the birch

a journal of Eastern European and Eurasian culture



havel at columbia

columbia university | fall 2006

creative writing | literary criticism | culture and affairs

EDITOR'S NOTE

At a certain point in every creative endeavor, one begins to wonder whether there is any need to continue. Such a moment of doubt overtook me at some point in the last few months. It was probably late, I was probably tired, and because I was almost certainly the only person left in Columbia's massive, 15-story International Affairs Building at the time, I was left to ponder this quandary largely by myself.

Of course, I do not mean to imply that the production of the fourth issue of *The Birch* has been a solitary effort - I have been assisted by some extraordinary editors. In fact, "assisted" is a colossal understatement, because since September, they have calmly responded to frantic e-mails, worked feverishly to meet my absurd demands, and have given me motivational speeches that would make any normal person blush.

Still, after twelve cups of tea and ten hours of staring at a screen to ascertain that the space between horizontal lines and photographs is consistent throughout the magazine, I have found myself occasionally overwhelmed by the methodical aspect of the job, completely forgetting its creative component.

Fortunately, reminders of the need to continue abound within the following pages, and I have never been disillusioned for more than a few seconds at a time. Just as our editors have done a phenomenal job in keeping me from going insane, our contributors (often, they are one and the same) have submitted work that has repeatedly motivated me to stop worrying and love the job.

And though *The Birch* is always blessed with phenomenal content, I find this issue to be particularly noteworthy, because it coincides with an important moment in Columbia University's history: the Residency of President Václav Havel.

Havel's presence on campus has given *The Birch* an opportunity to exhibit an unprecedented degree of relevance and currency, and hopefully, you will agree that we have managed to successfully commemorate this milestone.

As you read this issue, I hope that you get a sense of the excitement that has pervaded this campus in recent months. This has been a fortunate convergence of interests, and I am pleased to note that as I write this, irrelevance and futility are the furthest things from my mind.

Enjoy our fourth issue.

- Mark Krotov

Cover Photograph by Elena Lagoutova

Copyright (C) 2006. *The Birch*, Columbia University. All Rights Reserved.

the birch

A NATIONAL STUDENT-RUN UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL

MARK KROTOV
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ATOSSA ABRAHAMIAN
KATARZYNA KOZANECKA
MANAGING EDITOR

ELENA LAGOUTOVA
PHOTOGRAPHY AND DESIGN EDITOR

ESTER MURDUKHAYEVA
BUSINESS AND FINANCE MANAGER

MERRELL HAMBLETON
ABBY ROSEBROCK
YELENA SHUSTER
CREATIVE WRITING

EMILY LASKIN
AGNIESZKA SABLINSKA
JENNIFER WILSON
LITERARY CRITICISM

ASHLEY CLEEK
DAVID SCHOR
HAVEL AT COLUMBIA

JULIA BUTAREVA
KATERINA VOROTOVA
CULTURE AND AFFAIRS

DESTINY LONG
COPY EDITOR

VITALIY SHCHUPAK
WEB EDITOR

www.thebirchonline.org

Table of Contents

CREATIVITY

PRICHASTIE, OR GERUNDS ROSS UFBERG....4
SULTANNA FRANTSUZOVNA KATARZYNA KOZANECKA....7
THE MERMAID JONATHAN DEPERI....8
PETROUCHKA MARISSA MAZEK....12
BELOMORKANAL CECILY JONES....14

CRITICISM

CLOAK AND AXE CAITLIN MALONE....16
MEMORY BOX MARGINALIA VLADISLAV BERONJA....19
BLURRING BOUNDARIES THEA ANDERSON....24

HAVEL AT COLUMBIA

THE COLUMBIA CORE LECTURE MARK KROTOV....26
HAVEL AND CLINTON: PROCESSING THE FUTURE EMILY LASKIN....27
VÁCLAV HAVEL: IN FOCUS ELENA LAGOUTOVA....28
LIFE IN PLASTIC, IT'S FANTASTIC ASHLEY CLEEK....31
THE EXAMINED LIFE: ANALYZING HAVEL'S LEGACY MARK KROTOV AND ELENA LAGOUTOVA....32

CULTURE AND AFFAIRS

COLD WAR MEMORIES: SASHA CHAVCHADZE'S MUSEUM OF MATCHES MERRELL HAMBLETON....34
SUBVERSION FROM WITHIN: ANALYZING ANDREI TARKOVSKY'S SOVIET STATUS JULIA BUTAREVA....36
CINEMATIC IMPORTS: THE BEST FEATURES OF NEW YORK'S RUSSIAN FILM WEEK ESTER MURDUKHAYEVA....40
CREATIVITY AND DICTATORSHIP: THE MEANING OF SAPARMURAT NIYAZOV'S CULTURAL MONUMENT KATERINA VOROTOVA....43
HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN EASTERN EUROPE: VARIATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND SLOVAKIA NATALIE KOCH....46
LEADERSHIP THROUGH TRANSITION: AN INTERVIEW WITH EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE PAUL SONNE....50

PHOTOGRAPHY

BY ASHLEY CLEEK, GIGI KALIKA, MARK KROTOV, ELENA LAGOUTOVA, EMILY LOWRY (DRAWINGS), MALGORZATA PAWLAK, AND KATERINA VOROTOVA

Special Thanks

A publication like *The Birch* is an inherently collaborative endeavor, and as always, a great number of people have made this issue possible. We would like to thank The Harriman Institute and Catharine Nepomnyashchy, Alla Rachkov, Frank Bohan, and Natalia Novikova for their support, their generosity, and their patience. In addition, we wish to thank Gregory Mosher, Caralyn Spector, and Taya Mueller of the Columbia University Arts Initiative. Without their assistance, our coverage of Václav Havel's visit would have been minor and uninteresting. Finally, our board members and contributors have ensured that this magazine is far more enjoyable to read than 56 empty pages, and for that, they deserve our utmost gratitude.



Elena Lagoutova

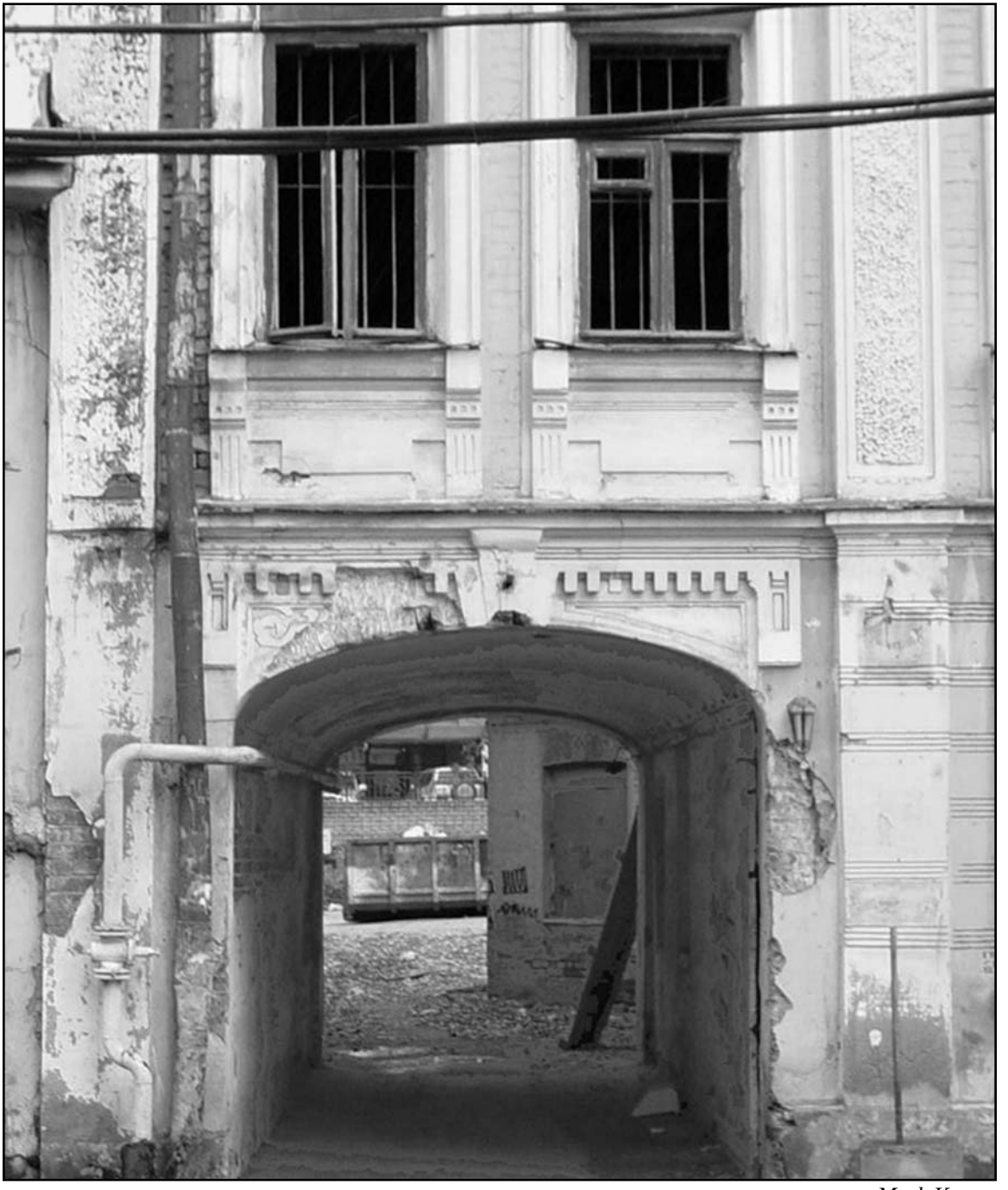
Prichastie, or Gerunds

ROSS UFBERG
HAMILTON COLLEGE

The ability of the Russian language to suggest the marriage of two actions
Is rather dazzling to someone from an “as,” “when,” and “which” culture;
To take gerunds and wrestle them into rhythmic syntaxes
So that they appear, to a Romantic like me, to be adjectives of acute but gentle accuracy
is something to admire at.

To say, for example: “The being fought in the bare brown mountains war,” or
“The young eating his vegetables slowly and with a sour face boy;”
These are very beautiful to me.
So, too, is, speaking of the exit of an artist from his studio early in the morning:
“The young with splashes of blue and red on his forearms taking a deep breath of the first air to come over the river today painter.”
I imagine this is followed by “warmed himself with thoughts of his tiny bed.”

But most beautiful of all is this, which I have never encountered before until now:
“The being approached by a nervous boy with pretty but all-wrong pink flowers in his hand girl,”
and then, one might add,
“touched her fingers to her neck and noticed the rapidly increasing pulse,
which she could, in no way at all, control.”



Mark Krotov



Katerina Vorotova



Gigi Kalika

Sultanna Frantsuzova

KATARZYNA KOZANECKA
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

A long, long time ago, in a northernmost city built by one king by way of gift for his queen, women frequented the theatre in hats adorned with live flowers. Each evening, whilst the musicians tuned their instruments, bees worked the hall collecting pollen from these blooms. After, neath the enormous stage, they spun honey, and their hum was indistinguishable from the hum of Sultanna Frantsuzova's sewing machine.

Sultanna Frantsuzova was possessed by gold hands. Twas said, that ballerinas who wore the dresses she sewed, carried themselves across the stage like something else. Twas neither a question of thread nor of cloth nor of the cut of the dresses, but rather, of the love with which Sultanna Frantsuzova sewed them. She measured cloth, certain she was measuring happiness. Each stitch was a dew drop on a spider web, each line of embroidery a gurgling stream.

Silver needle in gold hand, she sat there neath the stage even as the performance unravelled the audience into a sprawl of marvel: lest a sleeve unwittingly tear, lest a hem kneel, lest a stocking go for a run. The stage was her ceiling; through this thin ceiling she heard the slap of fine legs in thin shoes. She knew that, any minute now, the ballerinas would open their fists and throw to the wind the tiny poppyseeds hidden in those fists; the seeds, becoming crows, would scatter to the rafters. Later they would play the role of shadows.

But the applause always belonged to the women, not the shadows: their dresses by evening's end were wilted petals; their slippers were worn to invisibility; their lips were smeared with honey; their hair gathered in bun-nests bound for natural history museums. The applause furthered the momentum of Sultanna Frantsuzova's heartbeat.

All this comes to us by way of answer to the words of one bloke, "Allow me to inquire as to the reason for your happiness."

June 2006. Moskva.

The Mermaid

A poem by Mikhail Lermontov

Translated by
JONATHAN DEPERI
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

1

A mermaid swam ‘long the river light blue,
All lit by the shining full moon;
And she tried to splash full up to the moon
The silvery foam of the blue.

2

And noisily whirling, the river made
The clouds on its surface sway;
And the mermaid sang — and the sound of her words
Flew up the steep banks far away.

3

And the mermaid sang: “On the floor beneath me
The daylight plays flick’ring far down;
There goldfish in schools disport merrily;
All crystal are city and town;

4

“And there, in the shade of the thickest reeds,
On my cushion of bright blazing sand,
Sleeps a knight, sad prey to the jealous waves —
Sleeps a knight from a foreign land.

5

"In the gloom of the night we love to comb
The curls of our silken locks,
On his brow and lips at the noonday hour —
We would kiss him ne'er but once.

6

"Yet my ardentest kisses — I know not wherefore —
He remains to them cold and still;
He sleeps - and yielding, inclined on my breast,
He nor breathes, nor whispers in sleep!…"

7

Thus the mermaid sang o'er the river deep blue,
Full of strange anguish yearning away;
And loudly rolling, the river made
The clouds on its surface sway.

The original version of The Mermaid *can be found at www.thebirchonline.org*



Katerina Vorotova

Petrouchka

MARISSA MAZEK
BARNARD COLLEGE

I am a student at the Vaganova Ballet Academy. I do not graduate for another year, but I know that I will not enter the Kirov Ballet. I do not have the body, but still they let me in. At the entrance examination several years ago, it was obvious that my feet were too flat, my extension somewhat lacking, even then, before I had any training. My shoulders still stick out, "angel wings," Madame K. calls them, but perhaps the auditioners hoped they could force them down.

***

Walking to class, I lean backwards, much like I do during stretches, and stare at the spires scattered throughout my city. Every morning, I walk along the Neva and beneath the Catherine Palace, turning until I reach Rossi Street. The roads are more crowded now, with a mixture of once-awaited Ladas, new SUVs and foreign tour buses. Most mornings, in my first year, the spire of the Peter and Paul Cathedral was less blinding; the top of St. Isaac's dingier than today's gleam. But while the tourist attractions have become more luminescent, the rest of Petersburg has broken down. Her more recent, lesser glories are not so apparent anymore, but some things remain the same, like my school. The audience has changed, though, since the fall, when competition leapt from behind the curtain, impossible to catch, like perfection.

