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THE BIRCH

SPRING 2018



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About *The Birch*

Founded in 2004, *The Birch* is the first national undergraduate publication devoted exclusively to Slavic, Eastern European, and Eurasian studies. The journal is run by Columbia University students and annually publishes work by current undergraduates from many different colleges. We accept submissions of creative writing, art and photography, literary criticism, and essays on the culture and politics of the region.

You can find more information about *The Birch* online on our Facebook page, our website (thebirchonline.org), and by emailing us at thebirchjournal@gmail.com.

Our Staff

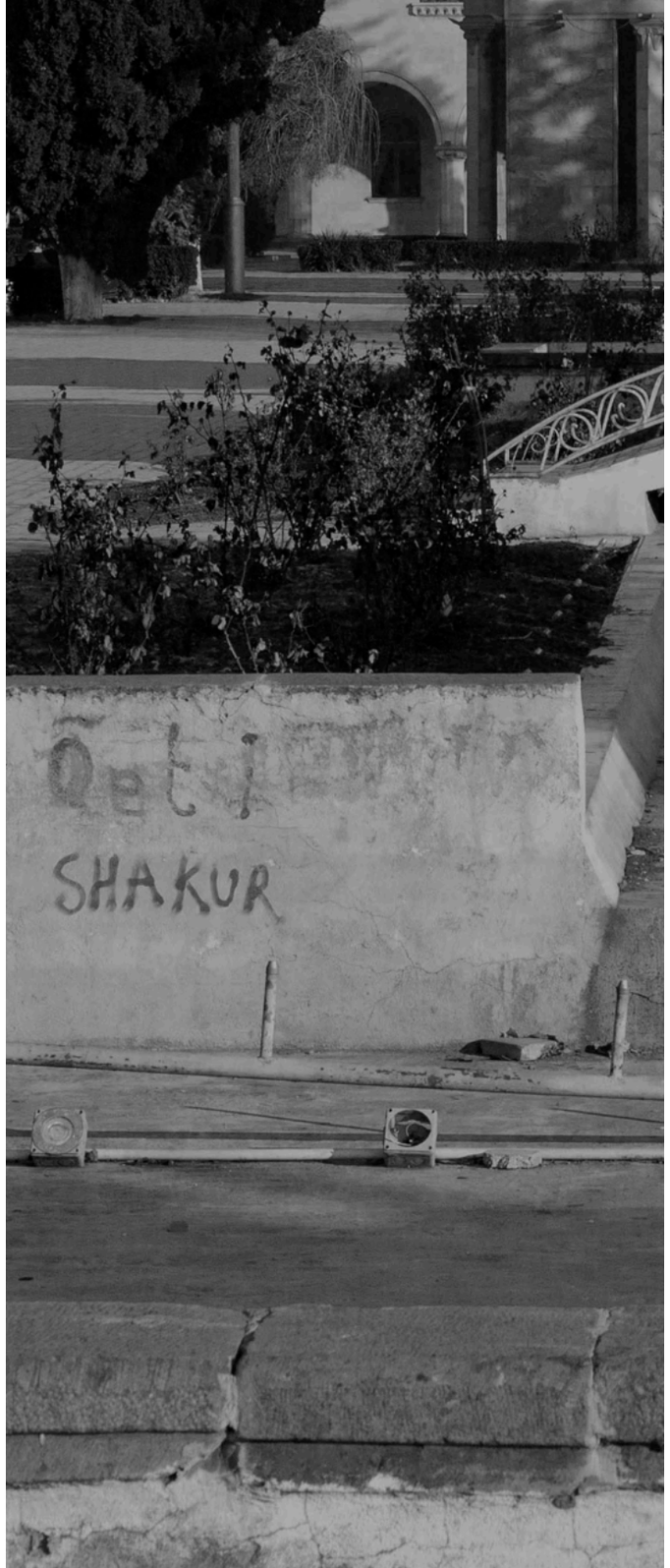
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Cover photograph by Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii, *View from the rear platform of the Simskaia Station of the Samara-Zlatoust Railway,* 1910.

Center photograph by Benjamin Arenstein



From the Editors

Dear Readers of *The Birch*,

We are excited to present our Spring 2018 issue of the journal! As interest in Eastern Europe and Eurasia continues to grow, we hope that the pieces in the journal will provide readers with a deeper understanding of the cultural and political issues pertaining to the region.

The pieces in literary criticism explore the use of Orientalist tropes in early nineteenth century Russian novels about identity formation (69), space and temporality in Moscow at the End of the Line (62), the picaresque genre of the same novel (78), and constructions of femininity in relation to theories of disgust in Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's literature (55).

In their creative works, contributors write about finding poetic meaning (97), baggage of emotional and physical sort (99), and love and friendship (100). This issue features translation work of poems by Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandelstam, and Eugene Yevtushenko, and an excerpt from a short story by Olga Isayeva. Also, the art and photography section features impressive original works that capture scenes from various regions.

Our culture section includes pieces on the politics of a film adaptation of a Georgian short story (40) and issues related to the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918 (46). Essays on politics discuss Russian expansion in the Pontic–Caspian steppe (8), the relationship between soviets and revolution in Russia and China in the early twentieth century (33), and the transmission of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* around the world (18).

We would like to thank the contributors to this issue and the editorial staff for their hard work. We hope you enjoy reading this edition of *The Birch*.

Seth Farkas and María Matilde Morales

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Photograph by Alexander Resnick

POLITICS



Russian Expansion on the Pontic Steppe: Transmutation, Concession, and Destruction

Luke Cregan

For hundreds of millions of years, the huge belt of the Eurasian steppe stretched from Manchuria to Moldavia, with only the Altai mountains to interrupt its arc across the continent. Archaeological evidence shows that these plains have served humans as home or as highway for millennia. Historians in Europe have recorded the long line of peoples arriving at the steppe's western terminus. First came the Iranians, but in the following centuries the Huns, Magyars, Turkic peoples, and Mongols all moved west. As each group coming from the east pushed its neighbor west, a dynamic emerged in which, when a nomadic people felt its existence threatened, it used the road-like nature of the steppe to move towards better conditions. However, when the Oirat Kalmyks arrived in the eighteenth century, they found that the steppe now terminated not at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, as it once had, but at lines of forts and river crossings guarded by Russian guns.[1] Between 1400 and 1800 Russian settlers had totally transformed the open, sparsely inhabited grassland into fields worked by peasants, protected by networks of walls.

In *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World,* Fernand Braudel describes the "vast history of nomadism," as one "at odds with the eternal opposition of the settled peasants; it has to overcome, or go round, or break through the barriers they set up, and often to yield before their silent advance."[2] The story of the Pontic Steppe in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries is the story of Muscovy's "silent advance." The Muscovite state made barriers not just for self-defense, but as the key tactic in a program of gradual colonization. Even as Moscow sought to impose its will on the steppe and its peoples, it was forced at first to make concessions. Moscow continued to use steppe practices like tribute payments, rather than implementing taxation, gave frontier settlers special privileges unrivaled in the interior, and allied itself to the semi-nomadic Cossacks. As the transformation progressed and Muscovy grew more powerful, it abandoned these concessions and enforced a more European system of taxation, serfdom, and agrarianism on the steppe's inhabitants. Meanwhile the growing network of walls transmuted the physical space of the steppe, destroying its openness and caging its inhabitants.

The Muscovites built their first defensive walls not to control the steppe, but out of a need to shield themselves from its masters, the Tatars. The earliest and weakest line marked the boundary of Muscovy's forested core, barely sufficient to protect Moscow and the other major settlements. At the beginning of the sixteenth century defenses began to creep forward from the woodland and swamps to better block the Tatar raiding trails leading to Moscow.[3] The Muscovites dug ditches across stretches of open ground and piled up earthen walls spotted with wooden forts and anti-cavalry fences. Huge raids, like one that reached Moscow itself in 1521, spurred these efforts, and by 1533 the western section of the line would be complete, with a new southeastern one soon to follow.[4] A hundred years later, with Moscow now well protected, Muscovy constructed a new barrier, the Belgorod line, tracing an eight-hundred-kilometer path through largely uninterrupted steppe.[5] Apart from its defensive purpose, the Belgorod line also let Moscow interfere with the politics of the Cossacks, Crimean Tatars, Ottomans, and steppe peoples to an extent that had previously been impossible. Muscovy continued to add extensions to the line, stretching it further south and east so that by the late seventeenth century its network of defenses reached the Caucasus,[6] the Urals, and the steppe north of the Caspian.[7]

1 Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 57.

2 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II, Volume 1* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 97.

3 Brian L. Davies, *Warfare, State and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500 – 1700* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 44; Judith Pallot and Denis J. B. Shaw, *Landscape and Settlement in Romanov Russia 1613 – 1917* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 16.

4 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 44-45.

5 Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500 – 1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 132; Denis J.B. Shaw, "Southern Frontiers of Muscovy, 1550-1700," in *Studies in Russian Historical Geography, Vol.1*, ed. James H. Bater and R.A. French (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 119.

6 Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 59.

7 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 158.

But the lines, while intended to keep out steppe peoples, did not cut Russia off from the world of the steppe. In defending itself, Moscow created a new frontier space, a borderland over which neither it nor its steppe opponents had complete control. This was especially true in the early period, when foreign wars and internal crises regularly undermined the power of the state. Acknowledging its inability to transform the steppe at a stroke, Muscovy adopted policies that took advantage of the area's ambivalence. Moscow partly conceded to the steppe and allowed certain similarities between steppe practices and its own to guarantee the success of gradual colonization. For instance, in the south, a system emerged, born out of military necessity, that encouraged and empowered small land holders at a time when serfdom was becoming the enforced norm elsewhere.

However, Muscovite rulers realized from the outset that walls and other changes to the natural landscape were not sufficient to fend off raiders, whose mobility and propensity to split into small groups of a hundred or so horsemen gave them an advantage over stationary defenses.[8] Troops were required, not only to garrison the lines' forts, but also to maintain them by keeping earthen walls from eroding and wood from rotting away.[9] These men needed food, and so grain agriculture and settled farming followed each step of the barriers' advance.[10] As Muscovite defenses crept south and east this process fundamentally changed the nature of the landscape and how it could be used. Forts blocked off river crossings and segments of open steppe and the agricultural settlements behind them denied pastoral peoples access to sites that had been open to them for centuries.[11] Military servitors arrived to take the place of previous inhabitants. These petty nobles brought with them the Muscovite military system, under which a certain number of peasant households supplied an individual servitor.[12] On the steppe, though, this required adjustment.

During the second half of the sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth, the khan of the Crimean Tatars could, with the goodwill of his nobles, summon every able-bodied man for a campaign. The law promised a death penalty for anyone who stayed at home illegally. The khans regularly mobilized forces of between 50,000 and 80,000 Crimean and Nogai Tatars. By contrast the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, often a victim of these raids, could maintain a border defense army of only a few thousand men spread over hundreds of kilometers of open, un-walled steppe.[13] Poland-Lithuania had to depend on the private forces of unreliable magnates and Cossacks to defend itself.[14]

Muscovy, with the object-lesson of Poland-Lithuania in mind, sought to put as much manpower along the Belgorod line as possible while still maintaining centralized control. To do this, Moscow adopted a policy that gave troops along the line a stake in the maintenance of the wall. Rather than transfer existing garrisons south, the government took advantage of decades of southward peasant flight by peasants, inviting them and other "free people" in the north to serve the tsar as garrison troops.[15] Poor relatives of servicemen and those who had lost servitor-status through their poverty sprang at the chance for land and employment. Close proximity, shared duty, similarly-sized portions of land, and tough farming conditions all did much to blur distinctions between different ranks of servicemen. As a result, these frontiersmen were recognized as a class of their own with special privileges and freedoms.[16]

The emergence of this class took place in stark contrast to the growing aristocratic estates in Muscovy's core. In fact, Muscovy took steps to support settlement of the line at the expense of the magnates. Throughout the middle of the seventeenth century (1637-1676), Muscovy published "Forbidden Town" decrees banning great nobles from planting estates on the new land protected by the garrison towns. In the 1640s, the military regularly blocked attempts to remand peasants who had fled to the line.[17] In 1649, Muscovy promulgated the *Ulozhenie* code which gave magnates extensive powers for recapturing their serfs, but the government hurried to prevent its application on the line.[18] In 1653, Moscow decreed that fugitive serfs who had enrolled in government service before 1649 were immune from any attempt to return them to their original estates.[19] Moscow's official leniency probably served to further encourage peasant flight, which it simultaneously used to its own advantage to create a large population in the south that was committed both to the tsar's service and to the defense of their new homes.

Muscovy adopted this same strategy with non-Russians it encountered on the frontier. Willard Sunderland explains that the tsars, the "supreme rulers of an agricultural empire," considered all land in the realm, and sometimes beyond it,[20] "their property," and therefore "a matter of royal prerogative."[21] But the Muscovite practice of taking and accepting *iasak,* or "tribute," shows an understanding that at first, at least,

8 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 21.
9 Ibid.
10 R.A. French, "The Early and Medieval Russian Town," in Bater and French, *Russian Historical Geography*, 265.
11 Pallot and Shaw, *Landscape and Settlement*, 18-19.
12 Shaw, Denis J.B. "Southern Frontiers," 127.
13 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 20-21.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 29.
17 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 87.
18 Brian J. Boeck, "Containment vs. colonization: Muscovite approaches to settling the steppe," in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, ed. Nicholas B. Breyfogle et al. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 47.
19 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 87.
20 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 61.
21 Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 28.

a different set of rules had to be applied to indigenous peoples and polities beyond the barriers. *Iasak* was in fact a Turkic institution, and the Golden Horde had once enforced *iasak* payment on Rus' principalities,[22] with Moscow itself continuing to give tribute to the Horde's Crimean successor until the late 1600s.[23] When the tables turned and the Slavs began to push into territories once ruled by Turks, Muscovy decided to adopt the practice. In the land that previously made up the Khanate of Kazan, Moscow made the indigenous peoples pay *iasak* in whatever goods they had traditionally produced, rather than immediately forcing serfdom and grain agriculture upon them. Despite the tsars' "prerogative," these communities continued their traditional ways of life for at least a century after the conquest with almost no interference from or interaction with royal officials.[24]

Where it could not assert direct rule, Moscow adopted a similar, if slightly altered strategy. In its interactions with steppe peoples beyond the lines, like the Nogai Tatars, Kazakhs, Kalmyks, and others, Moscow attempted to combine treaties of subjugation with the institution of *iasak* payments. However, during the seventeenth century, the steppe polities' official "subject status" was usually a fiction. Moscow asserted itself only through extensive bribes and manipulation of internal or dynastic politics.[25] The Muscovite practice of drawing up treaties granting it formal lordship over its southeastern neighbors demonstrated the tsars' imperial aspirations as they strove for a fuller prerogative. At the same time, the fact that Muscovy only won cooperation from its so-called subjects when it engaged in the game of steppe politics shows that on some level the state acknowledged the necessity of conceding to steppe traditions.

Muscovy's complex relationship with the Cossacks living to the south represented a similar sort of comprise. The Cossacks were groups of Slavic settlers who had adapted to the steppe, abandoning the agrarian lifestyles of their northern Muscovite brethren. Despite their differences, Moscow managed to develop a partnership with the Cossacks that was usually mutually beneficial.[26] For instance, from the late fifteenth century onwards, the Muscovite state hired individual Cossacks to serve as rangers, patrolling the steppe, hunting down squads of Tatars heading south after a raid, and, most importantly, relaying intelligence back to Moscow.[27] Though the Cossacks sometimes defied Muscovy, it progressively stepped up efforts at cooperation rather than cracking down on. According to Brian J. Boeck, from the beginning of the seventeenth century onwards Muscovite payments became a "pillar of Cossack subsistence" as they came to rely more and more on Moscow's money.[28]

Muscovy understood the value of employing the interstitial Cossacks, even when given the chance to assume more direct control. When a Cossack Host captured the Black Sea fortress of Azov from the Ottomans in 1637, they offered to hand it over to their northern benefactors. Moscow refused, calculating that it would be cheaper and more effective to maintain a policy in which the subsidized Cossacks fought the Crimean Tatars and Ottomans on their behalf, rather than garrison the area itself.[29] Moscow accepted the steppe-born practices of the Cossacks, and turned them to its own benefit, while slowly asserting more and more control as the century went on.

From the later part of the seventeenth century on, Muscovy turned away from its policy of concession and began to integrate the frontier lands along the Belgorod line into its core. By 1700 the edge of the state had been pushed hundreds of kilometers further south and east. Strategies emphasizing local autonomy, Cossack cooperation, and compromise with steppe peoples had served their purpose in defending the steppe and gradually extending Muscovite power. Now emerging as a Russian Empire under Tsar Peter I and Tsarina Catherine II, the state sought to transform its new lands into fields of grain crops farmed by peasants, the land use common throughout Europe. This meant that the forest-steppe region's interstitial nature, its status as a compromise between European and steppe traditions, would have to end.

A key step in the creation of this European space was the subjection of poor landholders along the frontier defenses, who had enjoyed privileges unparalleled in the rest of Muscovy, creating a more typical peasant-landholder dynamic. The "Forbidden Town" decrees were relaxed by the 1680s, allowing great lords to establish new southern estates.[30] The eighteenth century saw the arrival of great estates with thousands of peasants in areas previously that had, two centuries before, been occupied only by roaming steppe peoples and a handful of settled Slavs.[31] Along the Belgorod line itself, Muscovy rolled back the militarization and enfranchisement of small landholders. From the 1720s on, the frontiersmen encountered a set of restrictions on their movements and privileges as Moscow reclassified them as "state peasants."[32] For servicemen further east, the decline came even sooner, as they were subjected to progressively increasing taxation and restrictions through the second half of the seventeenth century. Brian L. Davies

22 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 63.
23 Alan Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978), 19.
24 Romaniello, *Elusive Empire*, 150-151.
25 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 66-67.
26 Boeck, "Containment vs. colonization," 43.
27 Brian J. Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries: Cossack Communities and Empire Building in the Age of Peter the Great* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 18; Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 56, 58.
28 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 21.
29 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 89-90.
30 Brian L. Davies, *State Power and Community in Early Modern Russia: The Case of Kozlov, 1635-1649* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 33.
31 Pallot and Shaw, *Landscape and Settlement*, 66.
32 Pallot and Shaw, *Landscape and Settlement*, 46.

notes that these soldiers' own effectiveness in protecting Moscow hastened their disenfranchisement. As they obsoleted themselves, Moscow looked to extract value from them in new ways that centered around agricultural labor.[33] Davies also points out that the resources generated by this "intense exploitation" were used to help the colonial project elsewhere.[34]

The same kind of degradation occurred in the former Kazan lands, where Muscovy made *iasak*-paying animists and Muslims of various cultures into grain-harvesting Russian serfs. To change the area into a European space, Moscow transformed not just the landscape, but the lives of those who had lived on it for centuries. Russians began to plant settlements on what had been the indigenous peoples' traditional lands, edging out the prior inhabitants. The tsar's officers forced Mordvins, who for centuries had lived as trappers and fishers in the northern forest to adopt grain agriculture in settlements the near the Belgorod line.[35] In the late eighteenth century, some were moved even further from their roots, into new settlements near Orenburg and the Southern Urals.[36] Moscow could do this because, after 1649, it stopped accepting *iasak* payments from many of the regions' indigenous peoples and worked towards categorizing them as "state peasants" as well.[37] Muscovy did its best to strip these people of their traditions and religion in order to integrate them into the realm not just as subjects, but as resources to fuel further expansion.[38]

In the eighteenth century, Moscow deployed its forts, walls, and settlements to block steppe peoples' access to traditional lands their pastoral system relied on. In 1718, a new Tsaritsyn line delineated the boundaries of Kalmyk land and cut the nomads off from their summer pastures. Another set of forts completed in 1762 put the Kalmyks within the crisscrossing defense network, guaranteeing that their movements would be subject to more and more Russian control.[39] Moscow had used such tactics before, against the Nogai Tatars, and would use them again to subdue the Bashkirs and Kazakhs, but only the Kalmyks chose flight *en masse* over submission.[40] Their exodus infuriated Tsarina Catherine II, who had intended to integrate these Buddhist herdsmen into her Orthodox, agricultural empire. As one frontier governor said in 1763, "wherever there is settled life, there is civil peace. By contrast, nomadic peoples will always be unreliable and ungovernable."[41] In January 1771, over 150,000 Kalmyks began their long eastward journey, through the lands of their Kazakh enemies, towards China, suffering incredible losses. In the aftermath, Moscow simply settled the lines that had forced out the Kalmyks, eliminated traditional Kalmyk institutions, including the position of khan, and encouraged the remaining fourth of the population to join the new agricultural settlements their kin had fled.[42]

Even Cossack autonomy fell victim to Russian expansion. The territory of the Don Cossacks was absorbed into the Russian state in 1696, and while they would maintain a distinct status within the empire, they became a weapon wielded by Moscow, rather than its partner.[43] The Zaporizhian Cossacks, who had also cooperated with Russia on the Pontic Steppe, lost their autonomous Host, the symbol of Cossack liberty.[44] In 1775 a Russian army destroyed the Host's fortified center at Khortytsia, scattered its Cossacks, and a Russian fort, planted nearby five years earlier, incorporated the settlement into the network of lines.[45]

With time, the meaning and purpose of those lines had shifted. The walls that had originally been simply defenses against powerful raiders, capable of depopulating swathes of the frontier with a single attack, took on an offensive role.[46] As Moscow's power grew, it quickly constructed lines that served not just for defense, but as agents of imperial expansion, colonization, and assimilation. Each new line through the steppe marked the boundary between Russia's developing European space and what contemporary Russians and modern scholars have called the "sea" of fields that lay beyond, filled with people of different religions, cultures, and ways of life from those seen in Europe.[47] Each new line and the land near it on each side represented an interstitial space, a borderland.

But the abatis, earthen mounds, redoubts, and river fortresses were themselves part of the Europeanization. Muscovite defensive lines forbade the free movement pastoralists and raiders relied on while simultaneously enabling and encouraging settled agriculture. While the steppe peoples did have stationary agrarian practices and permanent settlements, the Kalmyk, Nogai Tatar, and Kazakh ways of life were defined by raiding, free migration, and transhumance. As new, outer barriers were built, small landholders declined in status and were joined by great landholders with many serfs until the relative autonomy of frontier life was abolished.

The steppe peoples recognized the transformative power of the Russian fort. They often attacked new fortifications, or

33 Davies, *Case of Kozlov*, 246-247.
34 Ibid., 248.
35 Romaniello, *Elusive Empire*, 148.
36 Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 76, 114.
37 Romaniello, *Elusive Empire*, 173-174
38 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 158, 195.
39 Ibid., 141.
40 Ibid., 123, 158-159, 168; Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 46.
41 Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 62.
42 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 142, 144, 146.
43 Boeck, *Imperial Boundaries*, 127.
44 Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 199-200.
45 Paul R. Magocsi, *A History of Ukraine: The Land and Its Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 284-285; "Zaporizhia," 2016.
For similar instances of forts built near Cossack centers see Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 33, 59.
46 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 130; Davies, *Warfare, State and Society*, 66.
47 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 29; Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea* (London: Cape, 1995), 18.

pleaded with the Russians to raze them themselves. When Russia tried to restrict the Kazakh's access to pastures on west bank of the Yaik river, the nomads replied "The grass and water belong to Heaven, and why should we pay any fees?" Their answer echoed almost exactly a Kalmyk chief's response to Russian claims on the Caspian steppe a century earlier.[48] The same Kalmyks would, a few decades later, make what one leader described as a choice between "the burden of slavery; or [leaving] Russia and … [ending] all misfortunes."[49]

The Russians, meanwhile, understood their interactions with these steppe groups as part of a civilizing mission. The commander of a new fort facing the Kalmyks near the Volga saw it as his duty to persuade the Kalmyks "toward the plow and the Russian way."[50] Khodarkovsky tells how in 1763 the governor of Orenburg dismissed the Kazakh khan's entreaties by explaining Russian greatness: "the almighty force of civilization at the hands of the emperor was such that it could transform nature… through the wisdom of the grand sovereigns and the obedience of their subjects… the winters are turned into summers, and summers into winters."[51] These notions were coupled with a deep seated belief that Russian "civilization" was superior and that the steppe peoples were fundamentally "barbarian" and "ungovernable."[52] To Catherine's credit, she wished to see the change "from wanderers into sedentary settlers" take place voluntarily, but her state's coercive policies undermined, if not eliminated, the potential for real consent to these changes, motivated neither by economic or military duress.[53]

From the end of the seventeenth century onward, Russian rulers clearly conceived of their colonial project as their own iteration of the expansion England, Spain, the Dutch Republic, and other imperial powers were undertaking across the globe.[54] Those powers also generally understood their expansion as bringing positive change, correct religion, and the wonders of "civilization." They conceived of their colonization as reformative, or transformative. In praise of Catherine, one Russian wrote, "she speaks, and the fruitless deserts are transformed into a garden." In this praise, he displayed the common attitude that the steppe was "empty," not just uncultivated but unpeopled.[55] But modern scholars like Sunderland, Khodarkovsky, and Matthew P. Romaniello have helped reveal the deep destructiveness of Russia's march across the steppe.

It was the advancing Slavs who created an empty space, not the steppe people they forced before them. The Belgorod line, and those that came after it, created emptiness by forbidding pastoralists access to land the Russians had barely settled and would not fully settle for generations.[56] The famous criticism of empire given in Tacitus' *Agricola* seems particularly true here: "They make it a desert and call it peace."[57] The defensive lines, the best weapon in the imperial arsenal, ended a way of life that had been native to the Pontic Steppe since prehistory. Moscow's colonial mission, relying on the walls to project power and to create what Romaniello called "a massive intrusion" into native life, could then reduce or destroy the traditional religion, society, and customs of the steppe.[58] The advance of Russia's vast agrarian empire transmuted the land it acquired. It fundamentally changed the purpose and use of the steppe, and in doing so, destroyed the Pontic Steppe as it had existed for millennia.

48 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 216.
49 Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 57.
50 Ibid., 49.
51 Khodarkovsky, *Steppe Frontier*, 171.
52 Sunderland, *Wild Field*, 62-63.
53 Ibid., 64, 79.
54 Ibid., 41, 46, 78, 211.
55 Ibid., 71, 94.
56 Shaw, Denis J.B. "Southern Frontiers," 129; Davies, *Case of Kozlov*, 32; French, "Russian Town," 260.
57 Tacitus, *Agricola*, Ch. 30.
58 Romaniello, *Elusive Empire*, 44.

How *Doctor Zhivago* Made Its Way Around the World

Mishel Kondi

On an April day in 1956, Sergio D'Angelo, an Italian communist working at Radio Moscow reading the cultural news came across the name of Boris Pasternak, and the name of a promising book he would soon publish—*Doctor Zhivago.* D'Angelo's job had been to pay keen attention to Russian literature and bring some works for a new publishing house in Milan, established by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, a member of the Italian Communist Party. D' Angelo was very eager to get the right to a famous Russian poet's first novel, giving the publishing house a great name while benefitting his own career as well. D'Angelo quickly contacted colleagues at Radio Moscow and planned a meeting with Pasternak. After their first interaction, Pasternak expressed his wish of having the novel make its way around the world.

