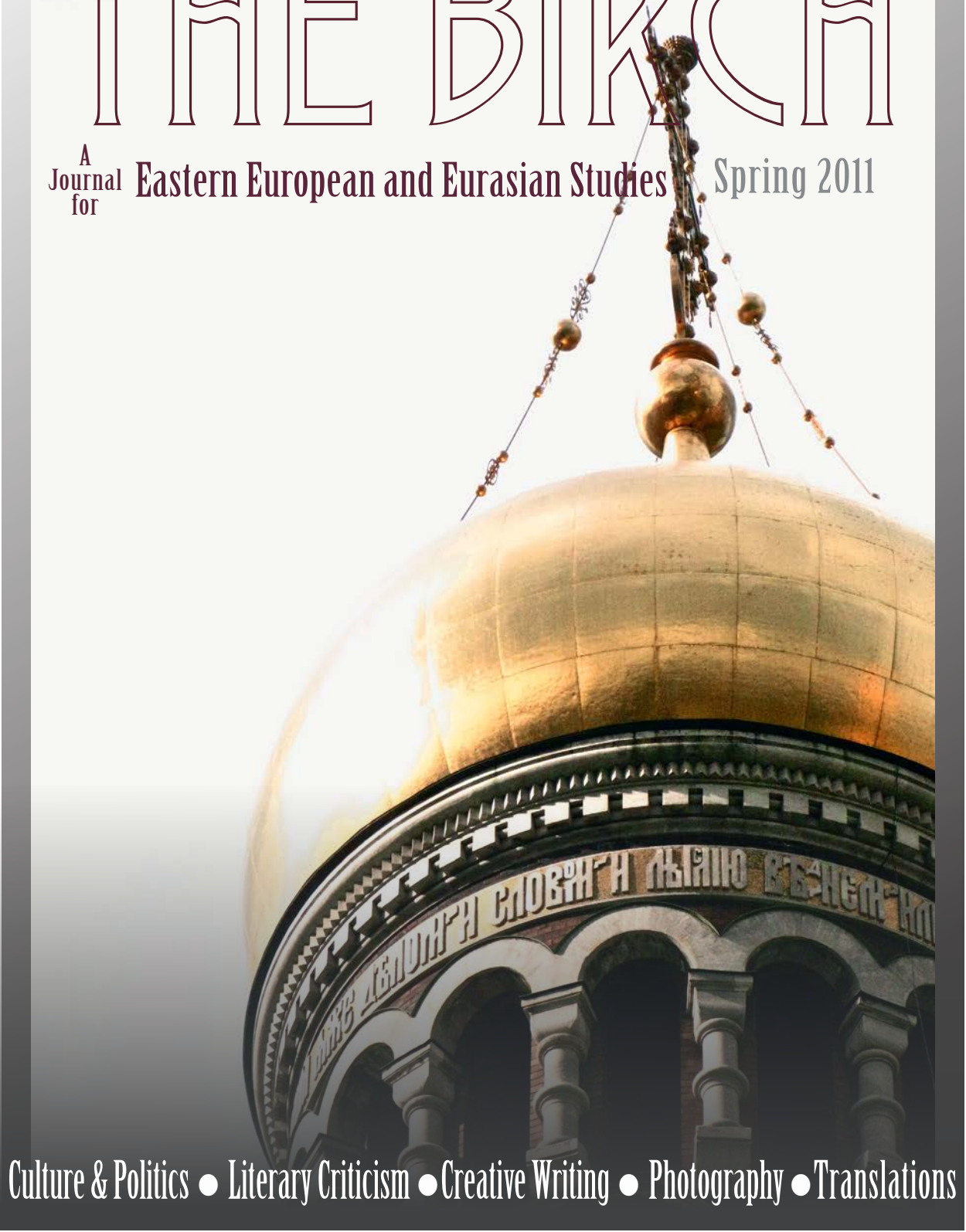
THE BIRCH

A Journal for Eastern European and Eurasian Studies

Spring 2011



Culture & Politics • Literary Criticism • Creative Writing • Photography • Translations

The Birch

A national, student operated undergraduate literary journal of Columbia University

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A Special Thanks:

We are overwhelmingly grateful to the Slavic Department and the Harriman Institute, especially Lydia Hamilton and Frank Bohan for their continual support and patience. We would also like to thank the Activities Board Council and our advisor, David Milch, at the Office of Student Development and Activities at Columbia for enabling us to publish at the highest quality. Finally, we thank CU Arts and Abigail Santner for their everlasting confidence in our work.

Cover Image: Храм Спаса на Крови"/ "Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood, Alexa Voyteck, Duke University

A Letter from the Editor...

While visiting Zagreb this summer, I ventured into the Botanical Garden and was greeted with a bittersweet message from the Division of Biology at the University of Zagreb. A placard welcoming visitors noted the miraculous tenacity of the trees within the garden. "[W]e consider ours to be very old because here at the Botanical garden they are growing in an unnatural and unfavorable environment: the heavy loamy soil retains too much water, the air is polluted with car exhaust fumes, and during the summer months the Garden is surrounded by hot city asphalt… they have to 'fight' the unpleasant climatic conditions and are therefore physiologically exhausted…" The message seemed quite familiar. In the literature and film of the region, the point is often rehearsed: in spite of harsh circumstances, beauty survives and persists in this haunted terrain. It emerges from chaos and uncertainty. Fortune, after all, usually comes only after several curses have been made.

Unfazed by the 'unfavorable environment' that can plague small journals, *The Birch* has emerged again as a wonderful testament to the academic interests and passions of talented undergraduates across the country. It is with great pleasure that I introduce the expanded and vibrant Spring 2011 issue of *The Birch*. This issue's writers dwell expertly on the technical and the profound: from the examination of Russian neo-mercantilist energy policies to a review of the Kazakh poetry of Olzhas Suleimenov to literary-living in Bulgaria, you will enjoy the depth and breadth that Eastern European and Eurasian studies offer students today. Whether you seek regressions and variables or discussions of nostalgia, there is something for every reader to cherish.

I would like to thank the editorial staff for a year of pure pleasure and invite readers, near and far, to write to us with commentary and criticism at thebirchjournal@gmail.com and visit our blog: thebirchjournal.blogspot.com. Though our numbers may be small, we envision creating a cohesive undergraduate community as well as new and engaging ways for students to meet and discuss their thoughts and visions of this ever-entrancing region. We appreciate your help and support.

Thank you and enjoy.

Tanah Spencer

Tanah Spencer
Columbia College
Class of 2011

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The Global Recession and Russia's Hegemony over Eurasian Energy

Ashley Quisol
Middlebury College

On 13 January 2011, Azerbaijani President Ilham Alieyev signed a landmark agreement with European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso to supply Europe with "substantial long-term" natural gas after nearly a decade of negotiations. One step closer to the direct export of Caspian gas to Europe, the world now turns to Turkmenistan to transform the agreement into a political reality. With a population of roughly 5 million, Turkmenistan possesses the world's fourth largest natural gas reserves and, along with Azerbaijan, it is a potential supplier for the proposed Nabucco pipeline, a multi-billion dollar project to supply gas directly to Europe, bypassing Russia as a transit state. Past attempts to include Turkmenistan as a supplier for the pipeline consortium have been frustrated by Russia, currently the sole exporter of Eurasian gas to Europe. Gazprom, the 51% Russian state owned energy company, is also the largest importer of Turkmen gas and has traditionally wielded significant economic and political power over the former Soviet Republic. However, the changing relations between Turkmenistan and Russia seem to indicate that Turkmenistan is beginning to assert itself as an increasingly independent actor, less reliant on Russian political and economic support.

The developing energy relationship between the EU and the hydrocarbon rich Caspian region threatens Russia's monopoly over the export of Eurasian gas to Europe and indicates flaws in Russia's current energy strategy. Gazprom's monopolistic practices have pressed the supplier states of the Caspian to collectively act in order to diversify exports routes and protect national energy interests. Additionally, the global recession has played a large role in exposing the vulnerability of Russia's energy policies, revealing the overextension of Gazprom's reach and corresponding implications for

future energy strategy.

Monopoly and Monopsony

Though natural gas is consumed at a cost advantage in comparison to other "clean" energy sources due to its abundance and established infrastructure, its transmission is inflexible and contingent on existing pipelines. Since building new pipelines comes at an astronomical price (the construction of Nabucco estimated at $12-13 billion), construction of multiple pipelines in a single energy corridor is discouraged.[1] This tends to create a "locked-in" relationship based on long-term contracts between the consumer and the supplier through a single pipeline usually controlled by the latter.[2] Often, natural gas is provided by a single source to a number of consumers, creating a monopoly over supply by the country or company possessing the reserves. This gives the upstream market, that is, the supply side of the gas trade, considerable economic leverage and makes a "market price" virtually impossible since, in terms of pipeline transmission, a true "gas market" cannot exist.[3] In the case of the European energy equation, Russia is the single supplier with a virtual monopoly over natural gas transit from both Russian domestic reserves as well as from the Caspian.

While gas pipelines usually form natural monopolies in favor of the upstream market, they may also facilitate for monopsony, that is, when buyers cooperate to unify interests of the downstream market to counter the supplier's demand.[4] The ubiquitous challenges of EU integration, have so far obstructed the formation of a unified European external energy policy. Instead, member countries have largely relied on state-to-state relations with suppliers, thus inhibiting the creation of a beneficial monopsony to counter the influence of Russia as its single supplier.

