of traits (Zug). Perception can identify these traits too, but they need to be juxtaposed using adverbs or complements in order to become motifs.

Bremond’s table presented above gives an overview of what a reader’s perception can be like after reading the texts. Certainly, the common motifs are not limited to the ones presented in this table. However, the overview given presents the motifs which can be noticed by perception even during an early stage of reading; other common motifs can of course be found after several readings.

Some of these motifs can be more obvious or more relevant in the stories. For example if we compare the figure of the copyist with the sickness of the protagonist, the former is not only presented in the three texts but it is an element which is more difficult to ignore. A copyist is after all the protagonist in the three stories. The figure of the tailor is probably not as obvious or striking at once as the figure of the copyist for perception. In “The Overcoat”, Petrovich the tailor has indeed an important role. A great deal of literature has even been devoted to Petrovich and the discussions around him present drastically different arguments: whether he represents demonic forces or a paternal figure for Akakiĭ Akakevich. However, it is undeniable that Petrovich possesses a more important role in the story than the tailor Mr. Avellaneda in The Truce. The tailor as a motif is not as striking in one story as in the other. At the same time, perception would also notice the absence of any tailor in “Bartlebly”.

There is an aspect that must be mentioned concerning the perception of the copyist and the tailor as motifs. Despite being simple substantives, terms like copyist and tailor may also suit in the category of motifs, as Frenzel (cited in Vanhelleputte 1993: 93) points out that “[p]articular types of humans who exhibit situation-bound traits, […] can also function as
motifs”. She gives also examples of both kinds of substantives referring to characters, with and without a complement or modifier. Among the human types she mentions in Motive der Weltliteratur, her lexicon of motifs, we find the loner, the amazon and the hermit. Frenzel's examples are particular human figures with strong psychological connotations. Nonetheless, she does not include professions, as in the case of copyist or tailor. However, she underlines the importance of taking the context into consideration. Frenzel's statement means that the same motifs are essential in one work, while in another they can have a supporting role, exactly as in the case of the tailor as a motif. In “The Overcoat” this motif is essential in the story; in The Truce it has a supporting role whereas in “Bartleby” it is completely absent.

2.2.2 Position

In the light of Frenzel’s statements, two aspects can be confirmed. First, both the copyist and the tailor can be motifs, beyond simple perception; secondly their importance as motifs can vary in the works from merely supporting to essential. Once the use of the first two common motifs has been identified, position can start, accordingly with Bremond’s method. The first positioned motifs would look like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>story a</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The Overcoat”</td>
<td>copyist</td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Truce</td>
<td>copyist</td>
<td>tailor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bartleby”</td>
<td>copyist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>story e</td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remainder of the common motifs which will be analyzed in this project are directly related to the three copyists. These other motifs are related to either their characteristics or events happening to them. These other motifs do not present the problem of the motifs of the copyist and the tailor, as they are substantives formulated with modifiers, as Frenzel suggests.

The next motif is not only related to the protagonist of the stories, but to their profession too. Their passion for handwriting is a characteristic that Gogol, Benedetti and Melville emphasize in their three characters. This feature is shared by the three copyists and is presented quite early in the three stories. This underlined passion for writing might be also related to the writers themselves, whose profession is to write. Such a detailed passion for
writing is difficult to ignore by perception, as this motif might be noticed after a single reading of the three texts.

Finally the other three common motifs which will be commented here are related to events in the lifetime of the characters. In this case these motifs are also related to each other as the first one to occur leads to the other in a direct way. There is an event in the lives of Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé which is a turning point in their stories and changes the whole perception of their lives. They both suffer the loss of an affection object. Akakiĭ Akakevich is robbed and the thieves take his overcoat, a piece of clothing which had changed his everyday life, while Martín Santomé suffers the loss of the person he loves, Laura Avellaneda, who had also changed his life as he had perceived it at the beginning of the story. In the case of Martín Santomé his life continues despite the pain, whereas Akakiĭ Akakevich becomes ill after having to walk home in the cold St. Petersburg and eventually dies. His sickness and death become motifs which are also present in “Bartleby”. Still, Bartleby does not suffer the loss of an affection object, according to the information provided by the narrator.

In addition, some of the motifs are so rich and cover quite many examples that they can be divided in subcategories. The copyist, for example, is a subcategory of another motif, the writer-character. All of those categories and subcategories can potentially become themes, as long as a universal treatment is given to them. In this project they will remain as motifs to delimit their analysis. Each motif is quite reach and they could be the subject of a whole project, and so can be the themes coming out of them.

2.2.3 Conceptualization

“The Overcoat” is then the literary piece which contains all of the six motifs, while The Truce and “Bartleby” share four motifs with “The Overcoat” each. These six motifs and their conceptualization will be the main corpus of this project. By this conceptualization I mean I will give a detailed analysis and present a discussion on these motifs which could be useful for a potential definition of a theme for each motif. This is how the table of motifs is once they have been positioned and they are ready to be conceptualized:
As mentioned before other motifs will be mentioned from works of Gogol, Benedetti and Melville as well as of other authors. Those works will take the place of story a and story b, while those other motifs will take the place of motifs A and H. Nevertheless neither the other literary works, nor the other motifs will be limited to only two. Many examples will be mentioned to prove the existence of such motifs in literature, especially from Europe, Latin America and the United States. That is why this projects will constantly compare the motifs with works of other authors, to show how these motifs are not isolated at and there is a constant intertextuality in literature with respect to motifs.

Before starting the first chapter concerning a motif, I have to clarify that due to the lack of literary definitions I am proposing my own whenever I do not find one in specialized literature. Concepts like “the humane passage”, “the little man”, “the anti-hero” are well-known and often cited and used; however whenever I encounter a new phenomenon of this kind I use my own terms, like in the case of “the calligraphy passages”, “Petrovich’s ophthalmological problem” or “Bartleby’s metaphysical sickness”. There is of course a possibility that some scholars have already come with a term for the aspects of the works mentioned here. Nevertheless, this is the contribution this project will give to future literary research.
3 The Copyist

"As a scrivener, Bartleby belongs to a literary constellation whose pole star is Akakij Akakevic"  
Giorgio Agamben

The copyist as a common motif is one of the most relevant and most easily noticeable in “The Overcoat”, The Truce and “Bartleby”, as it refers directly to the occupations of the three protagonists in the stories. The justification of the use of “human types” as described by Frenzel (1963, cited in Vanhelleputte 1993) as motifs in the previous chapter allows the analysis of the copyist as a motif. In this chapter I will explain why the copyist is a common human type in “The Overcoat”, “Bartleby” and The Truce. The copyist as a motif will be conceptualized (“what is exactly a copyist as a motif?”) and compared with similar motifs, and I will outline to what subcategories it belongs and what other motifs are related to it.

3.1 The writer-character

There is a great deal of emphasis in the three works on the features of someone who writes; a writer, would anyone’s first thought. However, if I had called this motif the writer, the name of this motif would imply the artistic connotations of someone possessing high mental endowments or literary talent. That is, what Foucault (1984: 113) defines as an author: “a person to whom the production of a text, a book, or a work can be legitimately attributed”. Then, when I am speaking of a writer, I also mean someone with the ability to write the letters of the alphabet or words on a piece of paper, whether or not their meaning is aesthetic or has a practical application. Such an odd definition of a writer is far removed from Foucault’s definition of an author. There is an irony in these definitions, for one of the uses I am giving to writer is almost an antonym of analphabet or illiterate. According to Pardo (2001: 152), “to write means to copy and to copy means to see without reading”, so the writers in these three stories do not need to understand what they are copying, as if they were analphabets. Still, in order to establish a clear difference between the usages of the two meanings of writer mentioned above, I will refer to the writers (fictional authors) in the literary works as writer-characters so that there is no confusion between them and authors.

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3 Even though one of the other motifs (the passion for handwriting) is closely linked to the motif of the copyist, it will be treated separately.
The writer-character as a motif is by no means exclusive to these three works. Mikhail Bulgakov (1997) in *The Master and Margarita*, presents two writer-characters whose writing is crucial to how their destinies turn out. The first one is Ivan Bezdomniĭ, who is merely an aspiring poet who loses his mind and abandons his atheist poetry; the second one is the Master, another author. He writes a novel which is received poorly among critics. This reception causes to break down and he is eventually taken to a mental institution. The connotations which writing implies in both of Bulgakov’s characters can be discussed from quite different viewpoints, be they literary, social, political or religious.

Another author who presents the story of a writer-character is Mario Vargas Llosa (1984) in *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*. The original title in Spanish, *La Tía Julia y el Escríbidor*, has a closer connection to the other writer-characters who have been mentioned here. *Escribidor* does not translate exactly as *scriptwriter*, a word which may have been chosen for the title of Vargas Llosa’s novel because there is no exact English translation for that particular word in Spanish. The choice of words in the title of Vargas Llosa’s novel presents the same problem in other languages; the Norwegian translation by Kari and Kjell Risvik has the title *Tante Julia og han som skriver* (“Aunt Julia and he who writes”) while the Swedish translation by Jens Nordenhök is titled *Tant Julia och författaren* (“Aunt Julia and the Writer”). *Escribidor* is a non-standard word in Spanish⁴, possessing pejorative associations, and implying the fact that this character is artistically less than an author. This *escribidor*, Mr. Camacho, pens radio soap-operas *en masse*. He writes these soap operas on-demand, much like Ivan Bezdomniĭ’s writes his poetry. The title *escribidor* is used condescendingly to underline the vulgar value of the genre he writes. Mr. Camacho is admired by yet another aspiring writer, Mario, who is addressed with either his name or last name in the Spanish diminutive forms *Marito* or *Varguitas*, as if a child were addressed. As in the case of Bulgakov’s characters, in *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, the writer-characters as a motif and their writing can be used to analyze the roles of literature, the act of writing itself, and authors.

In his novel *Blindness*⁵, José Saramago (1995) presents a writer-character with a more obvious irony; this writer-character is a homeless, nameless and blind author who writes a novel in a country where everyone is blind, and therefore his novel will never be read by

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⁴ *Escritor* is the standard translation for *writer*, and *guionista* for *scriptwriter* (*Diccionario de la Lengua Española de la Real Academia Española*).

⁵ *Ensaios Sobre a Cegueira* is the original title in Portuguese of *Blindness*. 

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anyone. A similar irony can be observed in the works by Bulgakov, Vargas Llosa and Saramago: in one sense or another, the writer-characters are frustrated authors.

On the other side, the three authors who are the subject matter of this project, Gogol, Benedetti and Melville also present a story about a writer-character. However, the connection between the authors and their writer characters is different in these cases. The differences are quite distinctive; their characters do write, but they are not authors. In “Bartleby” the difference between the protagonist and Melville is evident in the title itself. According to this title, Bartleby is a scrivener, not an author. The title of scrivener does not exactly represent the opposite of writer, but the difference becomes evident: Bartleby copies documents while Melville writes literature, creating a clear dichotomy between scrivener and author. This dichotomy is also confirmed in the other two texts. Martín Santomé complains about his work at his office, where he also writes for a living. At work he writes the same reports over and over again. In Akakiĭ Akakevich the dichotomy is more obvious than in Martín Santomé. He is a copyist too, who requests to return to his old job after being given a slightly more demanding task: to copy documents and simultaneously to changes the verbs’ conjugation from the first to third person. In two of the three cases, the authors present characters who either lack the ability, the talent or the opportunity to write something more relevant. The only exception is Martín Santomé. He writes a diary, which actually constitutes the corpus of the whole novel. Undoubtedly a novel can more easily become relevant and artistic, even canonical (as The Truce has become in Latin American literature), whereas it is not as easy for a diary to reach such literary status, except when being used as a testimony or historical document. However, Martín Santomé’s writing lies between The Truce’s canonical place in Latin American literature and the anonymous nature of a diary which might not be read by anyone, much like the novel by the blind writer in Blindness.

3.1.1 The copyist as a subcategory of the writer-character

The Master, Ivan Bezdomniĭ, Marito, el escribidor Mr. Camacho and the nameless blind writer write creatively even though their work is not received as positively as they expected it to be. In contrast, Akakiĭ Akakevich, Mario Santomé and Bartleby write almost mechanically and –excluding their calligraphy– inartistically. None of all the writer-characters who have been mentioned here are “complete” writers. There is a great deal of emphasis on their incomplete or mechanical, non-creative work. This kind of work includes the Master’s incomplete novel, Ivan Bezdomniĭ's atheist on-demand poetry, el escribidor’s mass
production of scripts for radio soap-operas, and the office work of the three characters commented on here.

In summation, all these characters are writer-characters, as all of them write for a living. Writer-character is a broad motif, which can be divided into several subcategories. I will call the first of them the fictional author. The blind writer, Ivan Bezdomniĭ, the Master, Marito and el escribidor Mr. Camacho belong to this subcategory. Akakiĭ Akakevich, Martín Santomé and Bartleby belong to a second subcategory of writer-character, which I have named the copyist.

Martín Santomé is a copyist, but he could easily be a fictional author too. The fact that he writes his diary is one factor which prevents him from becoming dehumanized in the way Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby do. While Bartleby mysteriously refuses to continue copying and Akakiĭ Akakevich’s world is limited to his copying work, Martín Santomé’s diary seems to save him from the type of destiny the other two characters suffer. The protagonist of The Truce does not become ill, lose his mind, or die, although he suffers the loss of Laura Avellaneda. The diary which Martín Santomé writes functions as an opposite force (creative, new, original, human) to what he copies at work (monotonous, tedious, repetitive, machine-like). In “Bartleby” as in “The Overcoat” there are other factors which contribute to the dehumanization of the protagonists. Such factors include Saint Petersburg and its cold weather, New York and its walls, the bureaucracy, the social system, and writing. These factors all limit the human contact the characters are in need of. The writing of his diary for Martín Santomé works in the opposite way for Martín Santomé; it helps him to preserve his humanity. Akakiĭ Akakevich “would hardly been capable of [writing a diary]” (Chizhevsky 1974: 299). Another Gogolian writer-character, the protagonist of “Diary of a Madman” has more human features than Akakiĭ Akakevich, even though he loses his mind gradually, in spite of writing his diary. Nevertheless, in the three works commented on this project, writing is given two opposites connotations; it can be damaging in a copyist’s life (the mechanical writing) and it can re-humanize a copyist (the creative writing).

There are certainly other elements which help prevent Martín Santomé’s dehumanization: his falling in love with Laura Avellaneda, his children and even his libido. Neither of the other two characters have such experiences, except Akakiĭ Akakevich and his experience with the overcoat. They do not have any real human connection outside their offices, be it to a significant other, a sexually desired person or a family. Akakiĭ Akakevich thinks he has found it when he sees in his overcoat his “friend for life” (Gogol 2004: 18). His
love for the overcoat attempts to be a substitute for human love or according to several scholars, a fetish. This love is also an attempt to re-humanize Akakiĭ Akakevich. Such a re-humanizing factor⁶ is completely absent in “Bartleby”.

I am using the word *copyist* here to describe the occupation of the three characters and thus establishing a clear position of this motif. This use of the word *copyist* (rather than *scrivener*, or *office worker*) can be justified by exemplifying how their work is simply to copy, to transfer a certain piece of information from one piece of paper to another. Of course *scrivener* and *office worker* and even the Russian чиновник – chinovnik (functionary) could be analyzed as motifs too, but their use would not cover the three characters studied here. The first motif, *scrivener*, would be a bit too specific (Martín Santomé is not a scrivener in the sense Bartleby is) and the other two, *office worker* and *chinovnik*, would be too general (and so would be *writer-character*, which I have already established as a category that covers the other motifs). In addition, *copyist* in itself indicates the kind of activity these three characters carry out at work, since all of them copy documents. *Copyist* is used several times in “Bartleby” and the verb *to copy* is used too in the translation of “The Overcoat”, even though in the original Russian Akakiĭ Akakevich is a *functionary of letters* (чиновник для письма, Gogol, 2004: 3). All this categorization is also presented by Gogol to delimit exactly what Akakiĭ Akakevich is: a *functionary* (чиновник, 2004: 1), more specifically a *titular functionary* (титулярный советник, 2004: 2) and then even more specifically a *functionary of letters*. All of these types of functionaries are motifs found in diverse literary works, especially in Russian literature. In addition, Gogol’s inductive categorization of Akakiĭ Akakevich from the general to the particular (functionary – titular functionary – functionary of letters) helps to clarify the placement of functionary of letters on the same category as *copyist*, thus in the same category as Martín Santomé and Bartleby.

### 3.2 The copyist’s routine

When at work, all these copyists do the same work repeatedly. They “have the fate of a writing machine” (Pardo 2001: 177). The routine and repetitive nature of their work is emphasized, although the characters’ or the narrators’ attitude towards this routine varies in the different texts. For Martín Santomé that routine is what he dislikes the least of his work: “Lo que menos odio es la parte mecánica, rutinaria, de mi trabajo: el volver a pasar un asiento

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⁶ All these dehumanizing and re-humanizing factors are actually an important part of the discussion of all the motifs mentioned in this project.
que ya redacté miles de veces […] En mi trabajo, lo insoportable no es la rutina, es el problema nuevo7 (Benedetti 2006: 10). On the other hand, Akakiĭ Akakevich does his work “with love” (Gogol 2004: 5), while Bartleby’s attitude is rather neutral: “he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically” (Melville 2002: 10). Both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby lack the human elements (his diary, his family, his emotional companion) Martín Santomé8 has in order to balance the routine of his work. Nonetheless, the reactions to that monotony caused by copying are stronger than the reactions of Martín Santomé. These stronger reactions might also be related to the fatal destinies of both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby.

This mechanical copying work becomes so habitual that writer-characters and authors can also be presented as mere craftsmen, whose habits and routines become extremely predictable. In “Nevskiĭ Prospekt”, Gogol gives one of the characters, a whitesmith, the surname of Schiller. In order to demonstrate that this character is not at all related to the German poet, Gogol justifies his name, while at the same time strengthening the view of the writer as a craftsman: “Перед ним сидел Шиллер, — не тот Шиллер, который написал «Вильгельма Телля» и «Историю Тридцатилетней войны», но известный Шиллер, жестяных дел мастер в Мещанской улице”8. This Schiller follows habits which appear mechanical, at work as well as in his everyday routine:

Я почитаю не излишним познакомить читателя несколько покороче с Шиллером… Ещё с двадцатилетнего возраста … уже Шиллер размезрил всю свою жизнь и никакого, ни в каком случае, не делал исключений. Он положил вставать в семь часов, обедать в два, быть точным во всем и быть пьяным каждое воскресенье.9

The description of Schiller’s routines continues throughout the whole paragraph: he does not add a single kopek to the budget assigned to potatoes when their price increases and he measures his libido towards his wife by cutting the amount of pepper in his soup. Akakiĭ Akakevich also follows a routine day after day, similar to the one which Schiller follows in “Nevskiĭ Prospekt”:

Приходя домой, он садился тот же час за стол, хлебал наскоро свои щи и ел кусок говядины с луком, вовсе не замечая их вкусу, ел всё это с мухами и со всем тем, что ни посылал Бог на ту пору. Заметивши, что желудок начинал пучиться, вставал из-за стола, вынимал баночку с чернилами и переписывал бумаги, принесенные на дом.10 (Gogol 2004: 6-7)

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7 “What I hate the least of my work is the mechanic, routine part: to have to copy a document I have written a thousand times […] In my work, the routine is not what is unbearable, it’s the new problem.”
8 “[…] before him sat Schiller. Not the Schiller who wrote William Tell and the History of the Thirty Years’ War, but the famous Schiller, the ironmonger and tinsmith of Meshchansky Street.” (Gogol 1985: 230)
9 “I think it will not be superfluous to make the reader better acquainted with Schiller himself […] From the age of twenty […] Schiller had already mapped out his whole life and did not deviate from this plan under any circumstances. He made it a rule to get up at seven, to dine at two, to be punctual in everything, and to get drunk every Sunday”. (Gogol 1985: 234-235)
10 “On arriving home, he sat down at once at the table, supped his cabbage-soup quickly and ate a bit of beef with onions, never noticing their taste, ate it all with flies and anything else which the Lord sent at the moment.
In both cases Akakiĭ Akakevich’s and Schiller’s routines are strongly marked by the use of imperfective verbs\textsuperscript{11} in Russian, pointing toward the fact that their actions were constantly repeated. Schiller is not a main character in “Nevskiĭ Prospekt” and thus the reader does not know much about his context. However, prior to the description of Akakiĭ Akakevich’s routine at home, the effect of his work is also mentioned. He is constantly distracted whenever he is not working, that is, anytime he is not writing, to the point that everything he sees, he relates to text and writing. He becomes totally absorbed in his work: “Вне любого переписыванья, казалось, для него ничего не существовало”\textsuperscript{12} (Gogol 2004: 6); writing represents his whole universe. He does not notice if there are rests of food on his clothes, or whether there is a horse in front of him; he does not notice anything around him. Straight lines in writing are the only thing he sees in everything around him (Gogol 2004: 6). The task of writing seems to affect the other copyists in The Truce, and their behavior has become so predictable that it is possible to describe it as a routine: “[…] Robledo […] va al cuarto de baño (exactamente, a las diez y cuarto)\textsuperscript{13}” (Benedetti 2006: 20, italics mine). Whereas Bartleby’s copyist colleagues, Turkey and Nippers are described with similarly predictable behavior (Melville 2002: 8-9), the narrator in Melville’s story relates Nipper’s behavior to “two evil powers – ambition and indigestion”, and this ambition was caused “by a certain impatience of the duties of a mere copyist, an unwarrantable usurpation of strictly professional affairs, such as the original drawing up of legal documents” (Melville 2002: 7). 

Nipper’s indigestion also affects his writing, since its effects make him commit mistakes when copying documents (Melville 2002: 7).

This kind of routine is also mentioned by Benedetti in some of his poems from his anthology Poemas de la Oficina (1981) and it emphasizes the repetitiveness of writing. The tediousness caused by life in the office is presented in all of the poems in this anthology, and underlines the repetitiveness of writing in at least a couple of them. The first reference is found in “Aguinaldo”\textsuperscript{14}:

\textit{Esta mano}

\textbf{Footnotes:}

\textsuperscript{11} The function of imperfective verbs in Russian is “to name an activity without reference to its completion or result” (Murray & Smyth 1999: 220). The verbal phrases here based on imperfective verbs are не делал исключения, положил вставать, обедать, быть точным and быть пьяным in “Nevsky Prospekt” and хлебал, ел, пожал, начал пучиться, вставал, вынимал and переписывал in “The Overcoat”. Unfortunately Gogol’s point concerning the choice of the imperfective aspect in both scenes is not present in Garnett’s translation of “Nevsky Prospekt”, nor in Hapgood’s translation of “The Overcoat”.

\textsuperscript{12} “Outside this copying, it appeared that nothing existed for him.” (Gogol 1992: 82)

\textsuperscript{13} “Robledo… goes to the toilet (exactly at quarter past ten)”

\textsuperscript{14} “Christmas Bonus”
The second reference in Poemas de la Oficina is found in the poem called “El Nuevo”:

Agacha la cabeza
escribe sin borrones
escribe escribe
hasta
las siete menos cinco.¹⁷ (Benedetti 1981: 10).