***

Some mornings, as I place my right leg on the top rail of the barre and bend towards it, I wonder how I can improve. If I can fix one thing, even if it's as small as tucking my torso forward so I can hold a pirouette well, then I have accomplished something. Anything not to fall. It is rare that a student here falls, especially those who, like me, are good jumpers, but when I see the evenly spaced, rosin-smelling wooden floorboards at eye level, it makes me think that perhaps apathy is pulling me into the Neva. Apathy is like gravity; it pulls you down while effort, talent and flexibility let you fly. If you've ever looked up at your foot while it is extended near your head, then you know the difference. That's why I keep dancing, why I haven't decided to enter a technical school and learn a marketable trade for the new world economy. Why be held down awaiting something that may never happen?

In Russia, we want to touch the sun. Even the women standing Babel-like on top of the Hermitage try to gain an advantage over the others. They compete with Peter and his horse, each glancing over at the competition, trying to leap higher and farther than the other. The ballerina in Swan Lake developpés to the side, with her head back and arms tickling the scenery, looking like a sunbather under the stagelights. She has to take over the stage as a person must do with his territory; make it hers or the spotlightman will be bored and will follow a step behind. The audience only watches when the ballerina's leg is up to her ear, ending in a perfectly pointed foot. Only then do they care.



Katerina Vorotova



Katerina Vorotova

Critics and the audience live far from the tourist area. Their apartments are like the dancers with ninety-degree extensions; average, but hidden from the visitors' photographs, just like me. Whenever someone films our classes to inspire Western students, I am sent to Peterhof or Pushkin. These palaces are like aging ballerinas during their last season or two; still beautiful, but aged and irrelevant. They should not be playing young girls in love anymore.

***

I fell today. I tried to turn and travel at the same time, which works well during single turns but is wrong for doubles. My ankle hurts and I limp as I cross the bridge to Vasilevsky Island, where I live. The always-uniformed Maritime and Science students smile in a way that would be charming if I, like a dumb girl from another place, did not know that, while their mouths and eyes smile, their teeth gnash.

Summer is almost here, and the White Nights are beginning. In winter, my way is lit only by the dim streetlights, the ones that work. I am not afraid, even though I am young and pretty and alone, because I know all of the backstreets and safe places where I could run. But I have never had to run. Americans are loudly afraid to go anywhere without a tour guide and minibus, but they are only in danger because they are afraid of becoming Russian. The small-camaraed and big-stomached have a way out of here, as do I. Tomorrow, they film my class for the Kirov director, to decide our placement in a company. Some say it is decided only after the graduation performance, but they lie; our jobs are determined a year before we graduate. Tomorrow.

***

Like a child who is looking forward to his birthday because it will bring a present from a store on Nevsky Prospect or a day out of school, I have been counting down to this. My mother has already left to clean rooms in the Hotel Astoria, so I am alone as I drink my morning tea and put on my most flattering leotard. I jab my head with pins and shake it to make sure that my bun is in tightly enough. There are too many hairpins, but at least it will stay.

The roads are crowded and I have to jump onto the steps of a building as a Lada goes down the sidewalk. A normal occurrence. It is faster to walk in this city, for even the trams are inefficient. Everything is these days, adults say; things stopped working when Communism did. Flashes come from a bus behind me and I think that the visitors are photographing me, but in front of them is the Hermitage. It stands in my way as Katya always does, blocking the view of the shabby present. I am always on the periphery of photographs; never the focus but there nonetheless. Soon, I will be shown to people I will never see. They will be my audience, witnesses to my art.

***

We begin. My demi-pliés are deep and soothing and I feel like a rubber band, the way we are supposed to feel. My legs are perfectly straight and I feel strong. I am sharp during beats, hitting the spot between my ankle and my Achilles – I am neither a hero nor a villain, nor will I be a victim – with the same force with which a thrown rock hits, but does not break, a window. I am infinite, and it shows in my grande battements, which reach the sky and pervert gravity, coming down slowly but just with the beat. The camera is on me and so are the glares. Katya's basic positions (her weakness) are sloppy. I am Odile, emerging not from Odette but from a powerless swan, third from the left in the last row of the corps. It is an old trick, used until the real ballerina can come onstage, and I am using it now.

The Aurora awakens to fire again, through my leg extensions. It is the glorious moment when the gun is out but before the tsar is shot and before the Cossacks arrest and murder the revolutionary – it is the moment when everything seems well. For this moment, I will be in the Kirov. But then, a blue-shirted

man says to a woman in high heels, “The thing wasn’t in right – I didn’t get any of that.” And then I know that I will forever be the girl who did well once, but had strange placement and bad line nonetheless.

***

So I practice the variations I will never get to dance, even if I am accepted into Perm, Moisiev, or something American. But I am on the Neva Embankment now. The sun is setting, because it is not yet summer, after all. The White Nights were a sham. But I am doing all the big jumps that I love so much, as the sun, warmer than the stage lights, singes my shoulders. So I jump more, pretending that Madame K. is screaming, “Higher, higher!” from somewhere behind me when now she must be below. Even the granite horseman and marble maids cannot keep up with me.

And I go on jumping, almost poking myself on the spire of Peter and Paul, which I am more golden than. I am more golden than everything and the rainbow is all around me – flashbulbs are louder than the honks of horns that belong to cars that should have stopped running years ago. For once, the visitors’ cameras are trained on me, just as I am trained to please them. And so I shall. I double back and over the Academy, where the crowd inside is confused – “Where did she go?” And they look up and see me, flying, flying, flying.



Katerina Vorotova

Belomorkanal

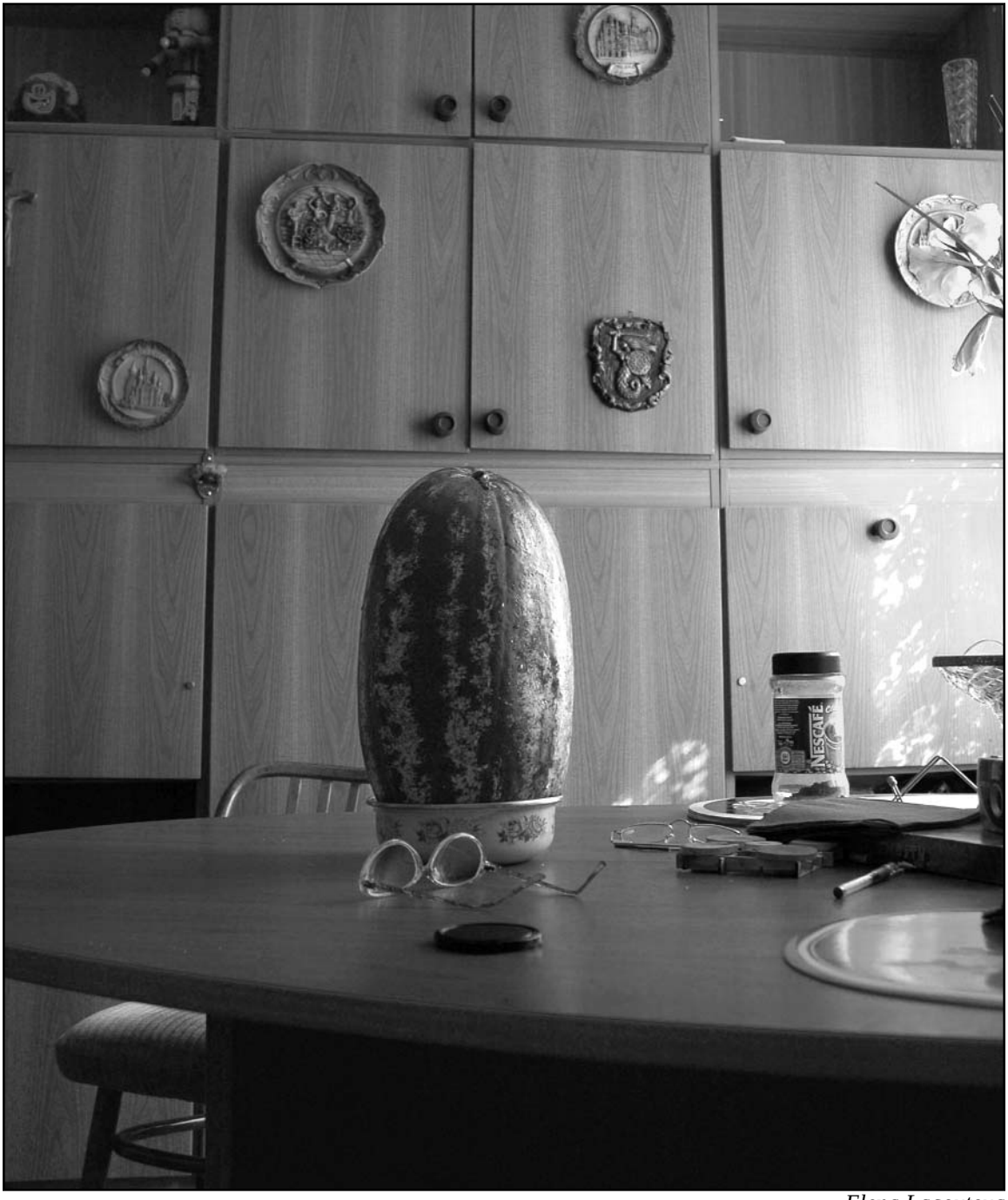
CECILY JONES
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Russia is a country
That does not exist
Where wintry war fabriks
Puff bullets stead of cigarettes

Home, your barefoot balcony home
Where Belomor filters Griboedova
You puff a paper white pulya
Seeing as you will never die
Seeing as Russia is a country
That does not exist

Bread beer and gum wrappers
Press noses to glass
In a country where kiosks have no give
The bundle of bodies at Leningradsky Vokzal
Sleeps rolled in pigeons red rugs and rags
Moscow is a city that does not awake

Let's stay home in Belomor
You light us up another four am fog
Puff purple ash for a Peter sky



Elena Lagoutova

Cloak and Axe

Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov as a Byronic Hero

CAITLIN MALONE
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

CRITICAL ESSAY

As the era of Byronic heroes in Russian literature climaxed with Onegin and Pechorin, and then began to decline in popularity, the "new people" of the 1860s and the ensuing Realism became the new Russian literary standard. Relatively recent analysis, such as that offered by Daniel Hocutt, however, has challenged the traditional perception that the Realist heroes were the antitheses of their Romantic counterparts. While concurring with Hocutt on the premises of his argument, I propose that this trend continues even further, into the heart of Russian literary Realism, where it unexpectedly materializes in Rodion Raskolnikov, the axe-murdering protagonist of Fyodor Dostoevsky's 1866 novel *Crime and Punishment*.

Traditional readings interpret Raskolnikov as a completely and indisputably Realist character, but a departure from this tradition and into Romanticism allows for a deeper understanding of Dostoevsky's artistry and intentions. Firstly, I will delineate the progression of the Russian Byronic hero, as well as show how this progression leads directly to Raskolnikov's distinct position as successor to the Byronic archetype. Secondly, I will offer an explanation and evidence as to why Dostoevsky, who as a Realist and a Slavophile was fundamentally opposed to foreign literary and cultural influences in Russia, chose to restore a model of Romantic and European origins.

The traditional Byronic hero is distinguished by a number of physical, behavioral, mental and spiritual traits, which can perhaps be most comprehensively summarized as "solitary and superior, a hero and leader above the common herd." He is good-looking and willfully independent, and particularly characterized both by self-confidence bordering on apotheosis and a unique moral code and sense of alienation that result from his refusal to obey the rules of his society. The Russified Byronic hero, developed primarily by Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, Alexander Pushkin, and Mikhail Lermontov, takes on characteristics distinct from those of Byron's protagonists. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky creates Romantic protagonists who are truest to the original, although they are highly imitative and melodramatic to the point of absurdity. Pushkin, with Eugene Onegin, creates a hero who carefully crafts his own isolation by rejecting romantic happiness, then dwelling on his loneliness. Lermontov distills the ennui, pride, and loneliness of characters penned by Bestuzhev-Marlinsky and Pushkin, and arrives at quintessential Russified Byronic hero in Pechorin, who selfishly rejects any concern for his neighbor and indulges his fancy to often lethal effects. In Pechorin, the sense of superiority and the ensuing isolation become reversed in their causality, as they combine to give Pechorin his justification for playing God and deciding who will live and who will die.

This trend reaches its Romantic climax in Lermontov's other infamous character, Demon, possi-

bly the darkest, and by far most complex of the Russified Byronic heroes, who nevertheless remains undeniably appealing (if disconcerting) to the reader. Daniel Hocutt argues that Turgenev's Bazarov is the next development in the progression of the Russian Byronic hero, whose isolation is exclusively self-imposed, whose cynicism morphs into nihilism, and whose purpose is rather mundane compared to that of the original Byronic hero. Byronic rebellious individualism was also not confined to the pages of popular literature: political revolutionaries, especially the Decembrists, elevated Byron to iconic status in their politics, which then interplayed heavily with Russian literature.

As in the case with the earlier Russian Byronic heroes, Rodion Raskolnikov's isolation is not physical, but stems from his mental isolation from, and feeling of superiority over, the society in which he lives. Since his status above his contemporaries cannot be reinforced by physically distancing himself from them, Raskolnikov cultivates a mental and spiritual isolation. The crime that does differentiate him is an attempt to legitimize his long-held pride:

> He was very poor and superciliously proud and reserved. It seemed to some of his fellow students that he looked down on them all as children, as if he had outdistanced them in knowledge, development, and ideas, and that he considered their interests and convictions beneath him.

This superiority is not only what spurs Raskolnikov to prove himself with his crime, but is also what allows him to play God by deciding who is not worthy of living. The individualism of the Byronic hero exalts man as being his own God, thus taking the God of religion out of the picture. Dividing people into those worthy and unworthy of living allows Raskolnikov to place himself at the pinnacle of Byronic arrogance, where man assumes the prerogatives of the supreme deity.

Raskolnikov's feeling of superiority also isolates him from his peers, which in turn feeds his pride. The Byronic mentality interplays heavily with his solitariness, which is the critical consequence of his perception of his own unique abilities and understandings of the world. Dostoevsky develops this sense of isolation to an extreme, with Raskolnikov saying at one point, "Whatever happens to me, whether I perish or not, *I want to be alone*." This sense of isolation is heightened after Raskolnikov's murders, when he is indeed separated from everyone else by his crimes. Significantly, it manifests itself in "a new and irresistible sensation of boundless, almost physical repulsion for everything around him, an obstinate, hateful, malicious sensation" rather than in a self-satisfied feeling of accomplishment.

This Byronic creation is by no means an accident. Dostoevsky himself makes numerous allusions both to Byron and to his prototypical hero. As an enthusiastic Slavophile, Dostoevsky realizes the power that the Byronic hero had in Russian society, and is disturbed by the extremes to which he saw the model taken. He alludes to the Byronification of Russia in *A Writer's Diary*:

> […] there was a time when we would go so far as to idealize certain nasty types who appeared among our literary characters and who were largely borrowed from foreign literatures. It's not enough that we esteemed such people – we slavishly tried to imitate them in real life and even bent over backward to model ourselves on them.