However, where the EU has failed, Russia has been successful; as a unified buyer with a number of suppliers, Russia has created a monopsony over its upstream market of Caspian gas. Whereas Russia is a single supplier to many European customers, it is also serves as a single buyer for the majority of Caspian gas supplies. Caspian gas reserves were instrumental in the development of Russia's main gas supply system in the 1970s and 1980s and, half a decade later, Gazprom still cites control of Caspian reserves as a "crucial element" to fulfilling export capabilities to Europe and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States.[5] Due to the importance of these gas reserves, Gazprom worked to retain power over the region through a monopolistic strategy characterized by acquisitions and long-term contracts.

Russia's Investment in Turkmenistan

As western interest turned to Caspian gas markets in the 1990s, Turkmenistan remained closed to foreign investment in its onshore fields. This left the country largely dependent on the Russian transport route, namely the dilapidated Central Asia Center Pipeline (CACP), which was constructed in 1974 and exports two-thirds of Turkmen gas.[6] Turkmenistan's heavy reliance on Russia as its main exporter gave the Kremlin political and economic power,

allowing Gazprom to secure long-term contracts for underpriced Turkmen gas.

Russia's investment in Turkmenistan exemplifies the Kremlin's energy policy of mass acquisitions of transit routes and long-term contracts with the objective of controlling both the supply and the transport of natural gas to consumers. This strategy, deemed by many political experts as "neo-imperialism" or "energy mercantilism,"[7] has come at the expense of internal investment in exploration and production in Russia's own aging fields and infrastructure; it is easier and cheaper to supplant any potential gas or export shortage with gas from Central Asia than to invest the capital in developing hydrocarbon-rich regions such as the Far East and the Arctic. The lack of internal investment and the continued subsidy of internal gas prices has limited the production potential of Russian gas fields and potentially diminished future domestic export capabilities.

The death of the Turkmenbashi in 2006 and election of President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov ushered in the establishment of clearer international energy development priorities for Turkmenistan. For example, the country raised the price of gas to Russia from $65 to $100 per 1,000 cubic meters, while Gazprom was selling the same gas to Europe for roughly $260 per cubic meter.[8] Perhaps sensing the growing independence of the Turkmen administration, especially in terms of gas pricing, Russia secured a 20-year contract in 2008 pegging the price that it paid for Turkmen gas to $150 in 2008 and $225 per 1,000 cubic meters in 2009. [9] The long-term contracts of 2008 fell in line with Gazprom's monopolistic tactics: though the Gazprom paid much more than it needed to for an amount of gas beyond its immediate needs, its strategy was to tie up Turkmen gas production in order to prevent it from fueling non-Russian projects, namely the Nabucco pipeline.

The Global Recession and a Reduction in Consumption

The economic recession that began in the fall 2008 greatly affected the energy sector and served as a breaking point in relations between Russia and Turkmenistan. Due to the economic downturn, natural gas consumption in Europe fell 5-7% in 2009 compared to 2008 consumption.[10] Experiencing an income drop of $20 billion in 2009, Gazprom reduced imports from Turkmenistan to 11bcm, nearly a quarter of the contracted 40bcm.[11] On April 9, 2009, following an explosion in a portion of the CAC Pipeline, the Turkmen state-run gas company Turkmengaz was forced to suspend exports to Russia.[12] While Russian experts blamed the aging infrastructure for the blast, the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan was quick to characterize the actions of Gazprom as "reckless and irresponsible."[13] Gazprom had reduced the flow of gas through the pipeline without notifying Turkmen officials, and the change in pressure was cited as a possible explanation for the explosion.

Despite the fact that gas began to flow between the two countries again in January, 2010, the assertive reaction of Turkmenistan towards Russia marked a change in diplomatic and energy relations. Regardless of what really caused the blast,

the loss of revenue was devastating to Turkmenistan. Moreover, Russia, having cut gas imports from Turkmenistan by 75% in two years, was no longer considered to be a reliable importer.[14] Ashgabat, finally feeling the pressure to diversify its exports, inaugurated the Turkmenistan-China pipeline on December 13th, 2009 as the biggest effort to export Central Asian gas through a transit route that bypassed Russia.[15] One month later on January 6th, 2010, Turkmenistan launched a second pipeline to Iran, a move that will eventually double the flow of natural gas to the country.[16] The second phase of the Turkmenistan-Iran pipeline opened in late November of 2010, enabling the future flow of 20 billion cubic meters annually. [17] Additionally, an intergovernmental agreement for the construction of the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline (TAP or TAPI) was signed on December 15th, 2010 after 15 years of negotiations, despite ongoing security concerns. [18]

Caspian Cooperation

Though these agreements with Eastern and Southern energy partners were significant in terms of diversifying Turkmenistan's downstream market, the 25-30 billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas currently exported is nowhere near President Berdymukhammedov's export goals of 180 billion cubic meters by 2030. [19] In order to fill this tall order, Turkmenistan has done what many analysts have deemed to be unthinkable: Ashgabat has finally begun meaningful cooperation with Baku, the primary objective being to coordinate an export route for Caspian gas to the European market.

One of the main obstacles that had prevented the construction of Nabucco in the past was the divergent interests of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. On November 18th, 2010 at a summit of the heads of Caspian states, President Berdymukhammedov declared that "underwater pipelines in the Caspian Sea should be built with the consent of only those countries whose territorial sectors would be traversed by such pipelines." [20] Berdymukhammedov's statement was monumental in that it indicated the desire for cooperation with Azerbaijan to facilitate the construction of an export route to bypass Russia. Turkmenistan is set for a meeting in Brussels in the spring of 2011 to solidify agreements over Turkmen gas supply. Since the principal concerns about the construction of Nabucco revolved around the possibility of supply, it seems that if Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan collectively follow through, the pipeline will eventually be built to the chagrin of Russia.

Russian Strategy Revisited

Turkmenistan's recent collaboration with Azerbaijan, along with the political capital that is being invested in a common European Union external energy policy, indicates that Russia's current monopolistic energy strategy is unsustainable. The political privilege that Moscow once held in the Caspian is now dwindling. Russia was historically seen as a security provider in the region but, due to Turkmenistan's growing relations with China and the European Union, that role has changed. Developing energy relations between Turkmenistan

and China have created new means of security, as Russian disruption of natural gas exports to China would destabilize Gazprom's attempts to enter the East Asian gas market. Therefore eastward flowing gas infrastructure is presumed to be secured. Additionally, the security of new westward transit infrastructure is in a sense secured since any provocation against European projects would portray Moscow as an aggressor, supporting the claim that Russia is an unreliable supplier.

Since Russia is still the largest exporter of natural gas in the world, holding the largest reserves with the largest transit system, the question is not whether or not the country will be an energy superpower in the world, but rather how it will choose to conduct its international affairs. The continuation of Gazprom's monopolistic strategies based on the complete control of natural gas transmission has proven to be unsustainable both in upstream and downstream markets. Moscow's overcommitment to the purchase of Turkmen gas resulted in Ashgabat's decision to diversify exports and break Gazprom's exclusive control over reserves. Similarly, Moscow's persistent neo-mercantilist energy policies will push other sectors of the energy equation towards collective action to counter Gazprom's energy monopoly. This can be seen in both the EU's renewed political interest in the construction of Nabucco, as well as the productive discussion of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan as suppliers. Unable to retain complete export control of Eurasian gas to Europe, Russia may be forced to invest in internal production, subscribe to international energy standards, and open up domestic production to foreign investors. These changes in policy would eventually transform Russia from a nation pursuing "great power" status using gas as an economic lever, to a more equitable partner in international energy relations.

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Political Capital in Post-Soviet Russia

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Twenty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian democracy has yielded only a few reluctant steps towards the path of liberalization. Electoral fraud, court abuses, and personality politics continue to augment the authority of the Kremlin at the expense of democratic representation; for all the ballots cast in today's Russian Federation, the state remains a democracy in name only. It may be said, that the Russian democratic experiment is a marked failure. However, one should note that in political rolls of chance, the dice are usually loaded. All through its growth, the Russian democratic system has stumbled under the weight of its past. Since the birth of the Russian Federation, previously established hierarchies have checked the development of liberal institutions.

Exiting the patrimonial-communist system, most of Russia's transitional elites owed their status in large part to the aid of the government.[1] Political capital – the capacity to mobilize public support – belonged almost entirely to the state. Concerning both the ideological and administrative spheres, power was organized in such a way that political influence could only be obtained through access to the Kremlin. The result of this dependence on the state was a political community that resisted penetration by a representative party system. Rather than freezing along lines of social cleavage, political coalitions initially congealed where old power had pooled; political-party development stalled and a decade of liberalization was lost to the inherited advantage of the incumbent. Opposed by a variety of electoral alternatives, political parties in Russia could not achieve great significance without the direct involvement of the Kremlin.