Both references can be a reference to story of Martín Santomé and to an extent to the stories of Bartleby and Akakiĭ Akakevich.¹⁸ The writing task seems not only habitual and tedious, it even seems to be eternal, never ending:¹⁹ Akakiĭ Akakevich is called a “perpetual titular functionary” (“вечный титулярный советник”, Gogol 2004: 2) by the narrator. He requested to return to his regular tasks after trying to copy and conjugate verbs. Then “they let him copy on forever” (Gogol 1992: 82). At the same time Bartleby’s formula²⁰ “I would prefer not to” when refusing to copy any more documents seems to be an attempt to break that circle of eternity.²¹ All of these references to eternity, the hand and the new office worker in Benedetti’s poems that write on and on, the eternal work position of Akakiĭ Akakevich, Bartleby’s refusal to ever write again: they make writing look like a tiresome, timeless, pointless task.

3.3 The irony of author vs. copyist

The irony here is that through their writer-characters, all these authors seem to be complaining about the tediousness of writing, which is in fact the authors’ and the copyists’ main activity. The copyist becomes a nonentity, for the “ideal copyist is the one whose presence and personality do not make any prints on his copy” (Pardo 2001: 177). The fact that writer-characters and authors might be related is expressed by Newman (1986: 21) in connection with Melville: “Bartleby as a copyist and Melville as a writer must ultimately be

15 “This hand / that writes one thousand two hundred / and transportation / and January / and cashier balance…”
16 “The New One”
17 “He bows his head / writes without mistakes / writes writes / till/ quarter to five.”
18 Benedetti’s reference of the hand which writes (not the writer, but the hand itself) resembles the autonomy with which another body part moves, namely in Gogol’s “The Nose”.
19 Graffy (2000: 75-77) in his study Gogol’s “The Overcoat” presents a detailed discussion on the feeling of timelessness which dominates the whole story.
20 I will refer to Bartleby’s words “I would prefer not to” as “Bartleby’s formula”, since that is what scholars call them.
21 Newman (1986: 28) suggests that Bartleby’s statement is related to the word said in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven”, said by the raven itself: “nevermore”. Although the protagonist in “The Raven” is not a writer-character, at least explicitly, there are some references in the poem that suggests he is a scholar (Meyers 1992: 163).
assessed as interpretations”. Newman does not completely reject the possibility of an interpretation which directly connects the author and his characters.

I have been suggesting a possible link between authors and their writer-characters. This suggestion brings us to well-trodden ground in literary theory, namely the question of the role of the author in a literary work. At a very superficial level, it may be possible to affirm that there is something of Gogol, Benedetti and Melville in Akakiĭ Akakevich, Martín Santomé and Bartleby respectively. A rather obvious case supporting this suggestion is *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, in which the protagonist Mario Vargas has the same name as the author, Mario Vargas Llosa, suggesting the autobiographical nature of this novel.

### 3.4 The biographical-historical method

The biographical-historical method is based on the author’s biographies to embark on a literary analysis for the works. Russian formalism considered the biographical-historical method as obsolete, as Tomashevskiĭ, a Russian formalist himself asks “do we need the poet’s biography to understand the work, or do we not?” (Tomashevky 1978: 48), and he affirms that this approach contains “an unhealthy sharpening of interest in documentary literary history [...] that is concerned mores, personalites, and with the interrelationship between writers and their milieu” (Tomashevsky 1978: 47). The Portuguese literary scholar Carlos Reis calls this approach “the simplest form to study the meanings of a literary work” (Reis 1981: 64). The role of the author in his or her own work has been the subject of an ongoing debate, and the viewpoint on this role traces the division between different literary schools. Foucault (1984: 104) insists that “it is not enough to declare that we should do without [the author] and study the work itself”. Tomashevskiĭ presents the case of Pushkin, who used elements of his own biography in his works, which contain constant motifs such as exile, wandering, duels and the Caucasus (Tomashevsky 1978: 50-51). Thus it is not possible to affirm that the only source for the study of Pushkin’s works is his biography; however the richness of the motifs he used was partly originated in his personal experience. The same personal experience, at least partially inspired the creation of Akakiĭ Akakevich, Martín Santomé and Bartleby. In other words, the motifs of exile, wandering, duels and the Caucasus were inspired by Pushkin’s life experience as the motif of the copyist might have been inspired by certain life experiences in Gogol, Benedetti and Melville.

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22 Mores: the essential or characteristic customs and conventions of a society of community (*Oxford Dictionary*)
This participation of the author in the work itself is what Foucault calls the “plurality of self” (1984: 112). This plurality allows the author to be present either as a part of the characters, including the narrator, even though the author can also mark a total absence of his or her persona. In these cases presented in this project the authors use that plurality to be a part of the copyists. However it is not possible to claim that Martín Santomé, Akakii Akakevich and Bartleby are based completely on their authors’ biographies, but it is possible to keep in mind that as Newman affirmed it, this is simply an interpretation. Lermontov used to deny that Pechorin, the protagonist in his novel A Hero of Our Time, had been inspired by his own biography, but for Giaconi (1960: 14), “an autobiographical Pechorin has more credibility, whether its hyperbole is exaggerated or diminished and therefore in a close relationship with the emotional ups and downs of his progenitor”. Giaconi expresses the same opinion about Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin. Such a definition can be applied to the three characters discussed here: the autobiographical Akakii Akakevich, Martín Santomé and Bartleby could have more credibility.

3.4.1 The authors’ experiences

The experiences in the lives of the authors which influenced them in their creative process are quite similar. Here I will only mention two. The first common feature in the three authors’ lives is that the three of them worked in offices before their breakthrough as writers. This work experience seems to have made the three of them develop a sort of “office-phobia” which is a constant motif in their works. The second common feature, at least as far as Gogol and Melville are concerned, is a feeling of being misunderstood as authors and a negative reception of previous work.

3.4.1.1 “Office-phobia”

Working as office clerks must have given these authors a great deal of inspiration for their characters. However, that inspiration seems to have been the only positive aspect of their experience. In the prologue to the Spanish version of “Bartleby” Jorge Luis Borges mentions that Melville had to abandon his studies after his father died and find a job in an office in order to support his family (Borges, 1984:10), where he became acquainted with the “routine of office life”. He later abandoned this occupation to join a sailing expedition.
Gogol also worked as an office clerk, as he thought there was a great career opportunity in the government offices, but this perception changed after he became acquainted with Russian bureaucracy from the inside (Schostakovski 1993: IX); he quit this job not without “having studied a whole collection of bureaucratic characters” (Waliszewski, 1946: 184).

For Miravalles (1988: 135), the Uruguay presented in *The Truce* is a “poor country where functionaries work with no motivation, they live or rather vegetate”. This negative feeling towards office life is not exclusive to *The Truce*. I have already mentioned Benedetti’s *Poemas de la Oficina*, which is a poetic anthology where these vegetating office workers are the protagonists. Miravalles (1988: 136) and Alonso Gómez also find these anti-office feelings in several more works by Benedetti, the verse novel *El Cumpleaños de Juan Angel*, the short story “La Casa y el Ladrillo” and his essay *El País de la Cola de Paja*. In his short story “El Presupuesto” the same routine and scant motivation in the office is presented. In this short story, from Benedetti’s anthology *Montevideanos*, there is in fact a reference which reaffirms these negative feelings and at the same time seems to link Benedetti’s work with Gogol’s: “Claro que también existía la otra seguridad, la de que nunca tendríamos un aumento que nos permitiera comprar un sobretodo al contado” (Benedetti 1968: 10, italics mine). What Paoletti (1996: 80) calls the “office universe”, is a world vision which reveals what Benedetti thinks of offices, and of his whole country. As Alonso Gómez (1988: 429) points out, for Benedetti, Uruguay is a country with “a public office mentality”, which is the same opinion La Rubia de Prado (2002: 31) has on the Russia presented in “The Overcoat”. As in the Benedettian view, there is no friendship in *The Truce* in those offices. The only aspect those office workers have in common is their daily routine. Alonso Gómez’s point is also reaffirmed in the office life described by Gogol and Melville, as there is certainly no evidence of strong friendship among the characters.

The “vegetating” state mentioned by Miravalles in the United States and Russia certainly reveals a number of similarities as they are presented in “The Overcoat” and in “Bartleby”. Giaconi (1960: 33-34, 54) explains that “the anthropocentrism which ruled the

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23 As mentioned in the note on translation at the beginning of this project, the edition of Benedetti’s production in English is limited. The Blog of Green Integer Books (http://greeninteger.blogspot.com/2009/10/holding-in-holding-on-on-mario-bendetts.html), suggests that Benedetti’s refusal to continue publishing his work in English was most likely due to his anti-U.S. sentiments. So I translate here the titles of Benedetti’s works as well: *Poemas de la Oficina – Office Poems, El Cumpleaños de Juan Angel – Juan Angel’s Birthday, “La Casa y el Ladrillo” – “The house and the Brick”, El País de la Cola de Paja - The Country with the Straw Tail, “El Presupuesto” – “The Budget”, Montevideanos – Montevideans.*

24 “Of course we had something for certain, we were certain we would never get a raise so we could buy an overcoat with cash” (italics mine).
literature of the nineteenth century finished definitively with the figure of the copyist Akakiĭ Akakevich, and it is the bureaucratic life which brings men to the ground, from where the Gogolian characters will never rise again”. There have been many social approaches to all these three works, which are often associated with this bureaucratic life. The office is the ground that Giaconi mentions and by saying that the Gogolian characters (and also the other copyists) will never rise from it, they seem to be condemned to be office-workers both inside and outside the office. Akakiĭ Akakevich’s first expression after being baptized is the expression of a titular functionary: “Ребёнка окрестили, причем он заплакал и сделал такую гримасу, как будто бы предчувствовал, что будет титулярный советник”25. Such a strong effect does the office have on the copyists, that their faces are modified from their childhood and even in adult situations, such as when a woman tells Martín Santomé that “he makes love with an office worker’s face”26.

### 3.4.1.2 Being misunderstood as an author

For some scholars, the pessimism in “Bartleby”, is related to Melville’s “growing disappointment” and what he felt was “the decline of his talent and reputation” (Fisher 2006: 435-436). As happened with the novel the Master writes on Yeshua Ha-Nozri in *The Master and Margarita*, Melville’s novel *Pierre* did not receive positive criticism and commercially it was his greatest failure (Howard 1961: 31, Pardo 2001: 141). *Moby Dick* had better reviews, but the sales did not reflect this and were quite low (Howard 1961: 26). For Deleuze (2001: 66) the silence of “Bartleby” would announce Melville’s silence as a writer after all these disappointments. This silence was a reaction towards the response to the rejection of Pierre (Newman 1986: 37). Still, Fisher affirms that “Bartleby” not only represents Melville’s disappointment, but that it also represents the fate of the writer in the United States, who is forced to “abandon the originality of his own expression and made to copy what his employer (or publisher) commands” (Fisher 2006: 436). The literary problem reaches other frontiers beyond the literary tradition of the United States. Martín Santomé, Ivan Bezdomnî and *el Escribidor* suffer from the unavoidable fate described by Fisher: while they might have the potential to write creatively, they have to perform mechanical, mass-production or on-demand work.

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25 “They christened the child, whereat he wept, and made a grimace, as though he foresaw that he was to be a titular councilor.” (Gogol 1992: 80)

26 “Vos hacés el amor con cara de empleado” (Benedetti 2006: 60).
Gogol, too, felt that he was misunderstood at many a time, right from the beginning of his literary career, his poem *Hans Kuchelgarten* did not meet a warm reception (Leger 1945: 24). A few years before the publication of “The Overcoat”, he struggled to have his comedy *The Inspector General* approved by the Third Section, the organization in charge of censorship. Gogol had to exert his influence to have tsar Nikolaĭ I approve it directly (Schostakovski 1993: XXIV – XXV, Waliszewski 1946: 183-185, Giaconi 1960: 10). After the publication of “The Overcoat” he continued feeling misunderstood. He felt that what was supposed to be his masterpiece, *Dead Souls*, was misinterpreted. In *Dead Souls*, Gogol was hinting that he would abandon writing (Waliszewski 1946: 193). Gogol accepted that there was something of him in his works as he wrote in a letter: “it is quite true that you will find in […] my works […] little bits of my mental and psychical state […] but without my personal confession no one will ever notice or see them” (Gogol, cited in Magarshack 1969: 80). Nabokov (cited in García Fernández 2002:71), claimed that there is much of Gogol in his own characters. What Gogol presents, “are not portraits, but mirrors”. This project, though, is based on the works, rather than on the authors’ lives. So Newman’s (1986: 21) statement concerning Melville can be adapted to Gogol: Akakiĭ Akakevich as a copyist and Gogol as a writer must ultimately be assessed as interpretations.
4 The Tailor

“The only man who behaved sensibly was my tailor: he took my measure anew every time he saw me, whilst all the rest went on with their old measurements and expected them to fit me”
George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*

The tailor is yet another motif which is shared by two of the texts. This is the second and last motif based on the figure of a person, and its use has been already justified in the introduction of this work based on the terms of Frenzel (cited in Vanhelleputte 1993: 93) concerning the use of persons as motifs when she affirms that “[p]articular types of humans who exhibit situation-bound traits, […] can also function as motifs”. The tailors in the stories fill this “literary requirement” mentioned by Frenzel. There are other “types of humans” in the three stories: the lawyer, the homosexual, the *Important Personage*, the young woman in love with an older man. These other types – as interesting and intriguing as they may be – are not a common motif in the three works. Copyists and tailors are the *types of human* which not only are the common motifs, but which have –to different degrees– great relevance for the course of the stories.

4.1 The tailors in literature

The number of tailors in literature is not as vast as the number of copyists. As noted in chapter 3, in the literary tradition of the writer-characters and copyists, Gogol’s character Akakiĭ Akakevich is undoubtedly one of the pioneers. This tradition was subsequently followed by many other Russian writers, among others by Dostoevskiĭ, Turgenev in the nineteenth century and later in the twentieth century by Bulgakov in *The Master and Margarita* (Graffy 2000: 13). Whether or not *The Truce* is influenced by Gogol, the copyist is used as a motif in Benedetti’s novel. The motif has also reached the literary traditions of Europe, Latin America and the United States. In contrast, there are not as many tailors in literature. Most of the famous tailors come from folk tales; among the most popular we find

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27 In his study *Gogol’s “The Overcoat”*, Graffy (2000) provides an account of the stories of copyists based on “The Overcoat”. His list comprises stories from Russia and the Soviet Union. While impressive, obviously it lengthened greatly by adding copyist stories from other countries, whether following the Gogolian tradition or not. Chizhevsky (1974: 310) mentions that the different versions based on “The Overcoat” have been numbered at approximately two hundred.
the protagonist of “The Valiant Little Tailor” by the Grimm brothers and the two shrewd tailors in both the Tales of Count Lucanor by Don Juan Manuel (popularized by the version of Hans Christian Andersen, “The Emperor’s New Clothes”). Although the authorship of these stories is recognized to belong either to the Grimm brothers, Hans Christian Andersen or Don Juan Manuel, it is known that these stories in fact have a rather ancient oral tradition, which was later transmitted to folk tales.

“The Valiant Little Tailor” is a case in point. The features of the story have also been identified in many other folk tales in different part of the world. Ashliman (1987), in A Guide to Folktales in the English Language presents a comprehensive research which even includes Lev Tolstoy’s “Ivan the Fool”28 in the list of stories with similarities with “The Valiant Little Tailor”. All these folk tale tailors are either heroes by accident or shrewd and cunning characters of the story. This may be one of several reasons why the tailor appears to be preconditioned not to be a typical hero or to have negative, “fox-like” connotations. If the character of the tailor was dependent on traditional folkloric conventions, he was likely to become an antagonist or a villain in the stories.

These conditions for the personality of the tailor, which seem to be inevitable and preconceptualized, are reinforced following the analysis of the personality of other tailors in literature. Two examples of characters which reinforce such theories are Aladdin’s father in the tale “The Story of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp” taken from One Thousand and One Nights or Motel Kamzoil, the tailor in Joseph Stein’s Fiddler on the Roof. These two tailors share some of characteristics of the ones mentioned above; they are either extremely poor, they come across as passive, or they have little influence on the story. One tailor who has a stronger influence on the story is found in John le Carré’s novel The Tailor of Panamá. Still, despite being taken from contemporary literature, this tailor shares the same dark characteristics found in the old folk tales: he must spy on his customers and sells the secrets he attains in this manner to powerful international clients. In other words, literature has never been kind to tailors; even though they might have some influence on the stories, traditionally their role has been negative.

4.1.1 Benedetti’s tailors

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28 As suggested by critics, the similarities between “Ivan the Fool” and “The Overcoat” are linked in other aspects as well, such as the presence of demonic figures.
In his poem “Aguinaldo”, Benedetti makes a reference where there is a tailor involved. This reference may reveal a connection between “The Overcoat”, The Truce, and also with some other works of Benedetti:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ya he sacado mis cuentas y} \\
\text{no le pago} \\
\text{a nadie} \\
\text{Ni al sastre que me hizo estas solapas}^{29} (\text{Benedetti 1981: 16})
\end{align*}
\]

The narrative voice in this poem belongs to a nameless clerk who cannot afford to pay the tailor. As noted above, the connection between the writer-characters and Benedetti’s production is present in several of his works. The narrative voice in his anthology Poemas de la Oficina belongs to copyists or office workers such as Martín Santomé. Still, this is probably the only work in Benedetti’s production—besides The Truce—in which both a copyist and a tailor are mentioned. Poemas de la Oficina was published for the first time in 1956, four years prior to The Truce. Nevertheless, “Aguinaldo” works as Benedetti’s first attempt to use the motifs of the copyist and the tailor. This poem works as a predecessor of The Truce, at the same time as it might be an indication of intertextuality between Benedetti’s and Gogol’s works.

4.2 Petrovich and Mr. Avellaneda

There are two tailors in the texts analyzed in this work. They seem quite different: Gregoriĭ Petrovich30, the tailor in “The Overcoat” who has either lost one eye or is boss-eyed31 and Mr. Avellaneda32, Laura Avellaneda’s father in The Truce. The differences and

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29 “I have made my calculations/ and I can’t afford to pay/ anyone./ Not even the tailor who made these slaps”.
30 In order to follow the tradition established by other scholars, the character will be referred to simply as Petrovich in the remainder of this work.
31 In “The Overcoat”, Petrovich is said to have a “кривой глаз” (Gogol 2004: 9), literally a “crooked eye” and his wife calls him a “одноглазый чёрт” (Gogol 2004: 11), literally a “one-eyed devil”. This is a detail which has not been completely clarified in specialist literature. Petrovich might have lost one eye either in an accident or during a fight, so that his eye was physically removed (tuerto, in Spanish). Alternatively, he may have suffered from strabismus, an ophthalmological condition which makes the eyes look asymmetrical. Both conditions can suit the description of кривой глаз and одноглазый чёрт, but it is not clear as both definitions could be used in either situation. In the Spanish translation by Cugajo (Gogol 2001a: 96) Petrovich is “tuerto”, which means he lost one eye. The English translation by Hapgood (Gogol 1992: 84) and the Norwegian translation by Bjerkeng (Gogol 2001b:13) do not clarify Petrovich’s condition completely as both translations are open to interpretation: “Petrovich […] in spite of having but one eye […]” and “han hadde ett øye”. In the Soviet film versions (see picture 1 and 2 in appendix 1) by Grigoriy Kozintsev (1926) and by Aleksey Batalov (1959), Petrovich has not lost any eye, but he clearly suffers from strabismus. Some critics assume he lost one eye while others in their studies assume that he is boss-eyed. Eichenbaum (1975: 280) points out how difficult it is to visually represent Gogol’s characters. This question also affects the theory of Petrovich’s one eye as a phallic symbol. In the remainder of this work, I will refer to Petrovich’s condition as “Petrovich’s ophthalmological problem”.
32 It has been a Latin American tradition to call people by their last name in some semi-formal situations such as in school (Martín Santomé refers as “Vignale” to his colleague from his school days) or at work (he calls his colleagues “Muñoz”, “Santini” and “Robledo” from his office, all of them surnames; cf. “Varguitas” in Aunt
similarities between them provide the material for these discussions on the tailor as a motif. These discussions include arguments describing their roles as demonic and paternal figures.

One of the main differences between these two tailors is their relevance in the texts. Petrovich is considered one of the protagonists of “The Overcoat” (Graffy 2000: 92-94) or at least the antagonist of the story (Mørch 2002: 105). His intervention is actually an essential turning point in the course of the story, whereas Mr. Avellaneda is barely mentioned, when Martín Santomé recalls his conversations with Laura Avellaneda. He also has few appearances at the end of the novel. In total he appears actively in the novel in three of the diary’s entries, on Thursday, February 6th, Thursday, February 13th and Sunday February 16th. His influence does not determine the course of the storyline. In contrast, without Petrovich and the overcoat he makes there would be no story as we know it. After all, it is Petrovich who makes it clear that Akakiĭ Akakevich needs to have a new overcoat made, instead of simply repairing the old one. Mr. Avellaneda appears in Benedetti’s novel when he is visited by Martín Santomé almost at the end of the story of The Truce, a story whose main corpus would not change with the absence of the tailor.

Mr. Avellaneda’s physical appearance is not peculiar. If compared with Petrovich and his extraordinary features, Mr. Avellaneda seems a perfectly normal-looking man. Still, Martín Santomé gives an account of the physical aspect of him and even of his personality, in an episode which seems to be following the advice of the narrator in “The Overcoat” (“Об этом портном, конечно, не следовало бы много говорить, но так как уже заведено, чтобы в повести характер всякого лица был совершенно оценен, то, нечего делать”33 (Gogol 2004: 9-10)). This is a description of the tailor which is based on Martín Santomé’s own impression after seeing a few old photographs and hearing about him through Laura Avellaneda:

Él es un hombre alto, de hombros más bien estrechos, con una calvicie que ya en ese entonces había hecho estragos, unos labios muy delgados y un mentón muy afilado pero nada agresivo. Me preocupan mucho los ojos de la gente. Los suyos tienen algo de desequilibrio. No por cierto de enajenación, sino de ajenidad. Son los ojos de un tipo que está sorprendido por el mundo, por el mero hecho de encontrarse en él. Ambos son (se les ve en la cara) buenas personas, pero me gusta más la bondad de ella que la de él. El padre es un hombre excelente, pero no es capaz de comunicarse con el mundo, de modo que no se puede saber qué iría a suceder el día en que llegara a establecerse esa comunicación34. (Benedetti 2006: 138)

Julia and the Scriptwriter, while friends and family members are mentioned by his first name: Isabel, Aníbal, Esteban). Martín Santomé calls Laura Avellaneda simply as “Avellaneda”, which makes sense in Benedetti’s “office-universe” –term used by Paoletti (1996 :80)– and in a Latin American context. However in order to avoid confusion the father will be referred as Mr. Avellaneda and the daughter as Laura Avellaneda.

33 “It is not necessary to say much about this tailor: but as it is the custom to have the character of each personage in a novel clearly defined, there is nothing to be done” (Gogol 1992: 84)”

34 “He is a tall man, with a broad back, with a very visible baldness, very thin lips and a prominent jaw but not very aggressive. I usually worry about people’s eyes. His show some signs of instability. The instability by the
This physical description does not contain any extraordinary characteristics: Laura Avellaneda’s father is tall, has a wide back and he is bold. The only observation made by Martín Santomé refers to Mr. Avellaneda’s disturbing eyes, but this is a rather subjective observation. The reader does not receive enough firm arguments to be convinced of the existence of Mr. Avellaneda’s dark side.