This discomfort with the popularity of the Byronic model provides some context for Dostoevsky's construction (and subsequent deconstruction) of a Byronic protagonist. Dostoevsky's hostility toward the Byronic hero is also religious in its origins, for as a devout Christian, Dostoevsky sees the godlessness of the Byronic heroes as threatening and the characters themselves as "evil, impatient, and quite openly concerned only with themselves." *Crime and Punishment* itself also contains thinly-veiled references to Byron and Byronism. Romanticism in its original form had largely fallen out of favor by the time *Crime and Punishment* was written, a fact that Luzhin welcomes: "[…] literature has been given a tinge of maturity; many harmful prejudices have been rooted out and held up to ridicule … In a word, we have irrevocably severed ourselves from the past, and that, in my opinion, is an achievement, sir…" Raskolnikov's own

Byronic attitude is also acknowledged by Porfiry Petrovich, who says that Raskolnikov is "one of those who would allow themselves to be disemboweled, and stand and face their torturers with a smile—if they had found a faith, or found God." When Porfiry adds "find your faith, and you will live," it shows Dostoevsky's attempt to redirect the power of the Byronic hero toward a religious end, thus turning the model into one consistent with Christianity.

Raskolnikov's Byronic independence, however, will not yield to such platitudes, and Dostoevsky ultimately ends up completely deconstructing his protagonist. The process is methodical to the point of being scientific, beginning with Raskolnikov's feelings of being out of control during the murders and ending with his realization that he is not the extraordinary man of his own theory. Dostoevsky's narrative method of showing the pathetic panic with which Raskolnikov struggles internally while projecting an outward air of aloof control, casts doubt on the Byronic hero in all his manifestations, implying that his suave power is merely a façade and that, in truth, he is just as frightened and weak as anyone else is. To methodically expose the Byronic hero as a fraud and a front is to destroy his mystique, and thus his power.

As a Christian and a Slavophile, Dostoevsky saw the Byronic hero as dangerous in his godlessness and cancerous in his popularity, a foreign model that infiltrated Russian literature and culture and made destructive ennui fashionable. *Crime and Punishment* provides a prescription for this ailment as Sonya, the most noble character in the book, admonishes Raskolnikov to "accept suffering and achieve atonement through it—that is what you must do." Dostoevsky's criticism is aimed at the Russified Byronic hero in particular, with its emphasis on the most destructive qualities, which resulted in a much darker hero than Byron had originally created. As a cultural phenomenon, Dostoevsky finds the Byronic hero tremendously harmful to Russia's search for national identity and in need of deconstruction, as it leads young men to run around dueling, pursuing unobtainable women, and later isolating themselves from religion and from society, and promotes both cruelty and unhealthy pride. *Crime and Punishment*, then, serves as Dostoevsky's indictment of the Byronic hero and his mystic appeal, as he takes it to its terrible extreme in Raskolnikov and shows that this trend is neither admirable nor romantic, but is inevitably destructive and ultimately deadly.



Mark Krotov

Memory Box Marginalia

VLADISLAV BERONJA
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

I. *Reliquiae Reliquiarum*

But all that, and I, never really were anything more,
Than some mist, moments, a whisper in China
That whispers, like a heart, yet colder and quieter:
That Neither Ming, nor yang, nor yin no longer remain
Nor Tao, cherries, nor the mandarin.
Nobody and Nothing.

Miloš Crnjanski, *Lament nad Beogradom*[1]

LITERARY ESSAY

No wonder Nietzsche considered forgetting to be a strength, since only memory can putrefy a person's will and unravel their whole identity. (If God is a keeper of all memory, he is a deeply resentful God.) Despite this, I know of people who keep their memories tucked away in a shoe box, in a dusty basement or under their bed. Periodically, they will open these treasure chests, perhaps to experience that paradoxical embrace of pleasure and pain that is most often present when we look at old photographs. Kundera's wonderful insight that "in the sunset of dissolution, everything is illuminated by the aura of nostalgia, even the guillotine"[2] should be interpreted accordingly.

Even my own childhood, viewed from the distance of the present, abounds in these memory boxes of sustained purity, despite, or precisely because of the backdrop of war:

During the years of my adolescence, before the war, before I became a refugee, my mom, my brother and I used to visit my grandparents every summer in Croatia. As it happens, in the early seventies my grandparents traveled to Prague, where they acquired a figurine of the good solider Švejk. They hung the Švejk on an austere light fixture in their bedroom, where it remains to this very day. Right as we entered their apartment, my grandparents would take my brother and me into their bedroom and spin the Švejk figurine. The two of us could lie in my grandparent's bed for hours watching the good soldier in his uniform, the color of sapling conifers, continually spin. There was a warm breeze coming from the open bedroom window. Beyond diaphanous curtains a view of the river, a coast lined with tall poplars and chestnut trees, a ruin of an old building in the distance with a crumbling façade, small barges cradled on the calm, watery surface: transcendent peace of Romantic pastoral landscapes. A chorus of children's voices and laughter passed along with a breeze like a disappearing melody. The conversation of adults in the living room occasionally brought us back from our reverie, but only to remind us to spin the Švejk once again. Ah, in the bosom of the family where one is secure and bonds between people are forged in ancestral love where we share a common hearth and drink from the same cup!

Then, the Berlin wall was demolished, the Soviet empire collapsed, Reagan declared the triumph of liberal democracies in Eastern Europe, Yugoslav politicians started planning a civil war, Croatia, then Bosnia, declared themselves independent states, Bosnia was occupied, my family was separated, losing most of its meager possessions, the dead Tito

transformed from a father of the nation to an oppressive tyrant, bombs and bullets whistled above our heads, many people disappeared into the ground, the war came and went, the politicians filled their pockets, the people were robbed, my father and mother reunited in America, as refugees. They are still looking across the ocean to the Old World, in the distance.

My own Europe seems to be a laboratory of History: between East and West, capitalism and communism, Christianity and Islam, it is as if it was destined for perpetual return of the same.

The Švejk still twirls in the eye of my memory. It is an image surrounded by darkness which I cannot illuminate. The background in which the figurine lives has disappeared, forever.

In vain I try to remember this lost world. It is trapped in another language that I am beginning to forget. I project a horizon to this image:

Švejk remains for me the Bohemian resilience to the violence of war. His weapon is humor and seeming naiveté, or as Benjamin says, he is a man who meets "the mythical world with cunning and with high spirits."[3] My grandparents' choice to hang that literary character in their bedroom meant that I was rooted in a liberal, educated *paterfamilias* who instilled both reason and imagination in my young self. They were a part of the progressive and moral class who believed not in superstitious religion but, perhaps naïvely, in ultimate triumph of goodness and justice over violence and chaos, through labor and education that engendered a creative and expressive spirit in a human being.

However, the light of memory rarely illuminates the darkness of Pandora's Box, where the threads of truth and chaos surreptitiously mingle to weave our sorrowful destinies. *All* history perhaps, is a history of violence, but that fact in no way prevents our nostalgic gaze. The eyes of memory also need a feast, especially in the moments of most dreadful hunger.

It has been said that Kafka's favorite story came from *The Treasure Chest* by Johann Peter Hebel. In the story, a young groom-to-be goes to work in the coal mine a day before his wedding, and there, he meets his death. Shortly after, the Napoleonic wars begin and the mine goes into disuse, with the body trapped inside it. However, fifty years later, the miners once again dig through the rubble and find the boy's dead body, unaffected by the scars of time. The bride, who never married after his death, rejoices at the discovery of her groom, saying that now she can finally die herself, for it was God's will for her to see him before her own death.

Walter Benjamin correctly remarked in his essay, "The Storyteller," that the time in the story is essentially opposed to the time in the novel. His profound admiration for Hebel and Leskov derived, in my opinion, from his own hope-bound conception of the "messianic time." The history of modernity, like the coal mine in Hebel's story, is essentially rubble that seeks reconstruction. While the time in story is restorative—the bride reunites with her groom—the time in the novel is unrelenting in its brutality. No destiny is spared the loss that awaits us all. Georg Lukàcs called it "transcendental homelessness." Refugees, then, should feel perfectly at home inside a novel, but they yearn for the storyteller.

II. *Momento Mori*

Sorrow appears as a color, as a scent or a sound, and this is why sorrow resists the photographic lens and cannot be captured by it. For it is not optic experience alone that invokes the feeling of sorrow, the synthesis of colors, scents, and sounds is exceptionally important in producing this unequivocally crestfallen condition, which is often salty as a tear—bitter and graphically unrealizable—so that it is more of a scent than a sound, more a color than a form, more a dream than reality, and more a shadow of an idea than a harshly spoken word.

Miroslav Krleza, *Izlet u Rusiju*[4]

After the war, my mother wanted to return to the apartment in Bosnia where we had left all our belongings. We had escaped with two handbags filled with clothes, some cash, cigarettes for my mother.

Some other family was living there, surrounded by the ghoulish presence of things of those who once lived there. When we first came back, after seven

years of exile, we suspiciously looked for change, in people and places. We only observed: Safeta was still roasting her coffee on the balcony; Lemo in his garage, was still eating bread soaked in milk out of his metal cup; Ina has grown into a woman. There was also the absence of others, who appeared and lingered for a moment as faded mirages upon empty spaces of memory, which reason and purpose soon corrected.

We did not want conversation, reminiscing: it was, after all, the same story of misery that everyone knew. My mother wanted to get out quickly and painlessly. She was there, after all, because of our family albums where were recorded the years of her pregnancies, my and my brother's early adolescence, family gatherings...

We were greeted with dissimulated hospitality by our "hosts." The woman anxiously looked at the wood stove, fearing for the worse – that my mother might take their warmth for the winter.

I looked around the one-bedroom apartment, given to my mother by the government that was no longer in tact, to see what was saved and what stolen or destroyed. The books: the Cyrillic Bible and the complete works of Ivo Andric, were all probably used as scapegoats in a burning ceremony. The paintings that remained were destroyed by water stains, their frames used as heating in the wintertime, others stolen or sold on the black market.

The woman went into the bedroom and came back with three thick photo albums. The memories were saved, after all. They destroyed religion, literature, art, but somehow, the albums were left alone, protected, perhaps, by the ghostly aura of photographs within. We left, fulfilled.

Those photo albums were carried across the ocean that separated the old world from the new. Years later, I would look through them, since memory somehow called, as I was sitting on the porch one summer afternoon.

Here were the tombstones of my adolescence, upon whose altar I offered glistening pearls. I felt upon me the inexorable gravity of time in its unmerciful, relentless pull that absorbs individual destinies, leaving behind only the bittersweet taste of tragedy, for gods to feast on.

I saw my mother, veiled in silver light, offering her bare breast to my brother. She too has changed, like Lot's wife in my memory: *Her fragrance unfolds a memory of embrace — pleasure in propinquity. Incandescent sunrise yet the East is so far, and*

I am frightened that she will turn into a salt pile.

Yet, if someone else was looking at these photographs, they would not be able to come upon the truth of my existence. My grandfather's artistic eye framed my life in the moments of bliss. Behind the photographs, a feeling which only I could sense, there lay a repressed, residual absurdity of suffering, misery and pain. Indeed, there was an infinite distance from the reality and those moments firmly sedimented in concrete memory. The flames on birthday cakes forever captured in time – infinite youth; and the years of my life blown away, fluttering like doves before alighting into the abyss of forgetfulness – infinite change.

It all seemed like those paintings by Monet, in which stone cathedrals are reduced to an infinite number of light particles, ready to vanish after the sun sets. Illusion disappears, and we realize that our senses take us for a fool, leaving us with doubt and agony. One sees a thing, where there is only a shadow. The cathedral was there, for a moment: I felt its presence within me as a living God. But where is it now? Eternal night surround me. I no longer perceive it. The moment was fleeting, and that sublime feeling ephemeral, and I, like Job, am left in the ash pit, where no light penetrates.

Notes

[1] Miloš Crnjanski, "Lament nad Beogradom," in *Tri Poeme* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1965), 36, author's translation.

[2] Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (New York: Harper and Row, 1999), 2.

[3] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 3*, 1935-1938 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), 149.

[4] Miroslav Krleza, *Izlet u Rusiju. Sabrana djela Miroslava Krleze* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1985), 59.

Blurring Boundaries

The Role of the Trickster in Zamyatin's *We* and Wright's *The Man Who Lived Underground*

THEA ANDERSON
KEENE STATE COLLEGE

CRITICAL ESSAY

Richard Wright's dystopian novella, *The Man Who Lived Underground*, is set in 1940s America. In Wright's America, hypocrisy and corruption masquerade as truth and justice, and wealth and skin color define an individual's character. In his novel *We* (1927), Russian author Yevgeny Zamyatin creates a dystopian world in which the ideals of the Russian Revolution have degenerated into a totalitarian regime. In Zamyatin's city, called the One State, humankind is isolated from the natural world, supposedly shielded from irrationality and buttressed against the frailties of the soul. Mathematics and rationality are posited as paradigms of human achievement, and the One State employs mathematical formulas to calculate the emotions and needs of its citizens. To critique the artificiality of their societies, Wright and Zamyatin explore the dangers of binary thinking which occur when society cannot admit that gray areas exist. To provide that missing "middle way," these authors employ the literary device of the trickster, represented by their characters Fred Daniels in *The Man Who Lived Underground* and I-330, the love interest of the main character in *We*.

In his book, *Trickster Makes this World,* Anthropologist Lewis Hyde traces the trickster character in the folklore and mythology of many ancient cultures including the Greek god, Hermes; the Norse god, Loki; the Yoruba god, Eshu; and the folklore heroes Raven and Coyote of Native Americans. Hyde describes the figure of the trickster as "the mythical embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox… the god of the threshold in all its forms." Found at figurative or literal crossroads, the trickster blurs and crosses artificial boundaries created by society.

Encountered in many old tales, the trickster is the agent of change coming into play when ideologies become too dogmatic, or when life becomes too narrowly defined. Wright's Fred Daniels becomes this cataclysmic change agent by creating a subterranean world – the city sewers, which mirror the value systems of the aboveground world. By examining similarities between the two worlds, Daniels reveals that corruption and brutality lie behind the façade of truth and justice, held up by the above-ground world. Daniels shows that 'truth' and 'justice' have lost their original meanings. Daniels is often shown standing in doorways that are gates between the two worlds. Epitomizing the role and place of the traditional trickster, Daniels stands on the literal threshold between two worlds; the subterranean world he has created and the aboveground world he has left. He feels himself "emotionally hover[ing] between the world aboveground and the world underground." A boundary line has been drawn, and he has one foot on each side.

Similarly, Zamyatin's I-330 straddles two sharply defined worlds: the natural, "wild world" and the civilized, refined world within the city's Green Wall. She, like Daniels, rejects the limits society tries to

enforce on the individual. Individuals, she insists, do not all have the same needs and desires; emotions cannot be calculated with mathematical formulas, and humanity requires irrationality and imagination. Zamyatin's I-330 represents many of the trickster qualities described by Hyde. She is highly ambiguous and she is an agent of radical change. Daniels and I-330 are the characters that can easily travel from one world to the other, and yet belong to neither, and so represent the traditional trickster as boundary creator and crosser.