Doctor Zhivago certainly made its way around the world, winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1958. While published in Milan in 1957, the book continues to inspire further examination of the contexts surrounding its birth.[1] In 2009, a Russian journalist and broadcaster, Ivan Tolstoy, published *The Laundered Novel: Doctor Zhivago between the KGB and the CIA,* suggesting that CIA's involvement and interest in *Doctor Zhivago* ensured that Pasternak was awarded the Nobel Prize.[2]

1 Sergio D'Angelo, *Sergio d'Angelo Papers* (Hoover Institution Archives, 2014), 3. This source was referenced in Peter Finn and Petra Couvée, *The Zhivago Affair* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2014), 3.

2 Michael Scammell, "The CIA 'Zhivago,'" *The New York Review of Books,* 10 Jul., 2014.

This theory has been questioned since and inspired extensive reporting about the US government's hand in the awarding of the prize. After having kept quiet for over half a century, in 2014, the CIA declassified 99 documents about its involvement with *Doctor Zhivago.* The documents suggest that rather than impacting the decision of the Nobel Committee, the CIA was interested in "soft" propaganda and making the work available for audiences in the West, but also Russian speakers, often émigrés.[3] The hostile approach the Soviet Union took towards the novel enabled a wide readership in the West, and made the novel an international bestseller when otherwise the elites within the state would have been the primary readership. Because of the appeal of the novel, in 1965 David Lean produced a film based on it, which is an important production of Hollywood. The book became a political tool wherever it travelled; the United States government, certainly made use of the human rights 'agenda' for criticizing the Soviet government, and saw this as an opportunity to 'score' ideological points in the context of the Cold War.[4] While *Doctor Zhivago* does not prove to have been a Western CIA plot, it nonetheless demonstrates how stereotypes undercut a Western understanding of the actual nuances of Pasternak's work. The manner in which *Doctor Zhivago* has been treated by Western media, particularly in the United States and Great Britain, comes to suggest how different interest groups use art or critiques of art to further the status quo that hold the power balances as they are.

In the Soviet Union, Communism's strict dogmas permeated most of the social and economic institutions, including art, which is required to serve the 'communist project.' In the early years of the USSR, the 'project' was truly utopian, led by people such as Mayakovsky who wanted to get rid of everything related to the past. As the revolutionaries became the establishment, they began to emphasize 'socialist realism', a very formalistic, representational form of art that renounced symbolism and demanded a rather direct portrayal of core communist values and ideas.[5] So, people such as Pasternak, Brodsky, Mandelstam and others, were both symbolic in their methods, but also to a certain level challenging the official dogmas. Because their symbols raised uncomfortable questions, not regarding socialism, as much as whether the Soviet government, were staying true to the ideology, they usually faced repression of one form or another.

Pasternak himself was very aware of the dangers of publishing the book outside the permission of the party, as evidencing

3 Finn and Couvée, *The Zhivago Affair,* 21.

4 The American Civil Rights movement was able to use this fact to put further pressure on the American government to live up to its own standards.

5 Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People's Republic of China*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 306.

when he said, "You are hereby invited to my execution,"[6] to D'Angelo when he handed over the manuscript.

The book is a product of various literary and political influences that affected Russian society. Because of its overall lack of contact with Russian thinkers and writers who did not identify fully with the political line of the Bolshevik party, the West received the book on a golden platter.[7] In response, the Western media and film industry took advantage of the historic moment and created a narrative which then was imposed on the book, one that left the nuances of the intricacies within Russian society get lost amidst the functional stereotypes that 'other-ized' everyone who did not support the status quo. In order to understand Russia in all its complexity, and the ways in which the narrative gradually became more and more simplified, I will begin by looking at Pasternak's understanding of the social circumstances. Vladislav Zubok has contributed a notable piece on this, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia.* He considered Pasternak to have been one of the last members of the Russian intelligentsia. Zubok shows how the Soviet intelligentsia also adapts simply what they want from Pasternak, ignoring aspects they do not understand or find useful. Zubok argues that above and beyond literature, the role of theater, film, new journalism, television and the scientific community embody the tradition of the intelligentsia. However, in the face of increasing Party control, the intelligentsia became an increasingly disenchanted dissident.

The next section of the paper will focus on newspaper articles from the United States and Great Britain and how the book was portrayed in the press, where one begins to witness a narrative that excludes vital nuances. The third section will focus on the hit Hollywood film of 1965, which primarily focuses on the book's love story, hence further simplifying the dynamics of *Doctor Zhivago*. The sections in conjunction come to show how culture was transmitted over Cold War borders, and that culture was a realm of contestation even against the intent of the author.

An Essay in Autobiography

In analyzing Pasternak's writings, it becomes clear that *Doctor Zhivago* is a continuation of his ideas about Russian society and human nature at large. The Pasternak family was a wealthy assimilated Ukrainian Jewish family that was part of the creative milieu of Moscow.[8] While brought up in this socio-economically privileged household, Boris himself was sympathetic to the Bolshevik Revolution and wanted to see the end of the corrupt tsarist reign. In many ways, he considered himself an ally of the people, and of those suffering, however, his understanding of suffering was from a distance. He was not part of the chaos of the streets, but rather he watched these events unravel from the comfort of his house. This is not to undermine his own personal suffering. He last met his family in 1923 who had departed from Russia and lived in Germany.[9] After personally returning to Moscow, he was never able to meet them again. Throughout his life, he lost numerous close friends, and these miseries drove him nearly to the fatal decision of committing suicide. This background serves as a reminder that his experience of the changes occurring in Russia and the Bolshevik Revolution was not quite the same as that of most Russians, who felt greater material and educational restrains.

The revolution represented a leap into the unknown, and this gave hope to Pasternak for the creation of a 'New Russia.' However, as Russia descended into the chaos of the civil war, he came to understand the terrorizing aspects in which the various of 'utopia(s)' that were envisioned during the years of the revolutions—1904 and 1917—came to battle one another and were distorted in their manifestation. In being asked to sign letters that implicated other writers in anti-regime work, he stated, "Nobody gave me the power of life and death over other people."[10]

In having been raised among influential members of the Russian intelligentsia, Pasternak's personal vision of a utopia equated to a Russia in which there was freedom for individual creativity, sources of non-state support for intellectual and artistic undertaking, and opportunities for civil discourse; components which the Bolshevik rulers would come to destroy in their journey of consolidating power.

Boris recalls the atmosphere in Russia during the First World War, and the filth of the trenches as he slowly transitions his narrative to the time of the Bolshevik revolution. Amidst the turmoil he states with concern that, "the college of art was also threatened," and their own home guard had to be on duty at night.[11] This signals the status of his family, the Russia that was being given a voice, or at least the Russia the Bolshevik pamphlets were targeting, did not have the resources and means to guard themselves from street chaos. In fact, that Russia was in the streets. The violence all around greatly had influenced Boris. He mentions in this essay some of the paintings of his father, and amongst the most significant is this young girl who was wounded and, "supporting herself against a pillar, goes on speaking; dragoons are charging the crowd and shooting at her."[12] It is a powerful image on multiple levels. His father was capturing the physical aggressiveness of the fight for a new Russia. Additionally, in this piece, the spotlight was given to heroic young women who were revolutionaries rather than focusing merely on the role of men. Pasternak acknowledges that the work of his parents, and the circle to which he

6 Finn and Couvée, *The Zhivago Affair,* 13.

7 Due to language restrictions, the West is defined for the purposes of this paper as the United States and Great Britain.

8 Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 5.

9 Ibid,, 3.

10 Ibid., 8.

11 Boris Pasternak, *Poems 1955-1959,* 19.

12 Ibid.

belonged due to family friendships serves as a basis for the making of his own world outlook. For that reason, the images produced by his father, with which he interacted and used to translate the act of the revolution, were fundamental to his understanding of the complicated social changes. The influence of his father can be seen in Boris's poetry. While his father was a painter, Boris was a poet who completed the same task through words. His first poems *Venice,* and *The Railway Station,* both rely on description of the scenes in order to convey their message. Of course, Pasternak was educated in the West and the lines of thought, and the artistic influence from the west also played a major role in his upbringing. Pasternak's own deconstruction of significant memories from his past reveal that his views on the changes developing in Russia are a product of his artistic talents and his socio-economical position in Russian society. Hence, as a member of the Russian intelligentsia, he supported the revolutions and admired the opportunity for change, but simultaneously he wished to see a Russian government that would allow creativity. Pasternak is writing with a narrative and intent that glorifies pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsia.

Prior to delving into some of his most constructive commentary of the paper *Lef,* it is worth examining Pasternak's views on literature as described by him through this essay in 1954. First and foremost, he seemed to be genuinely self-critical and not willing to allow the popularity of his name to influence his ability to be honest about his abilities, or perhaps that is the way in which he portrays himself. The manner in which he comes to define literature is:

> a world of rhetoric, triteness, rounded phrases and respectable names, of those who have observed real life when they were young but who, once they have achieved fame, confine themselves to abstractions, to rehashing and to cautious common sense. Whenever, in this kingdom in which artificiality is so established that it goes unnoticed, anyone opens his mouth not out of a taste for verbal elegance but because he knows a thing and wants to say it, the result is upheaval, as if the doors had been flung open and let in the noises of the street; not as if the speaker were reporting on events in town but as if the town itself were giving notice of its presence through its lips.[13]

This commentary on literature and literary work seems to reflect discontent with the world of his artistic realm. The last sentence highlights, and perhaps was directed towards both Russian writers and the bureaucracy, that after all, the works of literature are not creating the environment, but merely describing it, recording it, making sense of it.

In establishing his own political identity, Pasternak describes his relationship with another prominent Russian poet – Mayakovsky. He states that the two belonged in rival futurist groups. He argues that he never had a close friendship with Mayakovsky, and that in fact Mayakovsky had exaggerated it, and his judgments of Pasternak's work were distorted.[14] Pasternak, initially a contributor to *Lef,* a paper Mayakovsky and a number of other Socialist Revolutionaries also contributed to, decided to withdraw from it and developed a new and very critical outlook. He also initially considered himself a Socialist Revolutionary, however he would also withdraw from identifying with the group. He considers the art presented in *Lef* to be "pseudo art… mechanical, uncreative, ruined by editorial corrections made to fit the times—was never worth the care and effort spent on it and could easily have been spared."[15] Because of the aforementioned critiques provided by Pasternak, it seems that again, while he belonged to the Russian intelligentsia, he very much saw himself as part of the revolution and in full support of it. But he was displeased with the avant-garde art of the 1920s. He did not seem to agree with the direction that the revolution was taking and the Bolshevik agenda. He saw how heavily art was being carved to fit the Bolshevik agenda by Lenin and others who considered themselves part of the Bolshevik party, and did not support the limitation of the creative mind.

Pasternak had hoped that after the revolution, Russia would join the rest of the democratic countries in the west. His description of the sufferings during the First World War and the filthy trenches show his frustration with the Provisional Government. While he recognized that the Provisional Government was ineffective, and he believed that the authorities were corrupted, his vision for a future Russia aligned more strongly with a reformed Provisional Government than what was being formed under Lenin's leadership. Overall, Pasternak very much holds the ground of the intelligentsia, in that, while he envisioned a new Russia, he was not necessarily listening to the masses—which he saw as poor and uneducated, easily manipulated. This context provides a better understanding for the work *Doctor Zhivago.*

In the Western presentation of the work, at the height of the Cold War, it is concerning that much of the dynamics that were at play during these years in Russia are simply silenced. As will be demonstrated below, the Western reception of the book makes nothing of the various interest groups and different visions of utopia that circulated the streets of Petrograd—the violence, the hope born in light of the Revolution—which all contributed to the philosophies presented in *Doctor Zhivago*. Due to the aforementioned reasons, Pasternak's intention was to write a work he felt represented his genuine position and outlook of the trajectory Russian history had taken. The work does not fall under the binary categories of communist or anti-communist, the intent certainly was critical of some of the Russian literary and political circumstances. It was a thoughtful critique, not blatant propaganda. But it is a complicated history and Pasternak's own position and thoughts undergo great changes. The work draws from a long history of Russian literature. It makes connections to the writings of Tolstoy and other

13 Ibid., 20.

14 Ibid., 43.

15 Ibid., 49.

Russian authors. He particularly alludes to the Tolstoian narrative structure by using the same train station, and that is where his main character, Yurii dies.

Exploring papers written by Pasternak gives useful insight to who the author was and what motivated Boris to write this work and to why he wanted it to make a trip around the world; it is important to understand what Pasternak wished his work to be and compare this to how the West interpreted it.

Pasternak as Seen Through the Western Press (1950s-60s) (U.S. and U.K)

This section will serve as a survey of various news articles written during the years that the book was published in the United States and in the United Kingdom. Through these articles it becomes clear that a narrative motivated by political interests and general lack of knowledge was imposed upon Pasternak's work.

In 1958, *The Washington Post,* published an article titled, "'Doctor Zhivago': A Probing of Red Russia's Very Soul: Doctor Zhivago." In discussion the author of the book, Chalmers includes a quote from Pasternak:

> It was then that untruth came down on out land of Russia. The main misfortune, the root of all the evil to come, was the loss of confidence in the value of one's own opinion. People imagined that it was out of date to follow their own moral sense, they must all sing in chorus, and live by other people's notions that were being crammed down everybody's throat. And then there arose the power of the glittering phrase, first the Czarist, then the revolutionary.[16]

It relates to the aforementioned idea Pasternak posed about literature, and the overall disappointment with the ways in which literature was being created and used. More importantly, however, is the question of what Chalmers is suggesting about the revolution. Chalmers points out that Pasternak wrote this quote after the First World War, however, he provided different quotes from varies writings and time periods that can be misleading when used in news articles. Pasternak truly condemned the violence brought upon Russia and he retrospectively realized that he was disillusioned with the Bolsheviks, for they had not continued what was promised. But, he also did not choose to stay with his family in Germany and returned to Russia in 1923. By this point, the Bolsheviks had taken power, and he was inspired to contribute to the efforts of making a 'New Russia.' By including this quote, it appears to critique the collectivist impulse of the Revolution while serving as a celebration of the individual hero. This strategic selection of quotes instead, paints Pasternak as anti-Bolshevik. This might hold some truth, because at least at a certain point Pasternak had lost trust in the party, but this was not a constant line of thinking for him, and the book delves into various issues facing Russian society and

16 Chalmers M. Roberts, "*Doctor Zhivago*: A Probing of Red Russia's Very Soul: Doctor Zhivago," *The Washington Post,* September 7, 1958.

human nature at large. At the very last paragraph Chalmers does caution one to consider that despite the quotes he has provided, *Doctor Zhivago* is not a book of polemics, and that there are compelling stories of love, family, and hunger. However, the context he provides for the book promotes a story that would sell, given the emotions and fears surrounding American society during the Cold War, rather than provide a wholesome image of Pasternak. Nevertheless, this acknowledgement that this is not a book of polemics shows that this article does more justice than others written at the time.

On September 7th, 1958, the *New York Times* published an article titled, "But Man's Free Spirit Still Abides," that takes into consideration Pasternak's background and his formation in the Western tradition of the Russian intelligentsia.[17] It provides background for Pasternak and his experience as a writer in Russia spanning from the time his name became prominent through poetry to the time communist bureaucrats silenced him as "a decadent formalist and an enemy of the people."[18] The author, Marc Slonim, concludes that what saved Pasternak from persecution was his shared Georgian heritage with Stalin. He writes:

> This vast epic of about 200,000 words has varied layers of narrative. Chronologically it encompasses three generations and gives a vivid picture of Russian life during the first quarter of our century…it is primarily a chronicle of Russian intellectuals, but it contains some sixty characters from all walks of society. All form part of a complex plot.[19]

This commentary demonstrates significant understanding of Russian history, the complexities of life, and the variation in experiences people of different social and ethnic groups faced. While news articles from the Cold War period often displayed a binary narrative that depended on "us versus them" rhetoric, this article seems to validate the multifaceted struggles Doctor Zhivago's characters and, by extension, the people in Russia were facing.

Nevertheless, in the following page Slonim goes on to express his general surprise towards Pasternak's imaginative capabilities despite external pressures and considers the work to be a miracle. This carries two important implications. One, artists and their abilities are generally products of the socio-political currents in a given socio-temporal context. The second implication is Slonim's belief that creativity in Russia was not merely silenced, but dead.

By considering Pasternak's critical outlooks on the Soviet system a miracle, Slonim is playing into the Bolshevik message that there is only one unified perspective most Russians accept as the 'appropriate' narrative of the October Revolution and the Civil War. However, Pasternak's disillusionments were not alien to Russian thought. For instance, before the death of Zhivago, Pasternak wrote of history, "Leaves and trees change during the cycle of seasons

17 Marc Slonim, "But Man's Free Spirit Still Abides," *New York Times*, Sep 07, 1958.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.

in a forest, but the forest itself remains the same—and so does history with its basic immobility beneath all external changes."[20] Pasternak was refuting the Marxist understanding of history as linear and expressing in a sense the disillusionment with post-revolution politics.[21] This sentiment was not a "miracle." This sentiment can be traced back to the factions that overthrew the Provisional Government during the October Revolution, and then again that fought a Civil War over their very different moral economies and visions of what Russia should have become. However, perhaps the courage and ability to write of these sentiments in such eloquence is telling of Pasternak's talents as well as his aforementioned background. This book review is very useful, because Slonim is considerate of the various layers of complexity that influenced Russian history and literature. Additionally, while it glorifies Pasternak and the book, it makes his critiques seem unheard of and disengages the conversations and internal tensions in Russia. Slonim's article was not totally well-received, with responses indicating that popular opinion at large had become unwilling to accept towards works that, in fact, reflected greater understanding of Russian realities at the time.

In France, by January 1959, *Doctor Zhivago* had sold 300,000 copies.[22] This was the most sold book of the time, even Camus fell short of that number. The work received great attention throughout the West, attention that can be credited to the role of the press. There are numerous advertisements that appeared during 1958 and while they accepted that the translated versions of the book had much room for improvement. Nevertheless, without newspapers acting as the echo chambers for its greatness, the work would have merely remained accessible to an elite readership.

In 1966, *The Times* highlighted the debate over the appointment of a Russian America—in the Department of Defense. The article mentions how right wing US newspapers claimed that the appointment was a security risk. Most curiously, the article says how in his defense, the officer stated, "both his parents, who were not even socialists, had outstanding anti-communist records. His mother introduced Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, an anti-communist novel, to the American public."[23] This statement raises the question of what constituted an excellent anti-communist record, and it displays how identification relied on a "us versus them" mentality. It also connects to the question of what was anti-communist and whether *Doctor Zhivago* was really anti-communist. For some, it was. However, the novel provided a more critical perspective towards the post-revolutionary track Russian politics took and it alluded to religious messages that were not approved by the Communist Party. This article shows that the novel *Zhivago* was used in the United States as propaganda against communism, and as a triumphant work within Russia that would help identify who was worth trusting and who belonged to the "other side." Those who shared a positive consideration for the novel, and particularly if they were of Russian descent, were by extension considered anti-communist. This identification of *Doctor Zhivago* as something within the Soviet Union that aligned with "us," was an overarching sentiment throughout media publications in the U.S. and the U.K. *The Illustrated London News,* under the section of "Notes for the Novel-Reader," captures this reality is a simple sentence, "Let me say at once that we are bound to feel '*Doctor Zhivago*' is on our side."[24] This article shortly gave a brief introduction to the main character and it only delved into the theme of individuality in the novel—which is not surprising given that in the first few sentences it informs the reader that this is a work that can be trusted because it holds our truths. An important reality comes to surface through this message—one of the reasons the Western media was invested in advertising the work is because, it saw in it characteristics that spoke to its own beliefs. In other words, legitimacy is given and respect is paid to what resembles the self.

The Movie Doctor Zhivago and How it was Portrayed in the Media

Doctor Zhivago was adapted in 1965 for the screen by film director David Lean. The movie became a major hit and to this day, in the United States, it remains one of the highest grossing films of all time.[25] The movie was set in Russia between the years prior to World War I and the Russian Civil War. While in the background some events from the aforementioned time period developed—protests, the trenches and fighting against the Germans, the overthrow of the czar—the focus of the plot was mainly on the love story between Yurii and Lara.[26] More simply put, in this film, the book had been reduced to a love story. The image of Russia presented in this film was manipulative and artificial."[27] The movie was not even filmed in Russia, but Spain. In the book, the revolution and the streets of Moscow served as the catalyst for character development; whereas in the movie, both transformed into the backdrop. The ending poems in the novel are very key to understanding the main character, and the state of Russia during the post revolution period. The movie merely mentioned the poems, but more is made of them. Nevertheless, the film is an important platform through which to better grasp Western reception of the book.

Harlow Robinson is a historian who

20 Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (Pantheon Books: New York, 1991), 453.
21 Slonim, "But Man's Free Spirit Still Abides."
22 "Success in France of 'Dr. Zhivago'," *Times*, 23 Jan. 1959: 9.
23 "U.S. Security Post for Man Under Right-Wing Fire," *Times*, 27 Oct. 1965: 8.
24 "Notes for the Novel-Reader," *Illustrated London News,* 11 Oct. 1958, 620.
25 Paul Schrodt, "The 10 Highest-Grossing Movies of All Time – There's One Movie that Beats 'Star Wars,'" *Business Insider,* Dec. 16, 2015.
26 *Doctor Zhivago,* directed by David Lean (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1965), DVD (2006).
27 Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood*, 5.

capitalizes on the influence of Hollywood in public opinion, and who argues that the men who ran Hollywood were some of the most successful capitalists that our system had ever produced. For Robinson, the story is much more complicated due to the presence of Russian émigrés—some of whom were pro-Soviet and some of whom were anti-Soviet in their political and ideological leanings. Films can be used as a "reliable barometer of social attitudes," and in order to attract a wide audience, the value system presented cannot conflict greatly with that of the audiences.[28] Although Hollywood has employed members of some minority groups, their roles have consistently been subjected to stereotyping. The stereotypes act as a reassurance of the shared "superiority" of the film makers in relation to the audience, and they are powerful in conveying the sentiment of "other-ization." Due to the general lack of knowledge of Russia, stereotypes were easily accepted by the public.[29] Robinson goes on to argue that Hollywood, the medium of the cinema grew from lower-class broad audience, not an elitist one, because that's who the movies were being made for and who bought tickets to watch them. He states, "The cinematically constructed Russia of angelic Lara and handsome Yuri and brooding Strelnikov and evil Komarovsy—full of waltzes, wars, gigantic hydroelectric dams, endless train trips, ice palaces, flowering Siberian fields, and *humorless* revolutionaries equipped with dramatic facial scar—seduced me utterly and forever."[30] For many, the film humanized Russia, in that it gave a broad audience characters with whom to establish a connection. The absence of reliable alternate information about the Soviet Union meant that the image of the country presented by Hollywood would be powerful in shaping public opinion. Because of the dynamics of the Cold War, and the fear of the "others," Russia occupied an unusual position in the American psyche.[31] This meant that productions which were interpreting the country that was feared, were bound to assemble large audiences and sell, which *Doctor Zhivago* did. By extension, in an atmosphere of fear and general lack of knowledge, films served as handbooks of social behavior, because through the overly simplified narrative, Hollywood was determining the course of discourse in the public realm.[32]

The movie received an overwhelmingly positive review. However, in 1966, *The Illustrated London News* critiqued its inability to represent the novel. The article stated, "Mr. Lean over and over again gives us the impression that he grows impatient with the scenario's complexities and turns for relief—to the distractions of the scenery."[33]

28 Harlow Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians – Biography of an Image* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2007), 5.
29 Ibid., 6.
30 Ibid., 5.
31 Ibid.
32 Gavin Lambert, *Nazimova: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 231.
33 Alan Dent, "Prodidious Noble Wild Prospects," *Illustrated London News,* 7 May 1966, 40.

While there was variety in the responses to the film, its ability to sell and secure various nominations and awards is due to Lean's and Bolt's respectful names in the sphere of cinematography, the public interest in the adaptation of the famous banned novel, and successful advertising. It is important to highlight however, that most reviews did not point to the film's disregard for some of the most important themes of the novel—among others, duplicity, duality, coexisting paradoxes, overcoming existential crisis, nature and history. Hence, the visual interpretation of *Doctor Zhivago* did not convey some of the most important characteristics of the novel. It relied mainly on the romantic developments, and yet, managed to both make the 'anti-Communist' novel more accessible to a wider range of audiences, greatly simplified Russian history between World War I and its Civil War, and generate a considerable amount of wealth, all while relying on inaccurate images of Russia and the Russian populace.

Conclusion

The changes depicted in *Doctor Zhivago* reflect the course and chronology of Pasternak's personal disillusionment and awareness of historical developments in Russia, from the time of his childhood to the time the book was published. Pasternak regretted the subversion of the revolution by politics and the rigidity and terror that dominated the atmosphere after the Civil War. Pasternak was part of what Zubok considers the last of the Russian intelligentsia. The Russian intelligentsia and the Bolsheviks had their departures in terms of political beliefs. The Bolsheviks would go so far as to consider the members of the intelligentsia to be a dangerous class and capable of manipulating public opinion, hence the relationship between the two groups was complicated and often led to different forms of compromises.[34] But, his views cannot be understood in a binary of communist or anti-communist. He is a product of complicated dynamics within Russian society and his views reflect multiple actors influencing history.

In 1958, whether in the United States or the United Kingdom, newspaper articles were promoting the book. However, these articles were mostly focusing on the phenomenon of having a Russian author publish a book that carries unaccepted sentiments from the Communist Party, and considering it to be a sign of hope that creativity had not died in the Soviet Union. What their rhetoric suggests is that there was not any meaningful level of understanding of life within the Soviet Union, nor did it seem as though there was an interest beyond the point of finding anti-communist signs. In fact, in categorizing it as so, a lot of useful nuances are lost. Looking at the media portrayals of the work, it is worth reiterating that there is a difference between book reviews in more conservative outlets

34 Pasternak, *The Voice of Prose,* ed. Christopher Barnes (Grove Press: New York, 1986), 19.

and outlets more widely known as liberal. Even within Western press, there are different levels of a simplified narrative that come at play.

Furthermore, looking at the movie produced in 1965, one is taken away by the beautiful imagery and performance of the actors. However, the movie is not even filmed in a setting close to Russia, and while the love story is an important part of the novel, because it is a statement about human relations and human emotions, and consciousness, it is misleading to transform *Doctor Zhivago* to a romantic story. However, as Robinson states, "No wonder Vladimir Ilych Lenin, scheming godfather of the USSR, had once called the cinema 'the most important of the arts.' For it conveys the illusion of reality like no other medium ever invented."[35] This is a powerful reminder, and it is a truth carried beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. The film industry plays a significant role in influencing public opinion, whether in the Soviet Union or in the West. In the West, the power of the moving image belonged to few wealthy men who were happy to employ ethnic minorities so long as they played the narrative that supported the existing power relations.