In the race against party alternatives like the governor-led political machines of Moscow and St. Petersburg, burgeoning parties were inherently disadvantaged by their tendency to form along ideological lines. At the national level, a well-supported stance on an issue can be invaluable in elections. However at the regional level, issues in Russia are too localized for

broad positions to have great effect on voter preference.[2] Whereas parties were generally restricted by a definite policy, other brokers of political capital were able to bend to accommodate the demands of individual communities. As administrative capital providers, party substitutes sacrifice nothing in the way of reputation by lowering their ideological price; they have no need for a fixed moral stance and are thus more viable as constituency sizes decrease. Comparative lack of maneuverability stalled party-penetration into the regional and district levels. For what they sacrificed in flexibility, parties gained nothing in loyalty; not a single nomination in 1993 was associated with any electoral advantage.[3] In 1995, the total "hard-core partisanship," (i.e. the readiness of a voter to call a party, "my party") for major parties was less than 25 percent.[4]

Even examining solely the electoral winners, party utility was reduced in several ways. The small delegation sizes, born of a flooded and fragmented electoral market, rarely allowed for any party other than the party of power to set agendas on the assembly floor. Without statistical electoral advantage or coordinating ability within the legislature, party affiliation was near meaningless. Further hampering party development, whatever success may have come to a representative while in office only served to distance the individual from their party. According to Henry Hale of Harvard's Eliot School of International Affairs, "The winning-party nominees' personal incentives for party affiliation decline with the arrival of the incumbency advantage," which greatly outweighed the value of party support.[5] Again, on the list of party shortcomings, was the very real uncertainty of survival from one election cycle to the next. The short lifespan of nascent parties ensured that incumbents, given the chance, would abandon ship for the advantages of personalist power.

Russia's legacy of gated politics meant that only the president had the depth of power to unlock the political market to the party system; change had to come from the top down. Challenged for the first time by a party (Fatherland-All Russia) in 1999, the regime in power had no choice but to throw its hat into the party arena. In the span of one winter, the regime formed United Russia (UR) to carry Vladimir Putin to the presidency. Today, the catch-all party is unmatchable. With an executive blessing, UR dominates every sphere of political activity in Russia; from district to national levels, nearly all outlets for opposition have been sealed.

That these developments are met by a generally complacent population calls into question the potential for liberal change in Russia. In the past two presidential contests, super-majoritarian outcomes and massive turnouts have fostered an image of invincibility that works to discourage potential challengers.[6] With the realization of this induced consensus few now dare to voice their displeasure; the very will to oppose seems absent under the two-fisted leadership of Vladimir Putin. Furthermore, Russia's newly found stability offers little reason for resistance.[7] To the chagrin of liberal modernists, Putin's constrictions on civil liberties have thus far coincided with economic prosperity. While Russia's

current economic prosperity may have much more to do with oil prices than governance, the association has come to be deeply ingrained in the mind of the public; the Kremlin's heavy hand has become a sign of strength rather than one of oppression. The case of Russia's post-Soviet transition illustrates the importance of the initial distribution of political capital to the liberalization process. In this case, the state monopoly on political capital led to an environment in which only the executive had the might necessary to lead party penetration into the electoral polity. A guarded concentration of executive power has, to present, allowed the state to contest elections, provide outlets for opposition, and at the same time skirt the forces of modernization.

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The Pretender Phenomenon in Tsarist Russia

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From the seventeenth to nineteenth century in Russia, it was a not uncommon phenemenon in times of political or social unrest for a figure to arise, claiming to be a former Tsar or aspirant to the throne previously believed to be deceased. The degree of success enjoyed by these royal imposters tended to depend on their own talents as well as the nature of the crisis of the time. Though a small handful, such as the first impostor of Ivan IV's son Dmitrii in 1605, and Emelyan Pugachev in 1773, obtained real fame and notoriety for their accomplishments, most accomplished almost nothing. All the same, a fairly large number of them, whatever their eventual accomplishments, achieved some degree of support, if only at a very local level.

How does one explain the desire of some segment of the Russian people to believe that the Tsar in Moscow or St. Petersburg was in fact an impostor, and that the true Tsar was walking among them, waiting to be returned to his rightful throne? The explanation centers on the tremendous political and social power of the Tsar, particularly on his religious and mythological status. The belief that the Tsar was infallible and unquestionably righteous, a divine representative on earth, meant that any decrees deemed unjust and unpopular had to stem not from the Tsar, but from an impostor. And if the man on the throne can be an impostor, then the real Tsar, wherever he may be, must exist, and must be found.

The power and importance of the tsar stretched far beyond the levels typically associated with authoritarian monarchs. In an extremely large multi-national empire lacking strong intermediate governmental institutions and indeed even a strong collective national identity for much of its history, the Tsar was the state and the nation.[1] He or she was the unifying figure who gave Russia's various social and ethnic groups an idea of who they were and whom they served. As the imperial state developed, the peasantry never really grew to respect any of its intermediate agents with whom they interacted.[2] Yet they revered the Tsar, understanding him to be the embodiment of the state.[3] This respect for the Tsar was essential in maintaining state stability.

At times, however, political and social circumstances were so troubling that portions of the population were motivated to action by perceived injustices. These times were closely correlated with rule by Tsars of questionable legitimacy. Thus, the first well-known Russian pretender, the first False Dmitrii, rose to prominence during the reign of Boris Godunov, who had come to the throne not by heredity but through the election of the boyar council. It was easy for parts of the population to conclude that Godunov had come to the throne not through predestination, the path of the true Tsar, but through an act of human will. Moreover, Godunov's fiercely persecuted his perceived enemies, much in the style of his immediate predecessor, Ivan IV.[4] Yet while these tyrannical actions were tolerated under Ivan, viewed as a rightful tsar, they were unacceptable in a man who had claimed the throne for himself without any divine right to it.[5] Thus, when the pretender arose claiming to be Ivan's Son, Dmitrii, it was easy for segments of the people to rally behind him.

The false Dmitrii is an example of the type of pretender who would arise repeatedly throughout the history of the Russian Empire. This pretender would pose as a legitimate heir who had died under uncertain circumstances and challenge a ruler whose claim to the throne was based on obvious political machination. One side effect of political intrigues and palace coups was that they tended to produce a number of rulers or claimants who disappeared under murky circumstances. Catherine II, born a German princess with no claim to the Russian throne whatsoever, came to power through a palace coup against her husband, Peter III. In order to cement her rule, she also had eliminated the former child emperor Ivan VI. It is thus not surprising that the pretenders during her reign usually claimed to be one of these two former rulers who had quietly and suspiciously disappeared. [6]

The religious mythology surrounding the Tsar in Russia was such that at all times a rightful and righteous Tsar must somewhere exist.[7] The people saw the Tsar as a messianic figure, and could not fathom a ruler who belonged on the throne and yet consciously sent out unjust and harmful edicts.[8] The Tsars were chosen by God and were even considered by some to be the embodiment of Christ himself.[9] The Tsar was likened to an icon, and some liturgical texts, moreover, referred to God by the word Tsar.[10] Several sects among the Old Believers during the reign of Catherine II even believed their leaders to be both the reincarnation of Christ and Peter III. Pugachev's assumption of the identity of Peter III was also suggested to him by Old Believer hermits.[11] Religious groups in Russia looked to the coming of the messiah in times of crisis, and this messiah, in the words of historian Marc Raeff, was tied up in the "suffering and wandering Tsar or prince-redeemer, the savior."[12]

The religious fervor associated with the idea of the Tsar-messiah also meant that the pretenders themselves were not always simply clever opportunists capitalizing on an ignorant populace. Several of them actually believed that they were the fallen rulers they claimed to be, or at least convinced supporters that they believed

so. The idea of the Tsar as preordained is reflected in the idea of "royal signs," birth marks in the shapes of crosses or eagles which all true Tsars are supposedly born with.[13] Both the false Dmitri and Pugachev used marks on their bodies to justify their claims and convince others of their identities.[14] Reincarnation beliefs, popular mythology regarding birth signs, and opposition to state policies made areas dominated by Old Believers breeding grounds for people believing themselves to be the savior that was needed and others willing to support them.

With the Tsar associated so strongly with God, Christ, and righteousness, it should not be surprising that the pretender became associated with the devil, the antichrist, and evil. What arose was essentially an idea of two Tsars, one genuine, one false, one a living icon, the other an idol.[15] Yet who was to say which was the real Tsar, the ruler sitting on the throne or the claimant, branded "pretender"?

This question was particularly significant during the reign of Russia's most radical reformer, Peter the Great. His rule saw Russia undergo rapid and significant change, for which many of his subjects were unprepared. It is thus not surprising that Peter was considered by some who opposed him to be the embodiment of the antichrist. Nor is it surprising that a number of pretenders to the throne sprung up during his reign. Rumors held that he was an impostor, a substitute tsar, switched with the real Peter at birth or on his trips abroad.[16]

The constant conflict between two opposing sides: two Tsars, one Christ and one antichrist--contained in the pretender phenomenon is closely tied to religious notions of the messiah, redemption, and the building of a great Russia under a divine Tsar. Russia was a state with a fragile ethno-cultural identity, which relied heavily on the power of its sovereign to support social cohesion. As long as this question of identity remained uncertain in the context of conflicting modern and traditional values, the Tsar would remain essential to the unification of the country and people. And while so much import rested on the Tsar not just as a political figure but as one of religious salvation and spiritual unification, the phenomenon of royal imposture would continue to arise. Pretenders to the throne would use the disparity between the widely held image of the Tsar as infallible and righteous divinity, and the reality of the Tsar as fallible and imperfect man throughout the history of the Russian Empire.