As tricksters obscure existing value systems, they also blur distinctions in the language that supports such systems. Hyde describes this quality as the trickster's ability to "disrupt the web" of language which is "built around sets of opposites," such as "real and illusory, and natural and unnatural." Once this 'web' is disrupted, the terms lose their original significance and become, as Hyde states, "open to revision." Traditional tricksters blur such distinctions by using tricky language that can either be taken figuratively or literally revealing different meanings. In contrast, modern tricksters such as I-330 and Daniels point out that the 'sets of opposites' Hyde refers to are already less distinct. Operating as trickster figures, Daniels and I-330 force their respective societies to acknowledge this slippery quality of language.

I-330 blurs the line the One State tries to enforce between irrationality and reason. Irrationality is attributed to the natural world, to individuality, and especially to the idea of the soul; reason is associated with civilization, homogenization of the individual, and to the rejection of the natural world. I-330's wild and unruly behavior reveals that the 'reason' the One State enforces is actually irrational, even impossible. In trickster fashion, she reveals that the very thing the One State fears the most – irrationality – masquerades within the Green Wall disguised as reason. If what the One State refers to as reason is actually irrationality, then the concluding sentence of Zamyatin's novel, "Reason must prevail," should be read ironically, because the irrational values of the One State have



Malgorzata Pawlak

actually prevailed.

Daniels points out a similar absurdity in the aboveground world concerning innocence and guilt. Aboveground, Daniels is an innocent man beaten into confessing to a crime he did not commit. Later, he witnesses a boy wrongly punished for stealing a radio, and sees a thief slip through the cracks while another man pays for his crime. A society that allows guilt to go free while presuming guilt in the innocent subverts the meanings of both concepts. When guilt is found in innocence and innocence in guilt, each word loses its original intent to the extent that the meaning of one becomes the meaning of the other. This is an example of the modern trickster's ability to reveal to society that the 'web' of language is broken. In both texts, the prevalent forces maintain that there is a great divide between such opposites as innocence and guilt, and irrationality and reason. It is the trickster who reveals that these 'sets of opposites,' in reality sit in very close proximity to one another and are not so opposite after all. There is some innocence in guilt and some irrationality in reason, and in some cases the meaning of one "opposite" actually eclipses its counterpart.

I-330 provides similar ambiguity, as she represents the unknown, irrational, infinite, and the incalculable – all features which are feared and considered highly dangerous in the rigid confines of the One State. Her face is described as containing "the pointed horns of an X… a strange, irritating X, which could not be captured or defined in figures…". This 'X' symbolizes a crossroads, duplicity of choices, and thus it is often a symbol of the trickster's presence. I-330's gift is the assertion of the irrational and immeasurable human soul, and reliance upon our deepest natural impulses and emotions. In this particularly mathematical novel, her 'X' face also evokes the multiplication sign, and indeed, I-330 literally multiplies the character D-503 once he falls in love with her. D-503 is the engineer of the spaceship *Integral*, which is designed to spread the civilization of the One State to other worlds. Before his encounter with I-330, he was *one* part of the "million-headed machine" that constitutes the One State. After their meeting, he becomes *two*: his former self and the "hairy-armed savage". I-330, as a trickster figure, gives the gift or anti-gift of recognition to D-503 of his suppressed irrational side which tears him apart and makes him doubt his own reality. The reader must decide for herself whether I-330 has offered the gift of enlightenment to D-503, or if she has thrown him into confusion and obscurity. As with Hyde's examples of tricksters, the gift is paradoxically an anti-gift. Raven steals sunlight from the gods to give to humankind, but in doing so, he broadens the divide between the two worlds. Likewise, Wright and Zamyatin's trickster figures bring ambiguity disguised as enlightenment.

Tricksters blur the language of opposites by revealing to society that words like *guilt*, *innocence*, *reason*, and *irrationality* no longer have their original meaning or signification. This revelation confuses concepts that were once clear. Likewise, the gift of enlightenment brought by Daniels and I-330 actually casts the shadow of obscurity on formerly clear concepts. Society, through the actions of the trickster, loses the comfort and security found in its formerly well-defined and distinct world. Hyde's analysis, that "tricksters obscure as they enlighten," fits well here, also. What Daniels and I-330 offer their societies is both the "way and the no-way," the portal and the end of the road. It is precisely because the modern tricksters' gift threatens not only the status quo, but even the very logical basis for that status quo, that both traditional and modern societies perceive them as radical and dangerous.

Notes

[1] Lewis Hyde. *Trickster Makes this World* (New York: North Point Press, 1999).

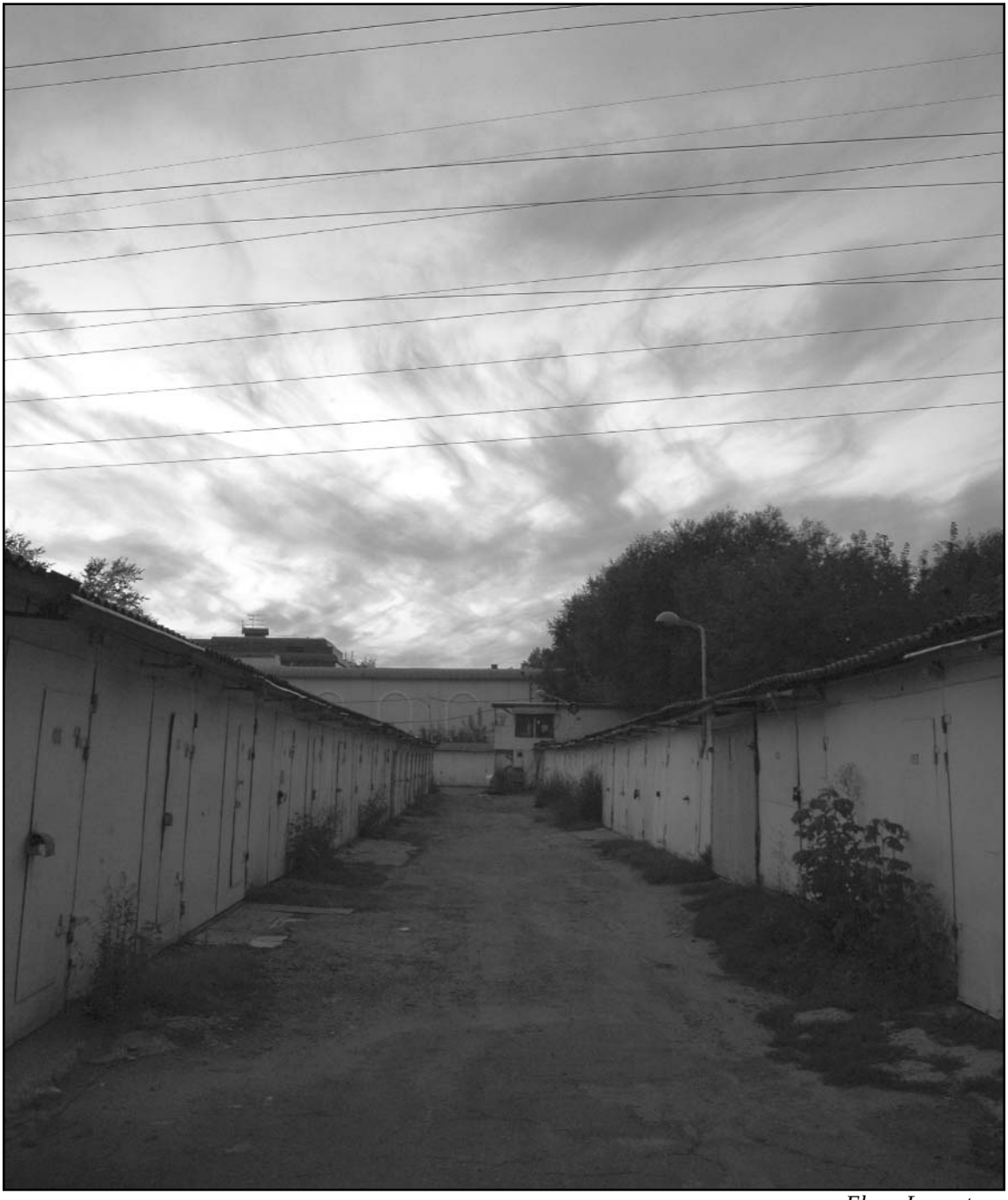
[2] Richard Wright. "The Man Who Lived Underground," in *The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Literature* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000).

[3] Hyde, 74-75.

[4] Hyde, 75.

[5] Yevgeny Zamyatin. *We*. (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 7-8.

[6] Zamyatin.



Elena Lagoutova

HAVEL AT COLUMBIA

The Columbia Core Lecture

Having sponsored lectures by some of the world's major intellectual heavyweights, Columbia's Core Curriculum invited Václav Havel to speak at the semi-annual Coursewide Lecture. The first political figure to speak at a forum that generally hosts academics who discuss Core texts, Havel spoke about the history of Soviet occupation and Czech independence and his own contribution to events that had one "extremely important result: the division of the world collapsed."

Havel described the Soviet Union's dominance over Czechoslovakia in strictly human terms, suggesting that the effects of a political regime can not only lead to an absence of basic freedoms, but also "a profound inner crisis." Havel's disdain for the Soviet regime, a system that transcended politics and penetrated into the hearts and minds of Czechoslovakians, was poignantly evident when he responded to a question about whether he feels any nostalgia for life under Communism. Havel starkly replied: "I'm not nostalgic of anything that built this regime … this regime was not built on any values—it was built on blah blah blah."

The notion of a value-less ideology clearly haunts Havel, but he made clear that he condemned any and all ideology, regardless of its rhetorical heights. He noted that even truth is susceptible to ideological influence, given that people build truth "into structures and ideologies to oppress those who believe different truths," and that the only antidote is morality.

A strong belief in morality defines Havel's worldview, and he believes that it represents the only consistent antidote to ideology. He said that "moral order, law, and principles are the only possible basis of legislation." Though he did not seek to deconstruct individualized moralities, it is clear that Havel believes that notions that are often viewed as nothing more than relative concepts such as truth, justice, and morality, represent a tangible personal opposition to the misuse of power, and the only real defense against oppression.

Having described the incursion of ideology into human life, Havel promoted art's ability to effect change with equal vigor: "I think every good piece of art has some direct or indirect political dimension or impact—good or bad, strong or not strong," he noted. Havel's notion of art is a truly noble one and is deeply rooted in his own experience and that of other dissidents throughout Communist Europe, including Solzhenitsyn, whose *Gulag Archipelago* has "more power than two Soviet divisions."

As someone who has "been in politics too long," Havel assigns art and artists great power, but he is concerned with the increasing influence of corporatism. He warned about the danger of tabloid media and corporate ownership, stating that "in the field of culture … the invisible hand sometimes plays a visible role." Given his belief in the world-changing power of art, this seems like an especially worrisome development, but it has not detracted from Havel from his own artistic field. After his stint as a major political leader, the former President is energized by the prospect of playwriting.

But what seemed to truly please Havel was the opportunity to speak to a group that was far younger than his traditional audiences. Ultimately, the man whose striving for freedom was as great as his perseverance in the process relished the chance to impart some advice based on his own experience. At the end of his lecture, he argued that the only possible opposition to any oppressive regime, whether totalitarian or simply ideological are "truth and morality, [which] have a stronger power than weapons."

- Mark Krotov



Elena Lagoutova

Havel and Clinton: The Leaders Reflect

Moderated by Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia University, and assisted by translator and Columbia University lecturer Christopher Harwood, Václav Havel and Bill Clinton discussed their visions for a changing world before an audience of Columbia University students, faculty and staff. If any members of the audience were in doubt as to Havel's political credentials, Clinton set them straight, placing Havel in the company of Mohandas Gandhi and Nelson Mandela as one of the few men who have ever changed the course of a nation through nonviolence.

Presidents Havel and Clinton kept the tone of the event light and informal, cracking jokes and praising each other as much as talking politics. They repeatedly stressed the need for governments to plan carefully for the future and, as Havel put it "make choices that confront future dangers." Though neither leader specifically mentioned globalization, the notion that the world is rapidly becoming a more close-knit, interdependent entity dominated the conversation. President Bollinger touched on the issue of globalization with his first question: what should today's students know about the world they will face in a few short years? Both Havel and Clinton agreed that the world is a changing place, and that citizens should understand what approaches will be necessary for governments to take in the coming years in the realms of international relations, environmental policy, and economic aid.

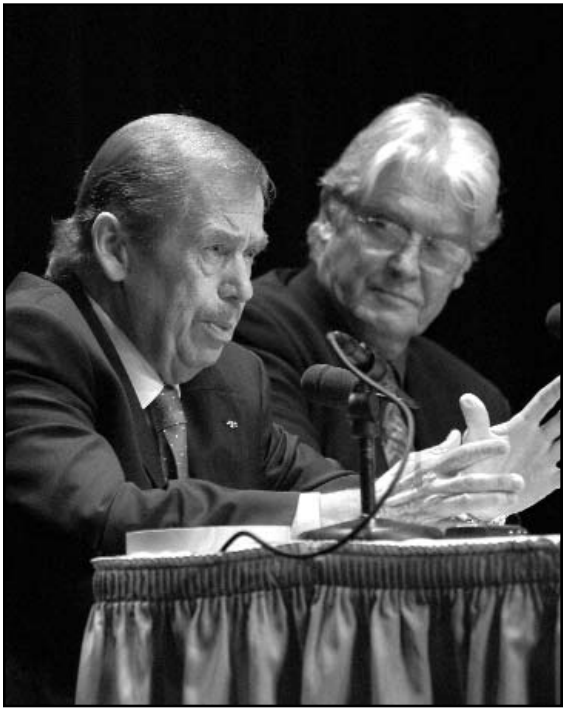
Havel proved to be as thorough and eloquent in political conversation as in his literary works.

