**An Avenger by Anton Chekhov**

In An Avenger by Anton Chekhov we have the theme of infidelity, trust, revenge, shame and pride Taken from his The Complete Short Stories collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and from the beginning of the story it becomes clear to the reader that Chekhov may be exploring the theme of infidelity. Sigaev’s wife has been unfaithful to him. Hence his visit to the gun shop. Sigaev wants to exact revenge on both his wife and his wife’s lover. However it is also noticeable that at times he also considers killing himself after he has killed his wife and her lover. This may be important as Sigaev appears to be looking for sympathy from others when it comes to killing himself. He wants to let others know that he is the offended party. That he himself has done nothing wrong and that the onus of responsibility lies with his wife and her lover. They are the guilty parties and their tryst or romantic engagements have driven him to the point of madness. Which killing himself, his wife and his lover would be. It would be insanity for Sigaev to kill himself of his wife or her lover over the fact that his wife has been unfaithful. Something that becomes clearer to Sigaev towards the end of the story when he decides that the proper course of action is to divorce and shame his wife.

Though Chekhov gives no background as to why Sigaev’s wife might have been unfaithful it is clear that Sigaev cannot trust his wife. What is also interesting is the fact that Chekhov also gives no background into Sigaev. The reader is left to take his word on everything. Only his feelings are felt throughout the story. Though it is clear his pride is wounded the reader never knows if Sigaev’s potential actions are justified. We do not know how Sigaev has treated his wife. Which leaves the reader wondering is it possible that Sigaev’s wife’s actions were triggered by the fact she feels as though she is in an unhappy marriage. The reader never knows. As Chekhov throughout the story is focused on Sigaev’s feelings about what has happened. Sigaev also appears to be more interested in how he will be perceived should he kill himself. Will he be viewed upon as the wounded party? Shaming his wife and her lover.

It might also be important that Chekhov affords Sigaev the opportunity to think things through. He may not necessarily be acting on impulse. Something that is clearer by the fact that he decides upon divorce rather than the action of killing himself, his wife and her lover. By not acting on impulse Sigaev is able to think clearly about the course of action he will take. At the end of the day he wishes to be seen by society as the one who has been offended. That is utmost in Sigaev’s mind. The outrage that Sigaev feels at the beginning of the story also seems to lessen as the story progresses. It as though Sigaev longs to make a decision that will not only ensure he is viewed upon sympathetically by society but that he will also come out on top. It is as though he can’t let go of what has happened. Though any man or woman may have difficulty letting go of their spouse’s infidelity. If anything Sigaev is a proud man. Rather than discussing what has happened to him with his wife and seeking some form of reconciliation. He appears to have a knee jerk reaction. Hence his thoughts about purchasing a pistol.

Sigaev’s indecision about which pistol to purchase not only buys him some time to think a little more clearly but his indecision also mirrors the course of action that Sigaev intends to take. From going from killing himself, his wife and her lover. Sigaev takes the more sensible approach and decides upon divorce. Affording himself the opportunity to be viewed upon sympathetically by others. It is as though Sigaev’s only real complaint is the fact that his pride is wounded. Though it is inappropriate to conduct a relationship with another person’s wife or husband. Sigaev does not at any stage in the story think that he might be at fault and it is also difficult for the reader to suggest that Sigaev is at fault. As mentioned Chekhov gives no background to Sigaev’s relationship with his wife. The entire story is focused upon how Sigaev feels and the importance of him being seen in a good light. Sigaev does not appear to mourn the fact that his wife has been unfaithful. Rather revenge is more important to Sigaev. Making his wife and her lover feel as he is feeling. As though this will solve the problem for Sigaev. In reality Sigaev should probably follow the course of action he decides upon at the end of the story (divorce). However he still longs to be viewed upon as the injured or wounded party. Though again it is difficult not to view Sigaev in any other light considering that Chekhov only gives the reader limited information.