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Support for Privatization in Russia: Evaluation of Winners, Losers, and Demographic Characteristics

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Introduction

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia and other emerging democracies faced what scholars call the triple transition. These countries simultaneously endured economic privatization, the establishment of democratic and semi-democratic polities, and a heightening of ethnic tensions. Each of these transitions weighed heavily on the populations of emerging post-Communist states. Given Russia's ambitions to enter the World Trade Organization and its growing integration with other large economies, privatization continues to be a salient current topic of debate within the country. Russia's transition to a market economy occurred quickly, spurred by President Boris Yeltsin's "shock therapy." From 1992 to 1996, around 122,000 businesses had been at least partially privatized.[1] Partial privatization with maintained state involvement in strategic sectors such as oil, natural gas, and light machinery was a core tenet of the Russian economic reform model in the 1990s and continues during the Putin and Medvedev years. According to the conventional economic wisdom, privatization would allow for more efficient allocation of resources by significantly reducing corruption and mismanagement of assets. In the case of Russia, efficiency experienced a unique ebb and flow pattern where efficiency increased and then abated as insider advantages were capitalized upon by elites.[2]

Winners and losers were necessarily created by the privatization process, leading to unpopularity and resentment in losing segments of the population. Sociologist Victoria Bonnell classifies the winners as the Soviet nomenklatura and others who transitioned from positions of Communist power to private authority.[3] Russia's corporatist system benefited

these directors in pushing the Russian government to privatize rapidly in 1992 before the introduction of effective parliamentary democracy, which hindered the participation of potential losers through mass-based political pressure on parliamentary parties.[4] The losers, on the other hand, were composed mostly of Russians with fixed incomes, such as pensioners, families with many children, and families with a single parent, among others.[5] The economic reform of the time eroded the purchasing power of the ruble through inflation spirals, damaging the welfare of those surviving on fixed incomes.

Popular support for the privatization process in Russia is influenced by a wide array of factors. Some of the most influential among these determinants are demographic considerations. Economist Bernd Hayo's regressions of Eastern European data, including European Russian respondents, analyzed the effect of factors such as age, sex, education, income, and living in the city on attitudes toward privatization.[6] All, with the exception of age, demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships with support for a market economy. Age was found to have a negative relationship with this dependent variable. Regressions on other dependent variables also suggested that an increase in these independent variables correlated with a preference for faster, rather than slower, privatization.[7] An earlier study conducted in 1991 also found age divisions in beliefs on privatization, suggesting that the divergence in attitudes was present early on in the history of the Russian Federation. Among those 34 and older, a majority in five of the six employment categories included in the study agreed that privatization would cause exploitation.[8]

This paper uses a number of demographic characteristics as well as conceptions of winners and losers as independent variables in order to understand where the sources of support and opposition remain. Its primary aim is to further clarify the link between economic loss and opposition to privatization in post-Soviet Russia.

Findings

This analysis uses Theodore P. Gerber's *Survey of Unemployment, Income, and Attitudes in Russia, January-March 1998* to analyze the demographic factors influencing attitudes toward privatization. A question asking respondents to give their level of support for market reform was used as the dependent variable. The first regression run with data collected from the survey featured nine independent variables: family's economic situation, income, geographical area's economic situation, age, urban or rural dwelling, education, rank and file CPSU member prior to 1991, unpaid elective position in the Primary Party Organization prior to 1991, and paid position in the party organs before 1991. The first three refer to winner-loser variables, while the others are purely demographic characteristics.

The last three variables are meant to gauge whether significant experience within the Communist Party before the collapse of communism influences views on privatization. Variables that look at only participation in the party will not suffice to test the effect of the CPSU on

citizens' beliefs. Because of the pressure put on Soviet Union citizens to join the party, allegiance to Communist beliefs can not be adequately discovered through the membership variable and significant involvement is required to determine actual allegiance. Both unpaid and paid positions are included in the analysis to monitor whether holding a paid position makes allegiance to Communist tenets transitory. This essentially analyzes differences in the effect of past intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation.

Four of the nine variables tested in the regression showed statistically significant effects on attitudes toward privatization. These factors were age, education, family's economic situation, and region's economic situation. Current material situation of the family of the respondent was positively correlated with support for market reform. And as the respondents' evaluation of their region's economic situation improved, support for reform did as well. On the demographic side, as a person's age increased, their support for market reform declined. Meanwhile, an increase in education level corresponded to greater support for market reform, possibly due to knowledge about the long-term benefits of privatization.

The urban versus rural variable implied that urban residents were more supportive of privatization, but not on a statistically significant level. Income also proved a statistically insignificant variable, and surprisingly suggested that those with higher incomes were less supportive of market reforms. The three variables that tapped into the respondents' personal association with the Communist Party were all statistically insignificant. This suggests that past Communist Party involvement does not effect current support for economic reform measures, such as privatization and price liberalization.

A second regression was run with pension as the independent variable and support for market reform as the dependent variable, as in the first regression. This variable had a large number of missing cases in the survey, so it was isolated and analyzed individually in its own logit regression rather than possibly skew the results of the first regression. The coefficient on this variable is positive, meaning that Russians who received pensions were more likely to oppose the continuance of market reform.

Conclusion

Based on respondents' answers to questions of the economic situation in their family and region, those who perceived themselves to be economic losers were more likely to oppose market reforms. Income was not significant as a predictor of support based on the winner-loser framework, possibly because it did not accurately reflect those who won or lost from privatization. Utility and preferences are subjective and largely based on perceived benefits, rather than objective ones, such as income.

Demographic characteristics also had effects on the dependent variable. Due to their dynamic nature, the age and Communist party involvement effects are of specific importance because they measure whether movement away from Soviet history will allow Russia to privatize further and embrace Western-style capitalism. Age

was indeed significant. Those that were older, and had thus spent more of their lives in the Soviet Union, displayed less support for market reform than younger generations. This move away from negative attitudes to economic reform by younger individuals suggests a generational shift toward liberal views and a distancing from the legacies and remembrances of the Soviet command economy.

The Communist party involvement variables yielded results that were less compatible with hypothesized predictions. The regression did not find a significant relationship between involvement in the CPSU (whether paid or unpaid) and support for market reform. This may imply the lack of importance of CPSU involvement as a determinant of market reform support. Russians may be making decisions on market policies based on issues other than past alignment with the party. The move away from this once sacred influence is crucial for successful economic transition.

The pension variable showed that pensioners were more likely to oppose economic reform than those whose incomes were not fixed. Persons on fixed incomes were inevitable losers in the privatization process. This result raises key questions about the need to compensate losers in the reform process. Given the stake pensioners have in economic policies, their opinions would likely be influenced by compensation.

It is important to note that the survey suffers several shortcomings. The data is over a decade old, and much may has changed since 1998, calling into question the validity of generalizing the results of the analysis to the present day. Additionally, the lack of longitudinal analysis tracking the gains or losses made by respondents from the Soviet period to privatization renders precise measurement of winners and losers in economic terms impossible. Imperfect measures had to be used in this paper because of the lack of such data. This may lead to inability to establish statistical significance. Also, other variables of interest, such as employment in state service and involvement in the agricultural sector, which Bonnell labels as a loser in privatization, could not be included.[9] Additionally, breaking down the dependent variable into support for price liberalization, privatization of major enterprises, and scaling back of government jobs would have contributed to the analysis and allowed for more specific evaluations of policy support. Despite the limitations of this analysis, its results have delineated a clearer picture of the interaction between economic gains and losses and demographic traits on views of privatization in the reemerging Russian economy.

Economic reforms are essential to the current trajectory of the Russian Federation. Reform can lead the way to WTO membership and further agreements with the European Union. Therefore, understanding trends in public opinion is instrumental for moving the economy in a positive direction. The regressions suggest that losers comprehend their loss in utility from reform and oppose privatization. Ensuring broad-based support for reform in any democratic society, or quasi-democratic society in Russia's case,

hinges upon placating these segments. Formulating innovative public policies to lessen opposition, and possibly restrain the insider advantages of short-term winners will be crucial to the success of economic reform. Further work must be focused on identifying the exact types of individuals who have lost out from the process and develop policies to integrate them into reform that benefits them.

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Ukrainian Now-Time[1]: Mnemonic Energy[2] in Sergiy Bukovsky's *The Living*

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How does an agricultural society rise back to its feet and become master of its own land? Only the living can rise again.[3]

For a film that speaks to Ukrainian nation-building, it is at first shocking that the storyline of *The Living* is grounded in documents unearthed from a Welshman's suitcase. In 2008, Sergiy Bukovsky pioneered an alternative representation of the Holodomor[4] in film, telling the story of how Welshman Gareth Jones ventured into the forbidden realm of famine-stricken Ukraine in the early 1930s. Within the constellation of Holodomor documentaries and television series, *The Living* stands out as a creation for the Ukrainian people rather than a didactic account or an attempt to assign blame to the international community.[5] Commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine, it is part of the Ukrainian project of revolutionizing the present and reforming the Ukrainian image as a European make.[6]

The documentary resurrects the voices of those afflicted by the Famine of 1932-33 in a style similar to that famously employed in Claude Lanzmann's film, *Shoah***.** In addition, *The Living* is quite significantly the work of a group of individuals who had previously collaborated in *Spell Your Name* (2006). The technique used in this Holocaust film, which discusses the Babi Yar massacre of September 1941 in Ukraine, is clearly present in the Holodomor film. The styles and tracking

shots provide a seamless transition between the Holocaust and the Holodomor in Ukraine. In this way, the filmmaker has self-consciously appropriated Holocaust discourse in discussing the Holodomor. Thus, by emphasizing victim perspective and sentiment in the style of Holocaust-related productions instead of presenting a more distanced, objective approach to the genocidal famine[7], the film situates the Ukrainian story within the larger history of 20th century European tragedy.