Looking at contemporary Russia and contemporary United States and United Kingdom, the political circumstances have changed. While Russia is certainly not a democracy, it is no longer under the rule of the Communist Party, and the United States and United Kingdom are being swept by populist movements that are threatening to democracy. Putin is interested in being in power, and he did not seem at first to have any direct interest in the sphere of the arts. Merely because he wanted to avoid anything that would be divisive—this can be seen in his unwillingness to address the 100th anniversary of the October Revolution.[36] However, that changed in 2012, as he faced a major protest movement that was both political and aesthetic. A lot of people hoped for a future that would bring Russia closer to Europe and for them Putin represented a different direction. During this time, many took to the streets to protest against rigged elections. The opposition movement had a strong artistic component. However, the radicalness and modernity of it allowed Putin and his supporters to push back by appealing to the sentiment that most 'ordinary' Russians considered the opposition's approach far from appropriate or pleasing. This is an interesting contrast because, Pasternak's years represented a time Russia was trying to leave its past behind and apply all that was radical and new; whereas moving forward to 2012, Putin is pushing back opposition under the disguise that 'ordinary' Russians do not want radical change and the degenerated ways of modernity. The story that made the most headlines was that of the Pussy Riot affair, however this was far from the only story.[37] In his attempt to marginalize opposition, Putin pushed 'wedge' issues, such as religion, and gender and sexuality. This is a phenomenon that the West is witnessing too. At first sight it seems as though there is nothing directly akin to *Doctor Zhivago* in the contemporary world, but looking closely, politics are increasingly playing themselves out in the cultural sphere.[38] For future research, it would be interesting to see whether *Doctor Zhivago* made its way around Eastern European countries or China who were also under a communist regime, or to extend the time frame and consider how the book was interpreted in Russia once it was published.

35 Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood, 2.*

36 Serge Schmemann, "What Russian Revolution?" *The New York Times,* Nov. 7, 2017.

37 Gulnaz Sharafutdinova, "The Pussy Riot affaire and Putin's démarche from sovereign democracy to sovereign morality," *in Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (2014): 615-621.

38 A. Makarychev and A. Yatsyk, "Refracting Europe: Biopolitical Conservatism and Art Protest in Putin's Russia," ed. D. Cadier and M. Light, *Russian Foreign Policy* (London: Palgrave, 2015).

Revolutionary Mechanisms: The *Soviets* of Post-1917 Russia and Pre-1949 China

Michelle Yan

Despite the volume of literature dedicated to comparative analyses between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, few historians have analyzed parallels between post-1917 Russia and pre-1949 China. The periods between 1917 and 1922 in Russia and between 1931 and 1949 in China were times of transition, as both states emerged from paralyzing power vacuums. Marxism and Bolshevik authority was not reaffirmed until the banning of intra-party factionalism at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (1921) and the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the Tenth All-Russian Congress of Soviets (1922). Such power struggles among various political parties and warring factions were mirrored in political woes in China throughout its Nanjing decade (1928-37). After the 1927 Shanghai Massacre, Chinese Communist power bases were largely wiped out in major cities, and party leaders were forced to turn to the countryside where they had little influence.

During such interregnal periods, soviets emerged as a flexible system that gave both Bolshevik and Chinese Communist leaders an opportunity to experiment with Marxist policies on a small scale without endangering the parties' respective hold to power in areas where party control was tenuous. This paper compares the way Bolsheviks and Chinese Communists attained political clout in rural regions through the use of soviets as sites of policy experimentation and power consolidation. Whereas the Russian creation and implementation of soviets was a bottom-up endeavor to create solidarity amongst the Bolsheviks' proletariat supporter base, the Chinese adaptation of soviets had a distinct top-down nature and served as sites of policy experimentation for Communist party leaders. Beginning with a brief look at the structure of a soviet and its historical roots in the *zemstvo*, I compare the Russian and Chinese adaptations to understand the complex political reality of the respective periods.

At its core, the Russian soviet was a form of self-governance that gave members some sense of political agency and protection. Borrowed from the Russian word совет, *soviet* is often interpreted as "council." Historically, labor activists and revolutionary theorists had promulgated various models of revolutionary councils, for example Karl Marx's Commune and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's agricultural-industrial federation. The soviets that first emerged in 1905, however, were unique products engendered by Russia's domestic labor movement. The first soviet in Russia was established under the name "Soviet of Workers' Delegates" in the apartment of the Russian anarchist Voline as an organizational body to coordinate workers' strike activities during the labor movements of 1905. According to Voline's own account in *The Unknown Revolution, 1917-1921*, the soviet "rose spontaneously, as the result of a collective agreement, in the context of a small, casual, and completely private gathering."[1] Worker committees and labor councils were formed across the empire to coordinate factory strikes and negotiate with imperial authorities.[2] Eventually, these workers committees joined forces to form a central committee known as the Council of Workers' Deputies, which became "the authorised spokesman of the revolutionary Russian working class."[3] This Council was the predecessor of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies that would be appropriated and replicated on smaller scales throughout the country by Bolshevik leaders after the Revolution of 1917.

A historical precedence of the soviet can be found in the zemstvo. Created by Tsar Alexander II in 1864, the zemstvo was a self-governance mechanism that consisted of a district-level assembly elected by local residents. The zemstvo responded to local needs and made important decisions on the provision of education, medicine, and aid to agriculture. More significantly, the zemstvo increased political participation and representation in the provinces by bringing together people all social classes in assembly bodies instead of segregating the population by estate (*soslovie*). Alexander II's creation of the zemstvo marked a departure from Russian politics' traditional reliance on central administration, a trend that culminated with the Zemstvo Congress of 1904, in which delegates demanded the legislation of equal rights for the peasantry

1 Voline, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917-1921*, trans. Fredy Perlman (Paris: Editions Pierre Belfond, 1947).

2 Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils, 1905-1921*, trans. Ruth Hein (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 24.

3 John Reed, "Soviets in Action" in John Reed Internet Archive (New York: The Liberator, 1918).

and the increase of zemstvo power. As political bodies, both the zemstvo and the soviet were "sensitive and responsive to the popular will."[4] The zemstvos established a legacy of local self-governance that was continued through the soviets.

Like the zemstvos, soviets were created initially as institutions that allowed members of all social strata to voice their opinions. Soviet elections rules "varied with the needs and population of various localities."[5] By virtue of having citizens from different social backgrounds serve on the zemstvo and the soviet, policy measures were more in touch with the people's needs. In his report "Soviets in Action," American war correspondent (and witness to the Bolshevik Revolution) John Reed emphasizes the horizontal structure of power within the soviets, claiming that "anybody could vote for delegates to the Soviets. *Even had the bourgeoisie organised and demanded representation in the Soviets, they would have been given it.*"[6] Reed's report on the Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Soviets points to the important fact that the soviets were initially conceived to allow for equal representation of the population, regardless of how individuals fit into the Bolshevik sociopolitical vision. This element of "Social-Democracy"[7] that was central to the aspirations for and conception of the Russian soviet, however, was undermined as Bolshevik leaders (and especially Lenin) realized the political expediency of overlooking popular sentiments expressed in the soviets to prioritize Bolshevik agenda for the sake of firmly securing party control throughout the country.

By 1917, soviets emerged as institutions that gave their members unprecedented power. During the period of "Dyarchy" immediately following Czar Nicholas II's abdication on March 15, 1917 and Grand Duke Michael's renunciation of the Russian throne on March 16, 1917, soviets became so powerful that they directly influenced national policy. For example, the Petrograd soviet was able to to leverage its intimate relationship with the working class and the military (after the inclusion of soldiers into its ranks through Order No. 1) to demand the adoption of an eight-hour workday,[8] the legalization of trade unions,[9] and the right to retain the Petrograd garrison within the city from the Duma Committee in exchange for support towards the Provisional Government.[10] Time and again, the Petrograd soviet flexed its political muscle as "orders [of the Provisional Government] are followed only if endorsed by the Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies."[11] The masses developed a sense of ownership over the soviets, claiming the soviets as "'their' organs" for representation and political agency.[12] As institutions that promoted "revolutionary dictatorship [and] directly expresses the mind and will of the majority of the workers and peasants," soviets played a large role in keeping the Provisional Government in power through "a direct and indirect, a formal and actual agreement."[13]

Bolshevik leaders not only understood the power of soviets, they were also aware of the need to stage a takeover of soviets in order to establish firm control over the population. Whereas the soviets were not dependent on the Bolsheviks to perform their political function, the Bolsheviks needed soviets (and particularly control over soviets) to consolidate their political power. Despite Lenin's criticism of the Petrograd soviet as a surrender of "its positions to the bourgeoisie," he recognized the influence of the soviet and its popularity amongst the proletarian class and soldiers that the Bolshevik party needed to win over in order to attain nationwide power.[14] The Bolshevization of soviets was identified as an indispensable step towards a Bolshevik revolution, and the attainment of national power illustrates the utility of soviets during interregnal periods characterized by political uncertainties and mercurial popular sentiments. Thus, Lenin sought to appropriate existing soviet structures by increasing Bolshevik representation in the soviets under the slogan of solidifying "class-consciousness and organisation of the proletarians and peasants [and] freeing the people from bourgeois influence."[15] After months of extensive party work such as agitating for new elections in the soviets and re-establishing party structure after arrests and exiles of party leaders, the Bolsheviks successfully won over a majority of delegates in the All-Russia Democratic Conference of September 1917.[16] The Bolsheviks were closer to obtaining a firm grip over the Russian population, and conditions were ripe for a *coup d'état*.

The October Revolution, however, did not mark the end of the Bolsheviks' struggle for power. Even after their successful revolution against Kerensky's Provisional Government in October 1917, election results to the Constituent Assembly and a subsequent civil war that did not definitively end until 1934 with the suppression of the Basmachi Revolution clearly demonstrated the tenuousness of Bolshevik power. With the delicate political dynamic in mind, Bolshevik leaders utilized the soviets as the

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "Theses On The Constituent Assembly" in Lenin's *Collected Works*, trans. Yuri Sdobnikov and George Hanna (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972).
8 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, "Module 3: 1917 - Did the War Cause a Revolution?," *Digital History Reader*.
9 David Mandel, *The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Régime: From the February Revolution to the July Days, 1917* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 123.
10 Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 130.
11 W. H. Chambertin, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, 2nd ed., vol.1 (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1952), 435, quoted in Oskar Anweiler, *The Soviets: The Russian Workers, Peasants, and Soldiers Councils, 1905-1921*, trans. Ruth Hein (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 235.
12 Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 218.
13 Lenin, "Dual Power" in Lenin's *Collected Works*, trans. Isaacs Bernard (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964).
14 Lenin, "Dual Power."
15 Ibid.
16 Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 177.

means through which they staged a national political takeover. Under Lenin's direction, the Bolshevik party directly manipulated soviet elections and intervened in soviet affairs. Menshevik and right-wing Social Revolutionary propaganda were suppressed, and candidates from these two parties were excluded from local soviet elections under the instructions of the Bolshevik-controlled All-Russian Central Executive Committee.[17] Populating the soviets with loyal Bolshevik party members from trade unions and the Red Army, the Bolsheviks built "a crushing majority in most urban soviets and provincial congresses."[18] In a final *coup de grâce* to opposition parties, Yakov Sverdlov—Bolshevik leader and chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee—dissolved the constituent assembly at the Third All-Russian Congress of Workers and Soldiers Soviets, thereby crushing all hopes for Mensheviks and SRs to achieve political mobility. Soviets were proclaimed "sole sovereign organ;"[19] the class-based vision of "proletarian democracy"[20] was turned into party-centric, Bolshevik dictatorship. Through the infiltration, manipulation, and appropriation of the soviets, the Bolsheviks successfully consolidated their claim to power.

The Bolshevik consolidation of power using the soviet system in post-1917 Russia served as an important source of inspiration for the Chinese Communist in their strive for legitimacy and statehood. Beginning with the adoption of the soviet as a unit of political organization, the Chinese Communists—ascending into power some years after Bolshevik victory in the Revolution of 1917—often referenced and actively learned from the experience of soviet Russia in their own state-building enterprise. Especially after the loss of strategic urban bases at the hands of Nationalists in the 1927 Shanghai Massacre, the soviet became an important tool for the Chinese Communists in establishing rural power bases. Amidst the loss of urban strongholds and strategic communication lines in key cities, Chinese Communists were inadvertently pushed to the countryside and forced to rely on the peasantry as their power base. To extricate themselves from the current quagmire, a National Congress was called to "reassess the past and sanction a shift in policy direction" that eventually designated the soviet as "the governmental system to be established [...] to replace the old political system" and "rule the rural base areas."[21] Because of the aforementioned structural and representational aspects of soviets, the Chinese peasantry experienced an unprecedented sense of empowerment that gave rise to their alignment with the Communist party.

Among the various soviets established by party leaders, the Jiangxi soviet stood out as the most important soviet that eventually became a proxy state around which not only the Chinese Communist Party, but also the peasantry and the proletariat, rallied. Founded by Mao after the failed Autumn Harvest Uprising of 1929, the Jiangxi soviet marked the beginning of his "Nongcun baowei chengshi"[22] strategy that called for the mobilization of support for the Party through rural pockets of power. A clear demonstration of the Chinese Communist Party's "aspiration to statehood," the Jiangxi Soviet hosted the First-All China Soviet Congress in November 1931 and was remodeled into the Chinese Soviet Republic with the merger of 15 other Party-held bases in the region.[23] The Chinese Soviet Republic was "modelled on the soviet government formed in Russia after the October 1917 revolution," with an elected executive committee overseeing top-level decisions such as policy and appointments.[24] Political scientist Derek J. Waller writes that "the state form of the Chinese Soviet Republic was [...] a workers and peasants democratic dictatorship, a transitional form en route to a proletarian dictatorship, [which] was the identical form adopted by Lenin during the 1905 revolution in Russia."[25] The importation of the soviet as an political unit of organization during revolutionary times from its Russian counterpart allowed Chinese Communists to not only win over peasants after the destruction of their proletariat support bases in strategic cities, but more importantly facilitated the development of strongholds against Nationalist aggression. Just as it did for the Bolsheviks between 1917 and 1922 when they were engineering a political takeover of the cities and provinces amidst internal factionalism and a bloody civil war, the soviet served as a mechanism of power consolidation for the Chinese Communist Party as the Party fought against Nationalist repression and strove for legitimate statehood.

The Russian inspiration to the Chinese soviet government becomes even clearer with an examination of the language used in the 1918 Constitution of the Russian Soviet Republic vis-a-vis that in the 1931 outline of the Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic presented to the First Congress in Jiangxi. For example, both constitutions contained clauses regarding the election of a Central Executive Committee—the supreme executive power of the respective

17 Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 230.
18 Ibid, 231.
19 James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917-1918: Documents and Materials* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1934), 389.
20 Lenin, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat" in Lenin's *Collected Works*, trans. George Hanna (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965).
21 Tony Saich, "The Chinese Communist Party During the Era of the Comintern (1919-1943)" (paper prepared for Juergen Rojahn, "Comintern and National Communist Parties Project," International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam), 23.
22 "Nong cun bao wei cheng shi," or 农村包围城市, can be translated into "surrounding the city by the countryside."
23 Saich, "The Chinese Communist Party," 31.
24 G. Kucha & J. Llewellyn, "The Jiangxi Soviet," *Alpha History*, accessed Dec. 12, 2017.
25 Derek J. Waller, *The Kiangsi Soviet Republic: Mao and the National Congresses of 1931 and 1934* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley Center for Chinese Studies, 1973), 32.

states—which would appoint a Council of People's Commissars—the highest administrative organ of the state.[26] Both constitutions guaranteed the freedom of speech, assembly, and the press to the worker and peasant laboring masses in defense against a "dependence of the press upon capital."[27] Finally, each constitution included provisions to guarantee "equal rights of all citizens, irrespective of their racial or national connections,"[28] as well as recognize national minorities' privilege of "national determination."[29]

Soviets became the way for both the Bolsheviks and Chinese Communists to consolidate power during periods of power vacuum and immense instability. Although soviets began as a bottom-up project that developed out of the Russian labor movement, they were appropriated by Bolshevik leaders post-1917 as mechanisms for power consolidation. Observing the popularity of soviets amongst the masses and the fact that soviet governance had been deeply ingrained into the political fabric of the country, Lenin and his fellow Bolshevik administrators set out to take over the soviets. By taking over the soviets, the Bolshevik party successfully established a firm grip of the country. In China, the goal of party dictatorship was evident from the beginning of the Communist creation of soviets. Soviet-building was a top-down enterprise undertaken by Party leaders to establish nuclei of local governance and bases in the conquest territory controlled by Nationalists. Conceived in hopes of a dictatorship of the proletariat—defined Lenin as proletarian democracy—both Russian soviets and their Chinese counterparts lost their structural integrity as the Bolsheviks and Chinese Communists became more concerned over securing party hegemony than bottom-up representation. The democratic form of soviets was consistently breached in favor of their function as mechanisms for power consolidation. As Anweiler astutely points out, Lenin's advocacy for "revolutionary self-government and far-reaching decentralization" in 1917 were only for "tactical reasons."[30] Both Russian and Chinese soviets demonstrated not only the transitional character of the soviet system, but more significantly the inevitability of a devolution into party dictatorship.

26 Ibid.

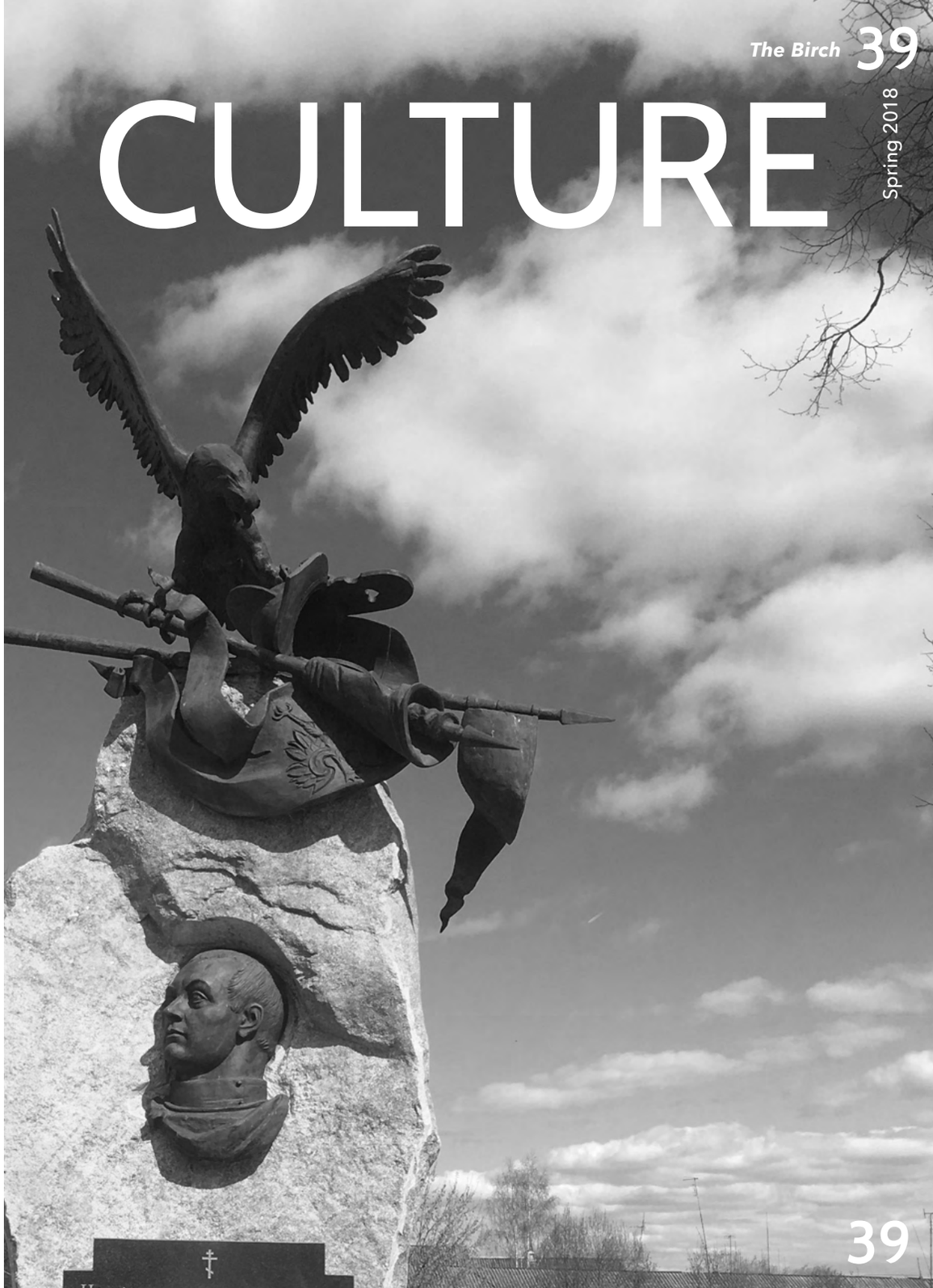
27 "The Russian Constitution, Adopted July 10, 1918," *The Nation* (Moscow, Russia), Jan. 4, 1919.

28 Ibid.

29 Renminwang, "Zhonghua Suweiai Gong He Guo Xian Fa Da Gang," Zhonghua Suweiai Gong He Guo Di Er Ci Quan guo Dai Biao Da Hui Wen Xian (1934).

30 Anweiler, *The Soviets*, 227.

CULTURE



The Politics of Adaptation: the Violence of Ovashvili's *The Other Bank*

Alexis McClimans

George Ovashvili's *The Other Bank*,[1] based on Nugzar Shataidze's short story "Journey to Africa," is a window into the changing ethnic relations and attitudes that were present in Georgia leading up to the 2008 Russo-Georgian war. Telling an atypical coming of age tale, both versions follow their respective adolescent, refugee protagonist as he returns to his childhood home in Abkhazia in search of his father. Though the film deviates significantly from the text, they both arrive at the same desire for reunification. However, the film's increased violence, which it shifts from the individual to society at large, is symptomatic of the changing perceptions not only of the war, but whom is to blame. Ovashvili's deviations expand Shataidze's reflections on the war to include the destructive power continued conflict had on the region and its peoples.

The period of the short story's first publication, eventual adaptation into film, and release spans several years following the war that typified the changing political environment. Both the film and short story are set during a hardening of relations between Georgian and Abkhaz powers. The text was published in 2004, shortly after the Rose Revolution of 2003, which replaced Shevardnadze with Saakashvili, and the film was produced in the period immediately leading up to and during the renewed conflict in 2008. In this context, the film adaptation's shifting tone may be understood as a reflection of the changing politics of the time. However, the changing political environment does not wholly account for increased violence in the film or at whom the violence is directed. The worsening of inter-ethnic relations must also be taken into consideration, as much of the added violence is enacted by ethnic tropes in the role of opportunists.

Both text and film depict the journey of a young Georgian refugee some seven to eight years following the Georgian-Abkhazian war of 1992-3. This period was a turning point in Georgian-Abkhazian relations. Renewed fighting was taking place in the Gali region between Abkhaz forces and Georgian guerillas. Abkhazia had hardened relations with Tbilisi, called a referendum on independence, and reelected Vladislav Ardzinba;[2] and Russia's relationship with Georgia and Abkhazia had taken a decisive turn following Putin's election, which would result in increasingly draconian policies against Georgia, and increased Russian support for Abkhazia.[3]

The post-Rose Revolution period in which Shataidze's "Journey to Africa" was published was politically tumultuous. Georgia saw the transfer of power from Shevardnadze, whose attempt at quashing Abkhazian cries for independence resulted in over 230,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and atrocities committed by both sides of the conflict,[4] to Mikheil Saakashvili, whose rhetoric shifted toward reunification. Released in early 2009, Ovashvili's film adaptation *The Other Bank* was produced as rising tensions gave way to renewed conflict. By this time, the principle players in the dispute had changed: instead of Tbilisi (Georgia) and Sukhumi (Abkhazia), the conflict was now between Georgia and Russia. Georgia's continued pursuit of NATO membership was met with increased hostility from Russia, who claimed that any involvement with NATO would result in the loss of both Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Both Shataidze's short story and Ovashvili's adaptation follow an adolescent refugee boy journeying home in search of his father, hoping to reconnect with his pre-war life. Both address the concept of unification, figuratively and literally: the protagonist seeks to reunite with his father, as Georgia seeks to reunite its populations. Overall, Shataidze's "Journey to Africa" looks at the internalization of war in the individual and in the family, whereas Ovashvili's *The Other Bank,* motivated by the horrors of the recent Russo-Georgian War, externalizes the protagonist's experience onto the various ethnic population in Georgia and Abkhazia, shifting the narrative to include all those touched by the war's violence.

Shataidze's "Journey to Africa" addresses the ongoing conflict in Abkhazia in a peripheral manner. While it helps spur the plot, the conflict is mainly used as a backdrop on which issues of race, ethnicity, and the theme of the toll of war on the individual are explored. For example, Shataidze's unnamed main character's

1 *The Other Bank,* directed by George Ovashvili (Tbilisi: East Gate Film, 2009).

2 Thomas De Waal, *The Caucasus: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 166.

3 Ibid., 166, 190.

4 Ibid., 165.

experience with active military personnel is limited to a scene on Enguri Bridge (which connects Georgia and Abkhazia), and is portrayed as little more than a bureaucratic task.[5] Ovashvili, conversely, utilizes a similar scene scene to depict indiscriminate Russian aggression and ongoing violence in the 'frozen' conflict. The scene depicts a man and woman transporting flour across the border. Pressed by Russian guards for a bribe, the man is shot as he pleads for sympathy. The death and the corruption of the soldiers is an addition to the film that likely is symptomatic of the worsening relations between Russia and Georgia at the time of production.

Shataidze's unnamed protagonist's understanding of the war, and of the worsening ethnic tensions between Georgians and Abkhazians, is related through rumors of Abkhazian soldiers drinking Georgian blood and playing soccer with their victims' heads.[6] The protagonist's fears are presented as little more than children's horror stories in the text, as no untoward actions occur during his journey. Moreover, his assumptions are overturned as he meets people on his way who do what they can to help him. For instance, Zita and Dauri, an Abkhazian couple that shelters him after he crosses the Enguri Bridge are not the 'ogres' he initially imagines them to be,[7] nor do the Russian soldiers on the Enguri Bridge present the danger he initially thought.[8]

In this way Shataidze's protagonist's experiences and fears are from the perspective of someone formed by war; forced to leave his home in Abkhazia while still a child, his formative years are spent as a refugee in Tbilisi. Thus his conceptualization of society is shaped by his life as a beggar: he judges people based on their treatment of him and the likelihood of them offering him food or money.[9] Beyond that, issues of ethnicity or citizenship do not enter into his moral judgement of people: good or bad did not equate with Georgian, Russian, or Abkhazian. Through his journey and interactions with those he meets along the road, the text calls into question whether insurmountable differences truly exist between ethnic groups in Georgia.