Continued on Page 30

Havel at Columbia: In Focus











- Elena Lagoutova

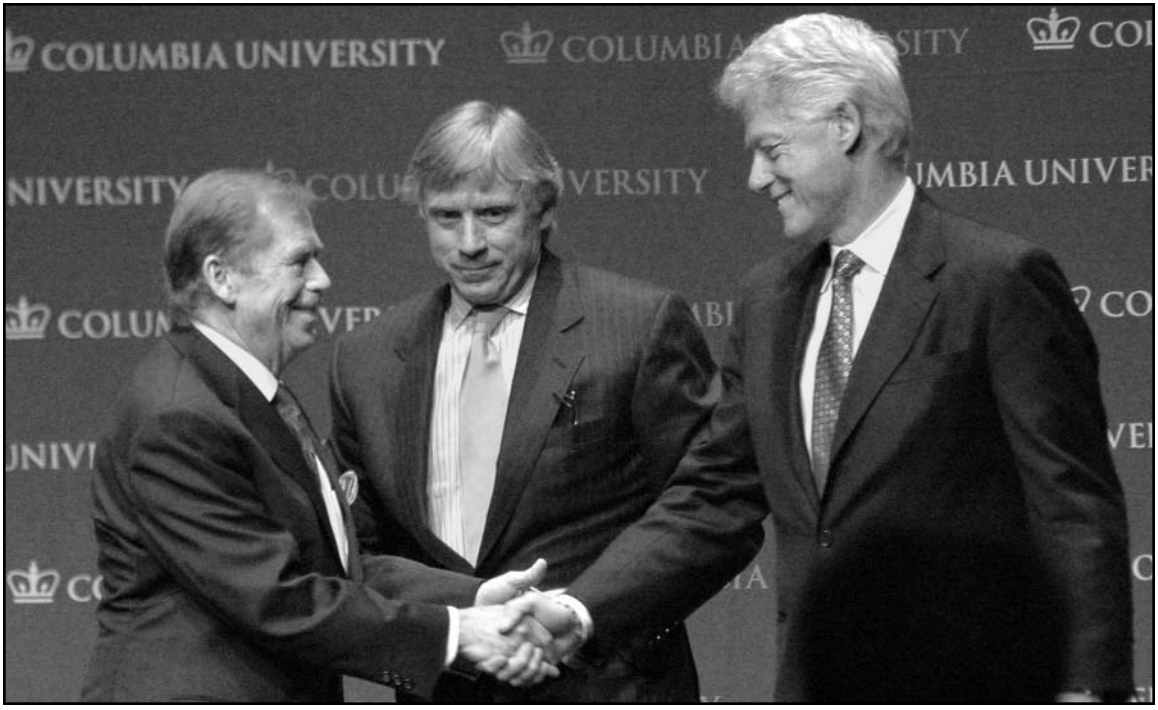
Continued from Page 27

While he emphasized the importance of planning for the future, he noted that the future is never entirely predictable and mentioned that he was completely surprised by the development of a phase he termed "post-communism" in Eastern Europe. He went on to agree with Clinton that human values such as liberty and civil rights should dominate a society's political discourse. He adamantly denounced any form of dogmatism, fanaticism, or "ideological hard-headedness," but appropriately, he said that he was hesitant to transform his views into a doctrine.

Iraq loomed large in the background of the discussion, and neither Havel nor Clinton addressed the issue directly, instead using it as a means to extol the virtues of solidarity among the world's established democracies. Though both shied away from presenting definite solutions to the problems posed by such issues as terrorism, the war in Iraq, poverty, and environmental degradation, the audience was nothing if not appreciative of their emphasis on liberty and cooperation. In their responses to an audience member's question "must every new country be a democracy?", both men agreed that not democracy, but tolerance, human rights, and social responsibility are the crucial elements of every government.

Early in the conversation, President Clinton mentioned that we as individuals and as nations have a harmful but persistent tendency to focus on differences between people. His observation that "we need a little more humility" was especially apt in the presence of President Václav Havel, one of the most thoughtful, principled, and humble men to ever emerge as leader of a successful "new democracy."

- Emily Laskin



Elena Lagoutova

Life in Plastic, It's Fantastic



Elena Lagoutova

After the death of one of its founding members, after disbanding in the early 1980s, after being dubbed "the greatest obscure rock band of all time', after thirty years of playing together, what does a band do to stay relevant? In the West, you put out a greatest hits album or you market your famous songs for commercials. This is not how it is done in Eastern Europe.

The Plastic People of the Universe was formed during one of the most explosive times in Czech history, a month after the end of the Prague Spring, a period marked by the encouragement of artistic expression. The founder of the Plastics was Milan Hlavsa, a bass player and poet, who was enraptured with Ginsberg and the Velvet Underground.

The Prague Spring was over, and censorship began. The Soviet government was quick to discover the popularity of this self-proclaimed psychedelic group and revoked its license to play as "professionals." Demoted to an amateur status, the band was forced to be creative in booking venues. They dubbed their shows "demonstrations"; Hlavsa read poetry and the band would play as a closing note. Due to the constant threat of being broken up by the authorities, their shows were kept secret and would often take a month to orchestrate. Even so, the Plastics developed a following of Czech youths who were looking for an alternative to state-produced art and music. "Most of our followers were pretty sad, depressed kids", said Paul Wilson, the band's briefly employed English language singer, at a lecture at Columbia this November. He then laughingly mused that perhaps the nature of the fans was the reason that some of the main ingredients of a rock and roll lifestyle were missing from the Plastic's concerts.

In an environment unfriendly to artistic development, things only got more difficult for the Plastics. In 1976, after playing at the Second Music Festival to the Second Culture, the Plastics were arrested. When asked about the arrests, Vratislav Brabenec, the saxophonist who joined the band in 1972, is as flustered as he might have been at the time. He was only imprisoned for one night; however, he was kept in a work camp for 8 months, and upon release, was billed for his time there. "It was more expensive than a hotel,"

Barabec joked when I asked him about this. Paul Wilson was also arrested and questioned, and, when he would not give up information, he was deported.

After the arrests, the Plastics became "icons of the revolution." When asked about their status, Barabec seemed confounded: "Because he had mentioned us in Charter 77, Havel asked if we would sign. We were pushed to be dissidents." The Plastics' songs never really dealt with political matters; instead, they were based on poetry and philosophy. Regardless, in the 1970s, this group stood at the center of a revolution initiated by the dissatisfied youths who attended first their shows.

The rest is history… until now. The Plastics are still together. They still have day-jobs and all but Barabec live in Prague. Though they have not put out an album in five years, they have new songs. The bassist and singer, Eva Turnova is sure that there will be enough for an album in a year. In fact, though she is the youngest member in the group, Turnova doesn't seem daunted by task of putting out a album of new songs. "The music sounds better than it did then, it's timeless," she excitedly said. It is this excitement that can make these rock revolutionaries go on forever."

- Ashley Cleek



Elena Lagoutova

The Examined Life: Analyzing Havel's Legacy

Organized by Czech Studies at Columbia and The Harriman Institute, "The Examined Life: The Literature and Politics of Václav Havel" was an all-day symposium dedicated to delineating Havel's substantial contributions to the interwoven realms of literature and politics. The first half of the symposium saw four scholars assessing and interpreting Havel's written work, though all of them asserted that in Havel's case, political consciousness could not be separated from the creation of literature.

Professor Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz, of the University of British Columbia, noted that because "Havel rejected ideology that did not question its own assumptions," he was hypercritical of his politicized surroundings and used his plays to question and deconstruct the dominant ideological motifs of the Soviet era.

Goetz-Stankiewicz also argued that Havel filled his plays with clichés that begged for thorough analysis, a reading that was echoed by Paul Wilson, who found that translating Havel's letters and essays was exceedingly difficult because of the playwright's reliance on evasion and obscurity. But Havel only deployed opaque writing when he needed to get around censors because his most powerful works are direct and forceless—Wilson noted that in "Power of the Powerless," Havel "cut to the core of totalitarianism."

The University of Pennsylvania's Peter Steiner chose to focus on an altogether different aspect of Havel's literary work—his visual poetry. Every poem that Steiner presented seemed to conclude with an existential dead end, because as Steiner noted, "the possibility of choice is insufficient—with either option, the truth will be mangled."

Finally, NYU's Carol Rocamora's lecture provided an apt conclusion to the morning session as she narrated the efforts of American and British theatre directors to keep Havel's legacy alive, even as he was trapped in prison.

Panelists in the afternoon session focused on Havel's legacy, as well, though their comments were tinged with nostalgia for a time when the president was anything but a traditional politician.

The first speaker was Martin Palouš, the former Czech Ambassador to the US and the current Czech Ambassador to the UN, who spoke about Havel's innate ability to understand what his society needed. Havel embraced NGOs that were often seen as threatening and urged his citizens to understand totalitarianism's origins, rather than erasing the regime from their collective memory. Palouš noted that Havel did not believe in forgetting the past, but sought to undermine a system's evils by closely scrutinizing its initial ideals.

Jirí Pehe, the Director of NYU in Prague and the former Director of the Political Department of Havel's Presidential Office, spoke about Havel's transformation from a political dissident to a dissident politician. "You are making a mistake if you mark the beginning of Havel's entry into politics in 1989," Pehe said, for most of Havel's writing has always dealt with politics. That said, Havel was destined to become an unorthodox politician. As president, "he did not play by the rules, because he did not become a politician under normal circumstances."

Petr Pithart, the former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, introduced his remarks by noting that "to be an intellectual and a dissident is natural. To be a dissident and a politician is strange. But to be an intellectual and a politician is truly contradictory." Havel, the intellectual who became a dissident and then a politician, was used to doubting everything and asking questions that did not always have an answer. Like his politics, his language was never purely rhetorical. He believed that a real question must start without an answer.

- Mark Krotov and Elena Lagoutova



Elena Lagoutova

Cold War Memories

Sasha Chavchadze's Museum of Matches

MERRELL HAMBLETON
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ART REVIEW

In his memoir, *Speak, Memory*, Vladimir Nabokov recounts a game of matches that he played with a general from the Russian Army. The general places the matches end to end to represent "a sea in calm weather." He shifts them into a zig-zag pattern and they become "a stormy sea." Remembering this game, Nabokov writes, "what pleases me is the evolution of the match theme. Those magic ones that he had shown me had been trifled with and misled and his armies had vanished and everything had fallen through."

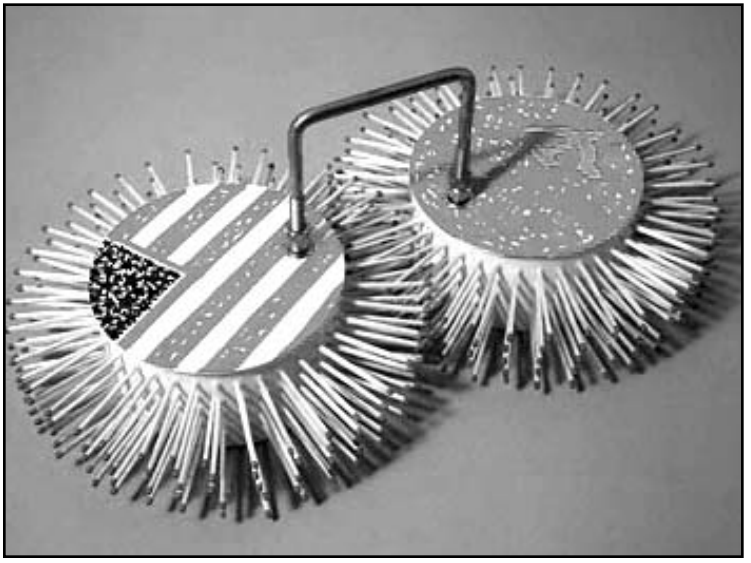
Nabokov's autobiography is an artifact in The Museum of Matches, an off-shoot of the Proteus Gowanus gallery in Brooklyn, NY, and this passage is quoted in wall-text at the entrance of the gallery. Its display suggests the centrality that the book and the story of the matches hold in the exhibit. Sasha Chavchavadze, the artist and curator behind The Museum of Matches, draws on the literal and abstract themes presented in this moment between Nabokov and the general, to explore the Cold War through a unique, if scattered, lens.

The Museum of Matches, like Nabokov's match game, incorporates matches in a literal sense, but is not ultimately about matches at all. And although the exhibit is made up of a number of artifacts, it is hardly a museum. The wall text at the exhibit entrance describes The Museum of Matches as a "one room museum founded by an individual to better understand an historical moment." The historical moment in question is the Cold War, but it is not the goal of the Museum of Matches to leave the viewer with even a superficial understanding of the conflict. Chavchavadze draws on Nabokov's themes of personal history, emigration, cross-generational relationships and war to explore her own life through quotes, artifacts, books, photographs and art. The Cold War is evidently an important element of the artist's exploration, but it is difficult to understand exactly why the show hinges on this event and what its goal is in doing so.

The first piece upon entering the gallery is one of Chavchavadze's own works: two cylinders, bristling with matchsticks, welded together by a metal handle. The top faces of the cylinders are painted with representations of the American and Soviet flags, respectively. Chavchavadze is commenting on the pointless stalemate in which the US and the USSR are caught, but the incorporation of matches seems inscrutable and incongruous. One traces Nabokov's war and match theme, but to what end?

The show makes an awkward transition into the next display. Chavchavadze's art is replaced by a collection of Cold War artifacts that illustrate parallels in American and Soviet symbolism and art.

What begins as abstract commentary on the Cold War suddenly becomes utterly didactic. Travel to the next display and one is in new territory once again. This time, the relationship in question is between Chavchavadze and her father, who was an agent in the CIA. While Chavchavadze seems to drop the Cold War theme here, she does make an effort to reintroduce the match game, as David Chavchavadze used to play a version of it in his youth. This portion of the show is also without any of Chavchavadze's own art, but relies instead on more wall text and artifacts that reference her father. Though difficult to place in the larger context of the "Museum," this portion of the show is unexpectedly moving. In a wall text, Chavchavadze tells a story from her youth, of seeing her father unexpectedly on the subway to Brooklyn. He is working undercover, holding a sandwich bag, trying to look nondescript. When he notices Sasha looking across at him, there is a moment in which he deliberates, deciding whether or not to speak to her. In this small instant, Chavchavadze successfully plays to her most central themes. Her father, uncomfortable and furtive in the American landscape, seems caught between identities: he is at once the accomplished and diligent CIA agent for the American government and a Russian displaced from his home. The Cold War, in which he is bound up, heightens the tension between these two selves. This moment, caught between America and Russia, illustrates the central problem that the artist seeks to address.



Proteus Gowanus Gallery

Unfortunately, the territory that Chavchavadze is interested in exploring is too general to allow her to present any more profound commentary on the Cold War and its impact on her life as a Russian immigrant. She works to fashion a three-dimensional memoir made up of art, books, images and words, but her various mediums fail to coalesce. The show is at its most interesting when it is personal, but it becomes less and less about Chavchavadze as it progresses. She shows us more books on the Cold War, then books about the CIA and the Russian revolution, then books on war in general. In many ways, it is an impressive and fascinating collection, but only by virtue of the works themselves. Chavchavadze's art is interspersed amongst the various collections of books, but it is overshadowed by all of the other objects on display. One has the feeling of having stepped into someone's private study and so the art-work on the walls becomes mere décor.

The Museum of Matches seems fixated on looking, in none too deliberate a fashion, at a series of basic, large parallels and ideas. On one wall, Chavchavadze has posted a sheet of paper that reads, "Relationships to Explore," which lists

such topics as Cold War/ Personal History, US / USSR, Cold War / War on Terror, Khrushchev / Kennedy, Past / Present, Russian Revolution /Cold War, Communism / Capitalism, Our Enemy / Ourselves, and finally, Father / Me.

This look into the artist's thought process excuses her lack of focus, since the show is visibly an exploration, a work in progress. Chavchavadze is a Russian immigrant in America and the Cold War represents something symbolic of her personal experience. She seeks to understand it through her father, Nabokov, books, and artifacts. She makes art about it. But at a certain point, the viewer has to ask, "so what?"