The film proclaims that Ukrainians speak as *subjects* and their words place them within a Western company in contradistinction to a Soviet past and a present Russian East.[8] Bukovsky accomplishes this by blurring the significance between narratives grounded in Western textual testimony and Ukrainian witness testimony. He complicates how each perspective—one from the Western eye and those from the victims' eyes—receives authority. Indeed, a "Heroes" section on the film's official website conflates the two, designating both Gareth Jones and the list of survivors present in the film.[9] The particular use of "hero" insinuates a pointed comment on the filmic history of the region and the theory of Socialist Realism, which required a "hero versus villain" narrative in which the hero is assured an eventual victory, at the cost of temporary defeat. Like several other instances in the film itself, this ironic commentary indicates the way in which Bukovsky depicts the formerly-colonized mastering their future and possessing the cognitive ability to outline their own discourse, regain a voice, and tell a story.

While Bukovsky remains open to and even appreciative of the West, he also asserts a nationalist impulse. In this sense, the film is an appropriate example of the politics of Ukrainian memory, in which there is a reworking of "trauma in the name of memory and national identity."[10] *The Living* is fundamentally the work of, as Carol Gluck has termed them, "memory activists," in its attempt to secure the event into Ukrainian vernacular memory.[11] It is this memory of local communities, rather than one officially promoted by the state, which functions as the most powerful terrain of memory. As in most cases of memory change, outside forces such as Gareth Jones and forces from below, the impoverished witnesses featured in the film, propel the transformation of memory forward. While the story of the Holodomor has been told before, it has not been previously figured as a call to action. It is for this reason that *The Living* is an effort at realizing "now-time" and making Ukrainians own their history.[12] As Walter Benjamin noted, it is by realizing now-time (Jetztzeit) in history that the individual may activate the past which would otherwise be "empty time." Through the objectivization of the event into a film, a device is formed which provides mnemonic energy to galvanize the Ukrainian public.[13]

Competitive versus Symbiotic Traumas in Ukrainian Cultural Memory

Can the Holodomor only be seen in the shadow of the Holocaust? The Holodomor, indeed, is often cited as the "hidden" or "unknown" Holocaust.[14] The very genealogy of the event as it is portrayed in the film—discovered through hidden foreign documents—suggests it as a

"hidden" phenomenon of Ukrainian history. How can the temporal lag between the discussion of the Ukrainian Holocaust and the Holodomor be interpreted? As Michael Rothberg has written, we must imagine the individual "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing, as productive and not primitive."[15] Not only can the individual endure the public sphere of multiple collective memories, but he can *benefit* from an environment of these "dynamic transfers."[16] The capaciousness of the cultural memory that houses collective memories enables the expansion of the imagination.[17]

Andreas Huyssen's analysis of "present pasts" provides meaning to the context in which *The Living* was made. The film bears the influence of work from the Holocaust testimony movement of the 1980s and the genocidal politics discourse of the 1990s[18] and emerges from the darkness with its own "unique event," crowned by the light refracted from these discourses. Michael Rothberg has written that "[m]ultidirectional legacies of violence haunt the histories of indigenous peoples on a global scale and cut across…parts of the former Soviet Bloc."[19] The various ghosts of Ukraine's past are presently occupying the national memoryscape. In effect, Bukovsky appropriates the "prism" and "cipher" through which the Ukrainian Famine can be understood.[20] He remakes, for a postcolonial Ukraine, the present past for a present future.

At the Request of the President

Bukovsky formulates Ukraine as a territory entrenched in competing histories, occupations, and traumas. He does not mask the production aspects of the film. As Nigel Colley prepares to read the text for the film in the studio, images are shown of white-gloved hands holding slides to lighted screens implying the fragility of the documentation of, as well as the debate surrounding, the Holodomor. Capturing an image clearly—grasping the Holodomor from these complicated histories—necessitates diligence and care.

The opening scene displays the former Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, leading his daughter through a burial site of Holodomor victims in Khuruzhivka, his home village. At once, the film reflects, as Gluck has named it, chronopolitics or the manner in which political decisions are informed by perceptions of past events.[21] A brief textual background fills the screen and provides a dramatic breakdown of figures: "In 1932-33, 17 persons died in Ukraine every minute, 1,000—every hour, and almost 25,000 every single day." Yushchenko walks to a fence, looking out among the picturesque birch trees, and says: "It is horrifying…what those beasts did. Just imagine, 400 to 500 people lie here. If only they were alive to speak to us." Yushchenko is undeniably the harbinger of a mission to reclaim the voices of the dead through the voices of the living for he suggests that testimony is a matter of national duty. The President speaks to a narrative within the memoryscape that must be explored. This narrative is "[c]oming into memory," which means not only telling the story but also assaulting the narrative provided by alternative, official accounts."[22] Displaying

the face of the victim solidifies the nation more than painting the villain. Following this presidential call, Bukovsky assembles four narratives: the attempt of Margaret Siriol Colley and her son, Nigel, to revive the work of their relative, Gareth Jones; Nigel's reading of Gareth's writings for the film; the display of foreign documents, press, and propaganda films; and the testimonies of the Ukrainian survivors. Through this synthesis of multiple narratives—both foreign and local—Bukovsky presents the event as one with a global and complicated imprint.

Revelatory Folklore

The first few segments border on the edge of gimmick and are meant to highlight the structure of the environment of production. As a victim is interviewed, she asks: "What are they looking at? How do they see me?" These moments, which reveal the strangeness and novelty of the camera for the survivors, support the storyline's assertion that it is the *first time* in which these testimonies have been revealed.

These survivors function as bearers of culture, as folk songs intermittently surface during several of the testimonies. Trauma is embedded within these songs and extracted by Bukovsky. Towards the beginning of the film, the survivor Kravchenko Anastasia Sergievna begins to sing with a man at her side: "Wheat is growing beyond the gully, and oats in the garden. My dear gray-haired beloved, you don't live truthfully. Come evening, you go to another. And when you come back, you call me in a whisper." Their voices fade and an image of the Zbruch River is shown, which as Bukovsky's narrative voice soon makes clear, evokes the song's themes of dual loyalty. Speaking to the need for Ukrainian historical synthesis and national unification, he proclaims that the river

separated Russian Ukraine from Polish Ukraine not too long ago. For several centuries, we have a number of Ukraines and histories without number. They have not been consolidated yet—even today Ukrainians see their past differently. Like this river, History divides rather than unites us.

Through the consolidation of testimonies and amalgamation of memories into a cultural memory that is event-specific, Bukovsky asserts himself against the divisive force of History. At the same time that a collective is formed, it is evident that Bukovsky seeks to give individuality to his cast of witnesses so that their experiences and identities are not interchangeable. Later, Sergievna sings: "Beautiful maiden, gorgeous maiden, why did you not come out last night? I will not come again, tonight or ever. I will send my sister. She is just like me. But I will just stand there with her, the whole night through. Thinking about things we had together with you." Though they are enveloped in wisps of amorous intimation, both this and the previous song show sentiments of betrayal and defeat. They emerge as "swan songs" which reveal the inconsistencies and duplicities of man in contrast to the stability of nature. Not only are romances lost—a survivor claims that all the suitors in her village are now dead—but the disappearance of childhood is also noted as survivors tell stories of searching fields

for weeds and sacrificing morsels for their mothers. While they do not reclaim what is lost through their testimony, through their songs they transmit a melancholy to future generations as a reminder of the ever-looming possibility of loss.

Shared Guilt

Notably, the film does not present living perpetrators in the flesh and blood: only the victims are given a voice. Instead, Bukovsky compiles a series of official documents from various embassies and propaganda films to generate the voice of the culpable. The records that Bukovsky unearths are presented on the screen and read, with meaningful text bolded. Bukovsky skillfully juxtaposes these incriminating documents against propaganda films, which generated a utopian world for Western consumption. For example, he places footage of Soviet food markets where plentiful produce is organized into the iconic form of the hammer and sickle.

It is important to note that while non-Ukrainian perpetrators make an experience in textual form, *Ukrainian* perpetrators exist within the words of the witnesses. As Larisa Onyshkevych has written of Ukrainian drama,

there is very little blame placed on the non-Ukrainians who implemented the famine, while at the same time there are more explicit expressions of self-blame for tolerating it.[23]

The presence of self-criticism within *The Living* removes the opportunity for complete external blame or disavowal of responsibility; it is a detail that enables the victims and nation to understand the totality of the event.

A Legacy Transformed

To paraphrase Shoshana Felman's analysis of *Shoah*, *The Living* presents sections from a series of interviews that collectively create a community of witnesses. Yet, at the same time, Bukovsky appeals to his community of viewers to remember and witness the details of the Holodomor. It is this act of double witnessing that binds the collective memory. It is in the tendency of the documentary to support the notion of video testimonies as "acts in the present, not present accounts of the past," that the productive and active nature of witnessing is underscored. Viewers of *The Living* must "allow the testimony to move, haunt and endanger them; they must allow it to inhabit them." Thus, in contrast to *Shoah*, Bukovsky intends for the viewer to appropriate the story and own it.[24]

Bukovsky's film is meant to unite viewers through learning the trauma of forced collectivization and its aftermath and, in doing so, undercuts any idealized vision of Ukraine's past or present. At the same time, the film does exude a kind of tempered optimism. Sergievna is asked about her dreams for the future. "I dream about only one thing—death!... What dream can you have when you're 80? There's nothing left to dream about." Despite her denial of any aspirations, it is clear that Sergievna does embody a larger dream shared by the collective of witnesses to which she belongs. Her dream, like so many 20th century survivors of war and genocide, is "never again."