On the other hand, like many Gogolian characters, Petrovich has a peculiar physical appearance. The first two features which are mentioned are that he is boss-eyed and that his face is pock-marked: “[портной], который, несмотря на свой кривой глаз и рабиину по всему лицу”35 (Gogol 2004: 9). Petrovich’s physical description continues and includes one more odd fact, namely the details of his deformed toe nail: “И прежде всего бросился в глаза большой палец, очень известный Акакию Акакиевичу, с каким-то изуродованным ногтем, толстым и крепким, как у черепахи череп.”36 (Gogol 2004: 11) All of Petrovich’s features are objectively described, even though they are peculiar. Nonetheless, Akakiĭ Akakevich finds Petrovich’s toe nail as disturbing as Martín Santomé finds Mr. Avellaneda’s eyes. There is something in those eyes and in that nail which for some reason makes them feel uncomfortable. Martín Santomé finds Mr. Avellaneda’s eyes intimidating, maybe because he is having a secret relationship with the tailor’s daughter; Petrovich’s nail can be seen as being simply unpleasant, unless there is more symbolism lying behind Akakiĭ Akakevich’s negative reaction.

The three features of Petrovich – his ophthalmological problem, his pock-marks, and his deformed nail – are typical elements of caricaturization of Gogolian characters. Here I have only commented on the physical descriptions, but there are other characteristics described which add more extraordinary elements to the figure of Petrovich. Akakiĭ Akakevich undoubtedly has many of these less-than-ordinary characteristics too. According to Waliszewski (1946: 189), “Gogol makes caricatures, even monsters. He does not hide anything of their ugliness and abjectness; he rather exaggerates such features; still ugly as they might be, those monsters do not cause him any horror or disgust”. Both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Petrovich have these characteristics mentioned by Waliszewski: they are not pleasant to the eye, they are not considered attractive. The food rests clinging to Akakiĭ Akakevich’s way is not because any craziness but more because of a feeling of not belonging. They are the eyes of a guy who has been surprised by the world, simply because he has encountered it. Both parents are good people (you can see it in their faces), but I like better her goodness than his. The father is an excellent man, but he is unable to communicate with the world, so that no one knows what will happen when that communication starts”.

35 “...[the tailor] who, in spite of having but one eye, and pock-marks all over his face” (Gogol 1992: 84)
36 “...and the very first thing which arrested the eye was his thumb, very well known to Akakii Akakievich, with a deformed nail thick and strong as a turtle’s shell.” (Gogol 1992: 84)
Akakevich’s clothes and Petrovich’s thick fingernail are enough to scare anyone away in the literary world or in reality. The abject features which Waliszewski points out have actually been used as arguments on the juxtaposition created between Petrovich and Akakiĭ Akakevich. The discussion whether they are simple caricatures or they are the motifs of the Devil and a saint generally uses those abject characteristics as an argument.

4.3 The tailor as a demonic figure

Petrovich’s “monstrous” features as described by Waliszewski have been a strong argument in support of the theory that this tailor is actually a representation of the Devil. As stated previously, this demonic characteristics used in this motif are linked to the cunning personalities of many of the tailors in folk tales, so the election of a tailor as a dark figure may not be completely arbitrary. At the same time scholars such as Merezhkovskiĭ (1986), Chizhevskiĭ (1987) and Rancour-Laferriere (1982) have dedicated a great deal of research in order to prove the demonic nature of Petrovich, and an even greater deal to discuss the role of the Devil in Gogol’s work.

One of the arguments used to show Petrovich’s diabolic character is the semantics chosen by Gogol when the action of the story points towards the tailor. This semantic approach includes words related to the devil [чёрт - chyort] in Russian, either words which mention the Devil itself, чёрт, or his advocations: “а теперь разнесла его нелёгкая запросить такую цену”37 (Gogol 2004: 17) or that simply resemble this word because of a similarity in their phonemes (cf. Graffy 2000: 92 -94).

The words related to the devil are repeated during the first time Akakiĭ Akakevich visits Petrovich: “чёрт знает какие цены”38 (Gogol 2004: 11) and “как будто его чёрт толкнул”39 (Gogol 2004: 16) and even Petrovich’s wife calls him a devil: «осадился сивухой, одноглазый чёрт»40 (Gogol 2004: 11). All these references point unequivocally towards Petrovich and not any other of the characters.

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37 This is a difficult sentence to translate into other languages. Approximately it means “and now the hell (the hell, literally “the evil”) tore him into requesting such a price; the translation of нелёгкая - nelyokaia is omitted in the English and Spanish versions by Hapgood’s (Gogol 1992: 89) and by Cugajo’s (Gogol 2003a: 103) respectively, but translated as “og nå forleder den onde ham å forlange en pris [...]” in Bjerkeng’s Norwegian version (Gogol 2003b: 19, italics mine).
38 Literally “the Devil knows what prices”, but “Satan only knows what price” in Hapgood’s version (Gogol 1992: 85).
39 Literally “as if the Devil had pushed him”, but “it seemed as though Satan jogged his memory” in Hapgood’s version (Gogol 1992: 87).
40 “When he had settled himself with brandy, the one-eyed devil” (Gogol 1992: 85)
This approach includes words which are not directly related to the Devil or his advocations, but are nearly homophonic to чёрт – chyort or close enough to resemble чёрт: в четвертом этаже по черной лестнице41 (Gogol 2004 : 9) (v chetvertom etazhe po chernoj lestnitse, italics mine). Although this argument could offer more examples, it can be easily defended by the fact that Gogol was indeed fond of word-play and that he took special care in the selection of words. As the Formalist school says, all of them have an important function, (Chizhevskii 1987: 298). The assumption that these words are arbitrarily chosen is easily challenged. Finally the last reference to words similar to чёрт points towards Akakiĭ Akakevich: С лица и с поступков его исчезло само собою сомнение, нерешительность — словом, все колеблющиеся и неопределенные черты42. Although this word, черты – cherty, means “traits” or “features” and could be included in the words which are homophonically similar to чёрт, it may also refer to Petrovich as it refers to Akakiĭ Akakevich’s behavior when daydreaming of his new overcoat; that is, after he has been tempted to have a new overcoat.

There are also other arguments sustaining the theory of Petrovich’s demonic nature. These arguments include the symbolic references used around him. He lives on the fourth floor; Toby Clyman (cited in Graffy 2000: 92, 128) observes that the number four has connotations to occult literature. Actually the fourth floor as a motif has also been used by Dostoevskii in Crime and Punishment and in Bulgakov’s The Master and Margarita; in fact, it is on this enigmatic fourth floor that Raskol’nikov commits his crime and where Margarita –turned into a witch– calms down a child after destroys Latunskii’s flat. To reach Petrovich’s flat, Akakiĭ Akakevich needs to use the back stairs (чёрная лестница – chyornaia lestnitsa, literally the black stairs), and both meanings are used in the argument. The color black is associated with dark forces (Graffy 2000: 92), while the back part and its unpleasant smells are associated with anal sex (Graffy 2000: 93; Rancour-Laferriere 1982: 184-186). When Akakiĭ Akakevich comes into the flat, it is full of smoke and its smell is unpleasant, descriptions which are associated with traditional descriptions of hell. Finally, since he was emancipated from serfdom (Gogol 2004: 10), he is for instance lordless, like a rebel angel who is lordless and godless (Graffy 2000: 93).

41 Literally “on the fourth floor by the back stairs”, but “on the fourth floor up a dark staircase” in Hapgood’s version (Gogol 1992: 84)
42 “From his face and gait, doubt and indecision – in short, all hesitating and wavering traits – disappeared of themselves” (Gogol 1992: 89)
His physical description, which has been mentioned above, is part of the arguments concerning the demonic features of Petrovich (Graffy 2000: 92), since what is described are his deformities: his pock marks, his ophthalmological problem and his damaged toe nail. In addition, in popular belief “devils are commonly thought to suffer from the absence or deformation of a prominent bodily organ” (Clyman, cited in Graffy 2000: 92), which strengthens the assumption that Petrovich is a demonic figure. Besides some other demonic figures Gogol’s works also have physical deformities, although as Waliszewski observes, their singularity may be due to the fact that they are merely caricatures. Nevertheless, the figure of the tailor as a motif can be both a caricature and a representation of the Devil. These dimensions are completely compatible. Besides, Gogol wanted to “make the Devil look as an imbecile”, he also wanted that “after reading his works, people could laugh of the Devil on the verge of tears” (Gogol’s letter to Chevryrev, cited in Merezhkovskiî 1986: 7) and some scholars even point out that Gogol had an obsession with the Devil (Mørch 2002: 97; Phillips 2000: ix). Such an obsession has provided food for thought for a great deal of scholars.

As a matter of fact Gogol’s literature is full of those dark figures. The use of his Ukrainian background and deep religiosity are often mentioned as inspiration for those figures as recurrent motifs. If Petrovich is a personification of the Devil, he is not by any means the only one in “The Overcoat”, as the nature of the overcoat can also be regarded as a form of a female demon (Mørch 2002: 99). The same can even be said of Saint Petersburg’s weather:

“Есть в Петербурге сильный враг всех, получающих четыреста рублей в год жалованья или около того. Враг этот не кто другой, как наш северный мороз, хотя, впрочем, и говорят, что он очень здоров.”43 (Gogol 2004: 8). When presented in the text, Saint Petersburg’s weather in none other but “the enemy”, yet another advocation of the Devil. If Petrovich is one of the devils in “The Overcoat”, he is not the only one trying to tempt Akakiĭ Akakevich. This situation with a simple man with a good heart tempted by several devils mirrors once more a folk tale, in this case “Ivan the Fool”. In Tolstoy’s version Ivan is constantly tempted by three little devils, but Ivan’s simple nature stops them from succeeding (Tolstoy 1975: 110 – 148). However, it is important to keep in mind that all these interpretations and assumptions are highly debatable and that there have also been scholars proving Petrovich’s good will, human character and Christian values (Mørch 2002: 106-107).

43 “There exists in Petersburg a powerful foe of all who receive four hundred rubles salary a year. Or thereabouts. This foe is no other than our Northern cold, although it is said to be very wholesome” (Gogol 1992: 83)
Certain features of Petrovich’s character and personality also support the argument that his nature is demonic. His vices are often emphasized: he drinks, sniffs tobacco and swears. Both the prices he charges and his temperament change drastically according to whether his sober or drunk. In “Bartleby” there are no tailors or clear demonic figures. However there are “two evil powers – ambition and indigestion” (Melville 2002: 7) which hunt Nippers. As in the case of Petrovich, the temperament of Nippers and Turkey changes according to the time of the day and Nippers’ indigestion:

Nippers’ and Turkey’s mood changes drastically during the day; it is worth mentioning that Nippers’ changes are related to indigestion, which according to the narrator, is an evil power. Petrovich’s changes are related to drinking, which can also be regarded as a type of indigestion. Both types of unwellness are caused by excesses of food or alcohol, both being varieties of the sin of gluttony. When seen in a Christian context, the sinful nature of both types of indigestion can more easily be linked to temptation by demonic forces, as said in Proverbs 23:20-2: “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags” (italics mine). Those rags mentioned in Proverbs certainly gives Shcheglov’s (1993: 50) “impression of déjà-lu” and remind us of Akakiĭ Akakevich’s old overcoat.

On the other hand, Mr. Avellaneda is an unlikely character to be described as a demonic figure; his physical appearance is not striking, nor does he have any physical deformities. The only trace left of a possible influence of Petrovich in Mr. Avellaneda is mentioned by Martín Santomé when describing his impressions after seeing Mr. Avellaneda’s picture. In fact, Mr. Avellaneda does not show any signs of an evil personality. He is certainly distant but his “eyes of strangeness” say more about Martín Santomé than about Mr. Avellaneda.

Perhaps it is Mr. Avellaneda’s “eyes of strangeness” that link him the most strongly to Petrovich. He looks strange to Martín Santomé, which is undoubtedly a subjective description. However, Petrovich is certainly “strange”, which is another way to say he is a

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44 The snuff box with the faceless portrait is also mentioned as a demonic symbol (Graffy 2000: 92-94; Mørch 2002 : 106), but at the same time Petrovich’s drinking has been as a symbol of his being a typically Orthodox Christian.
foreigner in the sense that he is described as looking like a Turkish pasha, his wife as a German, his needle as a Barbarian. He adopted his patronymic after being emancipated from serfdom and becomes Petrovich, “son of Peter”, that is son of both Peter the Great and Saint. Petersburg (whose nickname among Saint Petersburgians is simply Piter), therefore Petrovich, “son of Peter”, “son of Piter”, is presented as a product of an unholy ruler and an unholy city.

One of the strongest arguments for Petrovich’s demonic nature is his role as a tempter. He refuses to repair Akakiĭ Akakevich’s old overcoat and it is the tailor’s persuasion which convinces the protagonist to have a new one made. If Petrovich actually tempts Akakiĭ Akakevich, this postulation strengthens the theory that Akakiĭ Akakevich is in fact a saint. The postulations presenting Akakiĭ Akakevich as a saint are as numerous as the ones presenting Petrovich as a devil, and they are probably as controversial. The arguments for example include the choice of the name Akakiĭ (as a reference to the Greek Saint Acacius) and the often cited “human passage” where Akakiĭ Akakevich’s words resound in a young man’s as “я брат твоїй” 46, which has a strong Christian connotation. Still, if Petrovich is indeed a devil, a tempter, or even as suggested by Graffy (2000: 92-93) a watcher, a fallen angel and a false Dmitriĭ, 47 Petrovich is part of the many demonic characters in Gogol’s catalogue.

4.4 The tailor as a father figure

Although the interpretations of Mr. Avellaneda and Petrovich as demonic figures are different, as paternal figures these two characters have more in common. In addition, the view of Petrovich (and to a much lesser degree Mr. Avellaneda) as a demonic figure is related to the discussion concerning the motif of the tailor as a father-figure.

The reader learns that Mr. Avellaneda is not Laura Avellaneda’s biological father. This is confessed by Mr. Avellaneda’s wife to Martín Santomé: “Hace veinte años se me murió alguien. Alguien que era todo, […] Laura era lo último que me quedaba de él” 48 (Benedetti 2006: 166-167). Laura Avellaneda’s biological father had been dead for twenty

45 Akakiĭ Akakevich as a holy figure will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 7.
46 “I am your brother.”
47 Graffy finds that the name Gregorii means watcher, another name for a fallen angel, therefore a “false angel”, in other words a pretender and may be a reference to the false Dmitriĭ in Pushkin’s Boris Godunov.
48 “Twenty years ago someone died. Someone who meant everything, […] Laura was the last thing I had left from him.”
years. Akakiĭ Akakevich’s father is mentioned first indirectly through the description of his mother as a чиновница – chinovnitsa, a civil servant’s wife. Besides knowing that Akakiĭ was the first name of both father and son, nothing else is known about Akakiĭ senior; he disappears completely from the story. Both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Laura Avellaneda therefore fatherless, but as Rancour-Laferriere (1982: 174) suggests, they both have a “father-surrogate”. Mr. Avellaneda and Petrovich have this function of father-surrogates, that is, “an authority figure in the life of a full grown person” (Rancour-Laferriere 1982: 174). In the case of Laura Avellaneda this postulation is much more obvious, since Mr. Avellaneda is her father legally and morally and he is a substitute for her biological father. “Father-surrogate” is a term which is taken from Freudian theories. That is why I will not describe Martín Santomé as a father figure, since he is actually a father and neither simply a paternal figure nor a father-surrogate. These psychoanalytical theories imply that in order to find Akakiĭ Akakevich’s father-surrogate the reader is “encouraged to project him into the first male of any consequence that comes along in the narration” (Rancour-Laferriere 1982 : 174), for instance Petrovich and later on in the story the Important Personage. The childlike characteristics which Akakiĭ Akakevich possesses contribute to the reinforcement of such Freudian theories. His childlike include his weak voice, his lack of good oral skills, his feeling of intimidation in front of authority figures and even his sexual immaturity.

Following the Freudian theories mentioned by Rancour-Laferriere (1982: 173-174), both father-surrogates have characteristics of a “loved-father” and a “hated-father”. Akakiĭ Akakevich addresses Petrovich carefully; he even feels intimidated when talking to the tailor. Petrovich’s tailor’s skills are required to fulfill the need of the new overcoat, the fact that he is providing Akakiĭ Akakevich with clothing is quite obvious. Moreover, Petrovich puts a great deal of attention and care into the whole process of making the overcoat. In contrast, he causes repulsion, because of his physical defects, the smells surrounding him and because he might charge too much for repairing the overcoat. Laura Avellaneda’s ambivalent love-hate feelings towards her father-surrogate are summed-up in the entry on Sunday, June 23rd, which is the first time she talks about him to Martín Santomé:


49 *Pero además* can be translated as *even*. The use of that word in “The Overcoat” (Russian даже – *dazhe*) has the same effect as *pero además* here. One expects an eventually greater and greater degree in the lists of items the speaker is naming, and by presenting an unexpected item creates a typical Gogolian irony. The use of the word *dazhe* in “The Overcoat” has been the object of several studies (Chizhevsky 1987: 297-298; Setchkarev 1965: 226)
Los lunes se reúne con sus amigos teósofos y glosa a la Blavatsky hasta la madrugada; los jueves vienen a casa sus amigos anarquistas y discuten a grito pelado sobre Bakunin y sobre Kropótkin. Por lo demás es un hombre tierno, pacífico, que a veces me mira con una dulce paciencia y me dice cosas muy útiles, de las más útiles que he escuchado jamás. (Benedetti 2006: 90, italics mine)

Laura Avellaneda points out first the negative aspects (the hate feelings) towards Mr. Avellaneda; he is a terrible tailor who works mechanically and *even* (Laura Avellaneda’s own words), an anarchist and a Theosophist. Once she has covered the negative aspects she turns towards the love feelings; he is tender, peaceful and helpful.

Rancour-Laferriere (1982) relates those love-hate feelings to a Freudian analysis in which there is a strong Judaeo-Christian influence and in which God traditionally represents the loved father and the Devil the hated father. The Devil, however, can also inspire “ambivalent feelings” (Jones, cited in Rancour-Laferriere, 1982: 175-175); he is rejected, but at the same time he is feared and admired. The prominent toe nail and the one-eyedness are also considered phallic symbols, which Akakiĭ Akakevich regards with repulsion and admiration, creating a typically Freudian father-son relationship. So even if Petrovich is the Devil, he can still be a paternal figure. Petrovich undoubtedly has a strong influence over Akakiĭ Akakevich. Most of the times this is seen as a negative influence since many scholars follow the interpretations underlying the role of Akakiĭ Akakevich as a victim who has been had and fooled by the tricky and satanic Petrovich. What Petrovich the tailor says certainly has much to do with Akakiĭ Akakevich’s fate. Whether he there is an evil plan behind Petrovich’s intentions, those postulation have also been refuted. At the same time as Mørch (2004: 108) points out, there are positive aspects of him as a father-surrogate. Petrovich, despite his flaws, is the only character showing genuine human traits in “The Overcoat”. He is a character who displays care towards Akakiĭ Akakevich, thus manifesting the tender side of his paternal role. The words used by Laura Avellaneda to describe the tender side of Mr. Avellaneda also suit Petrovich. They are an argument for their not being either the Devil (in the case of Petrovich) or a bad person at all (in the case of Mr. Avellaneda): “Por lo demás es un hombre tierno, pacífico, que a veces me mira con una dulce paciencia y me dice

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50 Elena Petrovna Blavastskaia, known in Spanish (an many other languages) as Elena Blavatsky. She was the founder of Theosophy. (*Wikipedia*)

51 “Mi father lives out of this world. He’s a tailor. Awful. Never have him to make you a suit. He makes them using the same mannequin. He is even a Theosophist. And an Anarchist. He never questions anything. Every Monday he get together with his Theosophist friends and he talks Blavatskaia-like till very late. Every Tuesday his Anarchist friends come over and they discuss and shout about Bakunin and about Kropotkin. On the other side he is a tender man, pacific, he looks at me with a sweet patience and he gives me quite useful advice, the most useful I have ever heard from anyone”

52 Rancour-Laferriere (1982) devotes a great deal of analysis of the homosexual relationship between Akakiĭ Akakevich and Petrovich, giving plenty of examples and psychoanalytical observations. Besides, his posture regarding the demonic nature of Petrovich does not leave any space for questioning, for Rancour-Laferriere, “Petrovich is the Devil” (177).
cosas muy útiles, de las más útiles que he escuchado jamás” (Benedetti 2006: 90). Both tailors are indeed quite peaceful, Mr. Avellaneda is even a Theosophist and Petrovich, as discussed earlier, represents habits which are considered as typically Russian Orthodox.

4.5 The tailor as a craftsman

Exactly as discussed previously concerning the motif of the copyist, the motif of the tailor has similar characteristics. The tailor is someone who works with his hands and can have the same tendency to produce in mass, repetitively, or to create something new. The same disjunctive situation to which the copyist seems to be exposed is repeated here. The objectives of the tailor’s work lie between creating art and working mechanically. Petrovich creates a new overcoat, whereas Mr. Avellaneda sews all the suits based on the same mannequin, so the question of working mechanically versus creating art crops up again. The overcoat as a piece of art or a simple object in turn raises a question which can have quite a few different approaches. Considering the history of Russia and Latin America it is not surprising that many social and literary approaches have accompanied the role of these characters.

Mørch (2002: 108 - 109) points out the way in which Akakiĭ Akakevich’s and Petrovich’s different occupations determine their character. Akakiĭ Akakevich is a copyist and a civil servant whose mechanical job is a part of a dehumanizing system. Petrovich on the other hand is a craftsman who does not work mechanically; on the contrary, when making the overcoat he displays more human traits than the rest of all characters in “The Overcoat” and much more easily could gain the reader’s sympathy than Mr. Avellaneda. A similar social criticism is found in The Truce, but with more negative consequences for the Uruguayan society as even a tailor becomes part of the dehumanizing system. Mr. Avellaneda, despite having a potentially creative job, becomes machine-like and all the suits he sews are made as if they were mass-produced.