As if in defense of this challenge to her project, Chavchavadze includes a quote which reads, "This story has no beginning and no end; it is a sequence of images, snapshots of reality, loosely, sometimes arbitrarily, strung together along an open continuum, yet inextricably connected." To an extent, Chavchavadze's awareness of the nature of the show makes it hard to critique. At the same time, there is no getting around the fact that The Museum of Matches fails to coalesce. At best, we can use the quote as advice for seeking out the good in the show – and it *is* there, in the personal stories that she shares, both her own, her father's and Nobokov's. While Chavchavadze's inclusion of artifacts does flesh out the stories she tells, the overwhelming number and variety of objects become clutter. The look offered into the mind of the artist is interesting and unique, but ultimately too much work is left up to the viewer. One wishes that Chavchavadze would make the "inextricable connections" between her various images more apparent.



Ashley Cleek

Subversion From Within

Analyzing Andrei Tarkovsky's Soviet Status

JULIA BUTAREVA
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

FILM ANALYSIS

On October 8, a panel on the life and films of Andrei Tarkovsky was held in the Weill Art Gallery at the 92nd Street Y. The program included a diverse array of panelists, but its focus was on *Solaris*, Tarkovsky's most well-known film. The first speaker was Mikhail Iampolski, a Comparative Literature professor at NYU. He talked about the special position that Tarkovsky occupied in the Soviet Union. Tarkovsky's movies were elitist, individualistic, and brilliant, but Iampolski pointed out that they were also full of very overt spirituality, which is unusual in an atheist country, to say the least. To make his point, he played clips of *Andrei Rublev*, in which the icon painter's faith and awe are crucial to his work, and *Stalker*, where the messiah-like title character quotes the Bible at length.

Equally interesting was Iampolski's position on the uniquely privileged role of the artist in society. The view that an artist had something to offer that was not reproducible or commeasurable with anything else runs through Tarkovsky's entire body of work, starting with his first film, *The Steamroller and the Violin*." In that film, a sensitive young boy who plays the violin is protected by a worker who drives a steamroller. It is, Iampolski said, "an early sign that intellectual labor was beginning to be valued."

Tarkovksy's cinematography was also deliberately and distinctly un-Soviet: for example, the director hated and criticized Eisenstein and associated the technique of montage with crude propaganda. Iampolski noted that Tarkovsky was "opposed to the system of shocks" and tried "to create a more subtle relationship between the film and the spectator," opting for long, drawn-out takes that eased viewers into his films rather than jarring them. Tarkovsky was conscious of the fact that even his gentle cinematography was inherently coercive toward the viewer, but in his films, unlike in Eisenstein's, "the spectator's perception never feels coerced."

Iampolski empasized the implicit, if sometimes negatively expressed, recognition that Tarkovsky received. "All [were] absolutely conscious that Tarkovsky was a genius," even those who tried to "shelve his films." He was "an object of permanent jealousy," and quite conscious of his own genius. A telling fact that Iampolski brought up was that Tarkovsky dreamed of establishing a school for great directors like Fellini and Antonioni, where he would teach them to imbue their films with spirituality. But despite his skill with the language of film, when he wrote his book *Sculptor in Time*, he needed the help of the film critic Aleksandr Sokurov to express his ideas.

Iampolski did not overlook the unavailability

ANDREI TARKOVSKY



Emily Lowry

of Tarkovsky's films in the Soviet Union at the time. *Andrei Rublev* was not released until five years after its completion, and *The Mirror* was nearly impossible to see. His work was always scathingly reviewed in the official press, despite the fact that it continued to bring international awards. When Tarkovsky was dying of cancer in Paris, his family had a great deal of difficulty coming from the Soviet Union to see him.

And yet his position was unmistakably privileged. He was permitted to make the autobiographical film *The Mirror*, which, as Iampolski pointed out, was highly unusual for a Soviet director. And when he was dissatisfied with *Stalker*, he was given money to move the production to Estonia and reshoot. Like an Olympic athlete or an astronaut, he was an object of national pride. He showed the world that Russia could produce cinematic art as great as that of Fellini and Antonioni and win countless awards at Cannes.

Tarkovsky remains a recognizable name in the West to this day. *Solaris* was the only Soviet film remade by Hollywood and was discussed at length by David Gurevich, the second panelist at the event. A Russian writer living in New York, Gurevich writes film reviews for publications such as *Images* and has written *Travels with Dubinsky and Clive*, *Vodka For Breakfast*, and *From Lenin to Lennon*. Unfortunately, his discussion of the two films was a glib and shallow rant. In addition to making sneering, racist remarks about the "American political correctness" of making one of the scientists on the Solaris space station a woman and giving her "Rambo-style" lines, he seemed to misunderstand Tarkovsky's version completely. He talked at length about the way George Clooney's Kris Kelvin exists in the film "to fix his personal problems" and "do right by his woman," while Donatis Banionis' Kris is there to "make Contact." But Tarkovsky was quite explicit about downplaying the science fiction aspects of his film and using it as a vehicle for exploring precisely those relationships between human beings that Gurevich derides Soderbergh for attempting to treat. Among the most powerful lines Banionis' Kris utters are "Man needs Man" and "What we really want is a mirror." In his autobiographical documentary *Voyage in Time*, Tarkovsky even expressed frustration with the film for being "unsuccessful in being without genre." He was not interested in either science fiction or in creating a faithful adaptation of Stanislaw Lem's novel. According to Lem's web site, the writer himself "never really liked" Tarkovsky's version.

The final speaker was Boris Kerdimun. His son, Vitalik, played the role of the young son of Henri Berton, the pilot who is the first to report

odd occurrences on Solaris. He was noticed because he was in the Young Pioneers with the son of Vladimir Naumov and Aleksandr Alov, film directors and friends of Tarkovsky. Unemployed at the time for political reasons to which he only vaguely alluded, Boris Yusov was hired as his son's guardian. The filming took place in Zvenigorod, and father and son shared a house with Vladislav Dvorzhetsky, the actor who played Berton. Yusov's reminiscences about the dinner parties the cast and crew would hold – sometimes at Tarkovsky's residence, sometimes at his and Dvorzhetsky's – were tantalizing, but vague. Yusov had agreed to give his talk, and was, after all, the major attraction here, but he seemed reluctant to give details about the filming or to flesh out his hazy, worshipful sketch of Tarkovsky himself. "You felt that there was a presence in this person," he said. In the end, all that one could glean was that Tarkovsky adored his father and was a great dinner companion.

In spite of the reticence of the one person present who actually knew Andrei Tarkovsky, a portrait of the man eventually emerged. He was infinitely energetic, ambitious and intuitive: he even edited his last film from his deathbed. His presence must indeed have been powerful and difficult to describe. And despite his consciousness of his own genius and privilege, he never took advantage of it except in the service of his art. According to *One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich*, a recent documentary about his life, Tarkovsky is supposed to have claimed that the ghost of the poet Aleksandr Blok came to him in a dream and told him that he would make just seven films – but all of them good ones. He did, in fact, make exactly seven, not counting his student works. And all of them just so happen to be remarkably good.



Katerina Vorotova

Cinematic Imports

The Best Features of New York's Russian Film Week

ESTER MURDUKHAYEVA
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

FESTIVAL REVIEW

As Russian moviegoers become more American in taste, it is increasingly difficult for Russian directors to break through. Though there have been several success stories, notably the truly abominable *Night Watch*, the top-grossing movie week after week in Russia is an American blockbuster. Even *Night Watch*, ostensibly homegrown, derived much of its creative and stylistic inspiration from the bewildering Hollywood genre of overhyped movies created by music video directors. "What alarms me is that American films – which are more often than not terrible - are monopolizing the Russian film scene," stated Alexander Sokurov, one of Russia's premier directors, at a 2003 Cannes Film Festival press conference.

This unfortunate pattern has created a situation where the only available markets for quality Russian films are the European film festivals, which are often more than receptive. Sokurov receives yearly exposure at Cannes, Alexei Zvyagintzev's *The Return*, won the 2003 best film award in Venice and Kiril Serebrennikov's *Playing the Victim* won the top prize at the inaugural Rome Film Festival this October. And yet, despite respect in Europe, few Russian films have been able to break through in America.

"It is sad that Russian movies do not get much attention in America," Vladimir Vdovichenkov, star of *The Seventh Day*, one of the movies featured at the 2006 Russian Film Week in New York remarked. "America is the home of modern cinema, and we are making great movies that belong here." It is the rare contemporary Russian film that is able to be successful in both the domestic and international markets while retaining originality and artistic integrity.

New York's Russian Film Week, now in its 6th year, has made a concerted effort to break this cycle. The organizers of this year's, whose stated goal is to "position this event as a place to find modern Russian films for distribution in the U.S.," fortunately chose to continue Film Week's tradition of featuring quality motion pictures which are unmistakably Russian, as opposed to the more manufactured, throwaway Hollywood-style pictures. A notable absence this year is Fyodor Bondarchuk's Afghan War epic *The 9th Company* that was selected as Russia's entry into the competition for Best Foreign Language Oscar. While a solid and wildly popular movie, its collaboration with Britain's Pinewood Shepperton, the studio responsible for the James Bond films and *Black Hawk Down*, meant that Bondarchuk predictably borrowed heavily from the great Hollywood war movies, creating a powerful, yet somewhat superfluous film.

Instead of the more popular *The 9th* Company, New York film week chose to feature two World War II dramas. Both films are superb and highly original, despite using a historical backdrop redundant in Russian film. The week's opener, Alexander Rogozhkin's *Transit (Peregon)* shares a lot with *Cuckoo,* the 2002 film that many consider to be the

director's masterpiece. *Cuckoo* was an international sensation, sweeping the festivals in Moscow, Normandy and San Francisco, with many lauding its attention to the human stories that surround every war. Rogozhkin follows this pattern with *Transit*, creating a work where individual lives are far more important than battle scenes. *Transit*'s sole flaw is that it takes on too many lives. The knockout performances from almost every member of the cast are almost a detriment to this ensemble film, given that the movie frustratingly cannot focus on any one storyline for an extended period.

Nevertheless, Rogozhkin succeeds in other ways. The movie is set in a small airbase at Chukotka in 1943, where American and Russian pilots are transferring Lend-Lease warplanes to the front through Alaska and Siberia. Many of the movie's excellent comedic moments come from the hesitant interactions between the young Russian pilots, all male, and the American junior lieutenants, all female. Limited by language and dependent on awkward gesticulation, these meetings are by turns funny and uncomfortable. The authenticity of the time period in the actors' appearances, mannerisms and speech demonstrates the director's superb attention to detail, and is one of the highlights of the film.



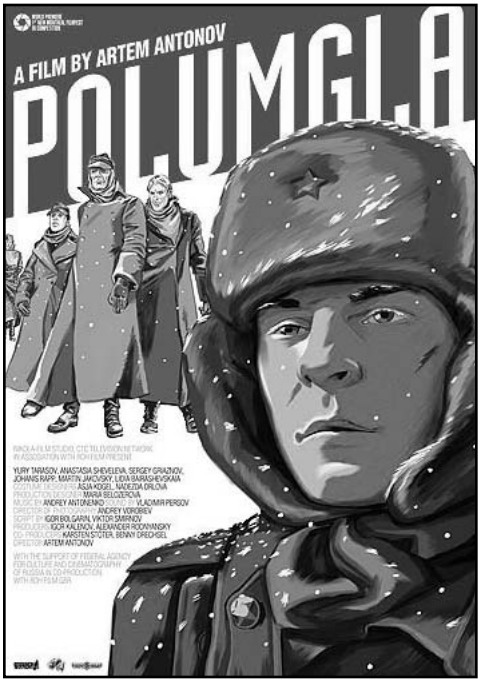
Transit, however, is at its heart, a drama. Alexei Serebriakov is gripping as Captain Foma Ilyich Yurchenko, the deranged alcoholic base commander. He does not have a single redeeming characteristic – vulgar, violent, crude and brutal, he simultaneously terrifies and engages the audience. Danil Strakhov, as Yurchenko's foil Captain Lisnevsky is solid, but incredibly boring. A seasoned actor provided with a much more complex character, Serebriakov overpowers Lisnevsky in many of their shared scenes.

The conflict between the two men is ostensibly over who controls the base, given that Yurchenko is mentally unbalanced due to a war trauma. However, it becomes clear that Lisnevsky is engaged in a love affair with Yurchenko's wife, Irina (Anastasia Nemolyayeva), and that Yurchenko has impregnated kitchen worker Valentina (Svetlana Stroganova), hopelessly confusing the lives of those on the airbase. As this situation develops into a detective story in the last half hour of the movie, it becomes somewhat ridiculous. Despite the faultless performances by Serebriakov, Nemolyayeva, Stroganova, this feels like a cheap way to wrap up a movie that at two hours is too short to sufficiently conclude the storylines it began. Moving from character to character, the audience also moves from romantic comedy to war movie to drama to detective story, without a very satisfying conclusion to any of them.

Despite Rogozhkin's ambitiousness, *Transit* is a fine movie, with spectacular acting and beautiful cinematography. The main disappointment is that one leaves the theater caring too much about the characters to let them go, and as far as disappointments go, it is a respectable one.

Artyom Antonov's *Polumgla*, the Week's other World War II drama, is more typical of that genre. Nevertheless, first-time director Antonov, with a crew of mostly first-time cinematographers, editors and technicians, approaches the genre with new eyes. He uses many themes from the great Soviet war epics, including Russian-German animosities, women deprived of their men, and ruthless militarism with a force that reawakens them, and makes them modern, as opposed to relics of the time period. "When I read the script, it struck me as a modern drama, a modern conflict," Antonov said, when asked why a young director would approach such used material.

The movie depicts a young, injured lieutenant, Grigory Anokhin (a youthful Yury Tarasov) who is ordered to oversee a group of Nazi POWs who are being sent to a village in the North, the titular Polumgla, to build a radio tower. The literal meaning of "polumgla" of haze manifests visually in the cinematography of the film, and symbolically, in the interactions between the characters. The villagers and Soviet commanders, Anokhin included, initially loathe the Germans, however, as time passes, survival instincts bring the individuals closer, despite their nations being at war. Nevertheless, though the language barriers and patriotic loyalties fade, they never go away, and there is a permanently foggy separation between the Russians and the Germans.



Polumgla is the type of movie that manages to succeed without any stellar actors or a particularly engaging plot. There are no superhuman Serebriakov-type performances, making the movie more effective in portraying how individuals react in times of danger. The Soviet myths of the war created heroes out of every individual, something that this movie debunks. The Penelope-like stereotype of the woman who patiently waits for her husband to return from war is entirely debunked with a village full of wives who succumb to sexual desires. Men return from the war destroyed, rather than proud to have served the nation. *Polumgla* presents Germans who are not the faceless enemy and Soviets who are not the glorious patriots.

Antonov bravely challenges the common conception of a World War II drama, and though his ending is far from uplifting, it is perfectly appropriate in its heavy tragedy. On the heels of a joyous celebration marking the end of the year, Anokhin and his crew learn that the army no longer needs a radio tower, and thus, no longer needs the services of the German prisoners. Producer Igor Kolyonov introduced the movie by warning the audience that it would not be happy. "I hope you gain something from it anyway," he finished. What we do gain is insight into the way a young generation understands one of the greatest moments in the development of modern Russian identity. This World War II epic is a true 21st century interpretation of the seminal event, and it would be wise for the next American director who chooses to tackle World War II to approach it with the same freshness that Antonov does.