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Skiagraphy and Squirrels: The Plight of Immigrants in Nabokov's *Pnin*

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Among the scattered imagery of Vladimir Nabokov's *Pnin* the image of the squirrel peers out from the text and reveals the darker forces at work. Just as Russian cannot be directly translated to English, so the Russian squirrel does not correspond directly to the American squirrel. The distance between those two represents the irreconcilable cultural rift between Americans and Russians.

The text is saturated with images of the squirrel, both in scenes of Pnin's Russian past and his American present. The squirrel turns up in living form, in postcards, as a stuffed animal, as Cinderella's slipper. The doctor who treats young Pnin in his first flashback is his father's friend Dr. Belochkin, whose surname is Russian for squirrel. Pnin's fiancée, whom he loses once to the Russian Revolution and a second time to a Nazi concentration camp, is Mira Belochkin. After each delirious plunge into the past, there appears the image of a squirrel. After a painful encounter with another personage from his Russian past – his ex wife – Pnin writes a postcard adorned with an image of a Grey to his adopted son Victor, and notes that "'squirrel' came from a Greek word which meant 'shadow tail'" (88) – a detail that adds another level of connection between the squirrel who has a shadow-tail and Pnin, who has a "shadow behind the heart"(126). The shadow behind Pnin's heart is a physical manifestation of this intense nostalgia – Pnin is shadowed by the heartbreaks of his past life, which, like the squirrel's tail, is forever behind him.

The language barrier between Pnin and his American peers appears in the squirrel. The squirrel first appears when Pnin finds himself alone and disoriented in a strange town without a copy of the speech he is set to give. In misplacing this important document, Pnin loses language itself, the key to crossing the cultural gap between

himself and the Americans. "A special danger area in Pnin's case was the English language,"(14) Nabokov writes, "He was utterly helpless without the prepared text."(15) Nabokov highlights how much of Pnin is lost in translation; what begins as "Russian verbal flow, teeming with idiomatic proverbs" (15) ends as patchy English. As the panic associated with this loss sets in, it pulls him into the memory of childhood illness in which he likewise struggles to regain his language. Within his childhood delirium, Pnin notices:

Near his bed was a four-section screen of polished wood, with pyrographic designs representing a bridle path felted with fallen leaves, a lily-pond, and old man hunched up on a bench, and a squirrel holding a reddish object in its front paws. Timosha, a methodical child, had often wondered what the object could be (a nut? a pine cone?), and now that he had nothing else to do, he set himself to solve this dreary riddle, but the fever hummed in his head and drowned every effort in pain and panic. (Nabokov, 23)

Examining the squirrel, he cannot find the necessary word for the object the squirrel is holding. Young-Pnin concludes that the key to the wallpaper must be "as precious as life itself, and when found, would regain for Timofey Pnin his everyday health, his everyday world." Deprived of language, immigrants are reduced to poor translations, just as Pnin's speech. Once the text is firmly in the present, the squirrel appears once again, this time seated at Pnin's feet holding a peach stone. However, that squirrel is not the answer to Pnin's riddle; the squirrels of Russia and the squirrels of America are distinctly different.

The American squirrel and the Russian squirrel are not only different species, like their respective cultures, they cannot coexist. The Grey Squirrel, *Sciurus carolinensis,* appears on the postcard Pnin sends Vladimir and as *Carolina* Slavski, the woman who stands in the way of Pnin keeping a post at Waindell College. The Grey Squirrel is archetypal American squirrel, native to North America and considered an invasive species in Europe. This is the squirrel of Pnin's present. The squirrel of his past is the Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, the bushy-eared European squirrel that is featured prominently in Russian folk art and children's stories, a fixture in the life of every Russian child. As an avid naturalist like Nabokov would know, the two squirrels are not simply variations of the same small furry animal – their differences are irreconcilable. The two species are unable to interbreed or even coexist, asserting that Pnin and his American colleagues are not fated to every understand one another. Likewise, the squirrel's American cultural meaning cannot coexist with its Russian counterpart.

Through the squirrel imagery, Nabokov shows Pnin's cultural distance from those around him. When one of Pnin's American dinner guests compares a glass punch bowl with a writhing pattern to Cinderella's glass slipper. Pnin quickly corrects her and insists that "Cendrillon's shoes were not made of glass, but Russian squirrel fur" (158). In doing so, he illustrates both his ignorance of American culture and the vast distance his American neighbors have placed between themselves and their own cultural

backgrounds. For the American guests, Cinderella has already become associated with *Walt Disney's* Cinderella and the iconic glass slipper, the softened version of the much older fairy tale. For Pnin, Cinderella is still the European "Cendrillion", a shadow of his Russian heritage. Thus, neither words nor cultural icons translate between the languages, rendering Pnin even more hapless.

The very same disorientating lack of language that keep émigrés from making sense of their new culture also conceal the remnants of Russian culture from the new American society. Only in the forests of the Catskills, where Pnin is surrounded by individuals with a similar expatriate background and able to speak in Russian, is Pnin a rather respectable gentleman rather than the silly old man his American colleagues see. The cultural distance created by both the language gap and the lack of a shared understanding keeps the more charming Pnin hidden behind the shadows of his Russian background.

Placing such heavy emphasis on the two contrasting varieties of squirrels within the text, Nabokov presents a very bleak outlook for Russian immigrants attempting to assimilate into American society. Just as the American Grey Squirrel and the European Red Squirrel are unable to exist side by side, neither can American and European cultures. People like Professor Timofey Pnin are lost in translation between the two identities. Their romanticized Russian past no longer exists, and that memory's mighty shadow obscures order in their American present.

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Socialist Realism Inverted: Ksenia Buksha and Her Debut Novella, *Alyonka-partizanka*

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The Socialist Realist tradition in Russian literature glorified the Soviet idea of salvation through production, task fulfillment and efficiency. The typical Socialist Realist was a young and passionate male embarking on a "road to consciousness" by combating worker laziness, bureaucratic incompetence, or Western decadence.[1] Throughout his inward journey, the Socialist Realist hero wins over the hearts of the people with his relentless dedication to the task at hand. Self-interest and emotional love are secondary concerns to the completion of the project for the novel's protagonist. In some novels, such as A. Fadeev's *The Young Guard*, the hero dies to fulfill his duties, making the ultimate sacrifice for the Socialist cause.[2] The Socialist Realist novel guided its readers towards the Party ideal.

Socialist Realist novels sought to dispel moral ambiguity, and clearly identify good from evil in both political and personal realms. The hero must go through several key stages: arrival in the setting, transition and obstacles, incorporation from the elder, and completion of the task.[3] At the end of this journey, the protagonist prevails over the outward evils of unproductiveness, incompetence, foreign threats, and the personal evils of self-doubt and despair. The people laud the hero for his championship of Socialist values and, in this way, the novel vanquishes ideological uncertainty.

Ksenia Buksha plays with the conventions of the Socialist Realist tradition in her debut novella, *Alyonka-partizanka*, when she denies the reader the typical payoff of the production novel. Buksha presents a modern version of the partizanka mission set in a new Russian capitalist world. Her novella follows the life and revolutionary mission of the young, tough and impassioned Alyonka, a young woman who leads a group of terrorists in thwarting the corporate powers that be.

Alyonka is the opposite of a typical Socialist Realist protagonist. The novella establishes Alyonka's rebelliousness from the outset. She spurns scholarly achievement, enjoys drinking as a teenager, and reads Ayn Rand while smoking cigarettes and passing out on the stairs.[4] She is hardly the classic picture of an upstanding Soviet youth.

Buksha's Alyonka further breaks from the Socialist Realist paradigm, when she launches upon her partizanka mission by inverting Socialist Realist gender norms. Unlike the female characters of Soviet literature, Alyonka lacks the balance of "socialist zeal and industry with wholesome femininity."[5] She asserts her authority by barking orders to her subordinates, in contrast to the one-dimensional, peripheral female characters of past production novels.[6] Alyonka rejects her expected role as a wife and mother. In Soviet novels, women maintained their family line. Instead, like the typical male protagonist, Alyonka devotes her life and emotion to her cause and establishes her leadership by shunning sentimentality and companionship with other women. Rather than acting as a source of feminine spiritual dignity, Alyonka embraces the rigidity and stony determination traditionally reserved for male characters.

Alyonka's rejection of gender roles is met with hostility from her family, indicating the significance of this betrayal. Alyonka's brother seeks to forcefully retrieve the family house key from her, even colluding with her enemies to bring about her death.

The structure of Alyonka's group is also contrary to that typical in Socialist Realist novels. Although Alyonka is essentially the leader of her revolutionary mission, she never achieves the complete obedience of her underlings, and because of that her plans often go awry. First of all, she lacks trust in her comrade, Aramis, and suspects him of withholding cash. She orders her flunky, Shtoyber, to follow Aramis after he leaves the terrorist base. This decision leads to her eventual capture by Kazimir Oleyko, a jaded, older, finance expert. Later, when an enemy raid of their headquarters leaves Shtoyber in prison, Shtoyber sells Alyonka out for the promise of food. Marinka, a meek partizanka, is too timid, childish and romantic to be useful to Alyonka. Within Alyonka's inner circle, she can only depend on herself.

