

Title: Love at the End of the Century: Chekhov, Zola, and Contemporary Sexual Ideology
Author: Melissa Miller, University of Wisconsin-Madison

It is a critical commonplace that the young Chekhov owed a substantial debt to the French author Emile Zola, who was famous throughout European letters, even notorious, for his forthright, oftentimes graphic depictions of sexuality and the human body. In particular, the period of 1886–87, when Chekhov was publishing his first stories under the editorship of Alexei Suvorin, has been described by Donald Rayfield as Chekhov's "lubricious, Zolaesque sequence of *New Times* stories" (*Anton Chekhov: A Life*, 149). Chekhov's explicit period of Zola-inspired stories is thought to have ended shortly thereafter in 1887, with the publication of his story "Verochka" marking a new period of introspective lyricism.

However, it is not the case that Chekhov stopped reading Zola's work. Chekhov's correspondence demonstrates that he was engaged with both the writer and the man, up until Zola's untimely and suspicious death in 1902. Careful scrutiny of Chekhov's creative work during the 1890s reveals that, in fact, he continued a dialogue with Zola in his fiction. One such story from Chekhov's post-*New Times* period, "Volodia bol'shoi i Volodia malen'kii," interrogates central themes of sex and gender from the summation of Zola's Rougon-Macquart saga, the novel *Doctor Pascal*. The paper seeks to demonstrate how Chekhov has, in this story of only fourteen pages, elaborated his own sprawling family saga in miniature, and in so doing, polemicizes with Zola's view of sexuality and the self.