The comparison between craftsman and machine opens a few more contrasting pairs in the three stories: tailor / copyist, creative / mechanical, mass production / art. Whereas Petrovich is able to produce something new (the overcoat), Akakiĭ Akakevich is not even able to change sentences from first to third person. He is happy when he is simply copying and he

53 “On the other side he is a tender man, pacific, he looks at me with a sweet patience and he gives me quite useful advice, the most useful I have ever heard from anyone.”
serves “with love”, and whether his work is mechanical or not does not matter to him. Both Bartleby and Martín Santomé suffer from this “syndrome” too. They possess the same “machine-like features” of Akakiï Akakevich (van der Eng, cited in Mørch 2002: 104), at least when they are related to their copying work. Petrovich, on the other hand, possesses a more human character and because he does not belong to the rank system created by Peter the Great; these condition’s in Petrovich’s life contribute to his ability to decide on his work and even to change his mind or to adapt the materials if necessary:

В первый же день он отправился вместе с Петровичем в лавки. Купили сукна очень хорошего — и не мудрено, потому что об этом думали еще за полгода прежде и редкий месяц не заходили в лавки применяться к ценам; зато сам Петрович сказал, что лучше сукна и не бывает. На подкладку выбрали коленкору, но такого добротного и плотного, который, по словам Петровича, был еще лучше шелку и даже на вид казистей и глянцевитей. Куницы не купили, потому что была, точно, дорога; а вместо ее выбрали кошку, лучшую, какая только нашлась в лавке, кошку, которую издали можно было всегда принять за куншу. Петрович провозился за шинелью всего две недели, потому что много было стеганья, а иначе она была бы готова раньше54 (Gogol 2004: 19-20)

Petrovich thus has many choices and uses not only his creativity, but also his common sense when it comes to prices and quality of the materials needed for the overcoat; he compares prices, fabrics and furs. Curiously, while the process of making the overcoat is narrated there is no mention of his heavy drinking problem; he simply “worked at the coat two whole weeks”. Nor there is mention either of how his ophthalmological problem could cause any difficulties or defects in the overcoat (cf. Rancour-Laferriere, 1982: 181). There is no mention either concerning his sniffing tobacco. He does not swear anymore. All these peculiar characteristics mark a significant difference with the copyists, and with other craftsmen too and even with the other tailor, Mr. Avellaneda. Another craftsman, Schiller the whitesmith, in “Nevsky Prospekt” has followed the same routine for years as a machine and so does Mr. Avellaneda the tailor. Not only does he make the suits with exactly the same measurements but even his discussions with his friends have a routine: Theosophy and Blavatskaia on Mondays; anarchy, Bakunin and Kropotkin on Thursdays (Benedetti 2006: 90). Scholars have had a tendency to literally satanize Petrovich and canonize Akakiï Akakevich (Mørch 2002: 104 -105), but the former’s ability to work not only properly but also creatively could act as

54 “On the first possible day, he visited the shops in company with Petrovich. They purchased some very good cloth – and reasonably, for they had been considering the matter for six months, and rarely did a month pass without their visiting the shops to inquire prices; and Petrovich said himself, that no better cloth could be had. For lining, they selected a cotton stuff, but so firm and thick, that Petrovich declared it to be better than silkk, and even prettier and more glossy. They did not buy the marten fur, because it was dear, in fact: but in its stead, they picked out the very best of fur cat-skin which could be found in the shop, and which might be taken for marten at a distance. Petrovich worked at the coat two whole weeks, for there was a great deal of quilting; otherwise it would have been done sooner”. (Gogol 1992: 89-90)
an argument against the negative image tailors have and the negative – and satanic – image the critics have claimed pertains to Petrovich.

Mr. Avellaneda’s status as a craftsman is not strong enough to make him contrast with the copyist in The Truce. In the case of Benedetti’s novel it is actually the copyist, Martín Santomé, the only character who is attempting to break the apparently inevitable circle formed by copying – mechanical work – tragedy. His diary is this re-humanizing attempt which the other copyists and other craftsmen in the stories lack: Akakiĭ Akakevich, Bartleby, Turkey, Nippers, Schiller the whitesmith and Mr. Avellaneda. The social criticism is clear, and it seems to be a common trait for the societies of Uruguay, Russia and the United States. These societies are being criticized for dehumanizing their people, as Mørch points out: “the system works to dehumanize the human beings that have become part of it. They become callous; they become like indifferent machines, indifferent cogs in a bigger machine, or they become like animals.” (Mørch 2002: 98). This machine-like state is severely criticized in all of the texts, to the point that even artists such as the writer-characters seem to be affected by such tendency. Once again the only character who is an exception to this tendency is Petrovich the tailor.
5  Passion for handwriting

“Oh, if my words were recorded, if they were written on a scroll, if they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!”
Book of Job 19, 23-24

The lives of all of the three protagonists are not exactly full of enjoyments. Their existence is marked mostly by pessimism and a sad fate to which all of them seemed to be condemned. Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby become seriously ill and die, while Laura Avellaneda unexpectedly dies and leaves Martín Santomé alone. In the middle of all this pessimism, there is at least one joy which two of the three characters have in common, namely their passion for handwriting.

To write, more specifically to handwrite, is described as an authentic source of pleasure. The motif analyzed in this chapter is closely related to the three writer-characters. This motif, the passion for handwriting, works as a reference point in the different definitions of what to write means, as writing is exactly what both the writer-characters and authors do for a living.

5.1 To write and to handwrite

The three works give enough material to discuss some of the different approaches to a definition of what to write means. There are several examples taken from the three texts which offer a definition of what this activity might mean. To write means to create literature; to write means to register history; to write means to transfer one piece of information from one source into a copy; to write is to trace beautiful letters; to write is also to hold a pencil and mechanically move one’s hand; to write means to record either poetry, Spanish coplas, Russian skazes or employee salary sheets; even in a more modern time than that of the three authors’; to write would mean also to type keys on a computer keyboard. All these definitions make the question of what to write means a more universal and metaliterary topic and could be used to formulate themes based on different approaches to writing. All of those definitions can obtain the value of “true” and they do not cancel each other out; instead they are complements of a whole unit, giving as a result several definitions of writing, all of them different from each other, yet linked to one another.
Still, certain hierarchies among the different kinds of writing are presented, or at least assumed, for there are different viewpoints from which the act of writing can be seen: this viewpoint can be artistic, literary, practical, historical, social and so on. Through an artistic viewpoint, for example, to write *mechanically* does not have the same level of relevance as to write *aesthetically*. Through a different viewpoint to handwrite can stand simply as a mechanical, — and simultaneously— as a hedonistic act; at the same time as something in which the characters find a moment of pleasure. This pleasure is present as long as this kind of writing is pleasing to the eye, that is, when beautiful calligraphy is produced; then it can also cause pleasure when it can be turned into an art. In order to turn simple handwriting into art one needs to excel at the art of *calligraphy*, word whose Greek roots are κάλλος – *beauty* and γραφή – *writing* (*Oxford Dictionary*).

The skilled calligraphist is a common motif which has been used in some other works. As an example, this motif can be found particularly among a few Dostoevskian pieces. Among those Dostoevskian characters whose great talent is their calligraphy we find Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot* and Vasya Shumkov, the protagonist of “A Faint Heart”, of whom is said that “no one would find such [beautiful] handwriting in the whole of Petersburg”\(^{55}\). Mikhail Epstein (1987) in his essay “Knyaz Myshkin i Akakii Bashmachkin (K Obrazu Perepuschika)”\(^{56}\) describes the development of these “holy fools” who are writer-characters in the works of Dostoevskiĭ and their similarities and differences with Akakii Akakevich. In this list of Dostoevskian writer-characters, Makar Devushkin protagonist of the novel *Poor People* can be included as a skilled calligraphist. Makar Devushkin, Prince Myshkin and Vasya Shumkov were among the first characters in Russian and World literature to follow the motif of the copyist after Akakii Akakevich, which later would certainly include Bartleby and Martín Santomé. Among all these writer-characters there are a few skilled calligraphists.

### 5.2 The “handwriting passages”

I will call the “handwriting passages” those fragments in the texts where handwriting is described or where it has a central role in the action of the stories. Under this description the creation of two subcategories is necessary. The first one includes those fragments in which the main purpose is to describe the joy and pleasure which handwriting produces in the

\(^{55}\) “[...] во всем Петербурге не найдешь такого почерка.” (Dostoevsky 1988)

\(^{56}\) “Князь Мышкин и Акакий Башмачкин. (К образу переписчика)”, know in in English as “Prince Myshkin and Akakii Bashmachkin: Images of scribes (Gogol and Dostoevsky)”. 42
copyists. The second subcategory describes handwriting without necessarily mention pleasure. This subcategory has one passage whose main point is to show how Martín Santomé’s handwriting has changed over time and handwriting becomes a reflection of how his life is and has been. These handwriting passages are also found in other works, among other in *The Idiot*, and they are likely to be present in other works in which a copyist is the protagonist.

5.2.1 The “calligraphy passages”

The two characters among the works here mentioned who have a passion for their own calligraphy are Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé. The fragments where this passion is mentioned have some characteristics in common; they are quite short, yet detailed; they appear only one time; and they appear quite early in both texts. They are just a few sentences in each text, but despite their shortness, they give enough information to open a discussion which would include possible answers to the question of what the meanings of writing and its symbolism are and what the meaning of creativity is. As I have not encountered yet a literary definition for any of these fragments where the passion for handwriting is described, I will refer to them as the “calligraphy passages”.

The diary of Martín Santomé starts with its first entry written on Monday, February 11th. Already in the diary’s second entry written on Friday, February 15th the passion for handwriting is mentioned. This is the first of the calligraphy passages, from *The Truce*:

…y la letra redonda con que debo escribir los rubros primarios me sale quebrada y sin elegancia. La redonda es uno de mis mejores prestigios como funcionario. Además, debo confesarlo, me provoca placer el trazado de algunas letras como la M mayúscula o la b minúscula, en las que me he permitido algunas innovaciones. (Benedetti, 2006:10, italics mine)

The rest of the diary’s entry confronts this pleasure with Martín Santomé’s routine, some other worries he has and even a auto-analysis. This entry in the diary undoubtedly resembles Akakiĭ Akakevich’s description of his passion for handwriting and how much he likes certain letters more than others. This is Akakiĭ Akakevich’s own calligraphy passage:

Там, в этом переписыванье, ему виделся какой-то свой разнообразный и приятный мир. Наслаждение выражалось на лице его; некоторые буквы у него были фавориты, до которых если он добирался, то был

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57 Calligraphy is mentioned in other occasions as well in the texts, and even in “Bartleby”. Still the description of the characters writing and the pleasure obtained by writing certain letters is exclusive to *The Truce* and “The Overcoat”.

58 "... and the round letter I must write the main itemizations with gets crooked and lacks elegance. The round letters are one of my prestigies as a clerk. Moreover, I must confess, the writing of some letters gives me such pleasure, such as the capital M or the small b, letters in which I have even allowed myself to perform some innovations of my own.”
сам не свой: и подсмеивался, и подмигивал, и помогал губами, так что в лице его, казалось, можно было прочесть всякую букву, которую выводило перо его⁵⁹. (Gogol, 2004: 5, italics mine)

Such amount of positivity in both calligraphy passages is not to be found otherwise in both texts, until the appearance of the two objects of affection, Laura Avellaneda in Benedetti’s novel and the overcoat itself in Gogol’s story. The stories do have a few comic scenes though, like the christening of Akakiĭ Akakevich or a couple of funny anecdotes in Martín Santomé’s diary, still there is no other joy described in those comic passages. According to Martín Santomé himself, the writing of round letters is one of the best 
prestiges
he has as a clerk, when in fact he does not have many prestiges at work. Moreover, it is possible to question whether he does have any other more benefits in his occupation. In both texts words related to pleasure (Russian приятный – pleasant⁶⁰ and Spanish placer – pleasure) are used to describe what the writing of letters cause in them. They both even have favorite letters, so they make the best out of an activity they completely enjoy.

To write in both passages has two different connotations. The first connotation refers to the ability to draw, to sketch, to ink, to inscribe the letters of the alphabet; the second connotation points towards beautiful handwriting, or calligraphy, which can even be considered as an art. Although they are not opposites, they still create a juxtaposition between a rather basic –almost animal or innate– activity and an art. This contrast between a mechanical activity and art is a constant question in all of the three works and is also a constant question in literature and even in sociology. The copyist, the scribe, the mass scriptwriter, the tailor, the smith and others work, produce, and thus his social function is somehow separated from the artistic experience.

Handwriting is a source of pleasure and joy for both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé; it might be was well for Bartleby, but the narrator ignores whether that is the case, as he and the reader ignore almost everything about Bartleby. Based on the information given by the narrator we know that Bartleby’s copying work is extensive, as he produces “an extraordinary quantity of writing” (Melville 2002:12). He works productively; his performance at the office is described by the narrator as follows: “as if long famishing for something to copy, he seemed to gorge himself on my documents. There was no pause for digestion. He ran a day and night line, copying by sunlight and by candle-light” (Melville

⁵⁹ “In that copying, he saw a varied and agreeable world. Enjoyment was written on his face; some letters were favorites with him; and when he encountered them, he became unlike himself; he smiled and winked, and assisted with his lips, so that it seemed as though each letter might be read in his face, as his pen traced it.” (Gogol 1992: 81, italics mine).

⁶⁰ “Agreeable” in Hapgood’s translation.
As the stories of “The Overcoat” and \textit{The Truce} continue the importance of this passion for handwriting becomes more relevant, for it is indeed the only one they have until their passions are replaced. However, in “Bartleby”, the protagonist never shows any similar sings of having any passion, neither for his handwriting, nor for anything—or anyone—else, despite the underlined productivity mentioned by the narrator. In contrast, the relevance of the passion for handwriting for the other two copyists is “a source of various spiritual movements and strong emotions” as Epstein (1983) points out for Prince Myshkin and Akakiĭ Akakevich. Before the appearance of the overcoat we know that Akakiĭ Akakevich surrendered himself to his copying work as he even served “with love” and Martín Santomé does not mind the routine as long as there is no new problem at his office and as long as he handwrites. This passion, in the cases of Martín Santomé and Akakiĭ Akakevich, where it is actually present, is thus the most positive side of the characters in the first part of the texts.

\textbf{Childlike features in the “calligraphy passages”}

This joy is described by both authors with features which could be shared with the features of an innocent and childlike habit, such as playing or learning something new. Akakiĭ Akakevich sits at his desk and delineates his favorite letters and the scene describing him resembles a toddler holding a crayon, innocently learning how to write his first letters and fully enjoying it. The childlike features of Akakiĭ Akakevich have been object of several observations. One of the arguments sustaining such observations is that from the scene of his baptize, the action moves abruptly to his work at the office, so that his childhood and adolescent years are deliberately skipped. When he hears from Petrovich how much the new overcoat will cost, he raises his voice “maybe for the first time in his life”\textsuperscript{61} (Gogol 2004 : 14). For Martín Santomé the description is not presented as extremely childlike as that of Akakiĭ Akakevich is, though he does admit to feel proud in the innovations he himself has done to certain letters. In some way, he resembles a child showing his advances at school to his parents as if expecting some positive feedback. That is most innocent and only childlike side of Martín Santomé, which is in addition the most useless, as those innovations in the design of the letters for documents required in an office of a company which imports car parts are not exactly necessary.

The “varied and pleasant world” which Akakiĭ Akakevich finds, or rather creates in his own mind, is a similar world that Martín Santomé creates when he is handwriting. The

\textsuperscript{61} “в первый раз от роду.”
childlike characteristics which surround handwriting resemble playing, activity which according to Freud “is the child’s favorite and most intense occupation”. This world the copyist create fits with Freud’s (2003 : 25) description of a child creating a fantasy world in order to play, and at the same time this child is behaving like a writer “by imposing a new and more pleasing order on the things that make his world”. Martín Santomé admits right after the calligraphy passage that he daydreams while he writes his favorite letters: “Ese tipo de labor no me cansa, porque me permite […] tambièn soñar”62 (Benedetti 2006: 10). Freud’s statements comparing a writer with a child do not contradict the seriousness and passion which Akakiï Akakevich and Martín Santomé devote to their handwriting, on the contrary, he affirms that “it would be […] wrong to think that he [the child and the writer] did not take this world of his seriously [since he] expends a great deal of emotion on it” (Freud, 2003 : 25-26).

Thus, the creation of this pleasant world can have two different functions; it is both an escape from the negative episodes Akakiï Akakevich experiences at work and from the everyday frustration an Uruguayan widower with three children can endure. The second function is, as the main argument of Freud’s essay points out, a first step into creative writing.

Despite their childlike characteristics or attitude towards their own handwriting, neither Martín Santomé, nor Akakiï Akakevich are children. They are grown-up men with jobs and responsibilities. Martín Santomé mentions his age together with a summed up description of his character in his entry from Tuesday, May 7th: “[…] yo, señor maduro, experimentado, canoso, reposado, cuarenta y nueve años, sin mayores achaques, sueldo bueno”63 (Benedetti 2006: 59) and he has even children who are already adults themselves. The exact age of Akakiï Akakevich is unknown; still when he meets the Important Personage the narrator points out that this Important Personage does not notice that Akakiï Akakevich is over fifty years old64 (Gogol 2004 : 34). Thus the childlike features of their passion is a contradiction, something not expected or at least not socially accepted for someone their age for either the Russian or Uruguayan societies of their time. Martín Santomé, in an attempt to reach an auto-analysis, accepts that there is a duality in him:

Es como si me dividiera en dos entes dispares, contradictorios, independientes, uno que sabe de memoria su trabajo, que domina al máximo sus variantes y recovecos, que está seguro siempre de dónde pisa, y otro soñador

62 “That kind of work isn’t tiring, because it allows me […] to daydream”.
63 “[…] me, a mature man, experienced, gray-haired, rested (analogy with wine, my note), forty-nine years old, no major health problems, good salary”.
64 “Значительное лицо, кажется, не заметил, что Акакию Акакиевичу забралось уже за пятьдесят лет” (Gogol 2004 : 34).
y febril, frustradamente apasionado, un tipo triste que, sin embargo, tuvo, tiene y tendrá vocación de alegría […] (Benedetti 2006: 10, italics mine)

So he is actually aware of that duality between the adult who has to behave as socially expected for an adult and the childlike character who daydreams and can enjoy handwriting. He has exactly the same behavior as Akakiĭ Akakevich. This duality is exact in both characters: adult / dominating /certain versus childlike /dreamer /emotional. The difference between the characters lies in what their response to this duality is. Martín Santomé has a stronger tendency towards his adult side, whereas Akakiĭ Akakevich maintains his childlike features for almost the rest of the story.

5.2.2 A Freudian approach to the “calligraphy passages”

The joy they obtain when writing, at the same time, is not caused by sharing their beautiful calligraphy with the world, not even with their co-workers or their families or acquaintances, or by obtaining the recognition their art deserves. The pleasure they obtain is thus private and personal, somehow egotistical. To excel at calligraphy is at the same time assumed as necessary for the copyists, since the copies they produce must necessarily be legible. Still, the legibility required for the copies or documents does not imply beauty. Despite their “innovations”, neither of the characters ever receives any kind of positive feedback for it. When Akakiĭ Akakevich receives a new document to copy, whoever is giving it to him does not even look up at him (Gogol 2004: 3-4). The inspector visiting Martín Santomé does not take part in the daydreaming and flashbacking the protagonist is having when looking at his calligraphy through the years, this inspector is concentrated on the work they have to finish (Benedetti 2006: 49). There is no extern comment indicating his handwriting is well done.

Whether handwriting is supposed to give an aesthetical experience or not, it does have some basic uses. The basic purpose of handwriting is described by the calligraphist Christopher Haanes. For him handwriting is something that is supposed to be shared. When handwriting becomes just a personal stenographic writing system which can not be understood by others, it loses a very important function. In some cases even the person who writes can understand what he or she has written. Then handwriting has lost completely its function.

65 “It is as if I were divided between two different, independent and contradictory beings; one who knows his work by heart, who is able to dominate his variability and secrets, who is sure of the ground on which he is standing; and the other who is a dreamer, never at ease, frustratingly passionate, and a sad guy who just the same once had, has and will always have a vocation to be joyful”
Haanes’ description of handwriting is related to the fact that nowadays the habit of legibly writing is being abandoned. Still, not to write neatly is simply out of the question for the writer-characters. However, Haanes’ point “handwriting is something that is supposed to be shared” contradicts the purpose which writing beautifully has for Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé. They write beautifully for their own pleasure. They know they will not obtain any benefits for writing more or less aesthetically. The assumption that legibility is essential for a copyist does not imply the joy and the gratification the writer-characters receive in addition.

That self-pleasure, the childlike contentment and handwriting gives a different sense when seen from a psychoanalytical point of view. The instrument used to write is a pen with its possible variations: Martín Santomé was likely to use a fountain or ballpoint pen and he mentions to have used a pencil; whereas Akakiĭ Akakevich used a peró, meaning a quill; and Bartleby simply a pen. Freud (1968: 354), in The Interpretation of Dreams affirms that “all elongated objects […] may stand for the male organ”, in which description pens and pencils fit accordingly. The scholar Sandra Gilbert (1986:486) –belonging to the pragmatic American feminist school– also describes the pen as a “metaphorical penis” in the context of an argument in which male authors have compared their creativity to a sexual and reproductive act: “male sexuality […] is not just analogically but actually the essence of literary power. The poet’s pen is in some sense (even more than figuratively) a penis”. A pen is after all an instrument for creation, then the comparison is both Freudian and literary at the same time. The authors use their pens to create their characters, in some sense as fathers too, to beget these characters as children in a biological way or even in a theological way where authors are a creating God, as proposed by Gilbert. Nevertheless the writer-characters, the copyists, are unable to create, to use creativity, because of the mechanical nature of their occupations.

These copyist are then unable to create. From an analogical Freudian point of view, this lack of creation can be interpreted as a frustration for being unable to have sexual intercourse: they possess the instruments pen/penis, they use the phallic object at work with which they obtain self-pleasure (whose Freudian analogy is masturbation). Still they can not

67 The Spanish word pluma : “no le importa por dónde corre la pluma”, and “su mano derecha empuña una pluma” (Benedetti 2006: 20) can mean either fountain or ballpoint pen. In addition “pluma” means literally “feather”, as used in quills (Diccionario de la Lengua Española).
68 “[…] всякую букву, которую выводило перо его.” (Gogol 2004: 5).
69 “He would be incautious in dipping his pen into his inkstand” (Melville 2002: 6), though this is said about Turkey, not about Bartleby.
create something new (whose psychoanalytical analogy is copulating and begetting children and whose literary analogy is to create an original piece of literature). Neither Akakiĭ Akakevich nor Bartleby have any sexual partners, in order to avoid saying that they have no sexuality; it is possible to assert that they have no active sexual life. Martín Santomé, on the other hand, does have sexual encounters sporadically. One of those encounters is the one recorded in his diary’s entry from Friday, March 22nd with the woman he casually meets on the bus (Benedetti 2006: 31-32) and later on with his lover/concubine Laura Avellaneda. He has then, in contrast with Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby, an active sexual life, and following Freud’s and Gilbert’s theories, he is using his pen/penis to create, therefore he is able to write something creative, in this case his diary, which is independent from his work as a clerk and a copyist.

It is notable the fact that the description of Martín Santomé’s favorite letters and the pleasure caused by writing them appears in the first pages of The Truce, for the calligraphy passage proceeds the part when he exposes his sexuality in the novel. Akakiĭ Akakevich’s calligraphy passage and the joy of handwriting appear early in “The Overcoat” too, long before he shows the development of his libido, which happens after he receives his new overcoat. This pre-sexual state of the copyists can be compared with Makar Devushkin in Poor People, whose last name is derived from the Russian words for virgin or virginal (дева, девственник, девственный). In Dostoevskiĭ’s novel Makar Devushkin has actually read “The Overcoat”, and longs to be a creative writer, like Gogol. Makar Devushkin’s “virginity” can be compared with the pre-sexual characters of Martín Santomé and Akakiĭ Akakevich and the inability or potential ability to create (in all its interpretations). These characters’ “virginity” can even be applied to the apparently asexual Bartleby.

These observations are notable because they are related to the same Freudian view applied on the copyists. As Haanes points out, “handwriting is something that is supposed to be shared”, in contrast, the pleasure of handwriting for Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé, is a completely private and personal pleasure. Joining Freud’s theories on the comparison of elongated objects such as pens and pencils with penises and the personal pleasure of handwriting, might result in an unconscious representation of masturbation.