Alyonka's isolation is a distortion of the conventional social positioning of the Socialist Realist hero. Traditionally, the protagonist arrives a fresh and impassioned outsider, but a band of supporters quickly accept the protagonist as he proves his worth. Alyonka remains alien, failing to foster community among her followers. Rather, there is no joy in the execution of the task, only fear, doubt and anxiety.

The only person to pledge allegiance to Alyonka is, strangely, Kazimir Oleyko. A wealthy financial consultant who is decidedly part of the system Alyonka despises, Oleyko is an odd candidate for Alyonka's most faithful supporter. Alyonka's beauty and not her radical beliefs feed Oleyko's passion. Ideologically, Kazimir is apathetic and apolitical. When he has Alyonka tied up in his apartment, Oleyko tells her the story of the "Free City," in which activists attempt to reform a

barbaric tradition to no avail. This anecdote communicates Oleyko's personal belief in the impossibility of real political change. For him, no matter the leader or regime, people will continue to let their basic instincts and emotions stand in the way of a true utopian society. In light of this perspective, Oleyko is an opportunist, manipulating whatever system is in place at the time.

As Buksha thwarts the traditional characteristics of the Socialist Realist female, she also plays with the customary gendered expectations of the Socialist Realist male. The fact that Oleyko is politically detached and emotionally guided is highly unusual. Oleyko betrays his insider status to save Alyonka multiple times. First, he releases her from his apartment without punishing her. Later, he lies to the authorities in order to get her out of prison. Finally, it is Oleyko who ultimately completes Alyonka's mission to destroy the Corporation Head, when he throws a grenade in anger after he learns of Alyonka's death.

In the scheme of *Alyonka-partizanka* as an inverted Socialist Realist novella, Oleyko is a subversion of the elder-initiate character, a figure that embodies the steady wisdom and initiated social status of the elder, as well as the level of consciousness the Socialist Realist hero seeks to obtain. Instead of assuming this role, Buksha's Oleyko rebels against the political mentor position and chooses to adopt the role of Alyonka's lover. This role refusal further emphasizes the ideological instability and anarchic rebellion running through *Alyonka-partizanka.*

While at first glance it may seem Alyonka is a Socialist heroine fighting against the influx of Western corporate capitalism in Russia, the action of the novella suggests something more ambiguous. Alyonka is clearly pursuing terrorist action against the current corporate regime, but she never explains her plan for an alternative regime. Besides rebellion and revolution, she has no ideals. Alyonka substitutes the morally unambiguous goal of past Socialist Realist heroes with an empty youthful angst.

By denying a deeper commentary on influential social change and ideals, Buksha effectively presents Alyonka as a postmodern heroine. She is a pastiche of the partizanka figure, not its actual realization. The subversion of the grand narrative of the Socialist Realist novel for the local narrative of the heroine's love affair further emphasizes *Alyonka-partizanka*'s postmodern tone. Alyonka's role as a partizanka in a world of financial markets and corporate schemes amounts to a symbolic nod to the past. At this point in the modern world, power is not ideology. Power is money. Buksha makes a point about the nature of contemporary authority through her mimicry of Socialist Realism. While Soviet authors were tasked with the duty of conveying a sense of importance and worth to the partisan cause, Buksha flaunts her freedom to expose its futility.

Although the enemy in the case of *Alyonka-partizanka* appears to be the Corporate Head and capitalism, the characters and tone of this evil regime are easily interchangeable with representations of the Party and Soviet bureaucracy. As with Oleyko's tale of the "Free City," Buksha's portrayal of authority figures in the novella reveals the invariability of political power

structures. Whether supported by the corporation or socialist party, the system is without fail run by humans with self-interested motivations, weaknesses, and dreams of grandeur.

Kazimir Oleyko plays an important role in communicating the essence of this perspective. Simultaneously the most conscious character and the most ideologically indifferent, he demonstrates that all revolt is essentially inutile. At the same time, by falling in love with Alyonka, Oleyko supports a continuing admiration for the traditions of idealism, passion and rebellion. Oleyko's position allows for a fusion of wisdom with nostalgia. His knowledge of the world and its workings forbids him to be persuaded by Alyonka's cause, but that does not mean he cannot find her revolutionary purity and fortitude endearing. Among a sea of vapid *blondinkas*, Alyonka is a rarity, and for that she can capture Oleyko's fascination and love.

The climax of *Alyonka-partizanka* underscores Buksha's postmodernist statement on political inefficacy. In the end, Alyonka must pay the price for her denial of feminine responsibilities and gendered expectations. Her brother returns, accompanied by her political enemies, to claim the family key. Unable to complete her mission to kill the Corporation Head, Alyonka is gunned down to her death. The only character able to complete the task is Oleyko. Hearing of Alyonka's death, he kills the Corporation Head with a grenade. Oleyko's violent action is not a gesture of partisan passion, but a final desperate demonstration of love. Rather than legitimize the potency of militant activity, Buksha chooses to redeem the lasting value of uncorrupted emotion. As the various ideologies destroy themselves, Oleyko's emotion survives as the only constant.

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Existential Questions and Stereotypes in *Rothschild's Fiddle*

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If I am not for my self, who is for me? If I am for my self then what am I? If not now, when?[1]

Though Chekhov's short story "Rothschild's Fiddle" seems to describe a cultural interaction between representations of Russian and Jewish culture through its main characters Yakov the Russian and Rothschild the Jew, the story complicates this binary by making Yakov a stereotypical Jew as well. Chekhov divides the stereotype into its external and internal parts; the gangly Rothchild embodies visible characteristics of a stereotypical Jew, while Yakov's miserliness exemplifies internal thoughts of the "greedy Jew." Through the interaction between these two stereotypes, Chekhov explores the interaction between two representations of the Jew.

Chekhov's study in stereotypes begins with Yakov's name. "Yakov Ivanov" combines the Jewish "Yaakov" (Jacob) with the Russian "Ivan" in his patronymic. From the moment he introduces Yakov, Chekhov places him in both groups. Yakov's miserliness makes him seem more like Shylock than a typical Russian. When he buries his wife Marfa, he focuses on the "losses" he could incur during the funeral. Yakov reflects that he "was very pleased that it was all so honorable, decent, cheap, and no offence to anyone. Bidding his last farewell to Marfa, he touched the coffin with his hand and thought, 'Fine work!'" (257). More concerned with the quality of the coffin's construction than its contents, Yakov's focus on the material overrides his emotional capacities. Yakov even uses his "chum" to reduce the "losses" he incurs for the funeral (257). Yakov's inside connection mirrors the sort of "secret financial network" that many European Jews were accused of using to exploit the peasantry of Western Europe.[2] Even though Yakov should not profit from his wife's death, he, like Shylock, chooses to take what he sees as rightfully his, no matter how morally questionable the gain might be.

Even after Marfa's death, Yakov's introspection is muddied by materialism;

his deepest regrets are financial rather than spiritual. As he sits by the river, Yakov thinks to himself,

But none of it had happened, even in dreams, his life had gone by without any benefit, without any enjoyment, had gone for nought, for a pinch of snuff; there was nothing left ahead, and looking back there was nothing but losses, and such terrible losses made you shudder (260).

Because his imagination has been swallowed by a calculating desire for a "pound of flesh", Yakov feels entrapped in a pointless universe that is nothing more than "a pinch of snuff". His financial "losses" make is such that he cannot even "dream" of a reality in which financial gain is second to emotional concerns. His failure to imagine keeps him mired in a world that had "gone for nought." The Jews of the ghetto and Pale of Settlement were accused of the same self-inflicted hopelessness.[3]

Yakov also follows religious laws similar to the restrictions followed by religious Jews. He refuses to work on religious holidays and on Monday, which he calls "the unlucky day" (254). Again, Yakov fits the stereotype of a Jew whose miserliness is combined, paradoxically, with a legal code that prohibits him from conducting business or handling money on several days throughout the year. Yakov reflects, "As a result in one year there was a total of about two hundred days when he had, willy-nilly, to sit with folded arms. And what a loss that was!" (254). The use of the word "willy-nilly" suggests that the narrator views these laws as arbitrary or anachronistic. Since Christianity provided a rationale for rejecting Mosaic law, some Christians viewed the Jewish legal codes in a similar light. Chekhov points out the irony in the stereotype of the miserly but lazy Jew when he explains that Christian holidays forced Yakov to make Marfa's coffin before her death (255). Chekhov shows that some versions of Christianity have very similar restrictions, noting the various Saint's days that keep Yakov from working. To the reader, the premature making of the coffin is morally uncomfortable; we would expect that Yakov could break the rules that prevent him from working, given the special circumstances. Yakov places strict adherence to religious laws before what the reader knows to be culturally acceptable, echoing the stereotype that Jewish law is being overly rigid, old-fashioned, and often culturally inappropriate. Chekhov challenges the reader in another way here as well. The first three days Yakov refuses to work make sense in light of Christian theology, but his desire to avoid work on Monday seems to be no more than a superstition. By placing this superstition alongside accepted religious traditions, Chekhov asks the reader to question the ways she determines the difference between the two.