In Ovashvili's film the main character is named Tedo, and his journey to Tq'varcheli, Abkhazia, is transformed from a moment of reflection into a perilous adventure framed by death. Unlike in Shataidze's original text, in which the unnamed protagonist is spurred to leave following the death of his friend, Tsupaka, Tedo's impetus for leaving is instead his friend's arrest and the threat of his own. From that moment onward, each of Tedo's encounters has is accompanied by the threat of some unknown peril. Georgian drug runners, corrupt Russian soldiers on the Georgian side of the Enguri Bridge, and old militia groups all present myriad dangers for the protagonist. Although these dangers are ever present in the film, they do not commit violence against Tedo, so much as they accelerate his journey.

5 Nugzar Shataidze, "Journey to Africa," trans. Mary Childs and Lia Shartava (Seattle: Georgian Digital Text Collective, 2014), 269.
6 Ibid., 268.
7 Ibid., 275–6.
8 Ibid., 269.
9 Ibid., 256.

In contrast to Shataidze's unnamed protagonist, Ovashvili's Tedo functions primarily as an audience to violence and secondarily as its recipient. Whereas in the text the unnamed protagonist is abused by his mother and falls victim to drug use, Tedo witnesses murders, prostitution, and rape. However, he is also exposed to similarly sympathetic people as in the text. A bus driver, an older woman crossing the bridge, and an Abkhazian couple all appear in similar contexts as in the text, though with added danger. Through his encounters with these people and the direct victims of the aforementioned violence, Tedo is exposed to the various, lesser known casualties of war.

Such differences between Shataidze's text and Ovashvili's adaptation greatly affect the interpretation of each story, though not in a manner that completely precludes the other. Rather, it is the manner through which the two arrive at the same message that changes: the text does so through positive measures—as the ethnic populations are equalized via the kindness that they exhibit towards the protagonist. The film, however, equalizes ethnic populations via the violence to which they are subjected. This deviation is realized through a variety of methods that represent the evolving political attitude of the period: the main character's personification, the presentation of the protagonist's mother, the added and manipulated scenes including the bridge, and varying endings between text and film.

Ovashvili's film adaptation differs first and foremost from Shataidze's text by way of its narrative mode. The short story's first person narrative is told from the perspective of a young boy, who provides minimal insight into events as he retells them from an unknown point in the future. The film, however, is told in the third person, projecting Tedo's interior monologue onto other characters when necessary. By externalizing his narrative via other characters, Tedo's commentaries and emotional responses to the events of the film shape the audience's perception of the world he inhabits.

The protagonist's mother is drastically changed in the adaptation. She is presented in the text as an abusive, tortured figure, whose life as a refugee has transformed her from the loving mother of the protagonist's memories into an abusive alcoholic.[10] Conversely, in the film she is depicted as a timid woman who is forced to turn to prostitution to make ends meet. Through this transformation, the film shifts the source of the pain from internal to external; the mother is no longer the source of her own or others suffering. Rather her reluctant position as a prostitute is the source of her degradation and of the protagonist's pain.

Excepting minor changes to the characters in the text, the film does not drastically deviate from the source material until the protagonist is forcefully removed from

10 Ibid., 259-260.

a train by a conductor at the outset of his journey, where Shataidze's version sees his protagonist peacefully reach his destination. The interruption of the protagonist's trip is the start of the film's descent into violence. Having removed Tsupaka's death from the beginning, the film instead continuously interrupts the protagonist's journey to reunification through violence and rape.

In the end, the text and film put forth two drastically different resolutions that, while they communicate the same message, arrive at that message through very different means. The text depicts the unnamed protagonist returning to Tbilisi having witnessed the destruction of his childhood home, and descending into an acetone-induced high, envisioning Saharan animals floating past. His once peaceful dream state is now marred by violence, as lions and vultures feast upon a fallen antelope and hyenas approach. This return of Shataidze's protagonist to sniffing acetone and his continued, if not renewed, anger towards his mother denies the audience catharsis. The hope he might have derived from the continuous dismantling of his fears and assumptions is overshadowed by his failure at reuniting with his father, who has since remarried and disappeared. Nightmarish violence plagues even his drug-fuelled attempts at escape, suggesting the continuation of the refugee slums in Tbilisi and of the violence throughout Georgia and Abkhazia.

The film's end also provides little relief for the audience, as the final scenes continue to build tension without resolution. Instead they fade to a Saharan-like desert landscape depicting the African animals that appear at the end of Shataidze's text. The film's final scene is itself something of a chimera; it suggests reconciliation between Georgia and Abkhazia's ethnic populations, as Tedo is taken in by Abkhazian ex-servicemen who were out hunting. The scene is nevertheless tainted by some aspect of peril. This is evident as the hunters call to the protagonist to join their drunken dancing: he reluctantly begins to dance in an increasingly fervent manner, closing his eyes in a manner symbolic of his fear. Thus, the film employs the same frustration as the text, denying the audience any feeling of catharsis or hope for the period to come.

Both Nugzar Shataidze's "Journey to Africa" and George Ovashvili's *The Other Bank* address the issue of identity in Post-Soviet Georgia and Abkhazia. As the protagonist navigates his way home in search of unification, the depiction of the frozen conflict questions what prevents Georgia and Abkhazia from reconciliation, if not reunification. However, their respective depictions expose the political undercurrents present in Georgia at their respective periods of release. Shataidze's text dismantles stereotypical ethnic relations, frustrating the protagonist through what he perceives as baseless conflict between peoples with no need for animosity. Ovashvili's iteration arrives at a similar message with the exception of what spurs the conflict onward: Russian influence.

Shataidze's original intent is not thwarted by Ovashvili's embellishments, as the damage to the rural populations of Georgia and Abkhazia are still present in the film. Rather, political undercurrents redirect the source of the damage to those not acting according to Georgian interests. As the source changes, so does the destination: the victims of the conflict are no longer restricted to ethnic Georgians or IDPs, but rather expanded to include all those who suffered a loss in the war. In this regard, Ovashvili's adaptation inverts the source of the pain from something internal, into something external, a pain inflicted by a third, outside, party.

The additional violence and Russian influence in the adaptation provide an opportunity to see not only the changing politics, but the embodiment of what many Georgians were beginning to fear, and what many still fear today. The 'Russian conqueror' trope is present in many post-Soviet states, and such fears today are embodied by closer ties with western allies as well as recent pushes for NATO membership. The reality of the situation, however, is not quite as transparent as in Ovashvili's adaptation or in Western narratives on the subject. Hindsight has bloodied the hands of all involved in the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict and marred the official discourses emanating from each side.

Defensive Idealism: Conciliarity and Hierarchy in the Decrees of the All-Russian Church Council of 1917-1918

Coleman Sherry

Introduction

On July 5, 1917, the Holy Synod released a "Letter of Convocation" calling for elected representatives from across the Russian Orthodox Dioceses to participate in a Local Church Council to be convened in Moscow that August, the first since 1666.[1] The letter offered a dire portrait of Russian Orthodoxy, with "dimmed faith," increased heresy, and alienation between pastor and flock and "among the Orthodox Christians themselves."[2] This picture of the Church, and the vision of the Local Council as an antidote to these endemic problems, represents the conclusion of efforts at Orthodox revival and restructuring evident with varied intensity throughout the preceding two centuries.

The Church's structure and influence in the early twentieth-century can be traced to Peter the Great's *Spiritual Regulation* of 1721. These reforms bureaucratized the clergy through the creation of the "Most Holy Governing Synod" (a permanent ecclesiastical college), abolished the Patriarchate, and relegated the Church to a set of "spiritually-facing" administrative functions including the registration of births and marriages.[3] Despite the Church's limited independence, Synodal organization dovetailed with conciliar ideas that emerged during Alexander II's 1860s period of Great Reforms. Notable Slavophiles like Aleksei Khomiakov and A.S. Pavlov promoted the concept of *sobornost'*, which emphasized collaborative participation by clergy and laity, resisted division of the Church into leaders and followers, and promoted a more collective vision of the Church body.[4] These collective notions supported a conciliar ecclesiastical structure both naturally and canonically, which the Synod realized, although without lay participation. But the conciliar independence of the Synod was limited by its secular "over-procurator," under whom ecclesial autonomy was restrained and attempts at reform consistently rebuffed. The procuratorship of K.P. Pobedonostsev in the late nineteenth-century was particularly restrictive and was especially hostile to reform and the prospect of a strengthened autonomous Church, which he feared as threatening to Tsarist autocracy.[5]

However, amidst the revolutionary turmoil of 1905, Nicholas II approved an "Edict of Religious Toleration," effectively creating an openly pluralistic society and beginning the process of separating church from state.[6] But rather than giving greater autonomy to the Orthodox leadership, Nicholas' edict revealed how interconnected Orthodoxy and the imperial state had become under the collegial administrative structure of the Synod.[7] With the persistent supervision of the secular over-procurator, Orthodox hierarchs were now effectively the only religious leaders with freedoms restricted by the state.[8] Faced with these pressures, "Preconciliar Commissions" of Orthodox hierarchs initiated preparations for the convocation of a Local Council.[9]

Despite these preparations, it was not until the summer following the February Revolution of 1917 and Nicholas II's abdication that reforming impulses coincided with state support for the Council, which convened in August to great anticipation and excitement.[10] 434 of the Council's 564 members present at convocation had been elected locally and 299 of its members represented laity.[11] The council thus offered a unique conciliar opportunity for discussion of central theological, hierarchical, and political issues, and for refining visions of the Church's role and structure in the twentieth century. With Orthodoxy weakened by both Tsarist policies and recent revolutionary events, the Local Council sought to redefine the role of the Orthodox Church in a new political context and to implement

1 Hyacinthe Destivelle, *The Moscow Council (1917-1918): The Creation of the Conciliar Institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 53-54.
2 Ibid., 54.
3 Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004),= 17, 20-21.
4 Ibid., 33-34.
5 Ibid., 26-7.
6 Ibid., 12.
7 John Meyendorff, "Russian Bishops and Church Reform in 1905," in *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime*, ed. Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 172.
8 Paul R Valliere. "The Idea of a Council in Russian Orthodoxy in 1905," in *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime*, ed. Robert L. Nichols and Theofanis George Stavrou (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 185.
9 Destivelle, *The Moscow Council*, 34.
10 Ibid., 63.
11 Ibid., 60-61.

nascent ideas of collective and conciliar governance at all levels of Church administration. However, as revolution continued in 1917 and 1918, the focus of the Council seems to have shifted from internal Church structure to the role of the Church in relation to an increasingly hostile state lacking clear or familiar institutions. Reflecting both these longstanding goals and contemporary upheavals, the decrees of the council consistently emphasize conciliar organization, yet with strengthened episcopal hierarchies as apparent safeguards to ensure continued Church function in the face of state persecution. Considering the broad scope of the decrees, this paper aims to discuss a selection of instances illustrative of both larger, ongoing Church debates, and of the apparent influence of external political pressures on the reforms agreed upon by Council representatives.

Supreme Hierarchies: Patriarchate and Parish

One of the most notable outcomes of the Council was the restoration of the Patriarchate, absent since the Petrine reforms of 1721.[12] Impassioned debates accompanied the issue however, with concern that the Patriarch could threaten true lay participation and conciliarity, and abandon central *sobornost'* ideals.[13] Yet *sobornost'* was also invoked by patriarchists, who argued that the concept included a notion of submission by the individual members of the Church body to the whole, which needed representation by an ecclesial figurehead.[14] But these debates unfolded amidst the turmoil of autumn 1917, and ultimately contemporaneous to the Bolshevik seizure of the Provisional Government. In this context, pragmatic urgency began to outweigh theological and canonical rationalism, with the Patriarch emerging as a potential leader of the Church through crisis and existential threat.[15]

Indeed, the decrees of the Council that define the role of the Patriarch clarify this insurgent political need for a strong center of Orthodoxy, and illustrate the Council's fusion of episcopal leadership with key conciliar ideas. The decrees stipulate that the Patriarch "represents the Church before the civil authorities," a function unnecessary before the separation of church and state instigated by the Provisional Government and the Edict of Religious Toleration.[16] Here the external concern of the Council is apparent, since it defines the Patriarch as an instrument of Church representation, not mere internal oversight. Even more explicitly, the decrees include a subsection, published later in 1918, titled, "On the Measures Caused by the Ongoing Persecution against the Orthodox Church."[17] Under this heading, the Council states that the Patriarch would "communicate with the local authorities regarding the release of those arrested, and… local diocesan Bishops would be notified regarding these communications."[18] This decree is notable because of its urgency, and even its sense of fear sparked by the immediacy of Bolshevik arrests, but also because of its insistence on Bishop inclusion in correspondence. Even here, when describing the Patriarch's unique function as external representative of the Church, there exists anxiety with an individual hierarch rising beyond the status of the bishops.

In the Council's description of the Patriarch's powers and function, competing desires for conciliarity and hierarchy manifest in both ambiguity and paradox. First, the decrees establish that "supreme power" of Church government belongs to the Local Council, but that the Patriarch "presides over" this government.[19] Next, the Patriarch is paradoxically defined as the "first among bishops who are his equals," and "accountable before the councils."[20] These definitions seem to illustrate reluctance to ascribe governing supremacy to an individual, but also elegantly preserve conciliarity within episcopal hierarchy by making the Patriarch accountable to, and elected by, the Local Council. Further, Articles 8-10 of this section provide a mechanism through which senior members of the Synod may initiate a process analogous to impeachment, emphasizing the significant resistance at the Council to a powerful, single Patriarch.[21]

The Council also applied this Patriarchal model of conciliar authority to more local levels of Church governance, notably, the Parish. The Council decreed that parishioners "constitute one spiritual family in Christ and take an active part in the whole life of the parish," yet advises them to remember that "the bishop is the Church, and the Church is the bishop, and whoever is not with his bishop, he is outside of the Church."[22] These parish decrees indicate that the Patriarchal compromise of a single hierarch subject to conciliar oversight was applied across scales of Church governance, and speaks to the remarkable organizational continuities that the Council envisioned. This recursive vision makes clear that a central theme of the Council was the rationalization of competing desires toward strengthened episcopal hierarchies, often in response to state hostility, and the implementation of conciliarity informed by *sobornost'*.

Property and Production

Under the Petrine system, the Church, particularly at the parish level, lacked explicit rights to private property, which the Council sought to clarify in light

12 Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy*, 17.
13 Catherine Evtuhov, "The Church in the Russian Revolution: Arguments for and against Restoring the Patriarchate at the Church Council of 1917-1918," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 3 (1991): 498.
14 Ibid., 500.
15 Ibid., 506.
16 My access to the English-language decrees is from the appendix of Destivelle's *The Moscow Council*, translated by Jerry Ryan. From here on I will include the citation of the original decree following a note for the location in Destivelle's volume. Destivelle, *Moscow Council*, 193, I. II. 2a.
17 Ibid., 284, III. IX.
18 Ibid., 285, III. IX. 8.
19 Ibid., 192, I. I. 1-2.
20 Ibid., 192, I. I. 3-4.
21 Ibid., 194, I. II. 8-10.
22 III. Introduction Subsection IV. art. 5-6. Ibid., 247.

of the Church's new independence from the state.[23] Like discussions about the restoration of the patriarchate, property debates centered around whether a conciliar or central authority would become the legal unit to which property rights could be ascribed. Traditionally, the property of the parish belonged to the parish church building, a confusing convention, and one that the Council aimed to rectify alongside its focus on *sobornost'* ideals.[24] The Council provides a lengthy introduction to the parish decrees, during which it submits a vision of the Parish as the local body of Christ, wherein members of a collective Orthodox community support and encourage each other toward salvation.[25] This conciliar vision of the parish also served practical concerns about the influence of the Church's supreme leadership. Within the Petrine system, lay election of parish clergy, priests, deacons, and bishops was severely limited, or wholly absent, and as dioceses were increasingly consolidated to closer resemble administrative regions, parishioners became alienated from central hierarchs who were ignorant to local conditions and the needs of the specific parish.[26] Through this lens, strengthening the parish and honing the scope of dioceses and deaneries would allow for more effective and relevant local administration, but also enhance the influence of the Supreme Church hierarchy, which would extend deeper into local Orthodoxy and could closer manage the implementation of decrees and theological debates.

Informed by these trends and ideas, the Council ultimately found an elegant compromise that rationalized conciliarity with episcopal authority, decreeing that "both the parish church building and the parish itself possess the rights of juridical persons."[27] By giving both the parish Church and the parish body legal authority, the Council initiated a diffuse, collective understanding of property ownership and supervision. This solution first realizes the goals of *sobornost'* by making the body of the Church responsible for its management, but also responds more practically to growing socialist understandings of property and of the collective community's legal rights. Destivelle adds that although early Bolshevik policies offered scant provisions or protection for organized religion, those policies did recognize "groups of believers."[28] By empowering the parish body with rights to its property, the Council both adapted to Bolshevik legislation and emboldened the parish community in defense of the Church and its property against mounting Bolshevik requisitioning.[29]

The Council ultimately extended this diffuse understanding of property rights beyond the parish to all levels of the Church. A 1918 decree stated that "the property that belongs to the institutions

23 Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy*, 17-18.
24 Ibid., 17.
25 Destivelle, *Moscow Council*, 241-2, III. I. I.
26 Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy*, 20-23.
27 Destivelle, *Moscow Council*, 250, III. II. 7.
28 Ibid., 102.
29 Ibid.

of the Orthodox Church of Russia constitutes the common possession of the entire Church."[30] Crucially though, the supreme administration of this property belonged to the Local Council, not the Patriarch, maintaining conciliar control of property within the highest level of Church government, and framing Orthodoxy as a community of believers with collective wealth, rather than a rigid episcopal organization.[31] These responses to the Church's ambiguous legal status reveal a response informed both by longstanding debates about the nature of the Church body, and contemporary political and physical threats.

Surprisingly, the decrees also reference another major Bolshevik and Marxist, concern: the significance and means of production. Principally focused on the monasteries, these decrees describe a collective, universal production, the fruits of which will be enjoyed holistically by the monastery: "Each person who is a member of the brotherhood… must bear his working obedience, alongside his labors of prayer, and does not have a right to refuse it."[32] Here the monastery appears as a spiritually-facing production commune, where both religion ("prayer") and physical toil ("working obedience") are described in terms of labor. This emphasis seems overtly defensive to a hostile socialist state obsessed with production, which becomes even more clear when considering the explicit socialist language that appears in the decrees: "All monasteries that own land as property must introduce a more sophisticated means of production."[33] By referencing the means of production, the Council seems anxious to create a portrait of Orthodoxy able to coexist harmoniously alongside Bolshevik socialism. Of course, the imminent, brutal Bolshevik repression of the Church make clear that this coexistence would never be realized, but the Council's socialist-informed rhetoric clarifies the effects of external political and economic ideologies on the religious reforms envisioned by the Council.

Information, Dissent, and Disobedience

During the Council, external and internal threats to Orthodoxy and the authority of its Supreme Hierarchies began to compound, with pressures including militantly-atheist Bolshevik propaganda, arrests of priests and property requisitioning, and internal dissent.[34] One notable incident of such dissent, sometimes labeled "ecclesiastical Bolshevism," was the Danilov Monastery mutiny, during which monks expelled their superiors and converted the monastery into a "den," complete with a distillery and prostitutes.[35] Likely in response to this instability, the decrees include a heading titled "On

30 Ibid., 328, IV. XXI. 1.
31 Ibid., 328, IV. XXI. 2.
32 Ibid., 318, IV. XV. 43.
33 Ibid., 318, IV. XV. 45.
34 Ibid., 124.
35 Pavel G Rogoznyi. "The Russian Orthodox Church during the First World War and Revolutionary Turmoil, 1914-21," in *Russian Culture in War and Revolution, 1914-22*, ed. Murray Frame et al. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014), 353.

the Measures for the Ending of the Discord in the Life of the Church," under which the Council "condemns those disobedient people and opponents of the Church as the adversaries of God."[36] Indeed, the Council enumerated punishments of excommunication for revolutionary dissent at all levels—bishop to "supreme ecclesiastical authority," clergy to diocesan bishop, laity to priest, and, perhaps explicitly in response to the events at Danilov, monastic "brothers or sisters… [who] show resistance to the direction of the ecclesiastical authority."[37] Clearly the Council was wary of revolutionary zeal penetrating Church organization, and prepared to punish dissent, but further decrees also indicate a focus on countering the supposed source of such dissent: Bolshevik propaganda and disinformation.

Strikingly, while describing the role of parish councilmembers, the Council asserts that members should "try to quell, in private, the enmity and malice among the parishioners at the very beginning… in general to struggle against evil."[38] Clearly, the Council was concerned with insidious, "evil" ideologies infecting the Church at its most local, popular levels, and describes the fear of "antireligious, schismatic, and sectarian false teachings" infiltrating the parish through the spreading of "books, booklets, and pamphlets."[39] Here the council places the parish at the center of a fierce information conflict, presumably between Bolshevism and Orthodoxy, and the tone of these decrees makes clear the severity of oppositional propagandizing to Church stability.

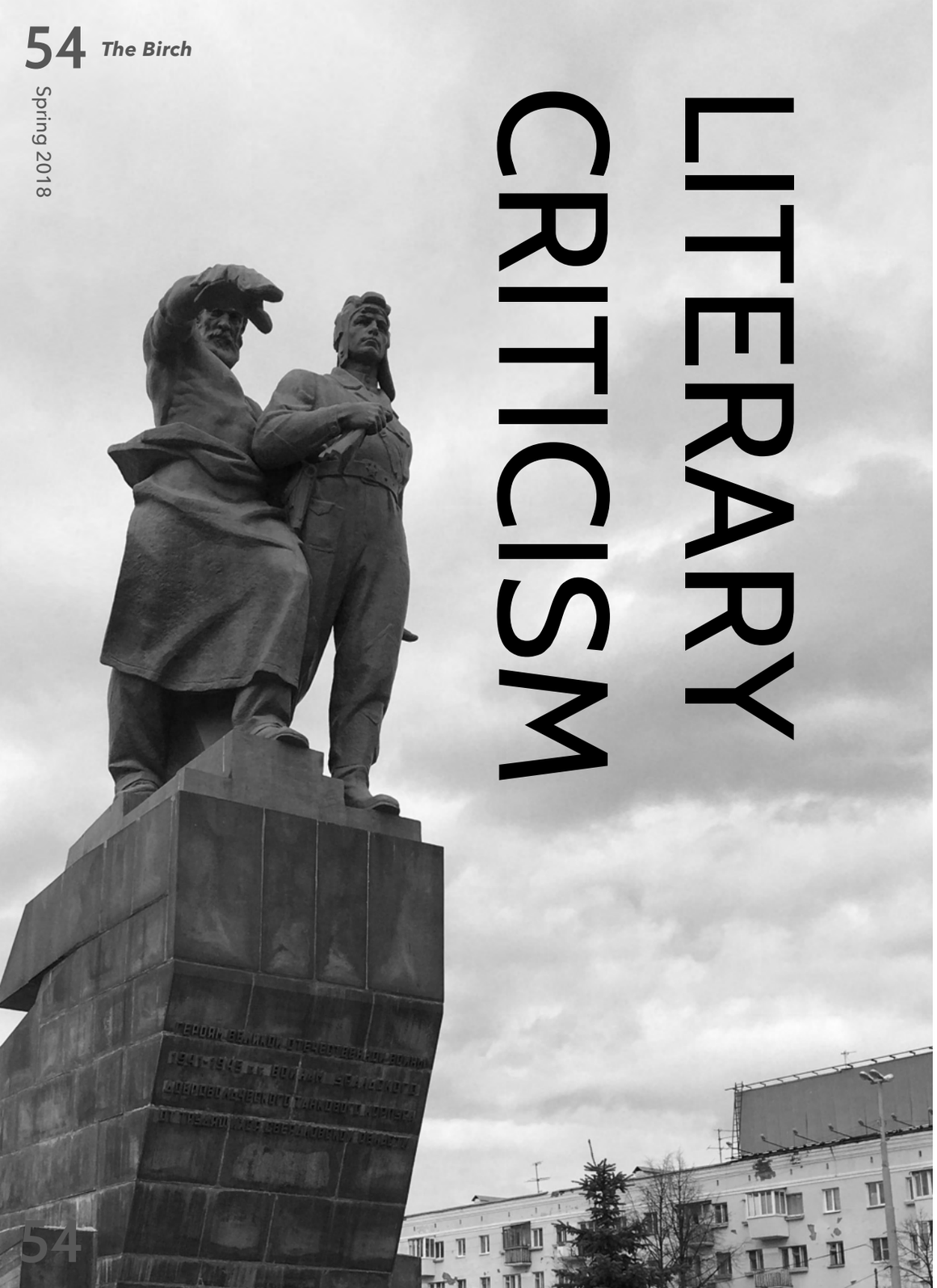
Even under the "paralysis" of the Petrine system, Orthodoxy's special relationship with the imperial state offered protection from ideological opposition, but with the newly-separated church and state, the Council was forced to develop a clear response to these existential threats. The actions described in the decrees focus on education, and, effectively, counter-propaganda. The Church would publish booklets describing the nuanced relationship between itself and the new State, make known to the Orthodox population "all cases of persecution against the Church,"[40] and even establish "mobile libraries" transporting and distributing "such reading that is needed in our time."[41] By proposing responses that emphasize inclusion of the broader population both in narrative events and Orthodox theology, the Council seems to be leveraging the deep, persistent religiosity of the Russian population in its defense, actively engaging Bolshevik information campaigns through direct opposition. These decrees illustrate the Council's ability and willingness to repurpose existing Church institutions like parish schools and monasteries in response to pressing political and ideological concerns. It is still unclear which of these Council decrees were ever implemented, but that they were declared resists the council's characterization as an Orthodox retreat into theological and canonical questions, instead placing the Council in active conversation with contemporary events of the Church and society.

36 Ibid., 287, III. X.
37 Ibid., 288–9, III. X. 1, 2, 6, 8.
38 Ibid., 262, III. II. 80c.
39 Ibid., 262, III. II. 80e, 80f.
40 Ibid., 285, III. IX. 9, 10.
41 Ibid., 265, III. II. 106.

Conclusion

By discussing debates surrounding the recreation of episcopal hierarchs, resolution of ambiguous property rights, and responses to dissent and propaganda, I have attempted to trace the arc of the Council within the Revolution, and demonstrate that facing an increasingly-hostile new state, the Council was forced to adapt both its decrees and its visions of modern Orthodoxy. The Council's convocation resulted from extensive preparations beginning at least in 1905, clearly illustrating deeply-held popular desires for Orthodox reform. The Revolutionary events of 1917 and 1918 made clear, however, that the Council was envisioning its restructuring in the context of a state that no longer existed, and forced representatives to adapt to direct external and internal challenges. Nonetheless, the Council maintained that Orthodoxy "is most sacred to the larger majority of the population and as to the great historic force that created the State of Russia."[42] With this popular, conciliar focus, the Council demonstrated flexibility and willingness to respond directly to revolutionary threats, creating novel solutions to longstanding Church questions in a political context that would soon threaten the Council and Orthodoxy itself. In many ways then, the Council's debates, challenges, and truncated conclusions foreshadow the complex, evolving relationship between Orthodoxy and Bolshevik socialism that would develop throughout the Soviet twentieth century.