Neither of these writer-characters tells anyone about their secret fantasy world and this particular personal pleasure, caused by both the handwriting itself and by the phallic object and his hands, because an adult “is ashamed of his fantasies, hiding them from others and guarding them as his most personal intimacies” (Freud 2003: 27). Martín Santomé feels safe
writing his diary as he can admit his daydreaming only to himself: “Ese tipo de labor no me cansa, porque me permite pensar en otras cosas y hasta (¿por qué no decírmelo a mi mismo?) también soñar”70 (Benedetti 2006: 10, italics mine), and he never reveals these fantasies to anyone else in the novel. The description of the fantasy world and its pleasures is as a matter of fact mentioned before the appearance of other types of sexual features in the copyists.

This passion for handwriting is then, like masturbation, a childlike sexual manifestation. This affirmation makes more sense when more mature and sexual behavior appears for the characters. The passion for handwriting fades away or at least is not mentioned again once it has been substituted by another passion. Thus, the passion that Martín Santomé feels for Laura Avellaneda and Akakiĭ Akakevich for the overcoat substitutes the need for a passion for handwriting. Freud (2003: 26) explains this leap from one passion to another by saying that “scarcely anything is so hard to forgo as a pleasure one has known, […] we […] merely exchange one thing for another; what seems like a renunciation is in fact the invention of a substitute, a surrogate”. The passion for handwriting has a central role in the part of the texts where it is mentioned, and then when the substituting passions emerge there is no room for the old passion, as the stories carry on the central role one passion has is transferred to the new passion.

The French poststructuralist theorist Hélène Cixous (1975: 348, 350) also aligns writing with masturbation; for Cixous writing is aligned with that “Western […] phallocentric tradition […],[which implies a] self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallocentrism”. Klages (1997) interprets Cixous’ statements saying that that relationship writing/masturbation has characteristics of “something secret, shameful, silly, not quite adult, something that will be renounced in order to achieve adulthood”. These theories become clearer under the examples of Martín Santomé and Akakiĭ Akakevich; once they develop a more mature sexuality, attaching it to a different desire object (whether Laura Avellaneda or the overcoat) this passion for handwriting is not mentioned anymore. Cixous’ writing had its focus on feminist theories, where the male domination over women is being analyzed. Still, I am allowing myself to use these theories as the copyists do not fit completely in the profile of Western literary heroes, but exactly the opposite. They are Don Quixotes71 without any big

70 “That kind of work doesn’t tire me, because it allows me to think of other things and even (why shouldn’t I admit this to myself?) to daydream” (itals mine).

71 Cervantes and his Don Quixote had actually a great influence on Gogol (Setchkarev, 1965 : 183); the conversation Aksentii Ivanovich Poprischin hears between two dogs resembles Cervantes’s short story “The Dialogue of the Dogs” (La Rubia de Prado 2002: 33).
windmills to fight against, and they are anti-heroes, with no great ambitions, they are not particularly successful either. They end up going crazy, being alone, and dying.

These three writer-characters are not in the same category as the “positively beautiful” Dostoevskian writer-character, Prince Myshkin. Even Epstein (1983) considers Akakiĭ Akakevich and Prince Myshkin to be “diametrically opposed to each other”, in spite of their similarities such as their innocence and passion for handwriting. Their only pleasure and “privilege” is to write and feel proud about their calligraphy. From Epstein’s viewpoint, Akakiĭ Akakevich succumbs to demonic temptation, thus failing as a saint, so “The Overcoat” becomes a Saint’s Life turned upside down, whereas Myshkin, by becoming more saintly “turns [this Saint’s Life] over again” (Epstein 1983; cf. Graffy 2000: 70).

Cixous’ literary arguments are not only referred towards oppression on women, but on everything that is “dark”. By “dark” she means everything representing the opposite of a European, White, Christian, male, heterosexual literary canon. At the same time she implies that these canonical “requirements” are also necessary for the protagonists in literature. The opposite of this canon is therefore dark. The dark is “black, Africa, dangerous”, in Cixous’ words. Dostoevskii, in Winter Notes points out this historical distance between Europe and Russia; “Russian Europe” is a colony of “European Europe”. Therefore its literature loses one of those canonical requirements, and so do Latin American and Anglo American literature. They are placed as colonies of Europe, drawing a clear line between a canonical European tradition and the rest of literatures: Anglo American, Latin American and Russian. This view of these literatures as dark, non-European makes it possible to apply Cixous’ words to Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé and on Bartleby. They belong to non-European traditions and they are anti-heroes in the category of characters hidden in the “dark”, and it is in the dark, hidden away from the public eye, where women write, masturbation takes place and where the copyists enjoy their own handwriting

5.3 Other handwriting passages

There are some other handwriting passages in these and other works. Even though the second handwriting passage from The Truce does not mention the passion for handwriting, I consider it to have some importance as this passage can reaffirms the points already mentioned about the calligraphy passages. This third passage is found in The Truce, in the entry from Thursday, April 18th, the whole passage is reproduced here:
To start feeling old. The first data from 1929 had been written by me; those notes and cancellations in the daily rough draft had been written by me; that information in pencil concerning transportation had been written by me. Then I was just an apprentice, though they used to assign me some important work, but the little amount of glory was exclusively for the boss, exactly as the little amount of glory is for me when the important work is assigned to Múñoz and Robledo. I feel a little bit like the company’s Herodotus, the one that registers-and scribe of its history, like a surviving witness. Twenty-five years. Five lustra. Or a quarter of a century. No. Sounds friendlier to say plainly and simply twenty-five years. And how much my handwriting has changed! In 1929 I used to have a sloppy calligraphy. The small \( t \) didn’t bend towards the same side as the \( d \), the \( b \) or the \( h \), as if a different wind had blown on each of them. In 1939, the lower part of the \( f \), the \( g \) and the \( j \) looked like a bunch of indecisive tufts with no character or will. In 1945 the era of capital letters commenced, my great joy was to decorate them with wide curves, which were spectacular and useless. The \( M \) and the \( H \) were enormous spiders, with their spider webs and everything. Now my handwriting has become synthetic, even, disciplined, direct. That is just a proof that I am a simulator, since I myself have become complicated, uneven, caotic, impure. Suddenly, when the inspector asked me for some information from 1930, I recognized my calligraphy, my calligraphy from a special time. With that handwriting I jotted down “Description of paid salaries to the staff during August, 1930”, using the same handwriting and on the same year, I had written twice a week “Dear Isabel”, since Isabel was living then in Melo and I used to write to her precisely every Tuesday and Friday. That was then, my boyfriend handwriting. I smiled, taken away by the memories and the inspector smiled with me. Then he asked me for another detailed itemization.”
handwriting passage\textsuperscript{73}; his handwriting and his calligraphy are the same thing and his only talent. Prince Myshkin from *The Idiot* has also a handwriting passage where he admits he does not possess any other talent, rather than his calligraphy:

[...]Я думаю, что не имею ни талантов, ни особых способностей; даже напротив, потому что я больной человек и правильно не учился [...] А почерк превосходный. Вот в этом у меня, пожалуй, и талант; в этом я просто каллиграф. Дайте мне, я вам сейчас напишу что-нибудь для пробы [...]\textsuperscript{74} (Dostoevskii 1971: 27, 28)

Exactly like Martín Santomé, Prince Myshkin uses the Russian words for *handwriting* and *calligraphy* (почерк and каллиграфия), or in this case *calligraphist* (каллиграф)

indistinctively.

Those letters these copyists write are used as a source of pleasure, as an escape from a hard reality. In addition those letters which start a passion can lead to quite different fates. While for Akakiĭ Akakevich “outside his copying, it appeared that nothing existed for him” (Gogol 1992: 82), handwriting is for Prince Myshkin and Martín Santomé actually a connection with something outside handwriting itself, a connection with the real world. For Prince Myshkin his calligraphy is used in the letters he writes to Varvara Dobroselova, and therefore to a contact with another person with whom he falls in love. For Martín Santomé it represents both a therapy for the writer-character and a step towards creativity. In other words, their passion for handwriting has opposite effects: it means salvation for Martín Santomé and Prince Myshkin, but it means damnation for Akakiĭ Akakevich.

\textsuperscript{73} In the Norwegian version of *The Truce*, *Nådetid* (1979), translated by Kåre Nilsson, he uses only the Norwegian words skrift and håndskrift and leaves kalligrafi out, which actually gives a different view on Benedetti’s novel and on this motif.

\textsuperscript{74} “[...]I fancy I’ve no talents or special abilities; quite the contrary in fact, for I am an ill man, and did not get a proper education [...] My handwriting is outstanding. There, perhaps, is where my talent lies after all; there, I am simply a calligraphist. Here, let me write you something as a sample[...]” (Dostoevsky (Garnett’s version) (2003 : 29, 30)
6 Loss of affection object

6.1 The lost object

In Bulgakov’s (1997) novel The Master and Margarita, a group of motifs which are an essential part of the whole plot include love which is longed for, then obtained, then lost, then obtained again with the help of demonic forces. The loss of a beloved person is certainly one of the main motifs in Bulgakov’s novel. As a matter of fact, Graffy (2000: 42) claims that the inspiration of the plot in The Master and Margarita comes actually from “The Overcoat”. For in “The Overcoat” there are also demonic forces involved, and there is something which is strongly desired. This something can be interpreted as an object, a companion, love or a substitute for love. This search for that something is the point where a great deal of discussion has been developing since the literary analysis of “The Overcoat” started. Is there lost love in Gogol’s story? Is there any love at all? That is why the choice of the title for this chapter carried the risk to sound misleading or inaccurate. There is certainly a clear loss in two of the three works analyzed in this project. According to Rando (1995: 211), loss is “a central phenomenon in human existence that must be accommodated in a healthy manner”. The way loss is accommodated varies in the stories. In addition, it might be possible to claim that in “Bartleby” there is a tangible loss too, though such a statement is based on interpretations and not using the text itself as a source.

In “The Overcoat” and in The Truce, there is a tangible, concrete loss of the affection “object”. The adjectives tangible and concrete might sound too obvious; still when contrasted with a possible loss in “Bartleby” those two adjectives make more sense. For in “Bartleby” there are too many details which are hidden. The narrator, who is also one of the main characters, is not omnipresent; there is much he ignores –or avoids to say– about Bartleby, which is the main reason why he is so puzzled. The “loss” of Bartleby can be simply guessed or interpreted. Thus, the tangible losses function as essential turning points in both stories. These losses cause a great deal of pain for both protagonists and bring along extremely

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75 Dostoevsky (cited in Setchkarev 1965: 224) answers this question by saying that there is no humanity or love in “The Overcoat”, but only “a grotesque play with words and values”.

76 Deleuze (2001) describes Bartleby’s loss as a betrayal. This point will be discussed in the chapter 7.
negative consequences for them. In “Mysery”, Anton Chekhov presents a character who has lost his son. He is all alone and needs desperately to tell the story of how he lost his son after he was sick with fever. Freud (cited in Rando, 1995: 212) points out that the way to deal with loss of an affection object is either through mourning, like in the way Martín Santomé and Iona the coachman “Misery” deal with the loss, or through melancholia. Melancholia has pathological consequences, which might be the case of Akakii Akakevich, who is unable to recover from his loss.

In order to clarify what an object of affection can be, we can take a look at one episode in Gogol’s Dead Souls, the passion for someone or something animate or inanimate is explained and justified:

У всякого есть свой задор: у одного задор обратился на борзых собак; другому кажется, что он сильный любитель музыки и удивительно чувствует все глубокие места в ней; третий мастер лихо пообедать; четвертый сыграть роль хоть одним вершком повыше той, которая ему назначена; пятый, с желанием более ограниченным, спит и грезит о том, как бы пройтись на гулянье с флигель-адъютантом, напоказ своим приятелям, знакомым и даже незнакомым. (Gogol, 1994)

While the overcoat is an object, Laura Avellaneda is a person. However, the way both Laura Avellaneda and the overcoat are treated in the stories is quite similar. That is why I have chosen to name this motif loss of affection object; although it might sound misleading, it is simpler to treat Laura Avellaneda as an “object” that to treat the overcoat as a “person” or “love”, for strictly literary purposes. Calling this motif the loss of affection object, has the intention to cover several literary situations which can include characters or items of animate or inanimate nature. The passage which has been quoted above from Dead Souls has a continuation going beyond those restrictions of animate and inanimate objects which Saint Petersburgians banally display at the beginning of “Nevskiĭ Prospekt”:

Один показывает щегольской сюртук с лучшим бобром, другой — греческий прекрасный нос, третий несёт превосходные бакенбарды, четвертая — пару хорошенных глазок и удивительную шляпку, пятый — перстень с талисманом на щегольском мизинце, шестая — ножку в очаровательном башмачке, седьмой — галстук, возбуждающий удивление, осыный — усы… (Gogol 1995a: 16)

Along this famous avenue, the people in Saint Petersburg display their objects of affection. Someone can even display a Greek nose. It is known through Gogol’s novella “The Nose”

78 "Every man has his particular fervor: one man’s fervor is turned toward wolfhounds; another fancies himself a great lover of music, and is wonderfully sensitive to all profound passages; a third is an expert at dining with gusto; a fourth feels that he can play a part in life ever so slightly higher that the one allotted him; a fifth, with more modest aspirations, sleeps and dreams of promenading with some aide-de-camp, in order to show himself off before friends, acquaintances, and even strangers”
79 As a matter of fact, psychology texts concerning process of loss and mourning use the exclusively the term “object” (Freud, cited in Rando 1995).
80 “One displays a smart overcoat with the best beaver on it, the second — a lovely Greek nose, the third — superb whiskers, the fourth — a pair of pretty eyes and a marvelous hat, the fifth — a signet ring on a jaunty forefinger, the sixth — a foot in a bewitching shoe, the seventh — a necktie that excites wonder, and the eight — a mustache […]” (Gogol 1985: 211).
that noses can be not only animate objects in the Gogolian world, but also cherished objects of affection. This Gogolian world includes realms of inanimate objects and persons, and in spite of being divided, those two realms constantly interact (cf. La Rubia de Prado 2003).

Nevertheless that задор – zador, literally “ardor”, mentioned in Dead Souls is not limited to animate or inanimate objects like the ones being displayed along Nevskii Prospekt; it also is extended to activities, like listening to music, dining or even handwriting, as it has been observed in chapter 5 and not only in the Gogolian world, but also in the works of Benedetti and Melville.

On Monday September 23rd, Martín Santomé writes in that day’s entry “Dios mío” seven times, leaving the reader in suspense and with the feeling that something negative and unexpected has happened. He stops writing his diary for four months. Then the reader learns that Laura Avellaneda had passed away. Martín Santomé eventually abandons his diary. Meanwhile in “The Overcoat” Akakiĭ Akakevich comes back home after a party held for him and his new overcoat and in the middle of a public square, a group of mustached men rob him and take away his overcoat. The elements which build up the stories do not seem to be related; still they lead to the same state of mind of the protagonists, to the same desolation. The loss is traumatic and irreversible.

### 6.2 Graffy’s structural model towards loss

Graffy (2004: 4) presents the structural model of “The Overcoat” by mentioning the motifs which chronologically appear in Gogol’s story: lack – desire – gain after major strivings and privations – short-lived joy – loss – suffering – madness – death and vengeance. The Truce follows this structure up to the motif of suffering. The first part of the chain of motifs is experienced by the two copyists. In order to understand the loss, it is necessary to be aware of the other motifs, which build up the stories. Lack, desire, gain after major strivings and privations and short-lived joy are motifs that function as steps leading to a climax in the stories. Once this climax is reached, the action starts moving in a different direction. These descriptions work also in a figurative mode; Akakiĭ Akakevich’s and Martín Santomé’s emotions build up the action, they reach the highest point of happiness, and the

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81 “Oh my God.”
82 As it has been mentioned before, Graffy (2000) uses actually half a part of his work to trace first the literary pieces in which Gogol’s “The Overcoat” has had an obvious influence and which follow the same structural model. He makes an excellent account among Russian authors and works and some English as well.
situation leads them to a fall towards misery in an extremely fast speed, as illustrated in the next figure.

As I said before, “The Overcoat” and The Truce share the same pattern up to the motif of suffering. Although there is a possibility that Martín Santomé loses his mind and dies as a consequence of his loss, the story finishes before that might happen. The curve of the figure rises again for Akakiĭ Akakevich after his death, as he returns in the form of a tall and scary ghost, but then again the fantastic part of the return is not a common motif in “Bartleby” or The Truce.

6.2.1 Lack

Both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé are grown-up men. However, due to different reasons, they do not have a sentimental companion. We do not know anything of Akakiĭ Akakevich’s younger years. From the time he was baptized to the time he is sitting at his desk copying documents, there is no information given. This includes any kind of love story, if there had been any. By the time he is told his overcoat needs to be repaired he has no sentimental companion at all. There is a different kind of information given by the narrator concerning what Akakiĭ Akakevich does – or rather does not do – in his free time. He does not spend his free time on the regular entertainment as the rest of common Saint Petersburgians: “словом, даже тогда, когда все стремится развлечься, — Акакий Акакиевич не предавался никакому развлечению”83 (Gogol 2004: 8). His only joy is to handwrite. His only pleasure is his own handwriting. Bartleby’s lack of leisure is described in a similar way:

83 “In a word, even when all strive to divert themselves. Akakii Akakevich yielded to no diversion” (Gogol 1992: 83)
I now recalled all the quiet mysteries which I had noted in the man. I remembered that he never spoke but to answer; that though at intervals he had considerable time to himself, yet I had never seen him reading—no, not even a newspaper; that for long periods he would stand looking out, at his pale window behind the screen, upon the dead brick wall; I was quite sure he never visited any refectory or eating house; while his pale face clearly indicated that he never drank beer like Turkey, or tea and coffee even, like other men; that he never went anywhere in particular that I could learn; never went out for a walk [...]

For both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby the thought of an emotional relationship or sexual life is not even considered. In contrast, Martín Santomé has been a widower for twenty years; however his sexual life has not ceased during all those years: “Oh, durante todas estas etapas el sexo siguió activo [...] Hoy un programa en el ómnibus, mañana la contadora que estuvo de inspección, pasado la cajera de Edgardo Lamas, S. A. Nunca dos veces con la misma” (Benedetti 2006: 55-56). The protagonist of The Truce mentions often how he sits in a café looking at and admiring women.

It is in a greater degree the emotional lives – and in a lesser degree part of their sexual lives – of Martín Santomé and Akakiĭ Akakevich where the lack of a companion lies. Almost at the end of the The Truce, Martín Santomé writes: “Cómo la necesito. Dios había sido mi más grande carencia. Pero a ella la necesito más que a Dios” (Benedetti 2006: 170); he is definitely aware that there was vacuum in his life, and he accepts he could have filled that gap in his life with God. He has some internal conflicts concerning God. Instead, that vacuum in his life was taken by Laura Avellaneda, giving the story a rather different turn than if he had had more theological conflicts. In short, he admits there was something missing in his life.

There is one clear point underlined in the lives of both characters. Their lives are described as sad and dull. One of the ways the authors use to exemplify this point is by describing their eating habits. Akakiĭ Akakevich’s routine when it comes to the way he is having dinner is more animal than human:

Приходя домой, он садился тот же час за стол, хлебал наскоро свои щи и ел кусок говядины с луком, вовсе не замечая их вкуса, ел всё это с мухами и со всем тем, что ни посылал Бог на ту пору. Заметивши, что желудок начинает пучиться, вставал из-за стола, вынимал баночку с чернилами и переписывал бумаги, принесённые на дом. (Gogol 1992: 82, italics mine)

Akakiĭ Akakevich’s lack of human characters becomes evident when he is described more like an animal (cf. Mørch 2002:100, 101). For he lacks not only a companion, but much more

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84 “Alas, during all those stages sex was still active… today someone on the bus, tomorrow the accountant who came to inspect, day after tomorrow the cashier girl working at Edgardo Lamas Inc., Never twice with the same woman”

85 “How much I need her. God had been what I lacked the most. But I need her more than I need God”.

86 Naturally, not all scholars agree. For Setchkarev (1965: 218) “in his narrow world, [...] Akakiĭ Akakiyevich is completely happy”.

87 “On arriving home, he sat down at once at the table, supped his cabbage-soup quickly and ate a bit of beef with onions, never noticing their taste, ate it all with flies and anything else which the Lord sent at the moment. On observing that his stomach began to puff out, he rose from the table, took out a little vial with ink and copied papers which he had brought home” (Gogol 1992: 82, italics mine)
to give him back his human nature. The meals Martín Santomé has are described as bland and lacking flavor: “Jaime dijo que la sopa estaba desabrida”; this word desabrida – flavorless, bland, is used a couple of times more, to describe the traumatic experience he lived as a child: “[…] y acabar de ese modo con el desabrido abundante puré.” So this flavorlessness is associated with boredom and a tedious life. There are a few moments with pleasant moments and they are related to pleasant food: “El menú preparado por Blanca fue el punto más alto de la noche. Naturalmente, eso también predispone al buen humor. No es del todo absurdo que un pollo a la portuguesa me deje más optimista que una tortilla de papas.” (Benedetti 2006: 51). Such moments are sporadic, since for him the common life, the “daily bread” in Uruguay is “a kilo of German bread” (2006: 51). The episodes when he is looking at women and many of the conversations with Laura Avellaneda outside the office include the presence of coffee, yet again a different flavor in his flavorless life, which he describes as a “long, empty and invariable tediousness” (2006: 55) since his wife died. In “Bartleby”, all the copyists – except Bartleby himself – have nicknames related to food: Turkey, Nippers, Ginger Nut; moreover, when Bartleby is working, it seems “as if long famishing for something to copy” and “he seemed to gorge himself” on the lawyer’s documents, and as a matter of fact, Bartleby barely eats anything, or even nothing at all, maybe only documents.

6.2.2 Desire

Once Petrovich makes it clear that a new overcoat is needed and that it is impossible to fix the old one, Akakiĭ Akakevich’s first reaction is to be worried for has no other choice but to make different adjustments in his daily routines. Soon after the sacrifices have been going on for some time, the idea of the overcoat as a companion starts growing strongly:

Надобно сказать правду, что сначала ему было несколько трудно привыкнуть к таким ограничениям, но потом как-то привыкло и пошло на лад; даже он совершенно привык к голодать по вечерам; но зато он питался духовно, нося в мыслях своих вечною идею будущей шинели. (Gogol 1992: 18 – 19)

88 In the chapter concerning the copyist as a motif, I have already started to discuss how Akakiĭ Akakevich is losing his human condition.
89 “Jaime said that the soup was flavorless.”
90 “[…] and that way, to finish with that abundant, flavorless mash”
91 The menu Blanca prepares was the night’s highlight. Naturally that helps improve one’s mood. It is not absurd at all the fact that Portuguese style chicken makes me feel more optimistic than a potato tortilla.”
92 “Nippers”: crab or lobster claws. (Oxford Dictionary).
93 “To tell the truth, it was a little hard for him at first to accustom himself to these deprivations; but he got used to them at length, after a fashion, and all went smoothly – he even got used to being hungry in the evening; but he made up for it by treating himself in spirit, bearing ever in mind the thought of his future coat” (Gogol 1992: 89)
Akakiĭ Akakevich’s mental process begins to work in a positive way; he even seems to be a different new person. From being a shy and childlike man, his personality suddenly acquires new characteristics: liveliness, firmness, decision. All negative characteristics simply disappear:

С тех пор как будто самое существование его сделалось как-то полнее, как будто бы он женился, как будто какой-то другой человек присутствовал с ним, как будто он был не один, а какая-то приятная подруга жизни согласилась с ним проходить вместе жизненную дорогу… Он сделался как-то живее, даже твёрже характером, как человек, который уже определил и поставил себе цель. С лица и с поступков его исчезло само собою сомнение, нерешительность — словом, все колеблющиеся и неопределённые черты (Gogol 2004: 18-19)\(^\text{94}\).