Other features at Russian Film Week range from truly magnificent to solid, with no missteps in selection. Given that the selection of American quality films is by and large pitiful, it is absurd that Russian movies, and foreign movies in general, are not shown more often. A wider American audience would give producers incentive to invest in young, promising directors such as Antonov, as well as established, revolutionary directors like Rogozhkin, which would in turn lead to more money for advertising in the domestic market. One of the reasons for the popularity of *Night Watch* and *The 9th Company* in Russia is the huge marketing budget both films had. While it is disappointing enough that these movies are not shown abroad, it is abhorrent that Russians themselves would choose dross Hollywood blockbusters and weak derivative movies over the outstanding films featured at Russian Film Week. More attention and bigger budgets for quality movies would translate to a wider domestic audience, reclaiming a rich tradition of brilliant filmmaking.

Creativity and Dictatorship

The Meaning of Saparmurat Niyazov's Cultural Monument

KATERINA VOROTOVA
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

This October, Turkmen dictator Saparmurat Niyazov "Turkmenbashi" opened a massive book-shaped building devoted to media organizations in Ashgabat, capital of Turkmenistan, in celebration of Turkmenistan's 15th anniversary of independence. The construction of the House of Free Creativity, as the edifice is called, in heavily censored Turkmenistan is a notably ironic political statement. The press in this Central Asian nation is regularly monitored by Niyazov's administration, libraries list only books approved by the state, and limited internet access is available to 0.7% of the nation. Any criticism of Niyazov is considered treason, punishable by imprisonment and exile. Furthermore, Turkmenistan was listed as the third most censored nation by the Committee to Protect Journalists. So what do we make of this building?

COMMENT

Because of his eccentricities, President Niyazov, who styled himself as "Turkmenbashi", meaning "Leader of all Ethnic Turkmens," has become known in the Western media as a caricature of an autocrat. He is often ridiculed for infamous projects like the erection of a golden statue of himself that revolves around the sun, set on a rocket-shaped monument base in Ashgabat, and for officially changing the names of the calendar months in honor of himself, his mother and his spiritual guide, the Rukhnama. Other projects, such as the construction of an ice palace with a ski resort, a man-made lake and cypress forest in the Kara Kum desert, and a recent $50 million Disneyland-like theme park for ethnic Turkmen folk art are funded by revenue from the country's export of oil and natural gas. Critics allege that instead of building up his cult of personality, Niyazov could use this money to enhance public welfare in a nation where over 56 percent of the country's population lives below the poverty line.

The $17-million House of Free Creativity has been compared by Western bloggers to Derek Zoolander's School for Kids Who Can't Read Good, suggesting that Turkmenbashi's attempt to claim freedom of speech can only be taken as seriously as Zoolander's school.

However, before dismissing the project as another self-gratifying move of a narcissistic despot, one should examine the historical context of the region. Rafis Abazov, adjunct professor at the Harriman Institute of Columbia University and author of "Historical Dictionary of Turkmenistan", says, "We can laugh, but I'm not sure if it's useful. We have to understand where Turkmenbashi is coming from."

Professor Abazov explains that Niyazov received his identity and education during the Soviet reign in Central Asia. With the independence of Turkmenistan in 1991, he had to fashion a new identity and learn new ways to legitimize his rule by combining his Soviet heritage with Muslim and post-modern Western traditions. Abazov adds that in the region, a good ruler is perceived as a builder for the people, even if the projects are not necessarily useful.

While it does not overtly establish free speech, The House of Free Creativity is nonetheless a statement that Turkmenbashi is not against knowledge in general. Niyazov himself is actually fond of writing and was praised by state-controlled media for the recent publication of a volume of his poetry titled *Turkmenistan – My Happiness*. According to Professor Abazov, Niyazov is determined to reflect what he thinks the people of his country want and is attempting to present himself as a modern leader that is aware of the rules of the political game in a world dominated by Western values. While it is essentially indisputable that Niyazov is an autocrat, Professor Abazov's commentary explains why the people of Turkmenistan are not rising up in protest.

On national Turkmen television, Niyazov proclaimed that based on GDP, his country is joining the ranks of developed nations. He said, "At present, our per capita GDP is some $8,000. This shows that Turkmenistan is among developed countries of the world."

SAPARMURAT NIYAZOV



Emily Lowry

Although the country's economy has indeed grown significantly since independence and a lot of its infrastructure has been constructed, Turkmenistan is far from becoming a developed nation. There is practically no civil society, no opposition parties and the country's constant human rights violations alarm the West. The government has been consistently persecuting ethnic minorities in an effort to "Turkmenize" the country. Until recently, non-ethnic Turkmen children were forced to wear traditional Turkmen dress in schools or face expulsion, and now, non-ethnic Turkmen women and their children are exiled to neighboring countries. Furthermore, in 2005, Niyazov ordered the closure of all hospitals outside the capital and cut off all education beyond the ninth grade, thereby eliminating the possibility of any Turkmen citizen to receive higher education. "Turkmenbashi is a tragedy to his people," says Columbia Professor Robert Legvold. Turkmenistan is very far from attaining the same living standards as any other developed nation, and "the GDP statistics Niyazov provides are utterly unreliable." Legvold also notes that because the GDP is not distributed, it means little for the population.

Russia, China and the European Union among others are interested in establishing and continuing trade with Turkmenistan. Russia's GazProm agreed to pay 54% more for Turkmen natural gas than it did previously, and China recently signed a cooperation agreement with Turkmenistan to explore the oil deposits at the Caspian Sea. Due to its rejection of democratic reforms, Turkmenistan is the only country in Central Asia that does not have a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU. Any future agreement depends heavily on Turkmenistan's ability to address human rights issues.

"Every politician has to make choices according to their priorities. Many politicians are willing to sacrifice human rights for other agendas. This is true of Turkmenistan and other leaders including the Western world," says Professor Abazov. "The difference is that in Western countries, people can disagree. In this system – no," he adds. Professor Abazov warns against the tendency of the West to impose its

standards on other countries. In fact, his analysis of Turkmenistan raises more questions than it provides answers: to what degree can or should the West interfere in internal affairs of other countries? Abazov cites Edward Said's *Orientalism* and the war in Iraq as warnings of such action. "For every complicated question, there are always two simple answers," he says, "Only both of them are usually wrong".

Professor Legvold states that he respects Said's argument on cultural differences but emphasizes that "there is a threshold." He elaborates, "When you damage the health of the population, destroy their chance at education, and keep the population in poverty, you cannot defend the regime on Said's argument. When a leader through conscious policy, not merely through ineptitude, ends up furthering negative trends, he must be condemned."

However, even if the international community were determined to implement changes in Turkmenistan, it would be extremely difficult. "Regimes that are so isolated are hard to influence," explains Professor Legvold. Therefore, change must come from within Turkmenistan itself. Before it can reach the status of developed nations, Turkmenistan will need to establish democratic procedures and fair elections, rule of law, and a business-friendly environment. It will need to create a system of fighting corruption and human rights abuses while maintaining political stability. "So far, there are no signs of moving toward this goal," says Abazov. "Hope will come when the whole thing implodes," says Legvold. "But maybe what replaces tyranny will be chaos, like in Iraq."

The building of the House of Free Creativity firmly states that there is room for media and knowledge in Turkmenistan, but it also concentrates the media in one place, so that it is easier to control. While it may be merely a successful effort by Turkmenbashi to glorify the Turkmen ethnicity and keep the population content, it is a failed attempt to create an international image of a country that is moving towards democratization.



Katerina Vorotova

Human Trafficking in Eastern Europe

Understanding Variation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

NATALIE KOCH
DARTMOUTH COLLEGE

In the early 1990s, after the collapse of communism in the East Europe, human trafficking in the region was thrust into the international spotlight. The dissolution of these regimes left many people facing serious economic hardship without the government assistance to which they were accustomed. Although the most severe problems associated with the post-communist transition have since diminished, vulnerable populations in Eastern Europe continue to be threatened by traffickers to this day.

The precise definition of "human trafficking" has been hotly debated in the international community. Only in 2000 was "human trafficking" concretely defined by the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The UN describes trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of people for the purposes of exploitation—including not only sexual exploitation, but also forced labor, other forms of servitude, and even the removal of organs. Although this definition has clarified the debate in a technical sense, human trafficking is still frequently confounded with other issues (like terrorism and organized crime) and sensationalized by the media and politicians alike.

The current era of globalization not only presents many opportunities but also new challenges in the effort to combat human trafficking. Some countries in Europe have responded positively to these challenges, but others have not. The case of the Czech and Slovak Republics is particularly interesting because of the surprising contrast in the trafficking trends and responses of these once-unified countries. At the time of this research, the Czech Republic was classified as Tier 1 by the United States Trafficking in Persons (TiP) Report, while Slovakia was on the Tier 2 Watch List (it was removed from the Watch List in the 2006 Report).

Livia Vedrasco, of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Vienna, explains that the variation between the Eastern European countries "depends a lot on the confluence of all sorts of political circumstances, and their subsequent political will." The numerous aspects of this variation for the Czech Republic and Slovakia are detailed below.

History and Economics

One of the most common explanations for this significant difference is the historical difference in wealth distribution between the two countries. Since gaining independence in 1918 and after the Velvet Divorce in 1993, the Czech Republic has become more economically advanced than Slovakia.

Slovakia's slow economic development is important because, as Petra Burcikova, the Director of La Strada Prague, explains, economic inequality is "*the* primary driving factor behind any trafficking case—it's the lack of economic opportunities in the country of origin and, therefore, the people are trying to find some other opportunities in other countries." Trafficking patterns in the Czech Republic are beginning to reflect this economic progress; Tereza Hulikova of IOM Prague explains that it is "becoming more and more the destination country." Not only is economics an important factor in trafficking routes, it also determines a nation's ability to effectively implement counter-trafficking measures, which can be very expensive.

Minority Populations

The sizes of minority populations differ considerably between the Czech and Slovak Republics, with Slovakia having a much larger Roma population. This group has historically been marginalized in both countries, and more Roma women are trafficked, often at younger ages.[1] According to Sona Šaradínová of IOM Bratislava, the Roma population in Slovakia "lives in very poor conditions [and] compared to Czech Roma, there's a *huge* difference in level of development. Some of the areas where the Roma population lives in [Slovakia are] really very, very, very below any—not even standards—much less than standards." The fact that there is a larger population of Roma in Slovakia living in deplorable conditions means that a larger population is vulnerable to trafficking. Hulikova says, "It's interlinked with marginalization of minorities. When you look at the streets in street prostitution, you have lots of Roma girls, even from the Czech Republic, Slovak Roma, Bulgarian Roma. […] It's interlinked with the fact that they […] don't find work in their countries."

Political Will vs. External Pressure

The enormous difference in counter-trafficking measures between the Czech Republic and Slovakia can be partially attributed to the greater political will that is found in the Czech Republic, as compared to Slovakia. Dealing with the issue of human trafficking is not a serious priority for most countries in Europe and is particularly overlooked in Slovakia. There, Alex Micudova of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), says, "you always need to feel a bit of political pressure to get things done." She explains that the United States TiP Report, with its threats of sanctions for countries dropping to a Tier 3 classification, "has had a very positive effect on raising the awareness and somehow initiating the motivation of [the Slovak government] to do something." Political pressure may be effective at bringing the issue to the government's attention, but it cannot solve a host of other state-level obstacles. In Slovakia, the lack of sincere political will to address the issue has rendered the rapidly implemented counter-trafficking measures that were adopted in response to the Report ineffective. For example, the competence of the new Slovak National Coordinator for Counter-trafficking is unclear. Micudova explains that he has been asked by the government only to set up a "system" for the protection of trafficking victims as quickly as possible. In fact, he has actually proposed a victim protection model, which Slovakia has subsequently ratified, that fails to comply with international laws and conventions. It seems that government

" DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS NOT A SERIOUS PRIORITY FOR MOST COUNTRIES IN EUROPE AND IS PARTICULARLY OVERLOOKED IN SLOVAKIA."

officials "do not know that the laws have changed", Micudova adds.

Slovakia's haste to respond to international pressure has thus far failed to effect a deeper commitment to combating trafficking. The Czech government, on the other hand, has demonstrated a serious commitment to working on the issue. Thanks to strong economic resources, the Czech government's commitment to funding counter-trafficking projects is much more effective than Slovakia's, where the National Coordinator has even suggested that victims pay for their own services—or essentially, for the provision of their internationally guaranteed human rights. Both countries undertook UNODC projects to help with the implementation of the Palermo Protocol in 2003, but this project did not materialize in Slovakia until 2006.

Governmental Institutions

Institutional instability has been a major obstacle to the effective implementation of counter-trafficking measures in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic as well, though to a lesser degree. Ministerial institutions in Slovakia have been subject to great volatility and historically, there have been problems with government coalitions' ability to function. Micudova explains that the UNODC projects have been slowed because their partners keep changing, as "new departments are being created and disappear, and they shift different types of responsibility." Even though the Czech Republic's governmental institutions are more stable, each election threatens a devolution in counter-trafficking measures, since most of of these measures are simply government resolutions that can be easily repealed. La Strada's Burcikova said that even in the Czech Republic, the successful treatment of human trafficking is "not that stable, and we can very well go back."

NGO Sector

Another major differentiating factor between the two case countries is the strength of the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector. NGOs are essential because they are often on the front line in the fight against trafficking persons.[2] In Slovakia, there are no NGOs that specialize exclusively in assisting trafficked persons, though a few NGOS that serve victims of domestic violence are sometimes willing to assist victims of trafficking. "But the problem so far," explains Šaradínová, "has been that they basically had no funds for that." Micudova adds that the NGO sector is weak and fragmented, and, furthermore, international organizations do not cooperate well in Slovakia.

Burcikova says that the beneficial measures to counter trafficking in the Czech Republic "are not just thanks to La Strada, but I think the presence of NGOs and of organs or institutions that are, to a large extent, devoted to protect, promote human rights, including migrants." It is also important to consider the individual when attempting to gauge the discrepancies between the strength of the NGO sectors. "Sometimes it may be an individual woman who was good in her studies, who got opportunity abroad, who got expertise in the subject, who founded an NGO, and that's it," Micudova says, citing Burcikova as one woman who did exactly this.

Media & Public Awareness

Public awareness of the complexities and causes of trafficking is highly influential in suppressing the phenomenon. There is a tendency in both countries to perceive trafficking solely as prostitution. In the Czech Republic, organizations like La Strada actively work to prevent journalists from sensationalizing news concerning trafficking. Despite the efforts of some NGOs to keep newspapers from referring to it as "'trafficking in white meat," this sort of sensationalism still continues. Micudova argues that because of this, people still have a distorted conception of trafficking and are

more likely to assume that it would never happen to them. It is exactly this attitude that increases an individual's risk. Insofar as the media propogates this idea, the discrepancies in public awareness are also partly responsible for the variation in who is victimized and how they are treated in the two countries.