42 Ibid., 223, II. II. 1.



LITERARY CRITICISM

Baba Yaga's Soviet Sisters: Ludmilla Petrushevskaya as a Theorist of Disgust, Violence and Abjection Through Motherhood

Noa Gur-Arie

In her review of Andreas Johns' 2005 book *Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of the Russian Folktale*, Natalie Kononenko asks a series of questions about the mythical Russian witch that also happen to apply neatly to the mother figures in Ludmilla Petrushevskaya's fiction.

> Who is Baba Yaga? If she is an evil witch who eats human flesh, then why does she help the hero of the tale by giving him magic objects that make him successful in his quest for a beautiful maiden? Is Baba Yaga some perverse phallic female with her bony leg, her mortar and pestle, her deep voice, and her long nose that sometimes gets hooked on the rafters? Or is she some all-enveloping mother figure who takes the hero into her hut and wants to take him inside her own body when she threatens to cook and eat him?[1]

The deeply flawed, desperately loving, occasionally extremely violent matriarchs of Petrushevskaya's stories are very much "ambiguous mothers" in the mold that Johns and Kononeko assert Baba Yaga to be. They are menacing and protective, almost always either the crux or narrator of the action. The way Petrushevskaya portrays them reflects her larger literary approach to the concepts of violence and abjection. Violence for Petrushevskaya is defined by the same rupture of boundaries—bodily, familial, social, cultural, sexual—that defines Julia Kristeva's abject, for whom motherhood is the ultimate violation of boundaries. Petrushevskaya's work, particularly in the three stories contained in the collection *There Once Was a Mother Who Loved Her Children, Until They Moved Back In*, coincides with Kristeva's positioning of the maternal body as the ultimate instance of and catalyst for abjection. Who and what are Petrushevskaya's mothers? Are they evil because they do harm or good because that harm is meant to help? Phallic females in their single-ness, violence, and physical repulsiveness? All-enveloping matriarchs in their consuming love of their offspring? Sacrificers or sacrificed? Subject or object?

Petrushevskaya sets up motherhood

1 Natalie Kononenko, "Reviewed Work: Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of the Russian Folktale by Andreas Johns," *The Russian Review* 64, no. 3 (July 2005): 504-05.

at its very physical inception (conception!) as violent, often literally the result of non-consensual sexual violence, as in *Chocolates With Liqueur*, where the protagonist Lelia's only relations with her husband Nikita are forcible. Along the lines of Andrea Dworkin's *Intercourse*, all heterosexual sex can be defined as violent: "A human being has a body that is inviolate; and when it is violated, it is abused. A woman has a body that is penetrated in intercourse...Violation is a synonym for intercourse."[2] This definition would not be a stretch in Petrushevskaya's universe of semi-autonomous matriarchal republics they are ultimately subjugated to a violently patriarchal society, wherein coupling certainly seems driven more by the male will to possession and domination than by female sexual desire. The narrator of *The Time is Night*, the poet Anna, is repulsed and tortured in the aftermath of male incursion into her body. Although the initial incursion in question is consensual sex in this specific case, it marks the beginning of a second one: the conception of a son. The first inkling of Anna's coming motherhood is repulsion and physical pain: "Everything that was part of me last night—his smell, his skin—became alien and disgusting...I wept in the shower, washing him off my body. Inside, everything swelled, burned, and ached… (Nine months later we knew why)."[3] This implies that it is not just the intercourse itself that is the reason for the swelling, burning, and aching, but also the fact that conception occurred.

And then there is the perhaps even more horrible consumption and occupation of pregnancy, followed by the rending wound of birth and the endless sacrifice of parenthood. Petrushevskaya, herself a mother, is highly attuned to the strangeness and horror of being compelled to love the parasite that has been feeding on one's flesh from the inside for nine months in order to form itself out of that flesh and come into the world demanding more. Descriptions of sons, husbands, and sons-in-law in *Time of Night* and *Chocolates With Liqueur* as insatiable consumers are reminiscent of Luce Iragaray's meditations on the violence of motherhood. In *Sexes and Genealogies*, Iragaray considers that the ultimate monstrosization and abjection of the mother in society, something expanded upon by Kristeva, is tied to the very violence to which she herself has been subjected in order to become a mother: "The devouring monster that we have turned the mother into is an inverted reflection of the blind consumption that she is forced to submit to."[4]

In *Chocolates With Liqueur,* Petrushevskaya's narrative aligns with Iragaray's argument almost exactly. Lelia's husband Nikita expresses the culturally ingrained terror of the mother as "devouring monster" in extremely concrete terms: "Every female is a predator who consumes the male after she gives birth. That's what you are doing to me, understand? Consuming me."[5] Petrushevskaya makes the irony of this statement clear, and completes Iragaray's path of reasoning, in the next two paragraphs: "Lelia was constantly hungry; she was so thin her pregnancy still didn't show. Nikita gobbled down all that meat in a month. He couldn't stuff himself enough, and kept asking for more."[6] The man, who consumes the woman endlessly, accuses the woman of his own crime. In Petrushevskaya, this is true of all men, husbands as much as sons.

Petrushevskaya's choice to focus on the mothers of boys is perhaps partially informed by her own personal experience as the mother of two sons, and it reflects both Iragaray's assertion that "a boy child is what makes us truly mother" and Kristeva's preoccupation with the story of Oedipus.[7] In *The Time is Night*, the nuances of the "mother-son dyad" as imagined by Iragaray and Kristeva are illustrated in a description of the narrator's son, Andrey, the product of that horrible sexual act which she had tried to wash off in the shower years before: "Andrey was in our kitchen eating my herring, my potatoes, my bread, himself made with my blood and marrow, yellow and emaciated, terribly tired."[8] The mother's ownership of the herring, potatoes and bread is paralleled with her ownership of the blood and marrow. This description portrays the son as a zombie-like amalgamation of his mother's raw flesh, who, further like a zombie, only seems driven to consume more and more of his victim. Anna the poet constantly affirms her connection to that other great Russian Anna the poet, Akhmatova. This scene recalls a line from one of Akhmatova's most famous works, *Requiem:* "You are my son and my horror."[9] When is a son not also a horror, after all?

The horror of children's endless capacity to consume is part of the larger horror of their inability to police their own boundaries, something that also characterizes old women in Petrushevskaya's work and in abjection theory. An instance of uncontrollable letting out—a child wetting the bed—generates disgust and violence in both *Among Friends* and *The Time is Night*. In *The Time is Night*, it very literally produces the mother as monster: screaming at her son who has soiled himself, Anna's daughter Katya suddenly resembles "a Greek goddess of terror."[10] In *Among Friends*, the image of "his little son drenched in pee" provokes the father Kolya to slap the boy. The mother only smirks.[11]

This smirk might reflect Winfried Menninghaus' assertion in his history of disgust that laughter can be thought of as "the negative complement" of disgust, a

2 Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (1987).

3 Ludmilla Petrushevskaia. *There once lived a mother who loved her children, until they moved back in: three novellas about family*, trans. Anna Summers (New York: Penguin Books, 2014): 14.

4 Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and genealogies*, (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1999), 15.

5 Petrushevskaia, 131.

6 Ibid.

7 Iragaray, 63.

8 Petrushevskaia, 51.

9 Anna Akhmatova, "Requiem," in *The Russia Reader: History, Culture, Politics,* ed. Adele Marie Barker and Bruce Grant (Duke University Press, 2010), 460.

10 Petrushevskaia, 69.

11 Ibid., 173.

"sudden discharge of tension" that, as an act of expulsion and rejection, allows an interaction with the abject "that does not lead to lasting contamination or defilement" and perhaps defends against it.[12] Petrushevskaya's sense of humor as a whole is defined by abjection. What could be funnier than disgusting human bodies and the rupture of their boundaries? Even funnier to Petrushevskaya is a principle that Kristeva, Menninghaus, Freud and Bataille have all explored in their turn: sexuality is inherently abject and disgusting, and the abject and disgusting are inherently sexual.

Petrushevskaya plays with this in several instances in *Among Friends*. One is the rupture of bodily boundaries in the form of Nadya's "wandering eye," which, when it "would literally fall out and hang over her cheek like a hard-boiled egg," was uniquely sexually exciting to her otherwise impotent husband Andrey. "On those nights, I imagine," muses the narrator, "he was able to perform."[13] Another is excrement being granted an equal place to the naked female body within "the sexual sphere" on a camping trip: "The only aspects of the sexual sphere that caught our attention were my white swimming suit, which turned transparent in the water, and the absence of a lavatory at our camping site, because Zhora complained that in the ocean poop didn't swim away."[14] This evokes Kristeva's thoughts on excrement as abject and therefore maternal:

> Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its "own and clean self." The abjection of those flows from within suddenly become the sole "object' of sexual desire—a true "ab-ject" where man, frightened, crosses over the horrors of maternal bowels...[which] gives him the full power of possessing, if not being, the bad object that inhabits the maternal body.[15]

For Kristeva, in some sense, a reaction to anything as disgusting, terrifying, and/or arousing is a reaction to the mother because she, and the subject's relationship to her, is the primordial source of those feelings. As Menninghaus puts it, "Kristeva has analyzed the 'abjection' of the mother's body—and the symptom-like insistence of the 'abject mother' in disgust for food, excrement, and bodily fluids—as a trajectory necessarily implied in every formation of the subject and in every integration into the symbolic order."[16] All disgust is disgust for the mother, the first border to ever be crossed in the process of self-formation.

Old women—usually suggested to be mothers of some sort—are central to all Slavic (and perhaps global) mythologies, Petrushevskaya's work being no exception.

12 Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: the theory and history of a strong sensation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 10-11.
13 Petrushevskaia, 159-160.
14 Ibid., 168.
15 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 54.
16 Menninghaus, 10.

They are also so crucial to any understanding of disgust and the abject that Menninghaus considers his entire book about disgust to be "at the same time, a book entirely concerned with the (masculine) imagination of the *vetula*, of the disgusting old woman."[17] Vetula is a Latin term for old woman employed by Kant, Nietzsche, Freud, Bataille, and others to evoke a certain terrifying vision of decaying femininity, a tradition continued in Kristeva's abject mother. Phallic, degenerate, child-eating Baba Yaga, no one's and everyone's mother, is of course the consummate Slavic vetula and therefore a constant spectre, implied in form when she is not invoked by name.

Old women's bodies in Petrushevskaya are sites of reflexive violence in their state of decay, but they are also subjected to violence inflicted actively and passively by people and institutions because they are disgusting. These bodies are disgusting for the ways that they defy boundaries, as the grandmother-narrator in *The Time is Night* is compelled to reflect upon seeing another older woman's girdle: "How often we forget our ugliness and present ourselves to the world au naturel, fat, flabby, unwashed. I'm sure her husband strays from her, repelled by the horror—for what's to like in an old person? Everything's bursting like an overripe orange; it's not spoiled, not yet—it's yesterday's good milk."[18] It's funny that she chooses milk as metaphor here, because that is also the substance Kristeva focuses on when discussing abjection in the realm of food. The repulsion to milk skin that Kristeva describes mimics the repulsion that Petrushevskaya's Anna imagines her friend's husband feeling towards his wife's bursting body:

> When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk—harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring—I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it.[19]

Examined in aggregate, it is stunning how central the loss of control over bodily borders is to the characterization of old women in Petrushevskaya. Zones belonging to old women are sensorily repulsive because of this: "In the late grandmother's lair," observes Lelia of *Chocolates With Liqueur*, "the stench was indescribable."[20] "Oh, how it stank in that ward," Anna marvels in *The Time is Night*, recalling the hospital where her incontinent mother had been pushed out of sight, mind, and smell along with dozens of other unwanted, disgusting "grannies" who "didn't make it to the bathroom" and constantly "pull up their covers, smearing themselves on the chin.[21] This borderless-ness strikes fear in the hearts

17 Ibid., 7-8.
18 Petrushevskaia, 84.
19 Kristeva, 2-3.
20 Petrushevskaia, 132.
21 Ibid., 85.

of caretakers. "The other day we lifted her neighbor, and she left her womb behind on the bed," Anna remembers.[22] She warns two ambulance drivers that if they don't take her and her mother home immediately, "In a moment she'll take a dump all over your floor."[23]

When the old lose control over their own boundaries, it means that it is easier for others to violate them too, compounding abjection. This is how families and the state abandon insane old women to their filth in hospitals hidden on the borderlands of society in *The Time is Night*. It is also reflected in one of the most gruesome scenes in *Among Friends*, when the narrator remembers what a state hospital did to the body of her old sick mother, rendering her even less human than she was already:

> They opened her up, then by mistake sewed a bowel to the stomach muscle, leaving her to die with an open wound the size of a fist. When they rolled her out to me, dead, crudely stitched up with a gaping hole in her belly, something happened: I couldn't understand how this could have been done to a human being, let alone my mother, and began to imagine that my mama was somewhere else, that this couldn't be her.[24]

The gaping hole is a particularly fitting image in a description of a horrifying woman's body when read alongside Kristeva and Iragaray. That symbol is what the collective male imagination seems to fear most in every woman and mother, because, as Iragaray reminds us, he inflicted it upon her in the first place when he came into being: "Her womb, sometimes her breast, gape open as a result of the gestation, the birthing, the life which have issued from them, without reciprocity."[25]

It is interesting finally to analyze the chief instance of violence in *Among Friends* as a means of exploring all of the contradictions and violence inherent in the identity of the mother for Petrushevskaya as well as Kristeva. The chronically ill narrator brutalizes her pathetically weak son in order to ensure that her selfish friends will take care of him after she is gone. Were they not galvanized by "the sight of a child's blood," the narrator believes, her friends "would have sent him to an orphanage upon [her] death and barely tolerated his visits in their new home."[26] In her article "The Blood of Children: Petrushevskaya's 'Our Crowd' and the Russian Easter Tale," Amy Singleton Adams posits this act strictly as a sacrifice of the son, Alesha—a transformative act of violence that, like the crucifixion, serves to create community and redeem sins. But the narrator is not a parallel to the Virgin Mary. Rather, she "disrupts the paradigm of sacred motherhood."[27] Despite the fact that with this act the narrator has irrevocably condemned herself to a totally isolated descent into blindness and death in exchange for her son's anticipated salvation, Adams argues that a reading of the mother as sacrificing herself through the sacrifice of her son is too simplistic. But she is also self-sacrificing along the lines of Oedipus in Kristeva, in the Ancient Greek terms of *agos*, *katharmos* and *pharmakos*:

> Entering an impure city—a miasma—[Oedipus] turns himself into *agos*, defilement, in order to purify it and to become *katharmos*. He is thus a purifier by the very fact of being *agos*. His abjection is due to the permanent ambiguity of the parts he plays without his knowledge, even when he believes he knows. It is precisely such a dynamics of reversals that makes of him a being of abjection and a *pharmakos*, a scapegoat who, having been ejected, allows the city to be freed from defilement.[28]

Like Oedipus, the narrator of *Among Friends* is able to purify her abject, sinful friend group by rendering herself the most abject of them all. Once she is ejected, they can be freed from defilement. It is as much her self-condemnation as her abuse of her son that is transformative.

Iragaray's thoughts on women and organized religion suggest yet greater meaning for this act of double-edged sacrifice. She contends that the the literal and figurative exclusion of women from all sacrificial religious practice is perhaps the greatest sacrifice of all: "the hidden sacrifice is in fact this *extradition*, this ban on women's participation in religious practice, and their consequent exile from the ultimate sources of social decision making."[29] The mother in *Among Friends* resists this paradigm (*the* paradigm, in fact) and becomes a social decision maker by entering the ritual of sacrifice from both sides. As sacrificer and sacrificed, Christ and Mary, she strives towards the realization of the impossible "female trinity" that the patriarchy systematically denies by forcing women to be either "mother" or "woman."[30] This striving, which is perhaps already inherent to motherhood, defines and catalyzes her specific abjection.

Petrushevskaya's mothers are never just heroines or anti-heroines. It is impossible to love them and impossible not to empathize with them. By exploring the terrifying contradictions inherent in motherhood, she places her work within a literary and theoretical tradition exploring the violence, disgust and abjection that underlie the everyday and its personification in the figure variously called the abject woman, horrible mother, *vetula*, or Baba Yaga. Reading her stories alongside the theories and histories of Kristeva, Iragaray and Menninghaus reveals the ancient roots of this tradition and valorizes Petrushevskaya's contribution to it.

22 Ibid., 97.
23 Ibid., 104.
24 Ibid., 171.
25 Iragaray, 15.
26 Petrushevskaia, 179-180.
27 Amy Singleton Adams, "The Blood Of Children: Petrushevskaya's 'Our Crowd' And The Russian Easter Tale," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 56, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 612-28, 616.
28 Kristeva, 84.
29 Iragaray, 78.
30 Ibid., 63.

Cyclical Time and Imaginary Space: Erofeev's *Moscow–Petushki* (1969)

Natasha Kadlec

Between Moscow and Petushki, Viktor Erofeev's inglorious hero Venichka encounters a fantastical version of the West. Venichka's West also mixes with his Soviet reality: he is equally likely to run across Sartre on the streets of Paris or Lord Chamberlain in the Kursk station restaurant. What Venichka encounters is Alexei Yurchak's "imaginary West," a "locally produced" conception of the abroad, unique to Soviet culture. However, the local geographies that Venichka encounters are equally imaginary, and Venichka's experience of Soviet reality is no more real than his obviously fantastic experiences of the West. The impossibility of meaningful movement between imaginary locations serves as a metaphor for the cyclical movement of time which, Erofeev suggests, has come to characterize Soviet 'reality.'

Venichka's claims to have travelled abroad extensively are clearly dubious. Such travel would be nearly impossible under Soviet law, not to mention the absurdity that a barely-functioning alcoholic (who cannot successfully reach the end of the Moscow commuter line) could make it to the United States, Paris and Pompeii, among other foreign locales. Venichka's comrades are equally shocked by his tales: one fellow traveller exclaims that "the ease with which you overcame all national boundaries astonishes me."[1] These practical restrictions aside, Venichka's travel stories are mythicized to the point of absurdity. During his time in Paris, Venichka recounts, he applies for admission to the Sorbonne and is close to acceptance (based on a nebulous account of his 'Siberian psychology') only to be forcibly removed as "the Rector of the Sorbonne […] had sneaked around behind me and—whack—in the back of the neck."[2] The absurdity of the moment only increases when Venichka encounters Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir on the Paris streets.[3]

1 Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow to the End of the Line*, trans. H.W. Tjalsma (New York: Taplinger, 1980), 107.

The West also appears, however, outside of Venichka's apocryphal tales. Venichka and his fellow travelers interact with their conception of the West in a way that suggests its ever-presence in their lives. During a staged mock revolution, Venichka and his comrades decide to declare war on Norway via mail. Their general confusion about Norway's existence does not hinder their efforts. Just moments before their declaration, one listener cries out "and Norway, where is that anyway?" Even after the declaration of war, none of the revolutionaries determine Norway's location any more precisely than "halfway to hell and back."[4] As we might expect, Venichka's relationship with Norway is not reciprocal—disappointingly, Norway fails to attack.[5] Neither his efforts at constructive interactions with the West (study at the Sorbonne) nor violent conflicts (war with Norway) come to fruition. Venichka finds both of these failures disappointing, yet none of his failed attempts at interaction with the "West" stop him from trying again.

The fantastical version of the West which Venichka encounters corresponds to what Alexei Yurchak calls the "imaginary West." For Yurchak, the Soviet abroad (*zagranitsa*) was an

> imaginary 'elsewhere' that was not necessarily about any real place. The 'West' (*zapad*) was its archetypal manifestation. It was produced locally and existed only at the time when the real West could not be encountered.[6]

The defining feature of this "West" was its externality to Soviet reality, but it was also an internal Soviet creation, such that "although references to it were ubiquitous, its real existence became dubious."[7] Yet despite its obvious internal contradictions, this imaginary West had a very real existence in Soviet culture. Even as symbols of the West became "profoundly disconnected" from their meaning in their original context, they remained meaningful in the Soviet one.[8] Yurchak describes the second life of Western-labeled liquor bottles and beer cans as decor in Soviet dormitories:

> Most of these packages and bottles were empty […]. However, this empty status did not matter because their original meaning as consumable commodities (the actual liquor, beer, or cigarettes) was largely irrelevant.[9]

Although these objects underwent an obvious semiotic shift—even their owners must have understood at some level that in a 'real' Western context, the bottles would represent containers for alcohol and not aesthetic cultural objects—they retained

2 Ibid., 104.
3 Ibid., 105.
4 Ibid., 119-20.
5 Ibid., 125-6.
6 Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006), 159.
7 Ibid., 159.
8 Ibid., 197.
9 Ibid., 195.

their value. The "imaginary West" thus retained its allure even when acknowledged as imaginary.

Venichka's declaration of war on Norway functions analogously. The Norway of Venichka's imagination is obviously untethered from its real-life counterpart—Venichka does not even know where it is located. Yet the explicitly imaginary character of this "Norway" is not a cause for concern. Similarly, the black-mustached fellow traveler, who had expressed his amazement that Venichka "overcame [all] national boundaries," nonetheless "believe[s] [Venichka] like a brother."[10] In the same way that the original function of Western liquor bottles was simply not relevant to their fetishized status, it is immaterial whether Venichka has been to the West in a literal sense. His experience is an authentic representation of the *imaginary* West.

But Venichka is not only the creator of an imagined reality. He is also the subject of one, as his Soviet world is equally "imaginary." Erofeev thematizes the imaginary character of Soviet "reality" by mixing elements of the "imaginary West" into daily Soviet life: not only might one run into Sartre and de Beauvoir on the streets of Paris, but they might also encounter Lord Chamberlain in the Kursk Station restaurant. In this way, Western cultural figures acquire a Russian flavor, while Russian ones are Westernized ("Ivan Turgenev, citizen of *la belle France*").[11] In a similar way, the Soviet champion of labor Alexei Stakhanov, Russian national heroes Minin and Pozharskii, and violent American sailors are all fair game for riddle material, with these riddles place both the Americans along with Minin and Pozharskii at—where else—Petushki.[12] The "imaginary West" thus becomes intertwined with an imaginary version of Soviet reality.

As several scholars have observed, Erofeev's cultural allusions (both Western and Soviet-Russian) are so frequent and arbitrary as to become decoupled from their original meaning.[13] Using the language of the Soviet state, Venichka and his comrades launch a revolution, maintain quantified documentation of their work activity (drinking), and repeat slogans about the sorry state of capitalism, but these efforts are all unproductive. Revolutionary slogans no longer produce revolution—they do not do anything at all. "I deceived myself, betraying my convictions," worries Venichka, interrupting his musings on *Othello* and the deleterious effects of capitalism, "or else I had started to suspect myself of deceiving myself and betraying my convictions."[14] It is unclear what convictions Venichka has ever had (besides a love for vodka), but if Venichka cannot even tell whether or not he has betrayed them, they could never have been terribly meaningful. Venichka and his fellow travelers continue to speak in an

10 Ibid., 107.
11 Erofeev, 84, 94.
12 Ibid., 136-7.
13 Mark Lipovetsky, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 69-70.
14 Erofeev, 29.

ideologically appropriate way, but this dominant discourse has lost its power, as it too has become imaginary.

The geography of Venichka's Soviet Union, it turns out, is no less open to interpretation than that of the West. "In general nobody can live in Siberia, only black people live there," Venichka asserts, a claim which lacks any context or reasoning. Even when a fellow traveller rebuts the claim—they "live in the States, not in Siberia!"—Venichka insists that he has himself been to the States and knows what he's talking about and the argument about Siberia's demographics ends in an impasse. The Moscow Kremlin, moreover, possesses a strange repellent which has prevented Venichka from ever seeing it, despite living in Moscow. Petushki is a legendary place as well, one where "winter and summer the jasmine never cease blooming."[15] The chapters titled "Petushki. Sadovy Circle" and "Petushki. The Kremlin," where Erofeev superimposes Moscow landmarks onto 'Petushki,' render both locations unquestionably fictitious—not to mention the prelapsarian quality given to Petushki by the very impossibility of reaching it.[16]

Indeed, no real movement can happen between locations which seem to exist largely in Venichka's mind. Despite the title *Moskow-Petushki*, Erofeev's *poema* does not contain movement between Moscow and Petushki: regardless of the prosaic explanation that Venichka just overslept and missed the Petushki stop, the entire *poema* anticipates his eventual failure to reach his destination. Between Saltykovskaya and Kuchino, the angels caution Venichka that "we are only afraid that once again you won't get there [to Petushki]," and later, the sphinx remarks that "nobody in general, ha, ha, will end up in Petushki!"[17] The inevitability of Venichka's failure places his journey back in the realm of the imaginary. If Venichka had not overslept, some other force, it seems, would have intervened to prevent him from reaching Petushki. Moreover, Venichka himself is aware of the uselessness of movement. As he sets off, he remarks that whether he heads left, right, or straight, he will "end up at the Kursk Station." Later, while trying to escape his pursuers, he tells himself to run in any direction, "left or right or back."[18] His physical movement is circular, inevitably beginning and ending at Kursk Station.

While failure is the defining feature of Venichka's various efforts through the *poema*, these failures produce no apparent consequences. The declaration of war on Norway is unheard and unreciprocated, stating that "we're fighting with her, but she doesn't want to with us."[19] Venichka's "individualized charts" accomplish nothing other than his removal from leadership and restoration to his original position—the return of equilibrium. Finally, he does not reach Petushki, but is returned to Moscow. If anything, the only result of Venichka's failures is the restoration of equilibrium, realizing

15 Ibid., 43.
16 Ibid., 156, 160.
17 Ibid., 48, 140.
18 Ibid., 15.
19 Ibid., 125.

the claim of the black-mustached man that Nature "worries about nothing so zealously as she does about equilibrium."[20]

The apocalyptic climax of the *poema*, however, seems to break out of this equilibrium. Shortly after contemplating the betrayal of Christ, Venichka is murdered by four men—an apparent allusion to the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Venichka's imminent death is accompanied by a narrative aside that "the heavenly angels laughed, and God was silent."[21] With his paradoxical claim that "I have not regained consciousness, and I never will," Venichka has escaped from his "imaginary" world, even if only into death; he has finally broken the pattern of equilibrium.[22]

Yet Venichka's final loss of consciousness is not the *poema*'s final end. Instead, Erofeev signs off with a terse endnote: "While working as a cable fitter in Sheremetievo, Autumn, 1969."[23] These final words correspond with the introduction "from the author," framing the narrative as the brainchild of someone who is *not* Venichka, and rendering Venichka imaginary. Venichka proclaims himself to be real, narrating in the first person, but the final endnote—written after the character Venichka's supposed death—reveals him to be a fantasy, like the West or the paradise of Petushki. For the "author" who narrates the introduction and endnote (the "cable fitter in Sheremetievo"), whether we take this person to be the real Venedikt Erofeev or another character in the *poema*'s frame narrative, nothing has changed. Protagonist Venichka has died, but the narrator of his story will return to work the next day, and, perhaps, begin to compose a similar story once again. Equilibrium is restored.