At the same time this desire starts giving the overcoat human features, including emotional and sexual features: “[…] and the friend was no other than the overcoat, with thick wadding and a strong lining incapable of wearing out.” (Gogol 2004: 19). All of a sudden he is in ecstasy because of the overcoat, even though he still does not possess it physically. It all happens quite quickly; from being worried about the money, he is suddenly creating a fantasy of him and the overcoat together. He commences to daydream of this overcoat as the friend who will accompany for the rest of his days, in Russian his подруга — podruga; that is, his female friend, his girl-friend.

Whether one can discuss and agree (and naturally disagree) on the human or sexual role of the overcoat, the truth is that sexual features appear in Akakiĭ Akakevich when he daydreams of the overcoat. He is after all “a new man”. If he had those childish habits which through a Freudian viewpoint could be compared to masturbation as discusses in chapter 5, he is becoming more mature after the development of his desire. His passion for handwriting is not mentioned again, though his handwriting is mentioned twice more. One of them is when he is thinking of the overcoat at work. He is so distracted that he almost makes a mistake while copying. His distraction is so unusual for him, that it disturbs him to the point to make him cross himself: “Один раз, переписывая бумагу, он чуть было даже не сделал ошибки, так что почти вслух вскрикнул “ух!” и перекрестился” (Gogol 2004: 19). As these thoughts and sensations are new and interfere with his old passion, they take him by surprise.

\(^{94}\) “From that time forth his existence seemed to become, in some way, fuller, as if he were married, as if some other man lived in him, as if he were not alone, and some charming friend had consented to along life’s path with him … He became more lively, and his character even became firmer, like a man who has made up his mind, and set himself a goal. From his face and gait, doubt and indecision — in short, all hesitating and wavering traits — disappeared of themselves.” (Gogol 1992: 89)

\(^{95}\) “[…]and the friend was no other than the overcoat, with thick wadding and a strong lining incapable of wearing out.” (89)
Akakiĭ Akakevich’s sexuality has always been an object of discussion; whether he is asexual, homosexual, heterosexual or even a eunuch (Rancour-Laferriere 1982: 187). Naturally, these discussions have caused a great deal of analysis and discussion. In them the sexuality of Akakiĭ Akakevich—and of Gogol too—has been argued over and over again. For many scholars, the overcoat has strong sexual connotations. The Russian word for overcoat, шинель—shinel’, is a female gender word in Russian. There are several details pointing towards the overcoat as a surrogate for a female companion, still Freud (Freud 1968: 354; cf. Graffy 2000: 32) recalls an overcoat as a symbol for male genitalia:

As regards articles of clothing, a woman’s hat can very often be interpreted with certainty as a genital organ, and, moreover, as a man’s. The same is true of an overcoat [German ‘Mantel’]; though in this case it is not clear to what extent the use of the symbol is due to verbal assonance

Whether the overcoat represents a fetish, or a female surrogate or male genitalia, the desire Akakiĭ Akakevich feels starts to grow stronger and stronger. A similar desire grows in Martín Santomé; however this desire is specifically emotional and sexual—not symbolic or interpreted as in the case of Akakiĭ Akakevich. Still, the effects produced by Laura Avellaneda and the overcoat in the copyists are quite similar, even though the difference between both objects of affection is the difference between being animate or inanimate.

6.2.3 Gain after major strivings and privations

The strivings and privations appear in both stories. Once again, the literary resources used to present them are different. In order save up enough money Akakiĭ Akakevich has to stop having dinner, stop using candles, “step as lightly and carefully as possible” (ступать как можно легче и осторожнее”), to avoid staining his clothes to have them washed as seldom as possible (Gogol 2004: 18). Whereas the reader is told about several tragicomic sacrifices Akakiĭ Akakevich has to go through so he can save money to pay for the overcoat, the strivings and privations suffered by Martín Santomé are of a different nature. Martín Santomé has to deal with being a widower and a single parent and the social conventions related to being in love with someone significantly younger than he is and all the hesitation it carries along. The strivings and privations last long for both protagonists. In The Truce the use of time is accurate as it mentioned dates, whereas in “The Overcoat”, because of the constant sense of timelessness, in which it is difficult to keep an exact account of the amount of time in which the whole story occurs.
Gain, as a motif, for both Akakiĭ Akakevich and Martín Santomé, is the beginning of their *truce* from the monotonous and tedious lives they have been leading. It is when finally the overcoat and Laura Avellaneda come into their lives that those lives seem to have reached a turning point for the better. The moment they gain their desired objects is actually quite brief in *The Truce*, it comes after a long hesitation—the striving—when Laura Avellaneda makes it clear that Martín Santomé’s feelings are reciprocal and she simply says: “usted me gusta”96 (Benedetti 2006: 72). In “The Overcoat” the moment when Akakiĭ Akakevich finally gains the object of affection is much more solemn. The scene resembles more of a ceremony: a wedding, a religious or demonic rite, depending on the approach. Petrovich expression is solemn, he takes out the overcoat with extreme care, the overcoat looks flawless, (“совершенно и как раз впору” Gogol 2004: 21). The narrator also underlines the fact that this was Akakiĭ Akakevich’s most solemn day in his life (“день самый торжественнейший в жизни Акакия Акакиевича” Gogol 2004: 20), expression which is used almost exclusively for weddings in several languages.

### 6.2.4 Short-lived joy

I have previously mentioned in this chapter how the authors use food and flavors to accompany the mood of the characters and the scenes. When the gain has been reached, the food and its flavors in the scenes are pleasant. Laura Avellaneda finally admits that she likes Martín Santomé, and in that moment dessert is being served: “el mozo trajo al fin los manjares del cielo”97 (Benedetti 2006: 72). The situation concerning food is also quite different once Akakiĭ Akakevich is enjoying his new personality because of the overcoat; after having gazed at his new overcoat and having compared it with the old one he starts eating. Still the scene described is different from the earlier scene in which he eats in an animal-like way, swallowing his food with the flies that fall on it. This scene in which he is eating after the appearance of the overcoat reaffirms Akakiĭ Akakevich’s new side: “И долго ещё потом за обедом он всё усмехался, как только приходило ему на ум положение, в котором находился капот. Пообедал он весело[…]”98 (Gogol 2004: 23). He is evidently

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96 “I like you”  
97 “Finally, the waiter brought the delicacies from heaven”  
98 “And long after dinner he laughed again with the condition of the “mantle” recurred to his mind. He dined gayly…” (Gogol 1992: 91)
happy; moreover he expresses it for the first time, at least in the story, a new and exclusively human characteristic: he is laughing.

The short-lived joy they experience is then the truce itself, a rather brief moment of happiness for both. Martín Santomé and Akakiĭ Akakevich have features which are visible even for others: “te hace bien el tónico […] [e]stás animado, más contento”\(^99\) (72) says Blanca Santomé to his father, thinking he is looking better because of other reasons rather than being in love. Akakiĭ Akakevich experiences the same, there is even “fire gleaming in his eyes”\(^\) (Gogol 1992: 89), and the observation regarding the solemnity of that day is repeated by the narrator: “Этот весь день был для Акакия Акакиевича точно самый большой торжественный праздник”\(^100\) (Gogol 2004: 23). Although the joy is not that short for Martín Santomé as it is for Akakiĭ Akakevich, it still can be considered as relatively short. Four months is the time the relationship lasts in The Truce, while the possession of the overcoat is limited to one day. The choice of simply a day is yet ironic, considering how much Gogol plays with the use of time and timelessness in “The Overcoat”, and how difficult Gogol makes it to find out the exact time Akakiĭ Akakevich waited.

### 6.2.5 Loss as climax

I have already mentioned the animal-like nature of Akakiĭ Akakevich when it comes to his eating habits. Benedetti has a short story which also could “come out of Gogol’s overcoat”\(^101\), with a slightly different twist, though. The story is called “A Imagen y Semejanza” and connects several points mentioned in this project. “A Imagen y Semejanza” describes in detail how an ant struggles to carry around a load following the other ants. After passing many obstacles and when the ant is two centimeters away from its objective a human finger presses the ant dead\(^102\). There are several connections\(^103\) between “A Imagen y

\(^{99}\) That tonic has been good for you […] you look cheerful, happier”

\(^{100}\) “That whole day was truly a most triumphant festival day for Akakii Akakevich”. Торжественный – torzhествennyi is translated here as triumphant and in the previous page as glorious. It can also be translated as solemn (Oxford Essential Russian Dictionary).

\(^{101}\) “We have all come out of “The Overcoat” is a phrase supposedly said by Dostoevsky, which is overwhelmingly quoted in literary criticism. However there is nowhere to be found in any of his writings (Chizhevsky 1974: 321).

\(^{102}\) Concerning the imagery of insects, Kafka’s novella “The Metamorphosis” is often mentioned in the stories with strong Gogolian influence.

\(^{103}\) These connections between the two stories include the animal character of the protagonists, the protagonists as synchronized workers and the use of alphabet letters.
Semejanza”\(^{104}\) and “The Overcoat”, but probably the most striking is the sudden loss after a carefully detailed description of the struggles. The loss of the object in Benedetti’s short story happens really fast and unexpectedly, which actually could have more in common with “The Overcoat” than with The Truce. The human finger in “A Imagen y Semejanza” resembles a cruel divine will coming from above; the same will determines the loss of Akakiĭ Akakevich’s overcoat and his death, and the death of Laura Avellaneda. The little religious Martín Santomé invokes seven times\(^{105}\) a God in whom he barely believes while in contrast Akakiĭ Akakevich utters blasphemous words: “наконец, даже сквернохульничал, произнося самые страшные слова, так что старушка хозяйка даже крестилась, отроду не слыхав от него ничего подобного”\(^{106}\) (Gogol 2004: 36). Both react in an opposite way from each other, still both reactions are directed towards God.

The loss functions as a turning point for all the stories. Death is involved in all the cases, either after or in the loss itself; Laura Avellaneda’s death, Akakiĭ Akakevich falls ill and dies eventually, and even the ant’s death in “A Imagen y Semejanza” is similar as it happens suddenly. This view of the loss as a turning point is a strong argument to claim that there is a similar unmentioned loss in “Bartleby”, since the sad fate of the protagonist is similar to the fate of the characters in the other stories.

The course of the stories change dramatically after the loss. As a consequence, decadence in different aspects follows. Martín Santomé does not die in the literary sense of the word. Nevertheless, because of this loss he feels “as he had been divested of four fifths of his being” (Benedetti 2006: 159) and he returns to the “flavorless” state in which he was before meeting Laura Avellaneda. Food and flavors are used again to describe Martín Santomé’s state of mind. The dinner suggested to celebrate his retirement would have had that “flavorless” characteristic: “el desabrido motivo de una cena alegre, ruidosa, con bombardeos de pan y vino derramado”\(^{107}\) (Benedetti 2006: 170).

\(^{104}\) “To his (God’s) image”.

\(^{105}\) Number seven has, ironically, a strong biblical connotation (cf Genesis 4:24; Matthew 18:22).

\(^{106}\) “…at last he began to curse, uttering the most horrible words, so that his aged landlady crossed herself, never in her life having heard anything of the kind from him…” (Gogol, 1992: 99)

\(^{107}\) “…the flavorless motive of a gay, noisy dinner, abundant in bread and wine”
7 Sickness of the copyist

“Potentia scriptoris perfecti in arte sua, cum non scripserit”
Aristotle

Sickness *per se* is an extremely common motif in literature. *Sickness of the protagonist* as a motif slightly reduces this commonness, but it is still a recurrent motif. However, my intention here is to present the *sickness of the protagonist* in a more particular and defined context (as the *death of the protagonist* in the next chapter). Following the conceptual frame described in chapter 1, in which the difference between a motif and a theme was determined, I am selecting *sickness of the copyist* as a motif. This is again a subcategory which is being used to delimit the motif, as *sickness of the protagonist* would be too general.

7.1 Sickness as a literary motif

Sickness is an inevitable part of human life. For instance it has always been a part of literature. Sickness has given literature a great deal of memorable, sick characters. Some of those examples include characters such as the ones suffering from psychological problems like Raskol’nikov in Dostoevskii’s *Crime and Punishment* and the Master in Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*; or from blindness like Mr. Rochester in Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre* and the protagonist in Saramago’s novel *Blindness*; or from the epileptic seizures suffered by four of Dostoyevskii’s characters: Kirilov in *The Possessed*, Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Elena in *Humiliated and Insulted* and Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. In fact, Dostoevskii suffered from those epileptic seizures himself. La Rubia de Prado (2003: 21) mentions how sicknesses such as emotional instability or pathological states are also frequent in authors themselves: Dostoevskii’s epilepsy, Gogol’s deteriorated mental state, Kafka’s insomnia. All those conditions experienced by the authors can be reflected in their work. In the *Petersburg Stories* all the protagonists end up losing their minds (La Rubia de Prado 2003: 22). Max Brod’s opinion was that Dostoevskii’s (and Gogol’s, as he does in his *Petersburg Stories*) tendency to include so many mentally sick characters was rather morbid.

108 Dostoevsky’s descriptions of epileptic seizures have even been used in the study of this sickness, especially the ones taken from *The Idiot*, like in this British internet site dedicated to such condition: [http://www.charge.org.uk/index.html](http://www.charge.org.uk/index.html)
(Brod, cited in La Rubia de Prado 2003: 23). It is the protagonist who is sick in all these examples given. Nonetheless, sickness has different functions and symbolism in each different text, and in this chapter the sicknesses of the copyist with their peculiarities is what is going to be discussed.

Two of the male protagonists in the texts fall seriously sick. Akakiĭ Akakevich has to go back home in a cold night in winter after his overcoat has been stolen. He seems to have caught the flu, which becomes a more serious condition. As a consequence he has a fever which makes him delirious. Bartleby is taken to prison, where after not having enough nurture his condition worsens, as apparently he does not eat anything. Then he becomes more and more sick until he finally dies. Although sickness in general is a completely natural process for anyone, the sickness from which these copyists suffer seems to have a great deal of literary connotations. Such connotations initiate the discussions on the symbolism which sickness has in each case. This is why this motif has been a source of arguments and literary studies.

After being humiliated by the Important Personage, Akakiĭ Akakevich makes his way home through a snow-storm: He walks without his new overcoat and without any hope to find the thieves who stole it. Then his condition starts to worsen: “Вмиг надуло ему в горло жабу, и добрался он домой, не в силах будучи сказать ни одного слова; весь распух и слёг в постель” (Gogol 2004: 35). He has a swollen throat, so he is even unable to utter any words, his fever exacerbates, the doctor gives him thirty-six more hours of life, he is delirious, he suffers and he finally dies.

How come all these characters have such terrible destinies? What is the source of all this suffering? One theory points towards Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby as holy figures, whose destiny is to endure suffering as if they were newer versions of Christ. Chernyshevskiĭ (cited in Graffy 2000: 16-17) argues that Gogol does not mention any faults in Akakiĭ Akakevich, as he is presented as completely righteous and good. This view of Akakiĭ Akakevich as an all-suffering martyr has many supporters. However, many scholars disagree with this view. All of these scholars, whether pro or con, give pretty solid arguments sustaining both theories. If Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby have come to the world to suffer

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109 In The Truce, Laura Avellaneda’s sickness suits the same situation of Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby. She is after all also a copyist and she becomes sick. However her sickness will not be conceptualized as she is not the main protagonist in the novel and her character is not surrounded by the same conditions that will be used here to conceptualize this motif.

110 “In a twinkling it had blown a quinsy into his throat, and he reached home unable to utter a word: his throat was all swollen, and he lay down on his bed” (Gogol 1992: 98).
and endure all kinds of humiliations, their sicknesses seem to be somehow justified as a logical consequence their suffering. Prince Myshkin in Dostoevskii’s *The Idiot* was actually created with the explicit intention to become a “positively beautiful” character, possessing several Christ-like characteristics (cf. Epstein 1983). Some of those characteristics found in Prince Myshkin were intentionally created by Dostoevskii and they can be related to the characteristics of Akakii Akakevich as a saint. I have mentioned before the similarities and differences between Prince Myshkin and Akakii Akakevich, and the way “The Overcoat” was an inspiration for *The Idiot*.

It is more complicated to take a position defending the moral position of Bartleby, than it is to position Akakii Akakevich as good or unpleasant. Bartleby’s character is not easy to judge as completely good or terribly disgusting. He certainly behaves oddly, and his appearance might not be considered usual. Nonetheless, he is described as “neat”, whereas Akakii Akakevich is known for the little attention he puts in his physical appearance. Bartleby is a more intriguing character, just the same, as everything the reader knows about him is given through one single vision, namely from the point of view of the lawyer. The narrator is not able to judge Bartleby as a good and righteous or as an immoral character, despite his efforts to show his employee some sympathy.

### 7.2 The responsibility of the narrative voices

The narrators have a great deal of the responsibility regarding the impression that the reader might have of the characters. These narrators, and their narrative voices, have the ability to change, avoid or hide information. They can use their own values and viewpoints as moral standards in order to make a certain character or situation look better or worse than they actually are. When reading “Bartleby” and “The Overcoat” and *The Truce*, it is possible to sense differences in the narrators’ attitude towards different issues.

The difference between the two narrators in “The Overcoat” and “Bartleby” has been observed by Giuliana Bacigalupo (2001: 44). Bacigalupo affirms that the main characteristic of the narrative voice in Melville’s story is a strong degree of objectivity due to narration in first person. What she calls “the ideological horizon”, or moral value scales – between Melville and the lawyer is irreconcilable. Melville seems to be absent from the narration, leaving the lawyer on his own, allowing him to judge every character and all the situations.

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111 However, Fisher (2006: 437) suggests the lawyer’s language reveals more than the lawyer himself realizes on his own; whenever there are double meanings “we sense the [Melville’s] point of view”.

67
Besides, according to Fisher (2006: 435), the narrators in Melville’s stories have “limited capacities for empathy and spiritual evolution”, which is why Bartleby seems at a first sight so difficult to understand and so mysterious.

The story of Bartleby is being told only through the lawyer. On the other hand, in “The Overcoat” the narrator does not take part in the action, in spite of being an omnipresent narrator. The presence of Gogol himself as part of the narrative voice is a possibility, though not everywhere in the text. In Bakhtin’s words, “The Overcoat” is “a story with a partially represented narrator” (Bakhtin, cited in Bacigalupo 44), whereas Eichenbaum (1974:269) points out that in “The Overcoat”, the narrator “puts himself in the foreground and seems to be using the plot merely to interweave individual stylistic devices”. For Eichenbaum “The Overcoat” has the characteristics of the Russian comic skaz, in which there are two ways to tell the story, the first by narrating it and the second by reproducing it; both performed by a narrator-actor (Eichenbaum, 1974:269). Vedeniapina agrees with Eichenbaum’s concept of the Russian skaz, but she postulates that there is not one, but three different narrators in “The Overcoat” (Vedeniapina, cited in Graffy 2000: 83), including Gogol’s voice. Setchkarev (1965 : 219) notices this plurality in the different narrative levels of “The Overcoat” and compares them to a “talkative eccentric: now in objective, now in elevated, now in ironic, now in jolly, now in mournful, now in cold-hearted, now in sentimental [... ]”. Regardless of the quantity of narrators, the narrative voice is full of interruptions, precisions, puns and digressions. In terms used by Voloshinov, the narrator in “The Overcoat” is sclerotic: he does not follow the continuity of the story. In fact, he seems to be distracted by external factors and superficial digressions (Voloshinov, cited in Bacigalupo 2001: 44, 46). This narrator seems to be more interested in guaranteeing the humor for an audience and keep them amused than in to follow specific discourses and viewpoints.

The difference between the two (or several) narrative voices determines how the impression of the character might be upon the readers. Since those voices can have a strong influence on the reader, they can also be misleading. One example of that possibly misleading influence is the often cited “humane passage”. This passage “has become the “idea” of the entire story” for many scholars, according to Eichenbaum (1974:282). In the “human passage” –called “pathetic passage” by Chizhevskiĭ (1987 : 295)–, right after his colleagues push his elbow so he makes a mistake while copying, Akakī Akakevich says to them: “Оставьте меня, зачем вы меня обижаете?”112 (Gogol 2004: 4). The narrator then starts

112 "Leave me a lone! Why do you insult me?” (Gogol 1992: 81)
telling a story which apparently might be relevant about one of Akakiĭ Akakevich’s young fellow workers. This young fellow worker perceives Akakiĭ Akakevich’s words as “Я брат твой”113. The young fellow worker then disappears completely from the story114. Nevertheless, what remains is the reference these unsaid words have to the Gospel of Matthew115: “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25:40), which is used as an argument to defend Akakiĭ Akakevich’s sanctity. Still, as short and speculative as it may be, the “humane passage” has led many scholars and readers to different interpretations of the whole story.

These are examples of how influential the narrative voices can be. The ambiguity of such voices has left some gaps which actually have become the base for the discussions on whether or Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby are Christ figures.

### 7.3 Saint Akakiĭ?

Considering that Akakiĭ Akakevich might be a martyr or a saint, or even a Christ-like character, it is necessary to assume that he must seen in the light of a Christian context. In chapter 4, I mentioned the theories that consider Petrovich a demonic figure. These theories can be used to interpret “The Overcoat” as a work full of Christian and biblical references. One of the first parallels is how all the young years of Akakiĭ Akakevich are skipped or omitted, as the adolescence years of Jesus in the Gospels are not mentioned. In such biblical context, it is possible to affirm that Akakiĭ Akakevich is being tempted by Petrovich. It is worth to repeat that for some scholars like Rancour-Laferriere (1982), Petrovich is considered the Devil. Then Akakiĭ Akakevich is being tempted the same say Jesus is tempted by the Devil in Luke 4:3-2: “The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone.”’’ The Devil is trying to tempt Jesus by offering something that covers a rather primitive necessity, namely food. Akakiĭ Akakevich is also being tempted with something to cover another primitive necessity, clothing, in this case. Then the difference is that Akakiĭ Akakevich yields into temptation, he accepts to have a new overcoat made. He experiences some changes after yielding into this temptation; his character is stronger, his libido awakens, he becomes

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113 “I am thy brother” (Gogol 1992: 81)
114 Gogol’s stories are actually characterized by such sequence of appearing and disappearing characters, whose introductions makes them look as if they are going be important for the stories, but their participation is limited to one or two scenes. Dead Souls, for example, is full of this kind of characters (García Fernández 2002: 76).
115 All the biblical passages cited here are retrieved from Bible.org.
popular. Then becoming sick and eventually dying can be interpreted as a divine punishment. As in Goethe’s *Faust*, Akakiĭ Akakevich must then pay the price for dealing with the Devil. In this case there is then a moral lesson behind: Akakiĭ Akakevich is failing as a potential saint. Then we are dealing with Gogol’s particular version of *Crime and Punishment*: the crime becomes Akakiĭ Akakevich’s sin and the punishment all the suffering, his death and eternal wandering in Saint Petersburg.

