

**Title:** Unmasking Objectivity: Contingent Categories and the Card-Carrying Lunatic in “Ward Six”

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This paper considers Chekhov’s “Ward 6” (Палата № 6), and aims to demonstrate that both Chekhov’s formal technique and his narrative development in this story serve to undermine the belief that complex subjects can be turned into quantified and qualified objects. It does this in the context of exploring the limitations of the ethos of scientific “progress” with which his society was caught up. As a medical doctor at a time and place that placed a premium on positivism and objectivity, Chekhov was exposed to the value of ruthless empiricism in the emerging science of psychopathology; as a creative writer, he critiqued the institutions that treated mental patients using strict definitions of moral, social, and physical health. Chekhov employs a number of literary devices in “Ward 6” to expose the weaknesses to which contemporary science was prone. Concurrent with this, he considers the possible role for empathy in the psycho-clinical context.

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