By facilitating equilibrium and precluding any real movement, Erofeev's imaginary geographies serve as a metaphor for the cyclical progression of time. As Bertrand Westphal has observed, the passage of time is often "conveyed through spatial metaphors." In modern conceptions of time, leading up to the Second World War,

> the progression of time accorded with progress itself, a view codified by a form of positivism. […] Time contained progress, and time was enslaved to progress. Consequently, space became an empty container, merely a backdrop for time, through which the god Progress would reveal himself.[24]

Perhaps nowhere was time conceptualized in such a rigidly linear fashion as in the Soviet Union, where ubiquitous slogans urging citizens to "fulfill the five-year plan in four years" not only proclaimed time's linearity, mapping progress directly onto time, but also encouraged the acceleration of time to fulfill those plans yet faster. In this sense, the concept of "time" became untethered from its actual representation by calendars or clocks. It was instead manipulable, an enemy to be conquered, as epitomized by the title of Valentin Kataev's 1932 novel, *Time, Forward!*

The linear nature of Soviet time reversed the "traditional" Russian conception of time. While "the Western understanding of time [is] linear," the Russian understanding "is cyclical. […] Reforms, by contrast, are the expression of linear time, which have recurrently been thrust on Russia."[25] In one sense, the revolution of 1917 radically overturned this cyclical conception of time. Revolutionary Russia joined the "modern" world in pursuit of linear progress, remaining on a linear trajectory long after Erofeev wrote his *poema* in 1969. At the time of Venichka's aborted travels to Petushki, he, along with his Soviet comrades, is supposedly moving forward, continuing with the building of communism and the project of overtaking Western achievement.

Yet Venichka's circular movement exemplifies precisely a lack of linear progress. The 1917 revolution was also just one of many attempts at reform, and in this sense, Soviet modernity is not entirely new, but the latest in a series of 'linear' models imposed from above. As Iurii Lotman has observed, the orientation of each period in Russian history and culture "towards a decisive break with that which preceded it" has produced "a good many repeated or very similar events."[26] The introduction and reintroduction of linear models, then, itself becomes a cyclical motif. Erofeev thematizes, and criticizes, this cycle of efforts towards linear "progress":

> '…I'm no fool, [claims Venichka,] I know that in this world there is also psychiatry, and extragalactic astronomy.'
>
> But, really, all that is not for us. All that was thrust on us by Peter the Great and Dimitri Kipalchich, the Decembrist astronomer, and really our calling is not here at all, our calling is in an entirely different direction.[27]

Before Soviet power, reformers and revolutionaries like Peter I and the Decembrists also sought to impose Western ideals of linear progress in Russia. Although many reforms produced undeniable change in Russia, Erofeev suggests that those changes were not fundamental enough to cause a break in the cyclical passage of time.

In the West, the Second World War fractured the grand narratives of linear progress, and "the concept of temporality that had dominated the prewar period had lost much of its legitimacy."[28] But things were not so in the Soviet Union, where, with "unofficial" peripheral exceptions, the dominant discourse of progress through linear time was reproduced from its prewar form with greater and greater rigidity. Yurchak

20 Ibid., 21, 87.
21 Lipovetsky, 81; Erofeev, 158, 163-4.
22 Erofeev, 164.
23 Ibid., 164.
24 Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. Robert T. Tally, Jr. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 9.
25 Katja Lehtisaari and Arto Mustajoki, *Philosophical and Cultural Interpretations of Russian Modernisation* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 51.
26 Iurii Lotman, *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985), 31.
27 Erofeev, 63.
28 Westphal, 13.

describes how the death of Stalin, the external "master" of Soviet ideological discourse, meant the disappearance of any means by which that discourse could be "calibrated." In order to avoid deviations from ideological norms,

> the production of political discourse [in the late Soviet period] became increasingly organized through collective writing and personal imitation, leading to a hypernormalization of that language. […] The same process took place on all other levels of ideological discourse, from visual propaganda and the structure of everyday rituals, to the organization of routine practices of everyday life.[29]

The result of the hypernormalization of language, Yurchak argues, was the increasing detachment of that discourse from its original or literal meaning. In a sort of desensitization process, the more frequently cliched slogans—including those of linear progress—were declared, the less they meant. This context explains the tepid response to Khrushchev's 1961 declaration that "reports show that in 20 years, we will have built a basically Communist society," to which Khrushchev received a reaction of "great hesitation."[30] Although his claim could not be questioned outright, the rationalized temporal scheme to which Khrushchev appeals (citing scientific "reports" and offering a precise timeline) had lost its credibility. Venichka too, from his homegrown revolution to his declaration of war on Norway, continues to use ideologically orthodox Soviet language, but his utterances have no addressee and produce no result. His death and vision of the red letter *iu*, perhaps the only events in the *poema* with a potential of finality and real meaning, are erased, too, by the narrator's note: his own life goes on.

Venichka's Soviet reality is an imaginary one, where the principles he invokes, from "Norway" to "Ilich," have lost their referents. In a narrative which claims to describe travel from Moskva to Petushki, the only real movement is movement back to equilibrium. The stress that Erofeev places on equilibrium—even to the point of Venichka's own death, allowing the *poema* to end and its author to return to work—revises the linear Soviet conception of temporality. Venichka's sudden assertion, in the midst of his drunken musings, that "my tomorrow is bright. Our tomorrow is brighter than our yesterday and today," is clearly baseless, and his misplaced optimism only emphasizes the "imaginary" character of the Soviet project.[31] Those impositions of forward motion are ultimately no more connected to the cyclical impassivity of lived reality than Venichka's hallucinatory imaginings of the West.

29 Yurchak, 284.

30 Leonid Mlechin and Dmitrii Volkogonov, *10 Vozhdei. Ot Lenina do Putina* (Moskva: Iauza, 2012).

31 Erofeev, 45.

A Two-Faced Janus: Empire, Identity and the Orient in Bestuzhev-Marlinsky and Lermontov

Francesca Sollohub

Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky described Russia as a "'Two-Faced Janus" looking towards both Europe and Asia, and a "link between the settled activity of the West and the wandering lassitude of the East."[1] Fyodor Dostoevsky famously observed that "In Europe we were lackeys and slaves, but in Asia we are lords. In Europe we were Tartars, but in Asia we are Europeans."[2] With one foot in Europe and one in Asia, Russia for most of its history has had a complicated relationship with both continents and with its own place in the world order.

This rapport is the object of the post-Soviet study of Russian imperialism. Influenced by Edward Said's *Orientalism* yet recognizing the cultural specificity of Russian perceptions, this field attempts to bring to light "the ways in which Russians projected their desires, fears, and fantasies on those they encountered."[3] Said summarizes Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[4] Maria Todorova,

1 Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, *vol. 2* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1958), 599. All translations from the Russian are my own.

2 Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, *vol. 27* (Leningrad: Izd. Nauka, 1984), 36–37.

3 Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist and Alexander Martin, "Some Paradoxes of the 'New Imperial History'," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 4 (2000): 624.

4 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Lon-

Mark Bassin and others have argued that although the Russian empire may not have been wholly European or Asian, it deliberately aligned itself with Europe, participating in similar processes of empire-building and Orientalism.[56]

Key to Orientalism is G. W. F. Hegel's dialectic of self and other. Said uses the Hegelian language of sovereignty when he describes Orientalism as being based upon "a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged."[7] Writing of Europe "articulating" the Orient, how "the West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor,"[8] and that "the Orient was reconstructed, reassembled, crafted"[9] by Orientalist literature and scholarship, he outlines a process which, just as Hegel envisaged the beginning of self-consciousness in the subject, "helped a European to know himself better."[10]

Two novels that exemplify the nineteenth century literary treatment of Russia's anxieties of belonging, and its fluctuating relationship with East and West, are Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's *Ammalat-Bek* (1832) and Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* (1840). Both political exiles, both soldiers, and both killed in the most romantic of circumstances (Bestuzhev-Marlinsky in a skirmish with Caucasian fighters, Lermontov in a duel), these two authors share a close association with the Caucasus. Drawing on their experiences of fighting on the front line of the early nineteenth-century Russian imperial expansion project, both writers produced narratives that explore the allied issues of identity and imperialism.

Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's *Ammalat-Bek* has been referred to as semi-fictional, being apparently based on an incident that took place during the Caucasian campaign of the 1820s in which a Dagestani fighter killed a Russian colonel, despite the long-standing friendship between them.[11] Bestuzhev-Marlinsky used this event to create a sensationalist story of high romance which, in casting the treacherous Caucasian Ammalat-Bek as a compelling, tragic antihero, destabilizes Russian cultural identity and undermines the 'us and them' mentality behind attitudes to war in the Caucasus. *Ammalat-Bek* had a lasting impact on the Russian perception of the Caucasus, and is a prime example of Orientalist discourse, in that it is both influenced by earlier depictions of the Orient and intends to influence future readers.[12]

The legacy of Pushkin's *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1822) is certainly present in this tale, one example being the depiction of the Muslim highlanders' "dashing machismo, engaging simplicity, emotional generosity and primitive poetry."[13] While unbridled emotion is a classic trope of the Oriental other, in this tale Russians and Caucasians do not fit into diametrically opposed categories of East and West, since the romantic emphasis on feeling over reason granted 'Oriental' characteristics a more positive dimension. For example, the Russian Verkhovsky and Ammalat experience passion in a similar way, only to different degrees of intensity. Verkhovsky "smoldered like incense kindled by a ray of sunlight, [Ammalat] blazes like a lightning-struck ship on a stormy sea."[14] Taking the two protagonists as representing the archetypal Russian and Caucasian, this can be interpreted as representing the complexities of Russia's Asian identity. In one respect it underlines the artificiality of the oppositional mentality: Verkhovsky perceives Ammalat as feeling just as a Russian might, only to an extreme. The idea of domestication also suggests that the distinction between civilized and primitive man comes down to the ability to control one's desires, not their presence or absence. This logic would allow Russians to embrace their romantically fashionable 'Eastern' facility for emotion, while retaining their sense of European superiority over the wild and uncontrolled Caucasus. As a domesticated Asia, Russia could avoid the sterility of Europe, and comfortably accommodate the other within itself.

A less favorable comparison, also bearing traces of Pushkin, is found in the episode described in Verkhovsky's first letter. In Pushkin's poem, the prisoner's Circassian captors behead slaves during the feast of Bairam. In *Ammalat-Bek* a captain Vetovich boasts he can cut off the head of a bullock with a dagger, following which among the rest of the soldiers "arose the desire to do the same: let's cut."[15] Their inability to sever the heads cleanly foreshadows the lurid passage in which Ammalat hacks away at Verkhovsky's corpse, when only "at the fifth blow the head broke off from the body."[16] The Russians are attempting to demonstrate their prowess with local weaponry, Ammalat wants to persuade Akhmet-Khan to give him his daughter Seltaneta's hand, but both instances represent an act of unnecessary and repelling violence. The similarity of the phrase used—"with his left hand he swung an enormous dagger"[17] and "he swung the dagger several times"[18]—further underlines this parallel. These three episodes see a double reversal of the identity of the slaughterer—from Caucasian to Russian to Caucasian—which cumulatively has the

don: Penguin, 2003), 3.

5 Maria Todorova, "Does Russian Orientalism Have a Russian Soul? A Contribution to the Debate between Nathaniel Knight and Adeeb Khalid," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 1, no. 4 (2000): 724.

6 Mark Bassin, "Geographies of Imperial Identity", in *The Cambridge History of Russia volume 2: Imperial Russia, 1689–1917*, ed. Dominic Lieven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 48.

7 Said, *Orientalism*, 8.

8 Ibid., 109.

9 Ibid., 87.

10 Ibid., 117.

11 Susan Layton, *Russian literature and empire: the conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 112.

12 Ibid., 126–7.

13 Layton, *Russian literature and empire*, 87.

14 Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh, vol. 1.*, 524.

15 Ibid., 474.

16 Ibid., 538.

17 Ibid., 474.

18 Ibid., 538.

effect of blurring the distinction between soldier and killer, making the Russians seem as senseless and violent as the tribes they are fighting.

In another interpretation, however, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky seems to imply that any real reconciliation between Russia and the Caucasus is not only dangerous but impossible. The destructive nature of the encounter between self and other posited by Hegel can be seen in action between Verkhovsky as West and Ammalat as East. Verkhovsky asks for Ammalat's life to be spared—he recognizes him as another human being, another self-consciousness like himself—which, eventually, leads to his own death, as Ammalat is unable to do the same. Before it is able to recognize other consciousnesses, the Hegelian subject "exerts itself as a kind of pure will, where any sense of estrangement from the world is countered by the destruction of the object,"[19] and this is exactly what takes place with Ammalat. Unable to reconcile himself with his place between two worlds, his desire drives him to distraction, and then to destruction. As Laura Zaper explains, Ammalat's absorption of Russian culture leaves him estranged from his own: "The description of these lands showed me that the Tartars occupy a small corner of the earth, that they are wretched savages compared to European peoples, and that no-one thinks or knows anything of the whole lot of them, nor of their horsemen - or even wants to know!"[20] The only thing that can fill this void is his increasingly intense love for Seltaneta,[21] which due to his estrangement from both cultures is able to supersede his sense of duty to, or friendship with, Verkhovsky: "what is friendship? I have a friend in Verkhovsky, an affectionate, honest, attentive friend… but what can I do? In my heart there is room only for Seltaneta."[22]

Similarly, Zaper observes that, despite his attempts to Europeanize Ammalat, Verkhovsky has fully accepted the hierarchical division of Europe from Asia as demonstrated by his view of Asia as "this cradle of humanity where the mind until even now remains swaddled,"[23] and therefore remains unable to see him as anything other than a representative of an inferior civilization.[24] Ammalat remains the other to Verkhovsky, and vice versa: neither can recognize the other as an equal and this leads to their mutual destruction. Ammalat meets his end at the hand of Verkhovsky's brother, whose function as a proxy for his kin suggests he is also a proxy for Russians as a whole. In this way, the conflict between individuals comes to represent the Russian

19 Robert Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Routledge, 2002), 73.

20 Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, 482–3.

21 Laura Zaper, *The Oriental hero in the Caucasus works of A. A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky,* (PhD Thesis, Indiana: Indiana University, 1999), 103.

22 Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, 483–484.

23 Ibid., 525.

24 Zaper, *The Oriental hero,* 114.

project in the Caucasus as based on a fundamental and insurmountable divide.

While *Ammalat-Bek* may include depictions similar to Pushkin's idealized and "invented" Circassians who were embraced as "surrogate selves,"[25] its dialectic of self and other is more complex. The conflict of identity in this story leads to rejection by both societies; at the same time, the Occidental and Oriental heroes are more alike than not, and capable, up to a point, of coexisting. The equation of Circassian and Russian violence reveals a less desirable side to the adoption of Caucasian habits and identity, and simultaneously undermines the moral and religious high ground assumed by Russians in their role as European-style conquerors, "carrying enlightenment to backwards continents."[26] *Ammalat-Bek* at once collapses and reinforces the cultural divide, showing identity as simultaneously fluid and immutable and the Orient as both the other and the self.

Mikhail Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* reworks and elaborates on the ideas found in Pushkin's and Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's earlier works. Peter Scotto has advocated reading for "ideologies of imperialism" in 'Bela', and that the Orientalism of this section acts as a counterweight to the world of "society" depicted in the other story of doomed seduction, 'Princess Mary'.[27] *A Hero of Our Time* offers an all-encompassing vista of humanity, with Pechorin's supreme egotism as the force uniting East and West. The intersection of identity and empire is subtler than in *Ammalat-Bek*, due in part to the famously fragmented narrative, though the struggle between selves remains the crux of the novel.

There are some obvious markers of Orientalism, most of which appear first in 'Bela' and are echoed in later sections. The chapter is framed as the notes of an unnamed narrator who, like a typical amateur Orientalist, is traveling in the exotic south. The description of the snow-capped, inaccessible mountains and the silver and gold of the jewel-like valley comes straight from the tradition of the sublime Caucasus beloved by poets.[28] With this local color and the narrator's claims to authenticity, 'Bela' begins like a travelogue, encouraging its reception as a reliable source of knowledge.[29] We meet Maksim Maksimych, the archetypal *kavkazets* who sees his role as an interpreter of local peculiarities for the

25 Layton, *Russian literature and empire*, 87.

26 Nicholas Riasanovsky, "The Place of Russia in Eurasia: Some Brief Historical and Historiographical Remarks", in *The Place of Russia in Europe and Asia*, ed. Gyula Szvák (Boulder: Social Studies Monographs, 2010), 169.

27 Peter Scotto, "Prisoners of the Caucasus: Ideologies of Imperialism in Lermontov's 'Bela'," *PMLA* 107, no. 2 (1992): 257.

28 Cynthia Marsh, "Lermontov and the Romantic Tradition: The Function of Landscape in 'A Hero of Our Time'," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 66, no. 1 (1988): 37. See also Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: a Russian Poetics of Empire*, 25.

29 Layton, *Russian literature and empire*, 21.

newcomer (and by extension, the reader). As a Russian officer of long service in the Caucasus, he awards himself the right to describe its inhabitants as "Awful beasts these Asiatics! [...] I know them well, they can't fool me!"[30] His knowledge carries authority, and as a 'Westerner' he can define the Orient according to his own experience. Together these two amateur ethnographers will speak for the Orient, guiding the reader through the unfamiliar Caucasus, and later through the equally alien landscape of Pechorin's soul. This structural parallel is one way in which the novel aligns Pechorin with the other, a pattern that will be discussed further below.

The affective power of the Caucasian landscape on its Russian observers is a recurring motif, reflecting Said's notion of the Orient as material to be used by the Western writer for therapeutic purposes.[31] "What matters about the Orient is what it lets happen to Chateaubriand, what it allows his spirit to do, what it permits him to reveal about himself, his ideas, his expectations"[32]: this describes precisely the dynamic of *A Hero of Our Time*. The wild, sublime beauty of the south imbues Pechorin with "some rapturous feeling,"[33] the "night-time dew and mountain breeze cooled [Pechorin's] burning head,"[34] and the mountains form a cathartic "amphitheater" in which he can be renewed and purified.[35] For Pechorin the Caucasus are a means of escape, not only from the boredom and falsity of Russian society but from his own emotions.

Bela herself, as the fantasy Circassian beauty, is an embodiment of the eroticized, feminized and subjugated Caucasus that Layton describes in her chapter 'Feminizing the Caucasus'. Scotto writes that Pechorin's actions and self-justifications are in accordance with the cultural expectations of how Russian men should behave towards Caucasian women who, as non-Russians and non-Christians, could be used and abused without fear of reprisals.[36] For Pechorin, Bela is nothing more than a distraction, but in abducting her he makes her 'spoiled goods' and ensures she can never return home—when he grows tired of her, she can no longer exist. She dies as a result of Pechorin's disregard for her status as an independent, autonomous being. The dual objectification of women and the Caucasus continues in the subtle comparisons of women and animals, particularly horses. With her black eyes, Bela is likened to a mountain chamois, and in the same breath Kazbich's horse's eyes are described as being "as fine as Bela's."[37] Pechorin asks Bela's brother Azmat to steal her in exchange for this magnificent horse, as Bela is nothing more than an exotic object, exchangeable

30 Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii, vol. 4* , 10.
31 Said, *Orientalism*, 158. See also Layton, *Russian literature and empire*, 52.
32 Said, *Orientalism, 173.*
33 Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 68.
34 Ibid., 142.
35 Ibid., 68.
36 Scotto, "Prisoners of the Caucasus," 252.
37 Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 16–17.

and exploitable.

Pechorin admits that "sometimes I understand the Vampire,"[38] and indeed he drains life from the world around him, exhausting both Bela and Princess Mary like he wears out his horse. He finds boundless enjoyment in the possession of another's soul, and feels "that insatiable hunger which consumes everything in its path."[39] Pechorin's capricious, acquisitive and destructive exploitation (both sexual and emotional) of others parallels the economic exploitation of the rich resources of the Caucasus and violent subjugation of its peoples by the Russian imperial machine.[40] His belief in fate, which as Layton points out he uses to absolve himself of the responsibility for the damage he inflicts on others,[41] corresponds to the idea of tsarist autocracy as wielding God-given power, and of the necessity of Russia forcibly bringing the Caucasus into the light of Europe. Thus, not only are Pechorin's all-consuming egotism and supreme will enabled by the imperialist ideologies of Russia's Caucasian campaign, as Scotto argues[42] : they are those ideologies writ small, transposed from the clash of civilizations to the level of the individual.

However, as in *Ammalat-Bek*, other interpretations suggest themselves. Pechorin is also a man of fluid and indeterminate identity, neither accepted by nor accepting of East or West. The first narrator remarks upon the "ability of the Russian to adapt to the habits of the people among whom he happens to be living,"[43] a facility Pechorin possesses to an extreme degree. He delights in his ability to be mistaken for a Circassian, deliberately dressing the part and imitating their riding technique to the point that he can boast "I have in fact been told that on horseback, in my Circassian costume, I look more like a Kabardian than many a real Kabardian."[44] This desire to 'go native' was, as Mikail Mamedov attests, fairly widespread among Russian soldiers in the Caucasus: Bestuzhev-Marlinsky famously fashioned himself as a Caucasian, dressing in the local costume and mastering several local languages.[45] The imperial troops also adopted the highlanders' modes of warfare, conducting bloody stealth attacks on villages whose inhabitants they ironically now resembled.[46] Going native is therefore a way of operating outside of conventional moral limits. Similarly, Pechorin makes use of his own flair for deception when acting immorally (or amorally), allowing himself to be misidentified as a thieving

38 Ibid., 118.
39 Ibid., 101.
40 Layton, *Russian literature and empire*, 176.
41 Ibid., 214.
42 Scotto, "Prisoners of the Caucasus," 253.
43 Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 28–29.
44 Ibid., 88.
45 Lewis Bagby, *Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinksy and Russian Byronism,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 247.
46 Mikail Mamedov, "'Going Native' in the Caucasus: Problems of Russian Identity, 1801-64", *The Russian Review* 67, no. 2 (2008): 285.

Circassian.[47] Mary mistakes Pechorin for a local bandit, and his mocking response in French is doubly confusing, as it implies he is even more European, and therefore more civilized, than the Russians. He channels his violence through words and duels, the tools of the civilized European, but he is no less a "dangerous man": Mary compares him to an assassin, exclaiming "I would rather perish in the woods, under an assassin's knife, than under your tongue."[48]

Pechorin is more Caucasian than the Caucasians, more European than the Europeans—and yet he is neither, for his self is too unstable. He shares Ammalat's fault of being neither/nor, although in Pechorin's case it is because he is too adept at simulating the other, to the extent that it threatens the integrity of his self—a self that is, in Lacanian terms, "permeable for the Other and convertible into the Other."[49] He also shares Ammalat's fundamental lack and drive to assert his subjectivity and have it recognized by others. However, his misanthropy prevents him from reciprocating this recognition, leading to the destruction of the other. Joining Pechorin's fatalism and death-wish— "maybe I want to be killed"[50] —is Grushnitsky's articulation of the Hegelian subject's dilemma: "there is not room on this Earth for both of us."[51] Pechorin looks upon the "sufferings and joys of others only in relation to myself, as the nourishment that sustains my mental forces"[52]: the people and landscape of the Caucasus provide the material for Pechorin's attempt to resolve his conflicted identity, just as they are the means for Russia to assert itself as a European imperial power. In Lermontov's antihero, imperial will and romantic individualism converge and consume all other living things.

A seam of destructiveness and violence, both real and imaginary, runs through both novels. The protagonists must fight in order to achieve selfhood, and inevitably this leads to the destruction of the others they encounter. Their identity nevertheless remains a site of conflict. Ammalat's dilemma is his inability to reconcile the opposing influences of European Russia and Asia. Pechorin, on the other hand, seems to possess an identity so protean that he slips expertly between his different selves, with the result that neither characters nor reader can identify his 'true' self—if indeed he has one. As examples of Lermontov's "half-Russian, half-Asian creatures"[53] both protagonists experience an alienation that prevents them from feeling they belong either in East or West, and end by rejecting and being rejected by both societies.

Ammalat-Bek and *A Hero of Our Time* present a dramatization of Russia's identity crisis. The parallels are intensified by the use of the Caucasus, the site of Russia's battle to prove itself as a European empire. Just as Pechorin and Ammalat's negotiation of their own subjectivity leads to bloodshed, the Caucasian expansion entailed the brutal subjugation of an entire region as both a prerequisite and an inevitable consequence of Russia's desire to define its own identity. Both novels illustrate this fundamental ambivalence, revealing the hopes and anxieties associated with Russian imperial ambitions in the Oriental south.

47 Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii,* 124.
48 Ibid., 103.
49 Diana Gasparyan, "Mirror for the Other: Problem of the Self in Continental philosophy (from Hegel to Lacan)," *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science* 48, no. 1 (2014): 14.
50 Lermontov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 136.
51 Ibid., 138.
52 Ibid., 101.
53 Ibid., 159.

Synthesis and Subversion: Venedikt Erofeev's *Moscow–Petushki* as Picaresque

Yana Zlochistaya

Written over the course of a few alcohol-fueled months in 1969, Venedikt Erofeev's late-Soviet novella *Moscow–Petushki* quickly took its place among the underground network of *samizdat* literature, reproduced in secret and passed on from reader to reader for two decades until its first licensed publication in the Soviet Union. That this strange text—one of the only works Erofeev ever completed before his untimely death from throat cancer at the age of fifty one—retained an avid underground following, holding its own amid other works by more famous and prolific writers of the era, serves as a testament to its magnetic power. The events of the story, which unfold over a period of about twenty four hours, are narrated in truly madcap fashion by Venechka Erofeev,[1] a thirty-year-old homeless man with penchant for drinking, who boards a train travelling from Moscow to the village of Petushki, where he hopes to reunite with his lover and infant son. On the trip, he reminisces about his life and converses with the other passengers, all the while becoming increasingly inebriated as he empties the bottles of cheap liquor he brings with him on his journey. Finally, he falls into a hallucinatory drunken stupor, as a result of which he ends up missing his stop and travelling all the way to Moscow, where he disembarks only to be chased down and violently murdered by a mysterious cohort of four men.[2]

The defining feature of this novella, which simultaneously draws in the reader and holds them at arm's length, is its ungraspability. *Moscow–Petushki* continuously defies readers' expectations, as Erofeev borrows from recognizable formal structuring modes only to distort them to the point of absurdity. The novella's subtitle identifies the text as a *поэма*, a "narrative poem," yet by the final page, it has at various points taken on the characteristics of numerous literary traditions, including holy texts, Soviet textbooks, political satires, social realist tales, chivalric romances, and picaresque novels. These generic crossovers interact in ways that undermine any attempt at constructing a single unifying system of logic. Adding another layer of difficulty is the never-ending deluge of intertextual allusions spanning literature, history, and politics.[3] It should therefore not come as a surprise that, though there is an ever-expanding body of critical literature focusing on Erofeev's novella, no two analyses come to the same conclusion as to its intentions. Consequently, recent articles have focused on the disorder of Erofeev's novella as its own organizing force. Ann Komaromi argues that the text's "'mutually perverting' centripetal and centrifugal forces do not annihilate one another—the overall impact of the text depends on them sustaining one another."[4] In other words, disorder does not function merely as a deconstructing force; rather, the novella, in its formal boundlessness, relies on the dynamic tension of many simultaneous planes of reference to maintain its structural integrity.