Before continuing I must repeat and underline the fact that the position of Akakiĭ Akakevich as a martyr is ambivalent among critics. He can be seen as a victim, for others a representation of a saint and for others a simple man for whom it is not necessary to feel much sympathy. The main point here is not to reach a conclusion proving or refuting Akakiĭ Akakevich’s or Bartleby’s sanctity. I want to present the different critics’ viewpoints in order to have a broader vision of the whole sanctity against mundanity question, in order to conceptualize this motif.

Assuming that Akakiĭ Akakevich is being punished, he seems to be punished from the beginning and not only because he has yielded into temptation. As Emarkov (cited in Graffy 2000: 32) points out, Akakiĭ Akakevich’s own fate is against him. He is humiliated from the start by being given a rather cacophonous full name with several negative connotations. Akakiĭ Akakevich’s name sounds more like a nickname rather than like a proper name for Eichenbaum (1974:279). The name and patronymic *Akakiĭ Akakevich* has a consonance with the word *kaka*, which is a mild, yet pejorative word for *excrement*116 (Ermakov, cited in Graffy 2000: 32). His last name is Bashmachkin, which derives from the words 〈bashmak, bashmachok and bashmachka – bashmak, bashmachok, bashmachka〉 (Sloane, Vetlovskaya and Karlinsky, cited in Graffy 2000: 86). All those words are variation of *shoe*. Graffy emphasizes that this object reveals the lowness that can be associated with the ground. In short, as Rozanov put it, “everything about Akakiĭ Akakevich is ugly” (Rozanov, cited in Graffy 2000: 20). This facts are not surprising taking into account that, as Pushkin expressed it, Gogol is considered an expert in representing the vulgarity of the most common man in an artistic way (Pushkin, cited in Schostakovski, 1993: XXVIII). In general, Akakiĭ Akakevich’s life and person are full of negative connotations.

Gogol does not seem to be kind to his own character, as Akakiĭ Akakevich is humiliated throughout the story. Notwithstanding, he is not that cruel, if it is compared to how

116The study of the scatological nature of Akakiĭ Akakevich has as well been the subject of many detailed analyses (cf. Rancour-Laferrière 1982: 140-142), one of the most cited is the study of Simon Karlinsky (1976), *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*. 

70
Flaubert treats his own writer-character in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*. Flaubert mistreats Pécuchet, his writer character. The author ridicules him and there seems to be even sadism and hate displayed against Pécuchet. In spite of all the humiliation, Waliszewski (1946: 187) points out that while Flaubert is excessively cruel towards Pécuchet, Gogol is simply making fun of Akakiĭ Akakevich. Giaconi (1960: 141,143) observes that despite the parody in Gogol’s works such as “The Overcoat” and “Ivan Fiodorovich and His Aunt”, there are still some human features in the Gogolian characters. Such human features, Giaconi observes, are completely absent in the Gregor Samsa in Kafka’s novella “The Metamorphosis”. According to both Waliszewski and Giaconi, Gogol allows Akakiĭ Akakevich to maintain certain human characteristics and lets him entertain the audiences with his caricatured and childlike features. Waliszewski’s affirmations can be sustained on a few facts. These facts include that in spite of the “punishment” inflicted on Akakiĭ Akakevich by giving him sickness, death and a phantasmagorical condition, this writer-character has the opportunity to recover some human features, like it has been previously mentioned, his laughter, his libido, and the fact that he is given the chance to take revenge on those other characters who made him miserable. In that aspect, Gogol is not only milder than Flaubert, but also milder than how Melville is towards Bartleby. Waliszewski is reformulating Belinskiĭ’s words on the works of Gogol, as he offers us “laughter through tears”. The author would write a letter in 1835, a few years before finishing “The Overcoat”, saying to a friend of his: “let us laugh, laugh as much as we can. Long life to comedy!” (Gogol, cited in Schostakovski, 1993: XXIII). Gogol’s sense of humor gives Akakiĭ Akakevich several opportunities not to have a completely tragic life.

Bartleby is also a character who has been viewed as a saint, a Christ-like figure, “the new man”, even an apostle and an evangelist (Agamben 2006: 133-135; Pardo 2006: 188-189). Deleuze (2006: 65) suggests that Bartleby possesses an “angelic and Adamic nature”. According to all these studies, he is “the new man”, “the new Adam”, which is a reference to the *Epistles of Saint Paul* (*Romans* 6:6, *Ephesians* 2:15; 4:22-24 and *Colossians* 3:9-11). In these epistles the old man represents the sinner and the new man is the one born again after embracing Christ as a savior (Herrik, 1999 : 2-5). The protagonists of Melville’s novels *Benito Cereno* and *Billy Budd* also belong to this category of Adamic characters, and according to Deleuze, they are “the angelic or hypochondriac, almost stupid, creatures of innocence and purity” (Deleuze 2006: 76). These characteristics could belong to Akakiĭ Akakevich too; he is Adamic because he sees everything as if it were for the first time, his
childlike features and his “hemorrhoidal” character are arguments which reinforce this link with Melville’s characters.

Agamben, Pardo and Deleuze have found some biblical parallels in Melville’s story. These references include the fact that the narrator denies having any links with Bartleby on three occasions: “The man you allude is nothing to me […] I know nothing about him […] In vain I persisted that Bartleby as nothing to me” (Melville 2002: 28, 29). This denial is a reference to the scenes in the Gospels when the apostle Peter denies Jesus three times (Matthew 26:34). The formula said by Bartleby “I would prefer not to”, which he repeats, turned the lawyer in one occasion “into a pillar of salt” (Melville 2002:14), alluding to Genesis 19:26 and the divine punishment on Lot’s wife after turning back to see the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. One more association related to the figure of Christ is the scene when Bartleby is taken into prison, he is among thieves and murderers, like Jesus also after being sentenced, he is crucified between two criminals. However, Pardo (2006: 176) suggests that Bartleby is actually standing at the edge of hell in this scene. Fisher (2006: 436) relates what the lawyer says about Bartleby’s biography to yet another biblical connection: “I believe that no materials exist for a full and satisfactory biography of this man. It is an irreparable loss to literature” (Melville 2002: 4). Fisher compares the lack of sources to back up the biography of Bartleby with the lack of direct sources needed to write a biography of Jesus. Therefore for Fisher, “Bartleby” as a story is in many senses “the only gospel we have” about the scrivener.

In addition, the names Bartleby and Akakiĭ are also related to Christian onomatology. Akakiĭ is usually related by scholars to the martyr Saint Acacius, name whose etymological origin is the Greek ακάκιος, which means “no evil” (Graffy 2000: 87; Lexicon of Greek Personal Names). This meaning links the name of the protagonist of “The Overcoat” with the Adamic nature of Bartleby and Billy Budd mentioned by Delueze (2001: 64 -65). At the same time the meaning corresponds with the personality of Akakiĭ Akakevich. As a matter of fact he is Akakiĭ twice, since his patronymic is derived from his first name; for instance he is ακάκιος, incapable of doing evil, twice. Pardo (2001: 189) identifies the name Bartleby as an abbreviation of the name Bartholomew. This name belonged to one of Jesus’ apostles, and who has a variation in the gospels, namely Nathaniel117. Agamben (2001: 134) compares Bartleby to particular kind of apostle, an evangelist, since he is a law-copyist. The evangelists

117 Pardo links the name Nathaniel with one of Melville’s closest friends and fellow-writers, Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of The Scarlet Letter, a “dead and deadly letter”. This reference will be relevant in the next chapter on the death of the copyist.
had the mission to write—to copy, without altering—the words and actions of Jesus. Besides, in his own apocryphal gospel, the Gospel According to Saint Bartholomew,\(^{118}\) he is described as a scrivener, that is, a copyist (Pardo 2001: 191)

In contrast, the protagonist of *The Truce* does not have a name with so many Christian connotations. His name, *Martín*, is a Latin name, related to the planet Mars (*Heráldica Aragonesa*), therefore more associated with paganism. The choice of the name of the character might not be arbitrary at all. Martín Santomé has a rather personal view on Christianity, he admits to hold a grudge against God\(^{119}\) (Benedetti 2006: 41). In short, he is a more modernly secular copyist. He admits he has a lack of God. When comparing himself with his friend Aníbal he wonders why being so different they are still friends. He admits “Él es católico, yo no soy nada.”\(^{120}\) Martín Santomé certainly goes through a great deal of suffering due to the sickness and death of the co-protagonist in *The Truce*, Laura Avellaneda. Nevertheless he does not have any of the possible martyr features which Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby have.

Opposite to Martín Santomé, Gogol was a rather devoted Christian, even considered for some a religious fanatic. He took part on several occasions in pilgrimages and spiritual journeys to Rome and Jerusalem. Schostakovski (1993: XXIII) gives an account of the pressure the Polish—and Catholic—poet Adam Mickiewicz had on Gogol. Giaconi (1960: 7) says that Gogol since he was a child believed more in the *Old Testament*’s avenging God than in a merciful one. Considering that the overcoat is interpreted as a sexual symbol, whether male or female, there is a fact which has been observed in Gogol’s work: sexual desire has negative consequences (cf. Rancour-Laferriere 1982; Karlinsky (1976 )). The overcoat as a sexual symbol depends on the interpretation given. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that Akakiĭ Akakevich’s sexual thoughts emerge after the idea of the overcoat appears. Not only he dreams of his future overcoat as he is said to think of it as “some charming friend had consented to along life’s path with him” (Gogol 1992: 89), he also has giggles after seeing a sexually suggestive picture in a shop window:

Остановился с любопытством перед освещенным окошком магазина посмотреть на картину, где изображена была какая-то красива женщина, которая скидала с себя башмак, обнаживши, таким образом, всю ногу, очень недурную; а за спиной ей, из дверей другой комнаты, выставил голову какой-то

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\(^{119}\) This feeling of rebellion against God is a common motif in Benedetti’s work. One of his most famous poems, “Padrenuestro Latinoamericano” is a version of “The Lord’s Prayer” in which the narrative voice complains to God about the social and political situation in Latin America.

\(^{120}\) “He is a Catholic. I am nothing.”
мужчина с бакенбардами и красивой эспаньолкой под губой. Акакий Акакиевич покачнул головой и усмехнулся (Gogol 2004: 24)

Although the narrator suggests that he might be having some sexual thoughts, then says not to be sure as “it is impossible to enter a man’s mind” (Gogol 1992: 92), Akakii Akakevich is more aware of such erotically intended advertisement, which would have been impossible to notice by the “old” Akakii Akakevich whose only passion was to handwrite.

7.4 Not a martyr

As mentioned above, not all scholars agree with the idea of Akakii Akakevich as a punished martyr; Wisseemann, for example, suggest that he is simply a victim of bad luck (Wisseemann, cited in Mørch 2002:99). Mørch (2002:105) also rejects the idea of a sanctified Akakii Akakevich; he points out that this copyist is actually a man who ignores his colleagues, is careless with his personal aspect, and isolates himself from entertainment and others’ company. For Mørch, this is the actual sin Akakii Akakevich commits; he consciously rejects his colleagues who are not evil. They are after all arranging a party for him, while he always tries to avoid them deliberately. All these theories embark on new possibilities for the interpretation of Akakii Akakevich’s sickness. He might still be punished, but not necessarily as a part of a divine plan to test him as if he were a the Russian version of Job. He is in this different light a character who can be seen independent from the religious, Christian view. Then he does not need to be a martyr, or a saint, in order to suffer, become sick and die.

Akakii Akakevich’s sickness can be seen as one stage in his continuously changing character. He is “the eternal titular councilor”, still his being sick is actually the fifth stage of the evolution of his character:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>baby</th>
<th>copyist</th>
<th>“new man”</th>
<th>sad, desperate man</th>
<th>sick man</th>
<th>ghost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

He is the shy and childlike copyist, then he turns into “a new man” after the appearance of the overcoat. Once he has obtained his new overcoat he writes for the last time: “Пообедал он

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121 “He halted out of curiosity before the lighted window of a shop, to look at a picture representing a handsome woman, who had thrown off her shoe, thereby baring her whole foot in a very pretty way; and behind her the head of a man with side-whiskers and a handsome mustache peeped from the door of another room. Akakii Akakievich shook his head, and laughed …” (Gogol 1992: 92)

122 Such statement “he isolates himself” is yet again debated by scholars. For La Rubia de Prado (2002 : 26), for example, it is the society who isolates Akakii Akakevich.

123 This figure is only to illustrate. The different “stages” in Akakii Akakevich’s character are certainly another topic for deeper discussion.
After this, he will never copy again, so he will never be a copyist again; he will not return to a previous stage. It is during his sickness and due to the fever he has, when he is finally able to express more than incomplete sentences. During his sickness he is able to speak out blasphemous words which must have been pronounced so clearly that his landlady was frightened and crossed herself. There is a strong irony here, since it is only when he is about to die that he becomes liberated from his speech impediment and speaks against God (Gogol 2004 36-37); This delirious state actually resembles an exorcism. By swearing he obtains yet another characteristic of human nature. The blasphemous words uttered by Akakiĭ Akakevich is of course part of the irony, if compared with the religiosity of Gogol. Akakiĭ Akakevich is not described as a devotedly religious man, but he would not have been able to swear or commit any blasphemy in the stages previous to his sickness, not even when trying desperately to find his overcoat.

### 7.5 Bartleby’s sickness

Bartleby’s sickness can also be seen in a meta-religious way. His physical sickness is likely to have been caused by a lack of proper nurture. The lawyer realizes that Bartleby practically does not ever eat anything. When I say “his physical sickness” I am suggesting that Bartleby might also suffer from another kind of sickness or abnormal condition which is not necessarily physical. From this point on I will refer to such condition as “Bartleby’s metaphysical sickness”. When Bartleby pronounces his formula “I would prefer not to” for the first time and shocks the lawyer, both his physical and metaphysical sickness start to be noticed by the other characters. His aspect at the beginning is not considered as an unhealthy feature: “[...] a motionless young man one morning, stood upon my office threshold [...] I can see that figure now – pallidly neat, pitifully respectable, incurably forlorn! It was Bartleby.” (Melville 2002: 9). So his physical sickness is likely to have started before his appearance at the office, but it is his formula which reveals the effects of such sickness for the others.

Bartleby’s metaphysical sickness has linguistic “symptoms”, which seems to be contagious, as everyone in the office starts using the verb “to prefer” (Deleuze 2006: 62):

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124 “He dined gaily, and after dinner wrote nothing, no papers even” (Gogol 1992: 91).
125 However, Gogol was really fond of writing of all those obscure and magical characters such as devils and witches.
Mr. Nippers,” said I, “I’d prefer that you would withdraw for the present.”

Somehow, of late I had got into the way of involuntary using this word “prefer” upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions …

“‘That’s the word, Turkey,” said I – “that’s it’

“Oh, prefer? Oh yes – queer word. I never use it myself. But, sir, as I was saying, if he would but prefer –”

“Turkey,” interrupted I, “you will please withdraw.” “Oh certainly, sir, if you prefer that I should.” (Melville 2002:20-21, Melville’s cursive)

Bartleby’s formula affects everyone’s language in the office. All of them use the verb prefer in perfectly grammatical sentences that are far from common and regular usage: “Prefer not, eh?” gritted Nippers – I’d prefer him, if I were you, sir;” […] “I’d prefer him; I’d give him preferences, the stubborn mule! What is it, sir, pray, that he prefers not to do now?” (Melville 2002: 20, italics author’s own). The metaphysical sickness affects the others in the office and their language. Bartleby does not speak much, and he speaks even less once he prefers not to do anything being commanded. However, a few words – and certainly the lack of them – are enough to influence all the action in the story.

Bartleby and Akakiĭ Akakevich have problems with oral language, exactly like another Adamic character in Melville’s works, namely Billy Budd, who has a stuttering condition. Bartleby is unable – or unwilling – to carry any conversations, while Akakiĭ Akakevich “expressed himself in chiefly by prepositions, adverbs, and by such scraps of phrases as had no meaning whatever” (Gogol 1992: 85), and has problems to speak coherently and confidently in front of Petrovich and the Important Personage. Ironically Bartleby and Akakiĭ Akakevich, as copyists, work with words but their oral abilities are limited. Once they stop copying, they also stop producing words completely. This is a condition which opens a “vacuum in language” (Deleuze 2006: 67). The only joy, and the only reason to live for Akakiĭ Akakevich was to copy, to reproduce words. Once he has abandoned his passion for handwriting and has a new passion for his overcoat and loses them both he has no reason to continue existing. Bartleby as a copyist is in the same condition; still Deleuze (2006: 63) suggests that his method to survive consists in preferring not to.

Deleuze’s statement might sound as a contradiction, since his preferring not to leads him eventually to death, but he explains that by preferring not to, Bartleby stops the flow of any linguistic contact, which includes commands and questions from others.

Deleuze (2006: 69-70) goes on finding the origin of Bartleby’s metaphysical sickness. According to his theory, Bartleby prefers not to copy anymore because he has been betrayed, since there is an “arrangement” between him and the lawyer that has been violated:

I resolved to assign Bartleby a corner by the folding-doors, but on my side of them, so as to have this quiet man within easy call, in case any trifling thing was to be done. I placed his desk close up to a small sidewindow in
that part of the room, a window which originally had afforded a lateral view of certain grimy back-yards and bricks, but which, owing to subsequent erections, commanded at present no view at all, though it gave some light. Within three feet of the panes was a wall, and the light came down from far above, between two lofty buildings, as from a very small opening in a dome. 

Still further to a satisfactory arrangement, I procured a high green folding screen, which might entirely isolate Bartleby from my sight, though not remove him from my voice. And thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined (Melville 2002:9-10 italics mine).

All the conditions of the “arrangement” are stated in this paragraph, which resembles a contract. In this contract, all the “conditions” that would be relevant are included: the folding-doors, the folding screen, the walls, the light and also the conditions under which Bartleby would work: he would be out of the lawyer’s sight, but Bartleby would be able to hear the lawyer’s voice. Deleuze compares this “arrangement” with a pact, similar to the demonic or homosexual pact some scholars claim there is between Petrovich and Akakii Akakevich (cf. Rancour-Laferriere 1982, Karlinsky 1976, Graffy 2000). Then when the lawyer wants Bartleby to leave his desk is the moment when the copyist pronounces his formula because the arrangement has been violated. He has been deprived from the walls which protected him, for instance he has been betrayed.

In Flaubert’s Bouvard et Pécuchet, the copyists and protagonist prefer to “copier comme autrefois”126 after giving up their ambitious intellectual project to embrace universal knowledge. Similarly, in “The Overcoat” when Akakii Akakevich receives a new and slightly more challenging task of copying documents and change the verbs from first to third person. Akakii Akakevich prefers not to conjugate verbs and prefers to return to his regular tasks, to the previous arrangement. Still Bartleby’s reaction is more radical and feeling betrayed is the detonator of both his physical and metaphysical sicknesses. In the case of “The Overcoat”, the Akakii Akakevich’s ordeal starts with the overcoat and the pact with Petrovich, even though to affirm that such ordeal starts because of this pact has been already debated. Akakii Akakevich and Bartleby are not only good at copying, this activity becomes a place where they thrive and a shrine where they are safe. Once they are removed from this safe environment they become vulnerable. Bartleby is a writer-character who has stopped writing, and so has Akakii Akakevich. Martín Santomé stops writing, he prefers not to write his diary anymore. So the sickness of the copyist as a motif leads to stop writing. To stop writing for a copyist leads him not to exist. This non-existence can mean death or can imply a different kind of existence, which will be discussed in next chapter.

126 “copy like before”.

77
8 Death of the copyist

“Escribir en tinieblas es un menester pesado”
Gonzalo de Berceo

The final theme to be discussed in this project is also the product of a rather common
motif, namely death. As in the case of the previous motif discussed, using the motifs of death
and death of the protagonist, I will delimit them both in order to analyze the last motif here,
the death of the copyist, which as will be shown, has its peculiarities in the case of the three
selected texts.

Death takes three different forms for the three protagonists. In The Truce Martín
Santomé does not concretely die; he semi-dies or as he put it, he felt as if he “had been
deprived of four fifths of his being” (Benedetti 2006: 159). In addition, it is the female
protagonist who dies. Akakiǐ Akakevich dies after several days of sickness, but comes back as
a fantastic figure of a ghost. The third protagonist, Bartleby, dies in prison, although here I
will argue the possibility of Bartleby already being a dead character.

8.1 Akakiǐ’s death

Akakiǐ Akakevich’s death and burial do not have any effect on anyone. His absence in
the city is described to be as meaningless as his existence: “Петербург остался без Акакия
Акакиевича, как будто бы в нём его и никогда не было. Исчезло и скрылось существо,
никем не защищенное, никому не дорогое, ни для кого не интересное” (Gogol 2004:
37). Four days after his burial his department is informed about Akakiǐ Akakevich’s death and
the day after there is a new copyist sitting at his desk. Still, for him, death definitely
represents the transition to a new stage in his changing character. During this last stage of his
existence he comes back to Saint Petersburg in the shape of a ghost. It is the Important
Personage who sees Akakiǐ Akakevich in his last stage: “Вдруг почувствовал значительное
лицо, что его ухватил кто-то весьма крепко за воротник. Обернувшись, он заметил

127 “To write in the dark is such an arduous task”
128 “And Petersburg was left without Akakiǐ Akakevich, as though he had never lived there. A being
disappeared, and was hidden, who was protected by none, dear to none, interesting to none…” (Gogol 1992: 99)
человека небольшого роста, в старом поношенном вицмундире, и не без ужаса узнал в нём Акакия Акакиевича" (G 2004: 41-42). The characteristics of this “new” Akakiĭ Akakevich are tangible, even though some characteristics of him as the old copyist are noticeable. Despite having the same height, the ghost speaks confidently and almost all the sentences he says to the Important Personage are complete: “А! так вот ты наконец! наконец я тебя того, поймай за воротник! твоей-то шинели мне и нужно! не похлопотал об моей, да ещё и распёк, — отдавай же теперь свою!” (G 2004: 42). The processes in Akakiĭ Akakevich’s different stages are gradual; they are transitions which include features of their previous and subsequent stages.

The improvement in his oral abilities began when he was still delirious and he started to swear. As a ghost, he is as tall as the living Akakiĭ Akakevich and the Important Personage recognizes him. Later on, when a watchman sees the ghost, Akakiĭ Akakevich has newer characteristics: “Привидение, однако же, было уже гораздо выше ростом, носило преогромные усы […]” (G 2004: 43). If we have no choice but to trust the unreliable narrator in “The Overcoat”, and this taller and mustached ghost is still the same character as the old copyist, then the postulations about a constantly changing Akakiĭ Akakevich are true. Besides, he is not called by his name anymore; he is simply called привидение – prividenie, the ghost. In Hapgood’s translation the ghost is called “the apparition”, curiously the same way Bartleby is referred to on several occasions.

One of the social approaches to “The Overcoat” criticizes the aforementioned dehumanization of Akakiĭ Akakevich. His death is the only way out of all of the problems caused by society. His features improve, he obtains justice and ironically it makes it looks as if Akakiĭ Akakevich were better off dead than alive (Flores Treviño 2002: 105, 108-109). It seems that sickness releases him from his shy character and death releases him from his social problems.