The case of the Czech and Slovak Republics illustrates the numerous factors that differentiate the effectiveness of the individual countries' efforts to counter human trafficking—factors ranging from historical economic inequalities to domestic internal will to civic activity and understanding. Beacause this variation hinges on a confluence of various political, economic, and social factors, it demands a smaller-scale analysis focusing not only on individual nations, but also on local populations and marginalized populations.

Works Cited

Corrin, Chris. "Transitional road for traffic: Analysing trafficking in women from and through central and eastern Europe." *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 4 (2005).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. "Toolkit to combat trafficking in persons." Vienna: UNODC, 2005.

United States Department of State. "Trafficking in Persons No. 11252." Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Public Affairs, 2005.

Notes

[1] Corrin, 548.
[2] UNODC, 13.



Elena Lagoutova

Leadership Through Transition

Former President Eduard Shevardnadze Reflects on the Fall of Communism and Recent Georgian History

Interview by
PAUL SONNE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Eduard Shevardnadze was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1990 and President of Georgia from 1995 to 2003. As Minister of Foreign Affairs and a member of the Politburo, Shevardnadze played a crucial role in glastnost, perestroika and the warming of relations between the Soviet Union and the West. He became President of Georgia in 1995, and for the next few years, he was forced to grapple with separatist conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as war in neighboring Chechnya. Shevardnadze resigned in 2003 after the Rose Revolution, a demonstration against corruption and rigged elections that brought current president Mikheil Saakashvili to power. Shevardnadze's wife, Nanuli, died in 2004, and he currently lives in Tbilisi. His memoir, Thoughts on the Past and the Future, was published in Georgia last summer. Paul Sonne sat down with him in July 2006 at his home in Tbilisi for an interview.

Paul Sonne: What is your legacy?

Eduard Shevardnadze: In the first place, the most important thing in which I played an important role is the end of the Cold War. Number two, the unification of Germany. The beginning of the democratization process in the Soviet Union. And the warming of relations between socialist and capitalist nations.

I became convinced that the idea of constant revolutions and a peaceful coexistence could not coexist simultaneously.

PS: When did you realize this?

ES: I was the leader of the Communists, and I could see everything from the inside from 1972 onwards. Everything had to be changed. Everything was centralized in the Soviet Union, and that was a problem. There was not enough leverage or independence.
Before I became the head of the Communist party in Georgia, I was the interior minister of Georgia for seven years. When I worked on the inside, I saw that there were things rotting and decaying that you couldn't notice from the outside.

PS: Describe your relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev.

ES: At that time, Gorbachev and I were in the same delegation and we were friends. I was the Minister of Foreign Affairs and we were part of one team. Today, our relationship is only official. The only contact we have is when we congratulate each other on birthdays. I have to specify the reason why our relationship changed. I had information that a counterrevolutionary coup was being developed against Gorbachev. I

had exact proof, very reliable information. I had informers in the military and in the intelligence departments. I tried to warn him that the counterrevolutionary attack was being developed, but I could not convince him, and I don't understand why. The counterrevolutionaries had a powerful army. And they were based 100 kilometers away from the Russian White House in Moscow. The session where I gave my resignation speech was the shortest speech I ever gave.
Therefore, when I gave the speech about my resignation, the crowd gave a standing ovation. The people actually knew more than the government itself about what was going on in the nation.

PS: Did your views with Gorbachev differ?

ES: No. There was no difference of opinions. Gorbachev, Yakovlev and I were the initiators of the perestroika and the democratization process.
When I resigned, my colleagues and I created an international association for democratization. Then, Yakovlev and I formed a democratic reform party. It became a very popular within half a year. The entire intelligensia became members. This is partially detailed in my first book, and it is in the second book too.
The book will be published in Germany.

PS: Can you describe Georgia's relationship with Russia?

ES: The relations are difficult today, but this has happened before historically. Everything began with Georgians exporting falsified wines, fruits and vegetables to the Russian market.

PS: Is that actually true?

ES: It is a fact that Georgia was exporting falsified products. I advised our president to meet with Putin and to negotiate with him, but not to go there empty-handed. Saakashvili should provide a guarantee to Putin that no falsified products will be exported to the Russian market.

PS: Is this related to the fact that Russia wants to put pressure on Georgia for becoming a more democratic state?

ES: Part of the tension is caused by the falsified products. But there are conflicts within Georgia – in Abkhazia and in Tskhinvali – and there is a difference of opinions in Georgia and Russia.

PS: What does Russia want in the end?

ES: In the end, it all goes back to the Treaty of Georgievsk. Starting with the treaty of Georgievsk, Russia was practically the owner of Georgia and at that point took away Georgia's sovereignty. Russia owned Georgia and there was no more Georgian independence, and Georgia had to obey the tsar.

PS: Did you ever feel discrimination as a Georgian in Russia or that Georgia should not have been part of a Russian empire?

ES: No. I never felt discrimination, but there was one group of people. These people were both in the Parliament and in the Central Committee, who really did not want to deal with me.

PS: How did being Georgian play a role in the collapse of the USSR? Did you sympathize with the plight of the republics as a Georgian?

ES: Officially, I could not make such statements. On the inside, I did feel that the nations should be freed. I felt like the Soviet Union would collapse sooner or later, but I was actually wrong in my calculations. At that time, I thought it would collapse in ten to fifteen years, but it collapsed much sooner than I had thought.

PS: Why did you return to Georgia?

I was doing very well in Moscow. I lived well in Moscow and had a nice flat. I was the head of one of the most respected parties, the party with the brightest future. But there were delegates from Georgia who were coming to me to tell me that Georgia was disintegrating and that I was the only person who could help. The situation in Georgia was terrible. There was no parliament, no government. There was only a military council that was ruling Georgia.

PS: Did you think that a resolution was impossible?

ES: No. My arrival was absolutely necessary and no one else could have done the job except for me. There was a military council ruling Georgia at that time. There were five members of the council, and I obtained a seat on it. Two people on the council – Jaba Ioseliani and Tengiz Kitovani – had served prison sentences from 15 to 20 years each. But even they wanted me to come back to Georgia. Jaba Ioseliani was especially active in lobbying for my return to Georgia. I didn't want to take the job, but my people made me come back.

The plan was this. First, Georgia had to be united. Second, Georgia would initiate democracy and free market reforms. Third, to carry out land reforms, judicial reforms, and so on.

PS: If you had not come back to Georgia, what would have happened?

ES: I'm not sure. What would have happened would have been nothing good. My friends James Baker and Hans-Dietrich Genschersaid that if I wanted their help and wanted them to recognize an independent Georgia, I would have to conduct elections and form a legitimate parliament. In May of 1992, I appointed the parliamentary elections. I scheduled elections for October. These were the first elections in the independent Georgia. Several elections were held afterwards, but these were the most fair elections in Georgia.

PS: How are you different from President Saakashvili? What has he done well and what has he done badly?

ES: I would advise you to talk to Mikheil Saakashvili about that. There are big differences between him and me.

PS: Like what?

ES: Age for one. I am almost 80 years old. We don't really have that much of a relationship. I decided to resign on my own volition, and I decided to give up the government at my own discretion. I have only met Mikheil Saakashvili once since then, at the funeral of my wife.

EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE



Emily Lowry

PS: What did you advise him to do with regard to Russia?

ES: With regard to Russia, I advised him to go and meet with Putin to discuss the issues at hand. He was not able to meet with him. But sooner or later, this meeting will happen. The most important thing is not to negotiate with Moscow empty-handed.

PS: If you could pass on one piece of advice to the leader of a country, what would you say?

ES: To continue the path that was defined at the end of the Cold War. We ended the idea of constant revolutions, and leaders should continue that path and form friendly relationships between nations.

PS: What did you feel when the Soviet Union collapsed?

ES: The system changes. The system had to be changed for sure.

PS: What about Yeltsin?

ES: At this time, when the counterrevolutionary forces attacked the White House, Yeltsin was at his peak.

PS: What did he do right and wrong? What should he

have done?

ES: Let's begin with the things that he did right. He defended the progress of democracy, and he defeated the counterrevolutionary forces. The disagreements between Gorbachev and Yeltsin played a big role in the subsequent developments.

PS: Which side were you on?

ES: My position was the position that I had before. I was for speeding up of the process of ending the Cold War, the democratization of the Soviet Union, and the unification of Germany. Perestroika, and so on.
I would also like to mention that one of my biggest achievements as the leader of Georgia was establishing good relations with the United States at a very early stage.

PS: How did you do that?

ES: Through personal relationships. Also, there were principles that united us. Democracy, market economy and so on.

PS: How did you feel when the Berlin Wall fell?

ES: I felt what each of the Germans felt. It was a feeling of great happiness.

PS: As a leader, who were your role models when you were younger?

ES: Stalin. He won the Second World War. He defeated the Nazis. Also, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Thatcher.

PS: Which of their traits do you find admirable?

ES: If I describe all the traits, I'd have to write a new book. I'd like to begin with Churchill. Churchill I did not know, but I have read literature about World War II that describes him. I believe that World War II would not have begun if Churchill had taken the correct position in the first place. But afterwards, he fixed his mistakes, and Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin became allies.

PS: In the end, was Stalin a good or bad leader?

ES: You cannot talk about Stalin that way. There is a lot of talk about Stalin's mistakes. People love to talk about Stalin's mistakes in their free time, but nobody knows better than I do what was acceptable and what was unacceptable during that time. What I know is that if it were not for Stalin, it is quite possible that Hitler's Germany would have won World War II.
At the same time, I know that there were purges during the Stalin era, and many innocent people were punished. My wife was the daughter of a military colonel. They took her dad one night and executed him.
If someone in a person's family had been executed or punished, that person had no right to marry another person who was a member of the Communist Party. It was illegal. I decided to marry Nanuli even though it technically was not allowed.

PS: Do you believe that the Rose Revolution was a coup or a revolution?

ES: At that time, I called the Rose Revolution a coup, and issued a state of emergency. But what is a coup? Afterwards, when I was returning home in my car, I was thinking, "What constitutes a state of emergency?" I was the chief of staff and the army was under my control. There would have been an armed confrontation in the coming days, and of course, the army would have crushed the resistance, and blood would have been spilt. People would have died. This could have spread to the regions, and a civil war could have started. That was a big danger if the state of emergency hadn't been issued. This was a coup. I chose to step down and resign. I still had one year and eight months.

PS: If you could do one thing over again, and change it, what would you do differently?

ES: If I could do everything over again, I would do exactly the same thing. I followed the path of Democracy, market economy, freedom of the individual, freedom of the press, and other principles. I remained faithful to these principles.
In the end, I'd like to add one thing. Georgia would not be an independent state without the help and assistance of the United States. The US has offered Georgia more than $1.5 billion in aid. The US trained the Georgian Army and created the military.



east view
information services

is Publisher of
The Current Digest

Consistent objectivity and accurate translations for researchers ... and just plain interesting English-language news from Russia.

The Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press offers weekly selections in English-language translations of the most important articles from major Russian newspapers.

In print since 1949, The Current Digest is a leading publication in the field of Soviet/Russian area studies. Now online,weekly updates offer insights on economics, politics and political reform, public health, privatization, foreign policy/international affairs and other social, cultural and legal issues.

Ask your librarian if your university has a copy, online or in print.

Contact
info@eastview.com
Or search and browse at
www.eastview.com

Thea Anderson is a senior at Keene State College in New Hampshire, majoring in English.

Vladislav Beronja is a senior at the University of Michigan, majoring in Comparative Literature.

Julia Butareva is a junior at Columbia University, majoring in Russian Literature.

Ashley Cleek is a senior at Columbia University, majoring in Russian Language and Literature.

Jonathan DePeri is a senior at Columbia University, majoring in Mathematics and Computer Science with a concentration in Economics.

Cecily Jones is a junior at Brown University, majoring in Comparative Literature, with a focus on German, French, and Russian.

Merrell Hambleton is a junior at Columbia University, majoring in History.

Gigi Kalika is a senior at Occidental College, double-majoring in Russian and Diplomacy and World Affairs.

Natalie R. Koch is a senior at Dartmouth College, double-majoring in Geography and Russian Area Studies.

Katarzyna Kozanecka is a senior at Columbia College, majoring in Comparative Literature and Society.

Mark Krotov is a junior at Columbia University, majoring in Urban Studies.

Emily Laskin is a senior at Barnard College, majoring in Russian Regional Studies.

Elena Lagoutova is a senior at Barnard College, majoring in Russian Literature and Photography.

Emily Lowry is a senior at Barnard College, majoring in Neuroscience and Behavior.

Caitlin Malone is a sophomore at Ohio State University, majoring in Engineering Physics with a specialization in Nuclear Engineering and minoring in English.

Marissa Mazek is a first-year at Barnard College.

Malgorzata Pawlak is a first-year at Barnard College.

Paul Sonne is the founding editor of *The Birch*. He is a senior at Columbia University, majoring in Russian Literature.

Ross Ufberg is a senior at Hamilton College, majoring in Comparative Literature and Russian Studies.

Katerina Vorotova is a senior at Columbia College, majoring in Comparative Literature and Society.

RUSSIAN PRACTICUM
HARRIMAN INSTITUTE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

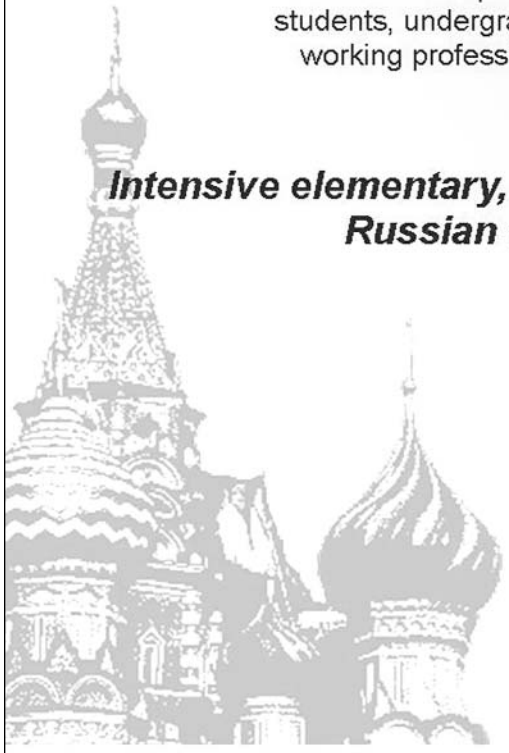
Summer Session 2007

Our excellent program is available in two sessions and features:

- Superb language instructors
- Small classes for your individual needs
- A variety of extracurricular activities
- Lowered tuition for Russian language courses

Classes are open to advanced high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, working professionals, and adult learners.

Intensive elementary, intermediate, and advanced Russian courses offered



Columbia & NYC
Get the best Russian experience outside of Russia!

For more information about the Russian Practicum, visit our website at www.harrimaninstitute.org/programs/russian_practicum.html or contact Alla Smyslova at as2157@columbia.edu.