This essay does not set out to propose a single, unifying formal structure to "explain" the novella, as such an approach runs counter to the spirit of the work. Instead, it will focus on how Erofeev constructs the boundlessness of the text, how a chronicle narrated by a figure as socially and psychologically crushed as Venechka nevertheless evades formal categorization so thoroughly that no single explanation of the text succeeds in encompassing all that it contains. To this end, I will explore the influence of the picaresque form as a structuring tool in Erofeev's novella. The freedom that the form offers, with its ties both to the chivalric romance and to social satire, allows Erofeev to tap into a tradition that itself arose as a primarily subversive tool. To the extent that the picaresque structure holds up in *Moscow–Petushki*, it

1 Notably, the novella's author and protagonist share a name. To avoid confusion, I will follow the example of other critics, who refer to the author as "Erofeev" and to the protagonist as "Venechka," the diminutive form of the name "Venedikt."

2 The identities of the men have been debated in critical literature, with the most common interpretations naming them as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse or the four foundational figures of Russian Communism; Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. See: Ann Komaromi, "Venedikt Erofeev's 'Moskva-Petushki': Performance and Performativity in the Late Soviet Text," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 55, no. 3 (2011): 431.

3 Boris Gasparov and Irina Paperno, "Vstan' i idi," *Slavica Hierosolymitana* 5 (1981): 387.

4 Komaromi, "Performance and Performativity," 31.

does so only because it allows for flexibility and takes for granted the world's chaotic nature. Identifying Venechka among a long history of picaro figures contextualizes his irreverence and unfiltered honesty, but it only begins to explain the larger subversive endeavor undertaken in the novella. Further clarification comes from analyzing the narrative voice in *Moscow–Petushki*, the generative nature of which allows Venechka's narration to transcend formal limitations. With Venechka at the helm, the text unfolds and then folds back in on itself in perpetuity—even as structuring modalities appear, Venechka's narration subsumes them like the gravitational force of a black hole.

Historians often trace the origins of the picaresque to *Lazarillo de Tormes*, an anonymous novel published in Spain in 1554. Its criticism of Spanish social hierarchy, particularly the pointed barbs it directs at corrupt priests, quickly endeared the masses to the novel, in spite of its eventual prohibition by the country's religious authorities.[5] Thus began a tradition of the picaresque as a satirical form which found its place in mass culture thanks in large part to its anti-authoritarian bent. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the picaresque had spread to France, England, and Germany, and by the early nineteenth century, it had made its way into Russia. Understanding *Moscow–Petushki* in the context of this tradition first requires establishing some definition of the picaresque form itself. To this end, I will turn to Ulrich Wicks, who proposes examining the picaresque not as a genre, but as a fictional mode. He builds upon Robert Scholes' [6]work on the ideal types of narrative fiction, which places the picaresque on a spectrum of fictional modes organized according to their attitude towards the world: romance is thus placed on one end, as the mode which operates in the most idealized version of the world, and satire is placed at the other, as the mode which exists to mock and subvert a dark, disordered version of reality. Wicks locates the picaresque on the latter side of the spectrum, between satire and comedy, writing, "I would suggest…that the essential picaresque situation—the fictional world posited by the picaresque mode—is that of an unheroic protagonist, worse than we, caught up in a chaotic world, worse than ours, in which he is on an eternal journey of encounters that allow him to be alternately both victim of that world and its exploiter."[7] The limited success of the protagonist's exploits mediate the inherent darkness of the picaresque situation, but these exploits still occur within the context of a world fundamentally lacking in moral order. Thus, if satire is typically underpinned by a feeling of hopelessness about the world it describes, then picaresque is underpinned by a feeling of instability.

5 Felipe E. Ruan, "Market, Audience, and the Fortunes and Adversities of 'Lazarillo De Tormes Castigado' (1573)," *Hispanic Review* 79, no. 2 (2011): 189-211.

6 Robert C. Stephenson, "The Picaresque Novel Reaches Russia," *Studies in English*, no. 25 (1945): 19-20.

7 Ulrich Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach," *PMLA* 89, no. 2 (1974): 242.

It is easy to see how *Moscow–Petushki* fits into this description. The purported orderliness of the Soviet system provides a vivid contrast with the chaos of Venechka's daily life, in which everyone acts perversely and nothing works the way it should: prostitutes become saviors, hiccups undermine ideology, trains run in the wrong direction. The very fact of Venechka's existence flies in the face of Soviet ideology, which posits that everyone must do their part to contribute to the realization of the communist ideal. The Soviet worldview leaves no place for marginality. Consequently, Venechka occupies the liminal spaces that exist on the outskirts of social consciousness, hiding on porches, drinking in gangways, and escaping up side staircases. Though Venechka lives in Moscow, the Kremlin— the nucleus of Soviet political control—has a kind of repelling power over him, so that even when he seeks it out, he always ends up back at the central train station instead.[8] In fact, the entirety of his journey from Moscow, the epicenter of the Soviet empire, to Petushki, located at the end of the line, underscores a desire to escape into the periphery.

Though any formal delineation between fictional forms contains an element of permeability, the picaresque lends itself to generic crossovers with particular ease, as evidenced by the inherent tension with its modal antithesis, the chivalric romance. This form, which originated in the twelfth century, chronicles the adventures of a knight who personifies the idealized medieval characteristics of valor, gallantry, and courtly love. Structurally, both the romance and the picaresque are panoramic, meaning that their plot is propelled not by the development of people or events, but by a single sequence—the quest— around which the characters and plot developments of the novel converge. The people that the protagonist encounters on his journey tend to be "types" rather than fleshed-out characters, often serving as exaggerated versions of the ideology, social position, or career that they embody (e.g. the beleaguered damsel in chivalric romances, the corrupt priest in medieval picaresque, and the Decembrist in *Moscow–Petushki*). The two forms are also bound by their episodic nature, which tends to follow a set pattern in which the protagonist lands in a precarious situation from which he must extricate himself, not without some unexpected difficulty, only to be thrust into yet another unexpected, similarly dangerous scenario. In the world of the romance, however, moral order inevitably gains the upper ground. As C.S. Lewis writes, at the conclusion of a chivalric novel, "All the apparent contradictions must be harmonised. A Model must be built which will get everything in without a clash; and it can do this only by becoming intricate, by mediating its unity through a great, and finely ordered, multiplicity."[9]

8 Venedikt Erofeev, *Moskva–Petrushki: poema*, (St. Petersburg: Azbuka-Attikus, 2012), 12.

9 C.S. Lewis, "The Medieval Situation," in *The Discarded Image: An Introduc-*

The picaresque, on the other hand, reflects and distorts this unity like a funhouse mirror. Whereas the romance moves in a relatively linear trajectory towards a satisfactory and all-encompassing conclusion, the picaresque relies upon what Wicks calls the "Sisyphus rhythm," whereby the episodic nature of the text folds back in on itself, leaving the protagonist right back where they started.[10] Venechka's life is also governed by this agonizing cyclicality. He experiences it both on a daily basis in his endless progression from sobriety to drunkenness to hangover, and in the broader patterns of his existence, as he undergoes a series of successes and failures in his professional and spiritual life. The fateful round trip between Moscow and Petushki also fits into this outline. In true picaresque fashion, his expedition comes to naught. He ends up back where he began, and his death provides finality, but not closure. Devoid of a grounding moral center, the novella transforms his attempt at forward progression into a painful exercise in futility.

Yet it would be inaccurate to portray the picaresque as the complete inverse of the romance, as the disorder of picaresque reality exists *simultaneously* with a strong underlying desire for the order of the romance.[11] Picaresque episodes contain within themselves the potential to unfold according to romantic rules, but this potential remains unrealized as the chaos of the picaresque reality inevitably undermines any hope of a neat resolution. With every subversive twist, the picaresque eschews the structure imposed by the moral order of the romance, but the traces of romantic potential inevitably leave behind a sense of disappointment. This tension lies at the very heart of *Moscow–Petushki*. Its basic structure, in which a male figure embarks on a quest, overcoming obstacles in the hope of reuniting with his lover and living with her in peace, remains in keeping with romantic tradition, rendering Venechka's eventual failure all the more heartbreaking.

In addition to its interplay with chivalric romance, the other defining feature of the picaresque is its unheroic protagonist, the picaro.[12] Situated in the middle of a chaotic world, he is a cunning, pragmatic figure, usually lower-class, who finds himself rejected by the social order and propelled through life by the harsh winds of fate. Defiant in the face of the endless challenges that stand in his way, he navigates the world alone, relying on nothing but his own dogged will for survival. While the picaro largely manages to evade disaster, often against all odds, his underlying feeling

tion to Medieval and Renaissance Literature. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11.

10 Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative," 243.

11 Ibid., 242.

12 Though the picaro is traditionally a male figure, thus justifying my use of the word "he," I do want to acknowledge that there exists a smaller group of female picaros, perhaps the most recognizable of which is Daniel Defoe's conniving protagonist Moll Flanders. See: Ian Watt, "The Recent Critical Fortunes of Moll Flanders." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1, no. 1 (1967): 109.

of helplessness in the face of an unpredictable world remains an important common thread. In this sense, Venechka Erofeev fits seamlessly within the picaresque tradition.[13] Venechka experiences total alienation on two fronts: first, as a result of constant social rejection, and second, as a result of his own internal rejection of social mores. Thus, Venechka's potential for human connection is severely limited. The only people who exhibit any sympathy towards him are just like him—lonely wanderers relying on alcohol for the warmth the world is unable to provide. His interactions with them offer little potential for social reintegration, as none of them wield any power within Soviet society. Even the quest itself, which usually allows the picaro some control over his own existence, instead further reinforces Venechka's lack of agency. The medieval picaro typically travelled by foot or on horseback, thus forging his own path toward his desired destination and deviating from it as he saw fit. Venechka does not have these options. Instead, he must board a train which propels him forward (and then backward) along a predetermined route, stopping at intervals determined by factors entirely outside of his control. Even he senses his own impotence, complaining, "И вообще раньше поезда быстрее ходили... А теперь, черт знает, стоит—а зачем стоит?... И так у каждого столба." ("And anyway, trains used to run much faster… But now, it's just standing there…why the hell is it standing?... It stops at every post as it is").[14] Unable to determine his own route, unable to control when to stop and when to start again, Venechka experiences his lack of agency as a frustrating inevitability. As the train speeds through the Soviet heartland, all he can do is name the stations as they pass by, locating himself in relation to his destination even as he admits his inability to control the manner in which he gets there.

From a formal standpoint, Venechka's solitude and helplessness have an important purpose. In his analysis of the chronotope of the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin—who refers to the picaro as the *плут*, or the rogue[15]—argues that social isolation brings with it a unique privilege: "The right to be 'other' in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available."[16] "Otherness" gives the picaro the

13 It should be noted that even Venechka's name is significant in the regard. Using the diminutive form to identify the protagonist has a long history in the picaresque tradition: *Lazarillo de Tormes*, usually considered the first European picaresque novel, derives the name of its eponymous protagonist from the formal "Lázaro," a technique which reinforces the protagonist's lack of social standing and engenders the reader's sympathy by emphasizing his childlike naïveté and powerlessness. See: Francisco de Quevedo, "Introduction," in *Lazarillo de Tormes and The Grifter (El Buscon): Two Novels of the Low Life in Golden Age Spain*, (Hackett Publishing, 2015), xvii.

14 Erofeev, *Moskva–Petushki,* 187.

15 In this essay, I will use the terms "picaro" and "rogue" interchangeably, as they describe the same type of character, though from different critical lenses.

16 Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Forms of

capability to see through the absurdity of established social structures and to point out those absurdities to the other characters and, through them, to the reader. He does not suffer the backlash associated with this kind of criticism because he has no social standing left to lose. When others challenge his subversive behavior, the picaro can hide behind ignorance or incomprehension as an excuse (whether or not that excuse is genuine). In this way, he resembles the Russian figure of the *юродивый*, or the holy fool, whose ascetic lifestyle serves as a reflection and a judgment of the world he inhabits.[17] Unlike the holy fool, however, the picaro still has some ties to this world, and he fights to establish a place for himself in ways that can be decidedly unholy. Thus, he occupies a unique narrative position "in life, but not of it."[18] This opens the door for the picaresque's most versatile and powerful subversive tool: its irreverent narration.

Beyond any explicit criticism that the picaro levels against the social order, it is the narrative act which serves as his ultimate gesture of rebellion. As Wicks points out, there exists an inherent irony in the discrepancy between the picaro's lowly status and his gall in telling his own story. The narrative role allows the picaro a level of credence that society has never granted him; thus, narration becomes a gesture of self-assertion. Fully aware of this power, the picaro also understands that reclaiming agency over his story depends on the reader's acceptance of his version of events. Consequently, he frames his narrative as a confession, "luring [the reader] into his world through ostensibly moral designs."[19] This strategy is but an extension of his broader survival approach. Aware that danger lurks behind every corner, the picaro has trained himself to be outer-focused. By virtue of a chameleon-like ability to blend in to any situation, he gladly sacrifices personal identity for the sake of self-preservation. As Laura Behara puts it, "the picaro is the rogue-hero of a thousand—not faces, but masks; this external excess disguises, betrays and perpetuates an internal lack."[20] He can be whatever he thinks his interlocutors want him to be, and in this case, the reader becomes another unseen interlocutor whom the picaro seeks to win over. Wicks goes on to explain, "First-person picaresque can thus be seen as a narrative version (between the picaro and the willing reader 'victim') of the tricks in the picaro's remembered life experiences (between the picaro and his landscape)."[21] Thus, the narrative itself becomes the locus of a power transfer, as readers can only access the picaro's story if they agree to view the world through his eyes.

It is with the question of narrative intent that *Moscow–Petushki*'s ties to the picaresque form begin to unravel. Though Venechka's "otherness" locates him within the picaro tradition, his narration is not an outer-focused projection, but an inner-focused attempt at piecing together a reality that incorporates all the disparate and contradictory facets of his lived experience. That is not to say that he does not have the power to influence others through his words. On the contrary, his linguistic prowess serves as his primary tool for survival, taking the place of the picaro's characteristic guile as the vehicle which allows him to navigate his precarious existence. Aboard the train, his knack for storytelling proves essential in ensuring a safe passage, even serving as an alternate form of currency. Instead of bribing the train inspector Semyonich with alcohol in lieu of purchasing a ticket, like the other passengers, Venechka bribes him with an ongoing recitation of world history, drawing a comparison to Scheherazade from *A Thousand and One Nights*.[22] His stories intrigue Semyonich so much that for three years, Venechka avoids incurring his wrath, leaving him the only person who remains "в живых и непобитых" ("living and unharmed") despite never having given the inspector any alcohol.[23] The strange hypnotizing effect of Venichka's recitation of his extensive excursion across Europe on his fellow travelers further exemplifies his narrative prowess. When his monologue is cut off by the arrival of the ticket inspector, it is as if a spell has been broken: "Но не только рассказ оборвался: и пьяная полудремота черноусого, и сон декабриста,—все было прервано *в полпути*" ("It was not just the story that was cut off: so was the drunken half-slumber of the man with the black moustache, and the nap of the Decembrist—everything was interrupted *midway*.")[24] The significance of this phrasing is twofold: First, by linking the progression of his narrative with the drowsiness of his listeners, Venechka implies that the very existence of the other characters is contingent upon his attention—as Venechka speaks, they fade into unconsciousness, to be revived only when he goes silent. Second, the word "midway" connotes spatial progression, which implies that the end of his narrative also marks the end of the journey itself, meaning that his transcontinental journey is a purely linguistic invention, not a description of events that occurred previously in time. This is a profound departure from the picaresque, where the events of the narrator's life shape the way he tells his story. In *Moscow–Petushki*, by contrast, utterance supersedes plot.

The effect of Venechka's storytelling on other characters within the text mirrors

Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: Univ. Texas Press, 1981), 159.

17 Mikhail Epshtein, "Posle karnavala, ili vechnyi Venichka," in *Vera i obraz: religioznoe bessoznatel'noe v russkoi kul'ture 20-go veka,* (Tenafly, N.J.: Hermitage, 1994), 174.

18 Bakhtin, "Chronotope of the Novel," 161.

19 Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative," 244.

20 Laura Behara, "Out of and Into the Void: Picaresque Absence and Annihilation," in *Venedikt Erofeev's Moscow–Petushki: Critical Perspectives*, vol. 14, ed. Karen L. Ryan (Peter Lang Pub Incorporated, 1997), 21.

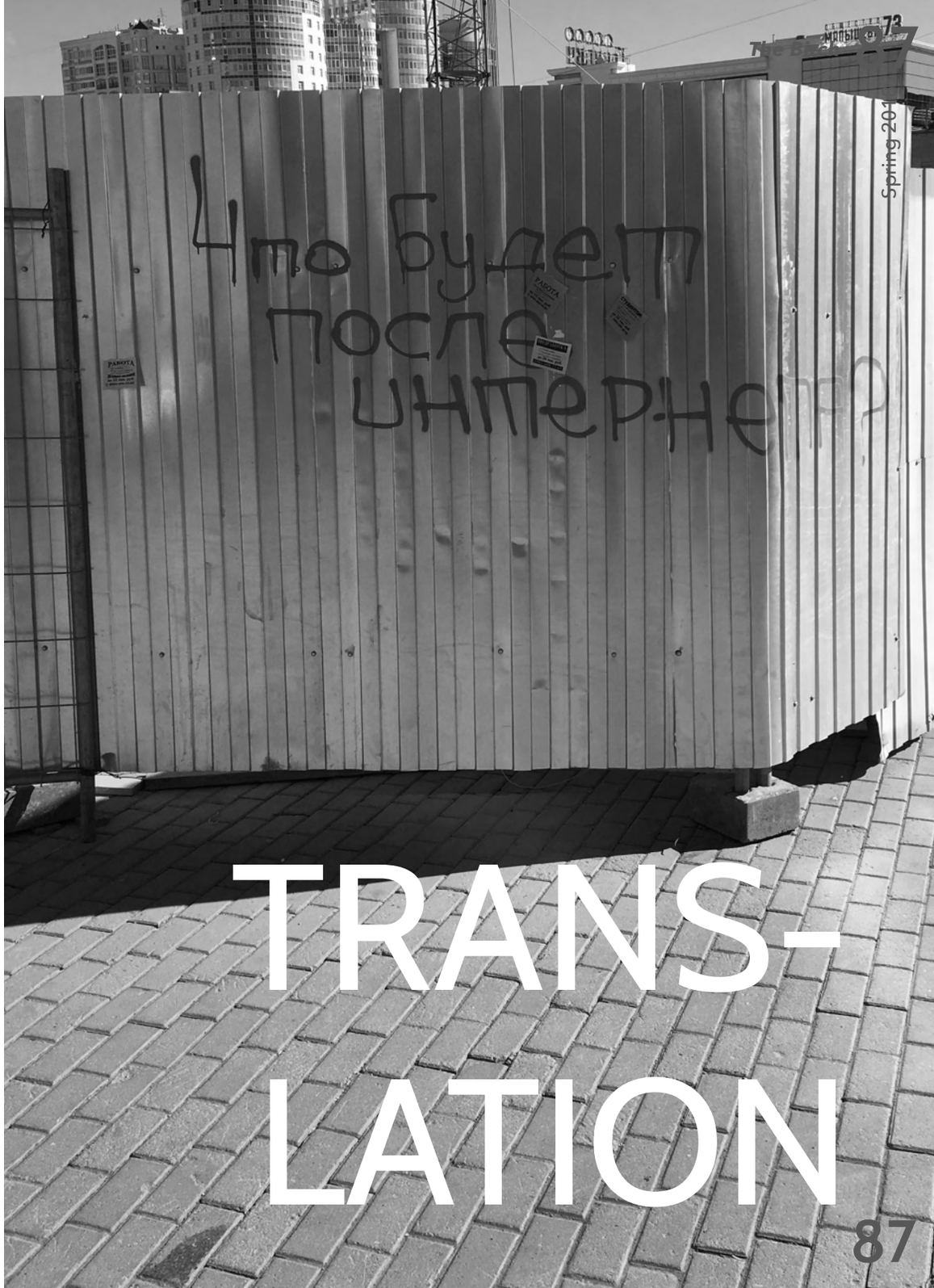
21 Wicks, "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative," 244.

22 Erofeev, *Moskva-Petushki,* 120

23 Ibid., 122

24 Ibid., 118, emphasis added.

the effect of his narration on the reader: though often confusing, it is also undeniably spellbinding. Unlike the traditional picaro, Venechka does not act the part of a trickster. Instead, his narration constructs a reality that is uniquely his own, where the boundaries between immediate external stimuli, world events, Russian poetry, classical music, Soviet sloganeering, and drunken hallucination continuously fuse and morph. Reading Erofeev's text means not just succumbing to narrative trickery, but actively trying to piece together a version of reality that consistently contradicts itself. Venechka does not just describe the world through his eyes; he recreates the world entirely. The generative nature of Venechka's narration allows him to transcend the boundaries of the picaresque form.



TRANS-LATION

«Автобус»
Excerpt from "The Bus"

by Olga Isayeva
translated from the Russian by Jake Hansen

The bus went on and the old, crooked structures of the private sector designated for demolition swam into Antoshka's view. The little houses squinted nearsightedly out from under their awnings, with just the same kind of nearsighted old women behind their dusty windows, carefree chickens on the porches, and bare rugs draped over the fences.

In just a minute the construction site will start rumbling around them, the bus will become somewhat clearer, and Antoshka will plop down on the back seat and watch the former passengers striding ahead yet simultaneously running away backwards with the shrinking buildings, foundation pits, sandy red mountains, and sickly little plants along the side of the road, lain out where the forest used to be.

At one time she and her mother had ridden here often on weekends. By the river and in the forest people had come out by the dozens. All the surroundings rang out with the sounds of voices, the striking of a volleyball, songs accompanied by harmonica, and the buzzing itch of mosquitoes.

After getting off the bus, they ventured into the woods along a lilac path dappled with shade and faded candy wrappers and wandered for a long time in search of a free clearing, from time to time pointing at the gypsy camps of picnic-goers with hammocks and cast-out blankets.

In the light patches between trees, paunchy figures could be seen in family-sized boxers and floral shifts, walking around awkwardly just like bears in a circus, barefoot, over sticks and rough bits of things hidden in the grass. Across the road ran wet little boys who had swum until they turned blue. From the bushes came the scent of campfires and shashlik, and shouts could be heard like "bottoms up" and "God, may this not be our last."

Antoshka looked on with envy; she passionately wanted to be part of that noisy commotion, and her mouth ran with saliva at the sight of those crushed tomatoes and hard-boiled eggs. But her mother led her away from the strangers' merrymaking with a firm hand, and they had to drag themselves farther and farther until, at last, they found some quiet place to spread out near an anthill or a wasps' nest...

That was a long time ago. Now, in place of those groves, ten-story buildings tower and foundation pits gape wide. The nearly empty bus jauntily bumps along to the last stop and Antoshka, at the wrong time as always, began to consider the law of misfortune. She had learned that phenomenon well from the various examples of her neighbors' and classmates' lives, and from her own life as well. Sometimes even one very small mistake will trail behind itself a whole series of connected misfortunes, one after another, and from this accumulated mass there is no way to pull oneself out... Take Antoshka's mother, for example!

If she hadn't fallen in love as a foolish seventeen-year-old and given birth to Antoshka, and had instead, like all normal people, finished school, then she wouldn't have had to toil away her whole life as a laboratory assistant for ChemSmoke; she wouldn't shrilly cry out her favorite little ditty when she was drunk: "I'm the mare and I'm the bull, I'm the man and woman too," she wouldn't call men "tailless curs," and she wouldn't envy her married girlfriends.

From time to time this meant Auntie Nina, who had sat at the same school-desk as mother for nine years. Not only had she finished school, she had contrived to finish college as well. Now she lives in the lap of luxury. But although she's got everything—a husband, a job, and a two-room apartment—she hasn't let it go to her head. On the contrary, as soon as her husband washes off on a business trip, she immediately calls up Antoshka's mother at work and invites her over: "Come on over, Zina, we'll sit and no one will bother us. Just like regular people - we'll have a drink and reminisce about our youth."

To this day Antoshka loves going to Auntie Nina's, and even when she was little she would sometimes pester her mother: "Come on let's go, let's go!" In Nina's house it always smelled deliciously of baked pies, carpets, and expensive polished furniture. Antoshka would take delight in the large space, the freedom, and the cornucopia of interesting items standing on the shelves and hidden in easily accessible spots. While the adults drank vodka in the kitchen from their stout crystal glasses, Antoshka, never losing the thread of their conversation, would periodically snatch chocolate candies from a little vase and inspect the contents of the living room's sideboard, china cabinet, and writing desk with great interest. There really was everything there! But most of all she took a liking to Nina's collection of buttons. She'd never seen such treasure in her whole life. Even now, Antoshka wouldn't be against playing with those buttons, but her age wouldn't allow it.

They would usually leave Nina's place with bags full of stuff. To Antoshka's delight, Nina would pull still almost-new dresses, skirts, and blouses off of hangers without looking and toss them into a "take-home" bag set aside for mother ahead of time. While doing this, she would say as if apologizing, "Zina, your hands work magic. I can't do anything. If they don't fit quite right, I might as well just throw them out."

Mother wasn't squeamish about taking the gifts (snip-snip of the scissors and she'd

have a new dress to show off), but after she kissed her girlfriend repeatedly while leaving and thanked her a hundred times, she always got gloomy on the staircase. Antoshka would remain silent the whole way back, knowing that at these moments her mother could explode for no reason whatsoever, at nothing, and then cry, apologize, and say that it doesn't matter, that she's the happiest person in the whole world because she has such a smart, beautiful daughter, and that some women were "barren as a brick" and always would be.

Antoshka recalls how once, when she was six years old, Nina invited them over for New Years. "My husband," she had said, "invited over the whole laboratory. There will be bachelors too—so Zina honey, don't let me down. Come here in full parade!"

Oh how she had bustled about and fretted and consulted with friends! Rita from Room #10 loaned mother her sheer blouse with black buttons, and Tanya Zhukova loaned her stiletto heels. The whole night before the holiday mother stayed up in her curlers, and before leaving she did such a job with her makeup and perfume that she looked the spitting image of the actress Skobtseva—not a hair different. The other women simply gasped!