8.2 Bartleby’s death?

129 “Suddenly, the important personage felt some one clutch him very firmly by the collar. Turning round, he perceived a man of short stature, in an old, worn uniform, and recognized, not without terror, Akakiĭ Akakevich” (Gogol 1992: 102)

130 “Ah, here you are at last! I have you, that […] by the collar! I need your coat. You took no trouble about mine, but reprimanded me; now give up your own.” (Gogol 1992: 102)

131 “But the apparition was too much too tall, [and] wore huge mustaches […]” (Gogol 1992: 103)
The analysis of Bartleby’s death carries with it some other difficulties. On several occasions he and his actions are described as if he were not alive, as if he were an unusual and unnatural being. He is actually sent to the prison in New York known as “The Tombs”. In addition, he is sometimes described as if he were a ghost, like the one into which Akakiĭ Akakevich turns. “At the period preceding the advent of Bartleby, I had two persons as copyists in my employment […]” (Melville: 5, italics mine), says the lawyer describing life in his office. He mentions Bartleby’s advent, instead of his arrival. In regular use of the English language, the word advent is more reserved for the Christian liturgical time than for the simple approach of a person (Oxford Dictionary). For Prado (2006: 162), Bartleby is “a spirit, a spectrum […], the office ghost, the scriveners’ spirit”. His being a ghost is suspected by the lawyer, when trying to plan an effective method to make him leave, he thinks: “What shall I do? What ought I to do? What does conscience say I should do with this man, or rather ghost?” (M:27). The use of the concept of “ghost”, “apparition” and “привидение – prividenie” is used by both the lawyer and the narrator in “The Overcoat”, as a way to explain the mysterious, unnatural and fantastic nature of Bartleby and Akakiĭ Akakevich. The choice of those words, besides describing the supernatural, reinforces the idea of both characters not being human, as if they were not even animate beings, as if they were objects or events. This is implied not only by “the advent of Bartleby”, but also by the way Akakiĭ Akakevich comes into life: “таким образом и произошёл Акакий Акакиевич” (Gogol 2004: 3); the Russian verb used here, произойти – proizoyti, is reserved for events, never for people. For Eichenbaum (1974: 286), besides the comic effect, the facelessness of the character is being underlined by the choice of such an impersonal verb. Eichenbaum calls it “facelessness”, which when applied to both characters might be the dehumanization both characters suffer.

In The Truce the only copyist who dies and who is described as a ghost is Laura Avellaneda: “Levanté los ojos y ella estaba allí. Como una aparición o un fantasma o sencillamente –y cuánto mejor– como Avellaneda”134. Even though the protagonist in The Truce seemed to have escaped most of the curses from which the other two copyists suffer, Laura Avellaneda shares the fatal destinies of Akakiĭ Akakevich and Bartleby: she is a copyist, she becomes sick, she dies and she is likely to become a ghost, at least for Martín

132 Hapgood’s translation misses Gogol’s intended pun: “In this manner he became Akakii Akakievich” (Gogol 1992: 80)
133 Alonso Gómez (1988: 432) points out that it is during the fourth time when this “apparition” of Laura Avellaneda curiously occurs. I have previously mentioned the use of number four by other authors.
134 “I looked up and she was there. Like an apparition or a ghost or simple –even better– like Avellaneda”
Santomé. There are a few more references to ghosts in The Truce, Martín Santomé recognizes himself as “the ghost of his youth” (“me importa reconocerme como un fantasma de mi juventud”, 2006: 108), a “phantasmagorical name list” (“ese Directorio fantasmal” 2006: 11) is according to him what lies behind all the papers and documents in the office which come along with a new task –not from a routine task –, as if he were implying that maybe this is a sort of ghost list, or a series of ghosts –copyist’s ghosts?– hiding among all those papers.

If Bartleby is not an ordinary human being, his death is not either. To start with, his death is described implicitly, not explicitly:

“Lives without dining,” said I, and closed the eyes.
“Eh! – He’s asleep, ain’t he?”
“With kings and counselors,” murmured I. (Melville 2002: 33)

His death is then implied, though in the epilogue it is mentioned more unambiguously: “Yet here I hardly know whether I should divulge one little item of rumor, which came to my ear a few months after the scrivener’s decease” (Melville 2002: 34, italics mine). Melville uses literary resources to avoid using more common verbs or nouns such as die, pass away or death.

There are several more hints indicating Bartleby was a ghost, or at least behaved or looked like one. He has a “cadaverously gentlemanly nonchalance” (Melville 2002:16) An unusual paleness in his actions is suggested. Actions have no color, still Bartleby is “pallidly neat” and he “writes palely”. Furthermore, apparently he does not eat anything at all. At one point, the lawyer suspects he eats only ginger-nuts, as he assumes Bartleby must necessarily eat something to survive: “He lives, then, on ginger-nuts, thought I; never eats a dinner, properly speaking; he must be a vegetarian then; but no; he never eats even vegetables, he eats nothing but ginger-nuts” (Melville 2002:13). Still, at the end of the story he realizes Bartleby “lives without dining” (Melville 2002: 33). The story is certainly told after “the scrivener’s decease”, and the lawyer is puzzled from the beginning: “While of other law-copyist I might write the complete life, of Bartleby nothing of that sort can be done. I believe that no materials exist for a full and satisfactory biography of this man” (Melville 2002: 4). There is no way to trace a ghost; he has no references, no papers, and no certificates, like the other copyist at the office. Such a lack of information, of course, might sound like a contradiction. After all, the lawyer is Bartleby’s employer and they work in an office surrounded by documents and information. However, this apparently illogical fact reinforces several interpretations: the “strange arrangement”, a homosexual relationship as suggested by Deleuze (2001: 70), and certainly the intervention of supernatural forces, like the ones coming from a ghost.
8.3 To die for love

In the story of “The Dead” by James Joyce, Gretta Conroy remembers how a boy, Michael Furey, being in love with her, stays outside her house in the rain. The boy falls sick and eventually dies. The situation presented in Joyce’s story also echoes how Akakiĭ Akakevich in search of his overcoat has to face a snow storm, becomes sick and dies. Still, for this echo to have the impression of déjà-lu mentioned by Shcheglov (1993: 50), the postulations of the overcoat and its erotic implications must be somehow accepted. Chizhevskii (1974:313) sees the appearance of Akakiĭ Akakevich’s ghost as a parody of the theme of “the romantic “dead lover” who rises from the grave in quest of his bride”, and traces this plot in Gottfried August Bürger’s poem “Leonora”, in Vasilii Zhukvskii’s poems “Ludmilla” and “Svetlana” and in some stanzas in Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin. This theme used by Joyce, Bürger, Zhukvskii and Pushkin is similar as in “The Overcoat”, a love after death. For Chizhevskii (1974:318), Akakiĭ Akakevich is dying for the cause of love, even though he feels Gogol is making a parody of a theme other authors present in a much more solemn way. However, Chizhevskii’s analysis goes beyond the mere parody; he names other Gogolian characters, all of them from the Petersburg Stories, who lose themselves and perish for other reasons rather than an object: Chartkov in “The Portrait” dies in the quest for fortune and fame; Poprishchin in “Diary of a Madman” and Piskaryov in “Nevskiĭ Prospekt” for the love of a woman; and according to him Akakiĭ Akakevich perishes for nothing: “his passionate enthusiasm is directed at an insignificant, unworthy object – and he has no center on which he can lean and withstand the world, or “overcome the very worst sufferings and the sorrow of life” (Chizhevskii 1974:318-319). Still, the justification for what a man can die, according to Gogol, what a man can have that задор, that ardor for, is already presented in Dead Souls and “Nevskiĭ Prospekt” (see chapter 5). What might sound banal for one person, is a passion to die for someone else.

8.4 Death in time and space

The name of Joyce’s short story has as well connections with the whole chapter of this project. For one of the questions it raises is rather simple, namely who is dead and who is not. Besides the parallel elements mentioned here between Joyce’s story and the other works, Dubliners, the anthology where “The Dead” comes from, was a source of inspiration for Benedetti, especially as an influence for the Uruguayan writer’s Montevideoanos. Gogol actually never presented his stories under the title of Petersburg Stories (Петербургские повести, Novelas de San Petersburgo, Peterburgnovelli), but it has been a traditional way among scholars to call them and among publishing houses to distribute them.
Death is the end of life. This statement, as logical as it might sound, raises many different arguments in the light of the three texts. There are different challenges such a supposedly logical statement can raise under the light of literature. A character might come back to life after death as in the case of Akakiĭ Akakevich, or could be dead all through the story, or might resemble or be a ghost. In order to follow a lineal and logical sequence of the events, there has to be an established sense of time and space. Time and space however follow rather the laws of an artificial universe created by the authors; in “The Overcoat”, as it has been already commented, there is a constant sense of timelessness (Graffy 2000: 75-77); in “Bartleby”, the protagonist lives in a constant present (Pardo 2001:161); The Truce is the only work where, not wishing to be tautological, time is chronologic (cf. Alonso Gómez 1988: 434-437). Without logical laws of time and space, it is more difficult to delimit where life and death start and end, which gives the authors more freedom to create those laws for their particular universe.

The spatial references are, at first sight, delimited in three works: Saint Petersburg, New York, Montevideo. Nevertheless, there are several occasions when space does not follow logics. Bartleby is placed at his desk, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, after an arrangement with the lawyer. Once he is asked to leave his desk, he starts pronouncing his formula. Apparently, the office is the only possible space to be, to exist, for him. From the moment of his advent and till the time he is taken by force to the Tombs, he never leaves the office. The possible initial intention was that he was supposed to be placed there to copy, like Akakiĭ Akakevich, навсегда – for ever, that was perhaps one of the clauses of that “strange arrangement”.

Before being robbed, Akakiĭ Akakevich approaches an “endless” square, which looks so out of proportion that it resembles a desert: “Он приблизился к тому месту, где перерезывалась улица бесконечною площадью с едва видными на другой стороне её домами, которая глядела страшною пустынею” (Gogol 2004: 27, italics mine). This agoraphobic feeling reveals the danger which the lack of walls can represent. Such agoraphobia might be suffered by the protagonist or by the narrator, or it can be yet another feature of the illogical sense of space in the story. Those protecting walls –not necessarily pleasant– are present all through the story of Bartleby –it is after all “a story of

137 “He approached the place where the street crossed and endless square with barely visible houses on its further side, and which seemed a fearful desert” (Gogol 1992: 93, italics mine)
138 Agoraphobia is not only the fear of open (wall-less) spaces, but of uncontrolled social conditions as well (Oxford Dictionary).
Wall-Street”—they are what keep him safe. If he is a ghost, a spectrum, or a shadow, then he needs a wall onto which to be reflected (Pardo 2001: 168). According to Borges (1984: 10), Melville changed radically from the “excessively open spaces” in Moby Dick to the limiting walls of the office. As it turned out to be, without those walls, even if Bartleby is a ghost, he can not exist anymore. Without those walls, Akakiĭ Akakevich will be robbed and, as we know, he will become a ghost.

As though to keep his copyist safe from this lack of walls, from the open sea in Moby Dick and the endless squares of Saint Petersburg, Benedetti sets his novel in a completely urban atmosphere, as the rest of his novels are (Miravalles 1988: 135). When Martín Santomé is sitting at his desk and looking at the wall—a wall which would represent safety for Bartleby and Akakiĭ Akakevich—, he does not understand its functions or why he stares at it: “Lo que no soportaba más era la pared frente a mi escritorio, la horrible pared absorbida por ese tremendo almanaque con un febrero consagrado a Goya […] No sé que habría pasado si me hubiera quedado mirando el almanaque como un imbécil”139 (Benedetti 2006: 12). He leaves the office walls and goes outside trying to find some peace of mind, unaware of the dangers open air might represent, according to “Bartleby” and “The Overcoat”: “Salgo entonces como salí hoy, en una encarnizada búsqueda del aire libre, del horizonte, de quién sabe cuántas cosas más”140 (Benedetti 2006: 13, cf. Alonso Gómez 1998 : 430). He is going towards that horizon where Akakiĭ Akakevich’s ghost disappears, where Bartleby is unsafe. Still, Martín Santomé does not lose his way: “Bueno, a veces no llego al horizonte y me conformo con acomodarme en la ventana de un buen café y registrar el pasaje de algunas buenas piernas”141 (Benedetti 2006: 13). Once more, a human feature—which neither Bartleby nor Akakiĭ Akakevich have— saves him: a picaresque fancy for beautiful women.

Graffy (2000: 75-77) makes several observations on the illogical account of time in “The Overcoat”. The beginning and the end are marked by two specific accounts of time; the first date mentioned is the birth of Akakiĭ Akakevich on March 23th and the Important Personage comes home exactly six minutes after seeing Akakiĭ Akakevich’s ghost. Still, most of the time references seem to underline the existence of a timeless eternity or an abnormal course of time. He is baptized as a baby and suddenly he is in at his desk left to write there

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139 “What I could not stand the most was the wall in front of my desk. That horrid wall taken over by a huge calendar whose February was dedicated to Goya… I don’t know what would have happened if I had stayed looking at the calendar as if were an idiot”

140 “Then I go out exactly as I went out today, in a furious search for open air, for the horizon, who knows how many more things”

141 “Well, sometimes I don’t reach the horizon and I am satisfied with feeling comfortable next to a café’s window and register the pass-by of a couple of nice legs”
forever. When Akakiĭ Akakevich realized his old overcoat might need repair it is in winter (Gogol 2004: 8; 1992: 83); while the new overcoat is being made he visits Petrovich at least once each month, during an unmentioned number of months (Gogol 2004: 19; 1992: 89); they decide buying the materials after half a year (Gogol 2004: 20; 1992: 89); then it takes Petrovich two weeks to have it done (Gogol 2004: 20; 1992: 90); and by then the cold season is starting again (Gogol 2004: 20; 1992: 90). As in “Bartleby”, in “The Overcoat” there seems to be no reference to sunshine or warmth, as it seems, they live in an eternal dark winter. The treatment of time is also unusual in “Bartleby”, as the protagonist’s only temporality is the present. “At present I prefer to give no answer” (Melville 2002: 20, italics mine), says Bartleby, and there is no change in that attitude, that is, he gives no answer later; the lawyer notices that temporality: “and one prime thing was this,—he was always there;—first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night” (Melville 2002:15, italics author’s own). For Pardo (2001: 162), the present is the only chronological reference which Bartleby has, he owns no past and has no future. The need to use a word to describe Bartleby’s temporality gives this concept of time a familiar term, namely the present. However Bartleby and Akakiĭ Akakevich live in eternity and in timelessness, simultaneously. Such a statement, certainly sounds like a contradiction, but that is the result of conceptualizing time in a works where there natural temporality is altered.

Akakiĭ Akakevich turns into a ghost and Bartleby might have been one from the beginning, so their deaths must not really affect those temporality concepts. At the end of his diary Martín Santomé writes: “Desde mañana y hasta el día de mi muerte, el tiempo estará a mi órdenes” (Benedetti 2006: 171). Martín Santomé is the only copyist who is given control over his time and space concepts. As Varela Jácome (1988: 403-405) points out, by being a homodiegetic narrator –both narrator and protagonist– Martín Santomé is given a great power: he can manipulate all of the discursive structures; concerning time he can skip dates, he can create silences and he can avoid or exaggerate information. Breaking the concepts of time and space makes it easier to accept the hints given in the story indicating that Bartleby was already a ghost, that he is a story told of someone already dead, like Michael Furey in Joyce’s story. The biography of Bartleby is impossible to write, says the lawyer at the beginning of the story, so his written –γραφειν– life –βιος– can not be recovered, as “it is an irreparable loss to literature” (Melville 2002: 4). In the epilogue, the

142 Sun is mentioned twice in “Bartleby”, both times in figurative sense.
143 “From tomorrow on, time will be at my service.”
lawyer learns that Bartleby used to be employed at the *Dead Letter Office* in Washington. The lawyer understands immediately the irony of his having been employed there: “[…] I cannot adequately express the emotions which seize me. Dead letters! Does it not sound like dead men?” (Melville 2002: 34). The Dead Letter Office represents not only letters (письма, cartas, brev) which have not been delivered, but also letters (буквы, letras, bokstaver) which do not have life.

Those lifeless letters can certainly be associated with the mechanical copies made by the three copyists: they are dead letters because they have been copied and they lack creativity. That is why the biography of Bartleby is impossible to write, because he is one of those dead letters (“dead letters! Does it not sound like dead men?”); he is a biography which lacks βιος. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the name Bartleby is linked with the name of the apostle Bartholomew, one of the Jesus’ apostles of whom there are practically no historical sources to write a biography. Since he can not be saved, nor persecuted, nor sent to heaven or hell, or even to have his biography written, he is condemned to stay in limbo, to remain a *dead letter*.
9 Conclusion

To find common motifs in three different literary works is a defined task. This task’s research takes two directions: the motifs are isolated to be analyzed. Nevertheless, they are constantly compared to other motifs among the same works, to other works by the same authors and finally to works by other authors. Motifs have been used since the beginnings of literature, but thematics as a part of literary theory is still developing. Hopefully this project will help future research on this area of literary studies.

The use of thematics’ theories has been the base for this project. The central concept used throughout this thesis project has been *motif*. One of the first difficulties I encountered was to find well-defined concepts under a general consensus among scholars. The definitions of thematics’ concepts are not universally accepted. Nonetheless, the definition of motif which I have used does not contradict any of the literature I have consulted. Some authors certainly contradict each other and some schools do not accept thematics as a serious branch of literary studies. Furthermore, the definitions of motif and theme used in this project sum up several different definitions. These different definitions have the tendency to diverge, so I have attempted to make them converge as much as possible.

The definition of concepts was just the first step. I have also presented the method to be *perceive, position* and *conceptualize* motifs, based on Silan’tev’s and Bremond’s method. In other words, this method identifies, classifies and analyze motifs. Once the analysis of motifs has been fulfilled, they can be used to form *themes*. This means that the base of a theme is a motif. Themes have, according to the definitions I used, a more universal relevance and can be used not only in literary studies, but in many areas of human knowledge.

As I mentioned, in order to be conceptualized, motifs needed to be isolated. However, this project has also presented how motifs are related to one another. At the same time, one motif can have varieties and can be found in many literary works.

The first motif which was conceptualized, *the copyist*, is present in “The Overcoat”, *The Truce* and “Bartleby”. As it was previously commented, this motif is also found in several literary works. In some of them the copyists have no name, for example the nameless copyists in Benedetti’s *Poemas de la Oficina*. Some other do have a name like Prince Myshkin in *The Idiot*. Prince Myshkin is a copyist; this Dostoevskian character also belongs to another category of human types which can be used as motifs: the “positively beautiful”.
This means that a character as a human type can belong to different categories or subcategories of motifs. To conceptualize the copyist as a motif meant to delimit exactly what a copyist is and what it is not. That is why it was demonstrated that the copyist as a motif is a subcategory of another type of motif, namely the writer-character. Writer-character is a term of my own, since I could not find another term that could cover the meaning that the conceptualization of this motif implied. Scribe was suggested and discussed by my tutor, my proofreaders and myself. Nonetheless, it was decided that scribe, despite being a perfectly standard word in English, it did not cover the meaning I wanted it to convey. The category of writer-character is shared not only by the protagonists of the three works, but also by many others. The protagonists of The Master and Margarita, “A Faint Heart”, Aunt Julia and the Scrivener, Blindness and several others.

The tailor was the second type of human which was presented as a motif. This motif is present in two of the texts. The choice of this motif revealed different functions in “The Overcoat” and The Truce. Based on the different connotations that the tailor as a motif has, he can be an antagonist, a demonic figure or a father-surrogate. At the same time, these different functions have been debated by scholars, giving as a result a great deal of different approaches to this motif. Those approaches diverge constantly and they usually refute one another. The intention of this work was not to prove any of these approaches, but to present them as part of the motif’s conceptualization. This motif also connects the works analyzed here with many other literary works form different times and places. The intertextuality provided by the use of this motif connects “The Overcoat” and The Truce with folk tales, contemporary literature, sociology and even with films.

Two more terms of my own presented in this thesis project were the handwriting passages and the calligraphy passages. These two terms were presented in chapter 5, in which the motif of the passion for handwriting was conceptualized. The conceptualization of this motif included an interpretation based on feminist studies and a Freudian interpretation of this passion for handwriting. The feminist views of Klages (1977) and Cixous (1997) gave this motif a different and enriching view, for a simple reason: the three authors and the three protagonists are male. Through the Freudian interpretation the intertextuality of the texts reached another area of human knowledge, namely psychoanalysis. This intertextuality between literature and psychoanalysis is not new at all. There is a great deal of works devoted to analyze the works of Melville, Gogol and Benedetti in the light of psychoanalysis. Some of those works were cited in this thesis project.
The passion for handwriting was not the only motif which connected the three works with psychology. Loss of affection object was conceptualized as a common motif and it is undoubtedly connected to psychological studies. In order to analyze this motif it was necessary to define loss and object from literary and psychological views. To conceptualize this motif it was also necessary to analyze the motifs that Graffy (2000) mentions. These motifs proceed and follow the passion for handwriting and to conceptualize them was essential to also conceptualize this motif.

*Sickness* as a motif was found in all the three works. In this case the intertextuality connected sickness as a literary motif even with medicine, as shown by the example provided by Dostoevskian texts. However, it was necessary to delimit this motif in order to reach its conceptualization. *Sickness* is an extremely common motif in literature, and so is *sickness of the protagonist*. That is why the resultant motif to be conceptualized in this thesis project was the sickness of the copyist. In the chapter concerning this motif, the conceptualization had several arguments discussing the reasons of those sicknesses. Once more, the debate presented radically different opinions. These opinions by several scholars include diverse and opposite reasons to explain the origin of the sickness of the copyists. At the end of the conceptualization, the three texts analyzed here connected the motif of sickness of the copyist with onomatology, biblical studies and linguistics.

Death as a motif presented similar difficulties as sickness as a motif did. Death is also motif commonly found in literature, so it was necessary to delimit it the same way sickness. The result of this delimitation was the *death of the copyist*. The conceptualization of this motif presented several peculiarities. As it usually happens in literary studies, the results can be contradictory. In this case one of the theories of this conceptualization of death of the copyists ironically resulted in *living* dead copyists.

The final result was not only to prove the existence of common motifs in works which were written in different languages, in different places and during different periods of history; but also to show how motifs work in literature. They are isolated as if they were cells taken to a laboratory, and there they could be observed closely. As it happens with cells, the motifs can be isolated to be conceptualized, but it also proves how interconnected they are with the elements of a bigger system. The motifs are connected through intertextuality with other motifs, with other literary works and with almost any area of human knowledge, even beyond literary studies and humanities.
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**Dictionaries and Lexicons**

“Ακάκιος (Akakios)”

Lexicon of Greek Personal Names, http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/index.html

Diccionario de la Real Academia Española, http://www.rae.es

“escritor”

“guionista”


“advent”

“agoraphobia”
“calligraphy”
“mores”
“nippers”


“торжественный (torzhestvennî)”

*Heráldica Aragonesa, http://www.redaragon.com/sociedad/heraldica/default.asp*

“Martín”


“торжественный”


“Elena Blavatsky”
Appendices

Appendix one

Picture 1. Sergey Martinson as Petrovich in the 1926 film version of *The Overcoat*.