The only misfortune was that Antoshka slept through New Year's night itself, first on the bus and then on fur coats behind the shower curtain in Nina's bathroom. All she remembered was how at first she had stared in anticipation through the window waiting for her mother to get home from work and then had suffered while she got dressed up. When at last they set off from the house, the clocks had already almost struck eleven and her eyelids drooped as if they were made of heavy dough.

Snow gusted on the streets. Sharp, silver little specks flashed around iridescent streetlamps. At the bus stop the shivering crowd informed them that on account of New Year's buses weren't running in the city. However, Antoshka and her mother decided to wait until the bitter end. They couldn't just go back to the barracks after all their preparations and trials without getting their due.

They froze and suffered... but in the end a bus did come. An unlicensed driver pulled up in a Santa costume—God save him! While they were packing into the bus and setting off, the clocks struck twelve. For some reason everybody was in great spirits; they opened up champagne and vodka, amicably passed it around (not forgetting the driver) and drank straight from the bottle. Then they sang ribald tunes and danced wildly, but Antoshka was already asleep with an unfinished candy in her mouth, nose buried in the patterns of frost on the bus window. And so she didn't know that her mother carried her in her arms from the bus stop to Nina's house, nor did she know why Nina never invited them back again for New Year's...

Special thanks to Dr. Zoya Polack and to Emily E. Schuckman for their assistance in translating this piece.

«Поэма без героя»
Excerpt from "Poem Without a Hero"

by Anna Akhmatova
translated from the Russian by Rosamond Herling

Petersburg in the year 1913. A lyrical digression: a last remembrance of Tsarskoe Celo. The wind, not quite recalling, not quite prophesying, mutters:

The Yuletide was warmed by the bonfires,
And carriages fell from the bridges,
And the whole mourning city sailed
To an as-yet uncharted destiny,
Along the Neva or against the current—
Just away from their own graves.
On Galernaya street an arch grew black,
In the Gardens a weather vane subtly sang,
And a silver moon grew brightly cool
Over the Silver Age.
Because along all roads,
Because to all thresholds
A shadow drew slowly closer,
The wind ripped posters down from the wall,
The smoke did a dance on the roof
And the lilac smelled of the cemetery.
And cursed by Tsaritsa Avdot'ya,
Dostoyevskian and possessed
The city withdrew in its mist.
And peered out once again from the murk
A Petersburger and a reveler,
A drum beat as before execution…
And always in the frosty darkness,
Pre-war and prodigal and wild,
Lived some kind of future humming,
But then it was heard more dully,
It almost didn't trouble the soul
And drowned in the drifts of the Neva.
Just as in the mirror of the terrible night,
A person both raves and refuses
To recognize themself,
Along the waterfront of legend
Approached the Twentieth Century—
Not calendar, but real.

Петербург 1913 года. Лирическое отступление: последнее воспоминание о Царском Селе. Ветер, не то вспоминая, не то пророчествуя, бормочет:

Были святки кострами согреты,
И валились с мостов кареты,
И весь траурный город плыл
По неведомому назначенью,
По Неве иль против теченья, —
Только прочь от своих могил.
На Галерной чернела арка,
В Летнем тонко пела флюгарка,
И серебряный месяц ярко
Над серебряным веком стыл.
Оттого, что по всем дорогам,
Оттого, что ко всем порогам
Приближалась медленно тень,
Ветер рвал со стены афиши,
Дым плясал вприсядку на крыше
И кладбищем пахла сирень.
И царицей Авдотьей заклятый,
Достоевский и бесноватый,
Город в свой уходил туман.
И выглядывал вновь из мрака
Старый питерщик и гуляка,
Как пред казнью бил барабан...
И всегда в темноте морозной,
Предвоенной, блудной и грозной,
Жил какой-то будущий гул,
Но тогда он был слышен глуше,
Он почти не тревожил души
И в сугробах невских тонул.
Словно в зеркале страшной ночи
И беснуется и не хочет
Узнавать себя человек,
А по набережной легендарной
Приближался не календарный —
Настоящий Двадцатый Век.

«Дыхание»
“Breath”

by Osip Mandelstam
translated from the Russian by Hilah Kohen

I have a body. What ought I do with it,
So singular, so mine, so closely fit?

For quiet joys—of breath, of life renewed—
To whom can I convey my gratitude?

I am the gardener, I am the flower as well,
I am not lonely in this worldly cell.

My breath, my warmth—these have already lain
Upon the everlasting windowpane.

A pattern weaves its way across the glass,
Unrecognizable as moments pass.

Though fog evaporates without a trace,
The cherished pattern cannot be erased.

Дано мне тело—что мне делать с ним,
Таким единым и таким моим?

За радость тихую дышать и жить
Кого, скажите, мне благодарить?

Я и садовник, я же и цветок,
В темнице мира я не одинок.

На стекла вечности уже легло
Мое дыхание, мое тепло.

Запечатлеется на нем узор,
Неузнаваемый с недавних пор.

Пускай мгновения стекает муть—
Узора милого не зачеркнуть.

«Я разный»
Excerpt from “I’m Different”

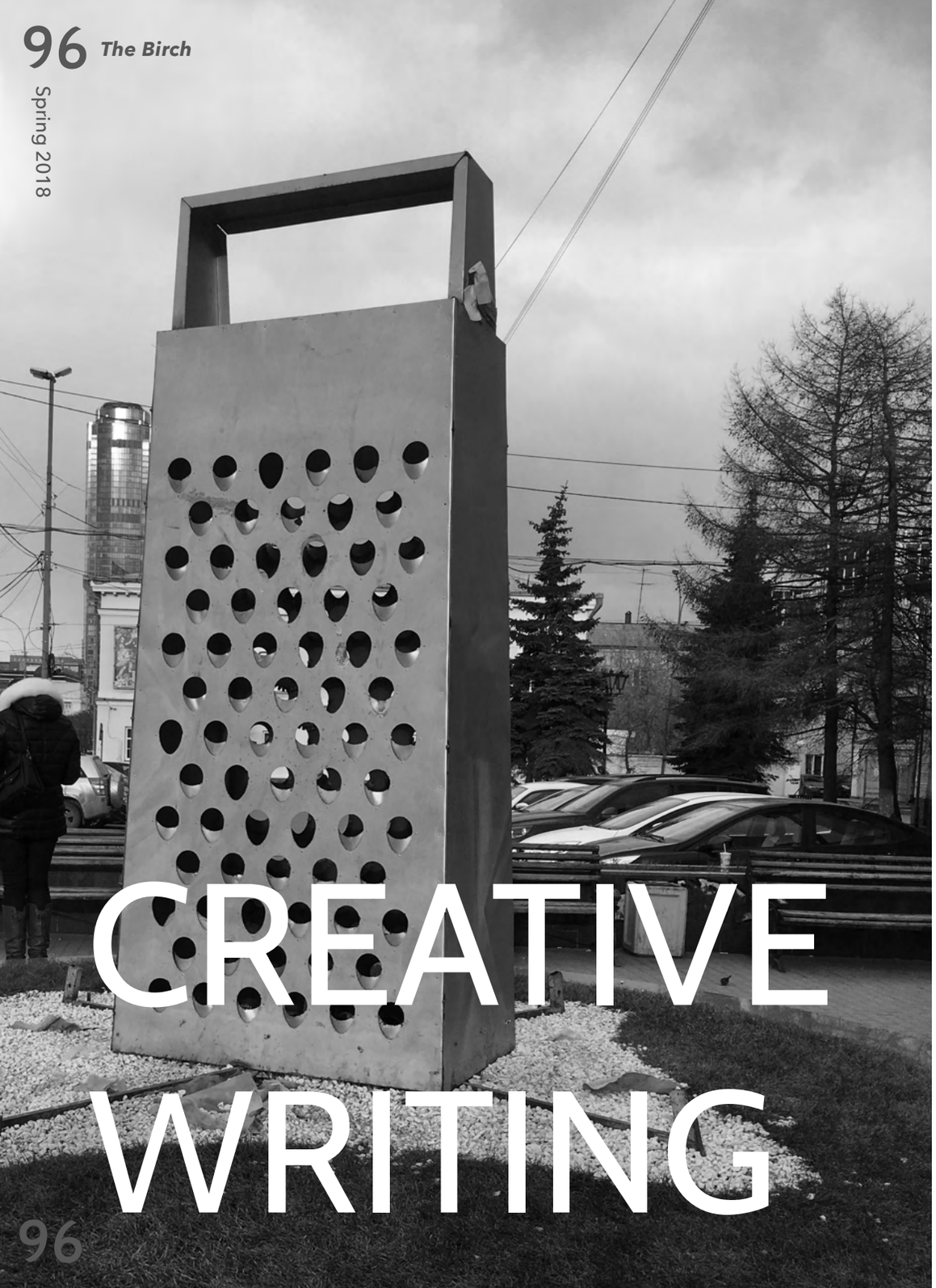
by Eugene Yevtushenko
translated from the Russian by Asya Volkova

Borders get in my way…
I’m uncomfortable
not knowing Buenos Aires,
New York.
I want to wander London as I please,
talk to everyone—
even in my broken English.
Like a boy,
hanging onto the bus,
I want to ride through a morning Paris!
I want art as different
as myself!
Let the art make me restless
and let it surround me on all sides…
I am besieged by artwork anyway.
I see myself in many different things.
I’m close to
both Yesenin,
and Whitman,
a stage enthralled by Mussorgsky
and the virgin lines of Gauguin.

Границы мне мешают...
Мне неловко
не знать Буэнос-Айреса,
Нью-Йорка.
Хочу шататься, сколько надо, Лондоном,
со всеми говорить—
пускай на ломаном.
Мальчишкой,
на автобусе повисшим,
Хочу проехать утренним Парижем!
Хочу искусства разного,
как я!
Пусть мне искусство не дает житья
и обступает пусть со всех сторон...
Да я и так искусством осажден.
Я в самом разном сам собой увиден.
Мне близки
и Есенин,
и Уитмен,
и Мусоргским охваченная сцена,
и девственные линии Гогена.

I like
ice skating,
and scraping my quill
during sleepless nights.
I like
laughing in my enemy’s face
and carrying a lady over a stream.
I devour books
and lug wood,
bask in melancholy,
search for something unclear,
and crunch the frozen crimson pieces
of an August watermelon.
I sing and drink,
not thinking about death,
with arms spread wide,
I fall into the grass,
and if I do die
in this wide world,
I’ll die from the joy
that I’m alive.

Мне нравится
и на коньках кататься,
и, черкая пером,
не спать ночей.
Мне нравится
в лицо врагу смеяться
и женщину нести через ручей.
Вгрызаюсь в книги
и дрова таскаю,
грущу,
чего-то смутного ищу,
и алыми морозными кусками
арбуза августовского хрущу.
Пою и пью,
не думая о смерти,
раскинув руки,
падаю в траву,
и если я умру
на белом свете,
то я умру от счастья,
что живу.



CREATIVE WRITING

Когда ты станешь немного старше

Yulia Alexandr

Когда ты станешь немного старше,
А я (так выйдет) немного стар,
Мы будем солнце топить в Ла-Манше
Под звуки эха чужих гитар,

И вечерами болтать без меры
О Лобачевском и о Толстом;
Я наконец-то отважусь верить
И счастье видеть в совсем простом:

Морозным утром, под теплым пледом,
Твой бархат плеч и румянец щек
Мне станут домом, каких не ведал
Я в жизни долгой своей еще.

Настанет вечер, когда не нужно
Для встречи будет искать причин,
Так неумело и неуклюже

When you are a little older
And I am (it will turn out) a little old,
We will sink the sun in the English Channel
To the sounds of echoes from strangers' guitars.

And in the evenings we will talk endlessly
Of Lobachevsky and Tolstoy;
I will finally find the courage to believe
And to see happiness in the simple:

One frosty morning, under a warm blanket,
Your velvet shoulders and cheeks' blush
Will become a home I've never known
In my long life before.

There will come a night when I'll no longer need
To look for reasons to meet you,

Бубнить слова, подбирать ключи
К твоей улыбке.

Из ран на крыльях
Кровь перестанет бить, как ручей…

Все тайны мира вдруг станут пылью,
Когда уснёшь на моём плече.

И будет солнышко из-за двери
Вплетать в косички из слов свой шелк,
Я раньше, каюсь, в стихи не верил,
Но тут случайно тебя нашел:

Как ты вошла в мою жизнь однажды,
Читая Бродского наизусть…

Настанет утро. И над Ла-Маншем
Проснется солнце.

…и я проснусь.

To babble words so clumsily and
awkwardly,
To pick the right key to your smile…

From the wounds on my wings
The blood will stop pouring like a stream.

All the mysteries of the world will suddenly
turn to dust
When you fall asleep on my shoulder.

And the sun, from behind the door,
Will weave braids of silk from my words.
I must confess: I did not believe in poetry
Before by chance I found you:

You came into my life one day
Reciting Brodsky by heart…

The morning will come. And the sun will
wake up
Over the English Channel

...and I too will awaken.

За спиною – рюкзак

Yulia Alexandr

За спиною - рюкзак, в нем - вино, ведь в вине нет лжи, за спиною - любовь и печаль, а в спине - ножи; ну, и сколько идти мне вот так вот еще, скажи, перед тем, как я встречу кого-нибудь, кто не ранит? Кто мне скажет: «Родной, не волнуйся, лишь сделай шаг, мы с тобою пойдем потихонечку, не спеша, ведь у нас впереди вся жизнь…» Запоет душа. С кем я стану счастливым снова, на каждой грани!

Знаешь, раньше казалось, что взгляд ее - дар небес, что вся жизнь моя - в ней, что не дышится вовсе без. И я прыгал за ней без оглядки во столько бездн… До сих пор вот пытаюсь выкарабкаться обратно. И я, знаешь, любил, что поет она мимо нот и что в ней живет пламя и кровь холодящий лед. Кто же знал, что однажды она навсегда уйдет, что останусь один, истлевая в лучах заката?

Я всего лишь хочу, чтоб без ветра и лишних слов, чтобы в сердце навеки снова вошло тепло, чтобы если горит - то не гасло, внутри не жгло… Почему быть счастливым так сложно на этом свете? Я всего лишь хочу, чтобы не было де жа вю, потому что я больше не выдержу, не стерплю, я всего лишь хочу наконец-то сказать «люблю», без секунды сомнений услышать «люблю» в ответе.

There's a backpack behind my back, there's wine in it, because there are no lies in wine; there's love and sorrow behind my back, and knives—in my back. Well, how much longer must I go on like this, tell me, before I meet someone who will not wound? Someone who will say to me: "Dear, do not worry, just take a step, we'll go gradually, slowly, because we have our whole life ahead of us…" My soul will rejoice. Someone with whom I will be happy again, in every facet!

You know, in the past, it seemed to me that her eyes were a gift from heaven, that she was my whole life, as if I couldn't breathe without her. So I carelessly jumped after her into so many abysses… You see, I'm still trying to climb back up. And, you know, I loved how she sang out of tune, and that deep inside her there were flames, and ice that made her blood so cold. Who knew that one day she would be gone forever, that I would be left alone, rotting in the rays of the sunset?

I just want the warmth to come into my heart again, without wind and superfluous words. I want whatever glows inside to never fade, and to never burn… Why is it so difficult to be happy in this world? I just want to avoid déjà vu, because I won't be able to stand it anymore, I will not survive it. I just want to finally say "I love you" without a second of doubt that I'll hear "I love you" as an answer.

Это ты...
That's you...

Nika Bederman

Говорят, что в доме уютно.
Говорят, что в доме тепло.
Говорят, что дом охраняет —
Там не может достать тебя зло.
Говорят, что дом — это место,
Где спокойно хранятся мечты,
Что оставить там можно и сердце…
Мне кажется… дом — это ты…

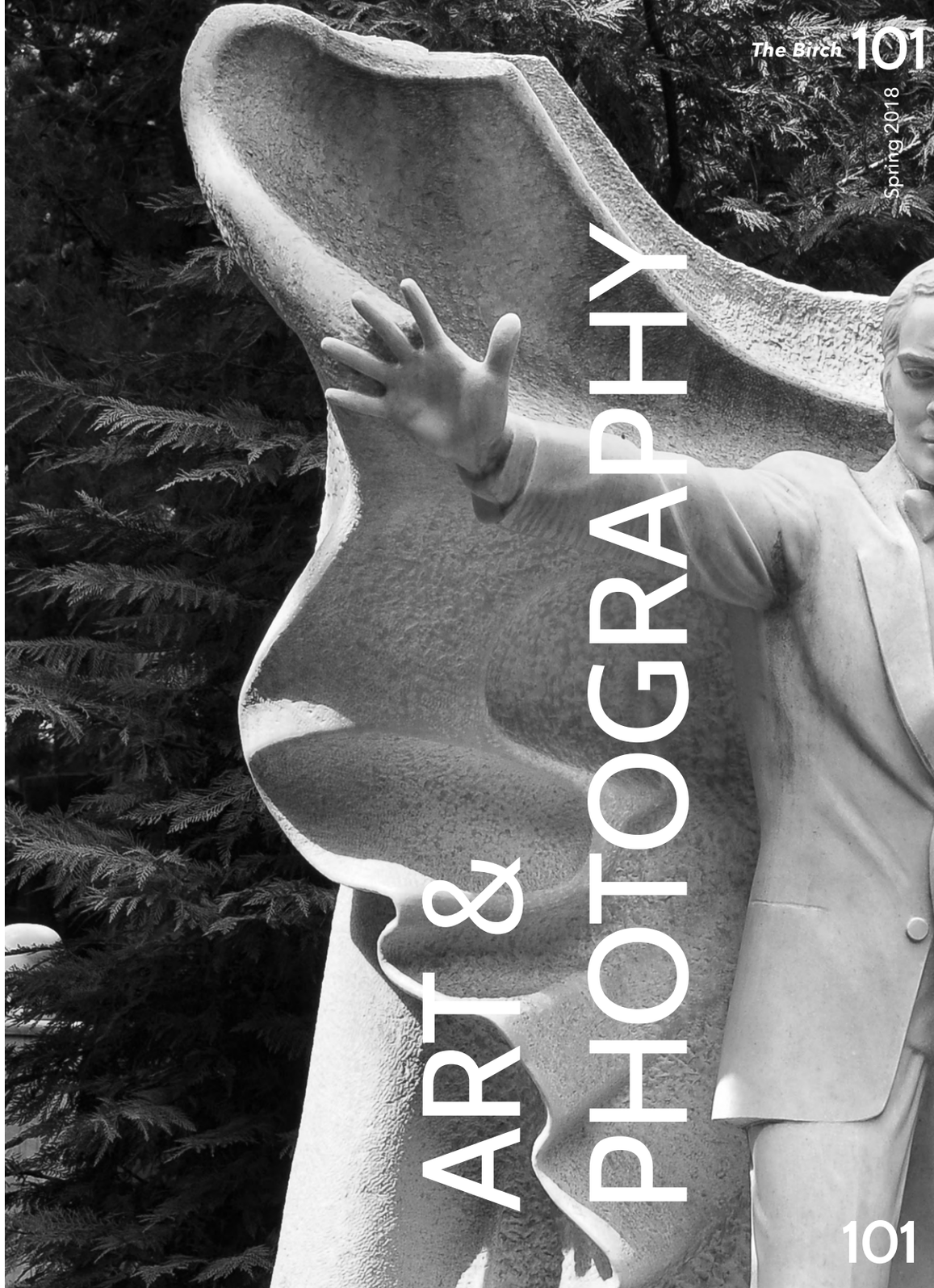
They say that home is comfort,
They say that home is warmth,
They say that home protects you—
At home no evil can reach you.
They say that home is a place
That can keep dreams safe and sound,
That you can leave your heart there…
And aren't you a home for me?

Говорят, что друг — вечно верный,
Он поможет душе найти место,
С ним погода не может быть скверной,
С ним на стенку смотреть интересно.
Говорят, друг — душа родная,
Не боится чужой клеветы,
С полуслова тебя понимает…
Несомненно, друг — это ты…

They say that a faithful friend
Can help you feel at ease—
With him, there is no dismal weather,
And bare walls have a certain grace.
They say that a kindred spirit
Doesn't fear others' slander
And understands your demi-words…
Doubtless—you are a friend for me…

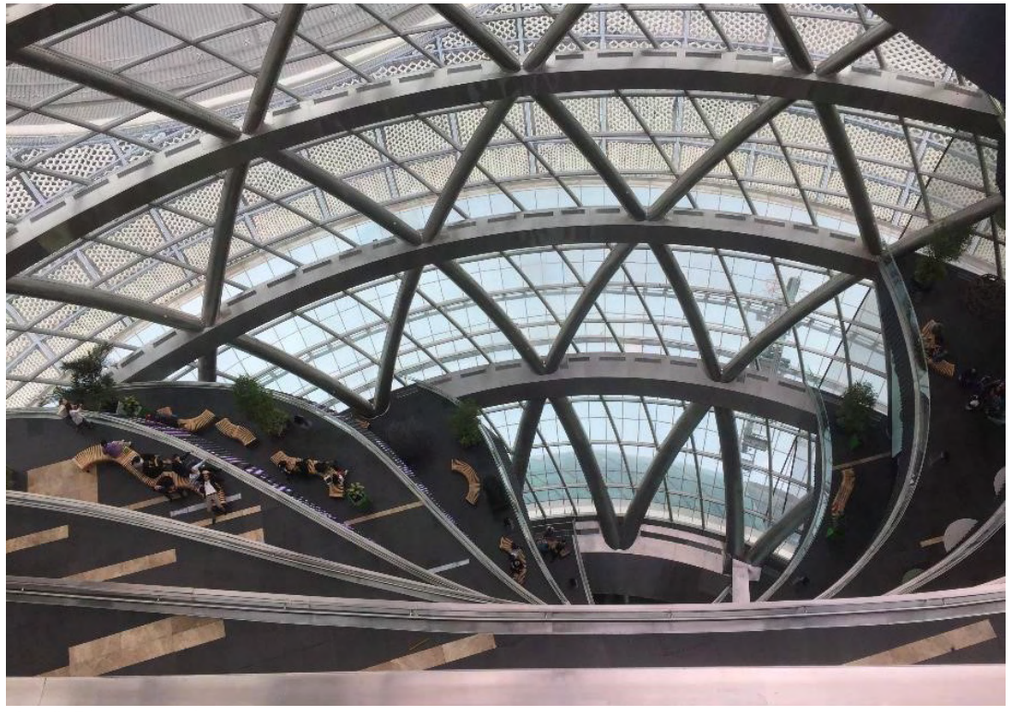
Говорят, что любовь оживляет,
Воздуха дарит глоток,
Говорят, что любовь окрыляет —
Ты взмываешь, пробив потолок.
И в ушах звенят птичьи трели,
Вдруг внезапно запели цветы…
Ну, я так говорю — мне виднее…
Ведь я знаю — любовь — это ты…

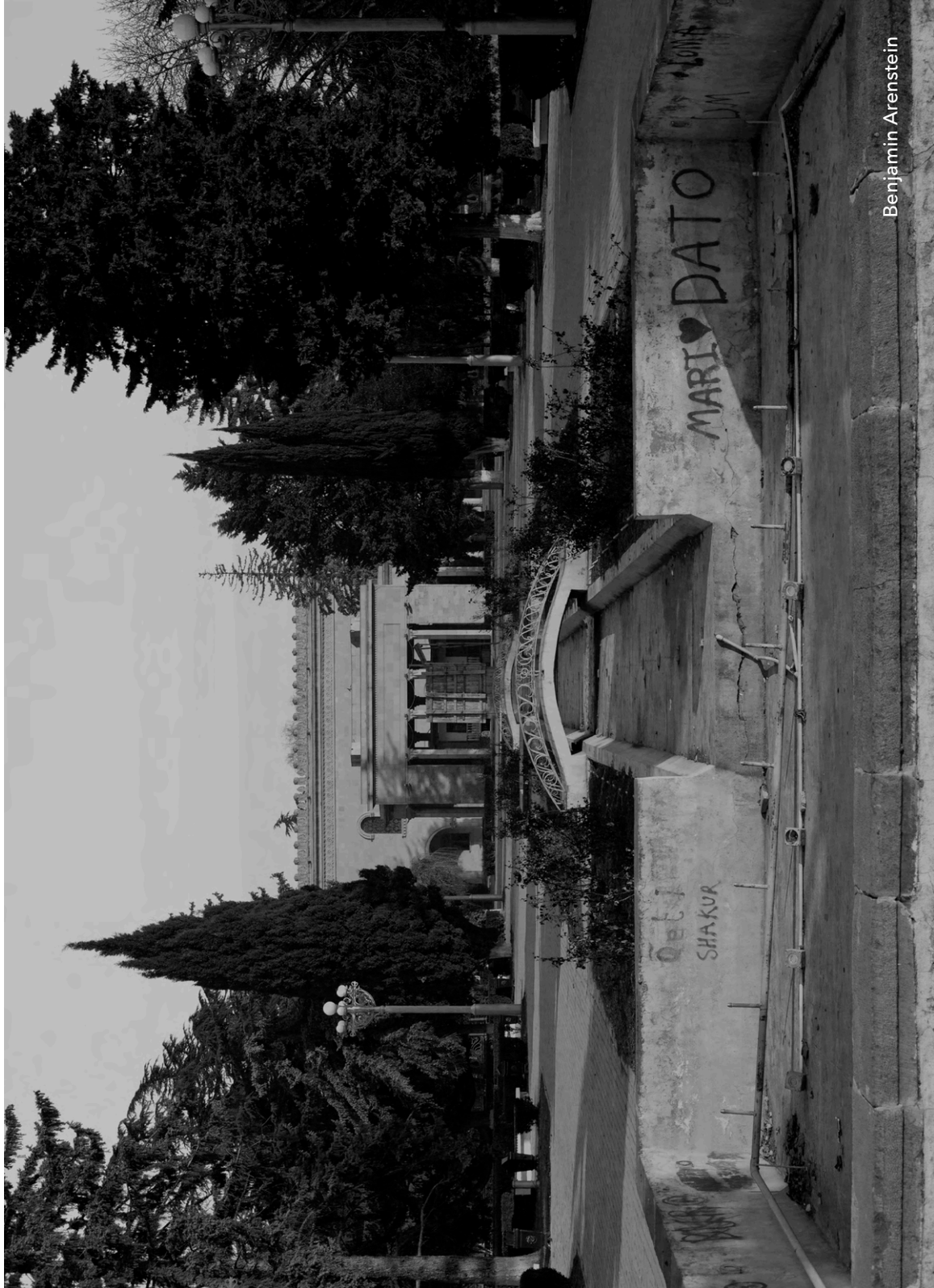
They say that love revives you
And offers you a gulp of air,
They say that love gives you wings—
And you push through the ceiling,
In your ears ring trills of nightingales,
Like birds the flowers sing…
I know that all these words are true…
For I know that love is you…





Alexander Resnick





Benjamin Arenstein



Benjamin Arenstein



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