Yakov also uses the self-deprecating humor common in eastern European Jewish communities. When he pleads with Marfa's doctor, Yakov says "and we're heartily grateful for your agreeableness, but permit me the expression—every insect wants to live" (256). Even as Jews were called insects or vermin, they still had a basic desire to live.[4] Here, Yakov's wittily turns this anti-Semitic slur against the Doctor. His dry sense of humor subverts the

doctor's derogatory language, paralleling the style of the wise men of Chelm.[5]

Yakov exemplifies many of the stereotypes about the way a Jew thinks and acts upon his beliefs. He possesses all of the internal characteristics of a stereotypical Jew; though he may not look like Shylock, he thinks like him. In contrast, Rothschild physically resembles a stereotypical Jew but lacks the internal "Jewish" characteristics seen in Yakov. Chekhov describes Rothschild as "a skinny red-headed Jew with a whole network of red and blue veins on his face" (254). Rothschild prefigures the kind of lanky, green-faced Jew in Chagall's "The Fiddler". Later in the story, Yakov uses similar language to describe Rothchild, "Yakov found it disgusting that the Jew was out of breath… And it was repulsive to look at his green frock coat with its dark patches and at his whole fragile, delicate figure" (258). Even as Rothschild's ragged frock coat conjures up an image of the "wandering Jews," he shares a name with one of Britain's richest bankers. His name does not represent his actual position in society, just as Jewish stereotypes are inaccurate. Rothchild is a haphazard compilation of images of what Jews look like to the outside world; he is both ragged and named after a banking tycoon. The external labels Checkhov seems to attach to Rothchild do not match Checkhov's more nuanced description of Rothchild's true character.

Rothschild's speech is also stereotypical. "Mister Shapovalov is marrying his daughter to a good mench. And oi, what a rich wedding it's going to be!" (261). His Yiddish-sprinkled diction puts Rothschild firmly in a cannon of outwardly stereotypical literary characters. Even the way he speaks to others in the outside world is distinctly "Jewish". Rothchild not only looks like Shylock or Fagin; he shares their verbal tics. Thus, Rothschild personifies the external stereotype of a Jew.

The fact that the we see so much of this stereotypical imagery through Yakov's eyes shows us that Chekhov is not simply having the Jew and Russian switch places in order to undercut prejudices against Jews. Rather, Chekhov is asking us to consider the ways in which Rothschild and Yakov interact and the differences between the outward, visible stereotypes and the inward, ideological ones.

Chekhov shows that both Rothschild and Yakov are capable of compassion and make progress toward a deeper, more empathetic understanding of one another. Rothschild does this through his understanding of Yakov's deeply felt music. "The frightened puzzled look on his face gradually changed to a mournful and suffering one, he rolled up his eyes as if experiencing some painful ecstasy and said: 'Weh-h-h!...' And tears flowed slowly down his cheeks and dripped onto the green frock coat" (261). Even though Yakov and Rothschild live in different communities, Rothschild is able to understand the existential pain expressed in Yakov's music. Thus, Rothschild does have a deeper spiritual dimension that transcends his stereotypical physique. His tears mark his frock coat, complicating the stereotypical image.

Yakov's path to redemption is more complex. His moral depravity seems to

obscure any potential expression of the pain he has experienced in his life. He does not even allow himself to remember his daughter. Yet, the combination of Marfa's joyful look as she dies and Rothschild's pain after he is bitten by a dog are enough to shock Yakov out of his moral and emotional stagnation, leading him to a classic existential dilemma. Yakov thinks to himself, "Life was to a man's loss, but death was to his benefit. This reflection was, of course, correct, but all the same it was bitter and offensive, why was the world ordered so strangely that life, which is given man only once, goes by without any benefit" (260). Yakov's moral redemption comes from his newly-realized ability to experience and understand the pain that accompanies wondering if life is indeed worth living. The fact that he reaches this conclusion because of his observation of Marfa's emotional state proves Yakov is emotionally broken but not emotionally empty. Though his logic appears vacuous, the conclusion it yields is rich. That said, he is unwilling, or perhaps unable to articulate this emotional conclusion; instead of words, Yakov uses a combination of deeds and music to express his emotional change. When he reaches out to Rothchild, Yakov proves he is capable of some gesture of kindness. This does not mean, however, that his motives are entirely pure. He still views material objects as people; his violin will be "orphaned" after his death (260). Still, his understanding of existential pain means that he is able to care for his violin and develop a deep enough sense of generosity to share that material wealth with Rothschild. The violin then, represents not only Yakov's own emotional shift, but acts as a sort of vehicle for emotional expression in Rothchild's hands. By making both Rothchild and Yakov musicians, Chekhov allows them to share an emotional vocabulary, even though they do not share a linguistic one.

Chekhov argues that the person who looks like a stereotype and the person who thinks like one are capable of empathetic connection with each other. Through this connection, the characters complicate the generalizations; after they reach out to each other, neither character is accurately represented by his stereotype. Rather, they are people whose emotional lives, transcend and invalidate their stereotypical images. By breaking the stereotype into its internal and external parts, Chekov shows that the interaction between these two stereotypical representations of the Jew yields two people who are not at all stereotypical.

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2 The suspicion that Jews ran a secret financial network in Europe developed in the late 18th century.

3 Beginning in 1791, Jews in Russia were restricted to living in the Pale of Settlement. In the Pale, Jews were prohibited from working in agriculture, and worked only as commercial merchants. The previously sizeable middle class became severely impoverished once they were prohibited from living and working in major urban centers. In on the places in Western Europe, from Germany to Venice, Jews lived confined in walled ghettos, until a gradual "emancipation" at the end of the 18th century. For most Jews, baptism was the main route out the ghetto. Thus, those Jews who chose to continue to live in these impoverished communities, were said to do so on their own volition.

4 The stereotype of Jews as "insects" or "vermin" arises first in Martin Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies.* Similar language was used from pre-modern times well into the 19th century, including in Karl Marx's *On the Jewish Question*.

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The Poetry of Boundaries in Nabokov's *Cloud, Castle, Lake*

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While "Cloud, Castle, Lake" remains one of Nabokov's most enduring short stories, scholarship associated with it tends to focus on the relevance of the lyric poet Tyutchev to interpret the story at the exclusion of Nabokov's other favorite golden age poets[1]. "Cloud, Castle, Lake" is also a poetic homage to Pushkin, whose classic poem «К***» forms one of the main themes of the short story. Furthermore, Nabokov creates a literary "otherworld" within the text which allows an unorthodox reinterpretation of «К***» in which the unnamed lost love of «К***»'s narrator is the Russian poetic tradition as a whole.

One of "Cloud, Castle, Lake's" main motifs is the protagonist's, Vasiliy Ivanovich's, lost love. In the beginning of the story Nabokov makes a mysterious reference to a "lady, another man's wife, whom [Vasiliy] had hopelessly loved for seven years." Nabokov mentions this love in the same sentence as Vasiliy's love for "Russian lyrical poetry" and "some evening skyline seen in a dream."[2] This connection between poetry, landscape, and loss of one's beloved develops throughout the story.

Nabokov also embeds his first reference to Pushkin's «К***» in the paragraph in which he first mentions Vasiliy Ivanovich's lost love. Vasiliy Ivanovich thinks that his life will be meaningless unless he finds his orientation «к чему-то, к кому-то».[3] While «К***» is normally understood to be an address to a person («к кому-то»), without a greater context, there is no reason to assume that the title alone does not suggest an orientation towards an inanimate object («к чему-то»). Vasiliy's vascillating indecision between person and object makes the indeterminacy of Pushkin's title explict. Furthermore, Vasiliy refers to the land as «моя любовь» when it reminds him of his homeland. Upon

Vasiliy's first seeing the castle while under the impression that this apparition could become a new homeland to him the narrator remarks:

"Of course, there are plenty of such views in Central Europe, but just this one -in the inexpressible and unique harmoniousness of its three principal parts, in its smile, in some mysterious innocence it had, my love! my obedient one!-was something so unique, and so familiar, and so long-promised, and it so understood the beholder that Vasiliy Ivanovich even pressed his hand to his heart, as if to see whether his heart was there in order to give it away."

Vasiliy's love for the country is obvious through the narrator's description of the landscape as focused through Vasiliy's emotions. As the land would be the intended recipient of Vasiliy's heart, the land is most likely his "love!" as well. The words "familiar" and "long-promised," in reference to the land allude to the idea of a homeland, or potentially a lost homeland, hence endowing the land with an emotional or cultural significance that begins to throw light on Vasiliy's motivation for love.

The thematic connection of Russian culture and literature to landscape is by no means unique to Nabokov. Both Tyutchev and Pushkin were distinguished for describing distinctly Russian landscapes.[4] By adopting this technique himself, Nabokov is particularly evocative of Tyutchev and Pushkin; while particular landscapes tend to evoke Russian culture (birches, steppes, etc.) Nabokov's references to specific natural scenes and landscapes is meant to evoke Tyutchev and Pushkin in particular, and therefore Russian culture and Russian poetry in a more general sense. In his essay "An Intertextual Spiderweb in Nabokov's 'Cloud, Castle, Lake,'" Edward Waysband finds a "Tiutchevian topos … [functioning] as a nostalgic sign of a Russian "paradise lost"" within "Cloud, Castle, Lake."[5]

This "paradise lost" quality fits well in Nabokov's historical context. In his introduction to Invitation to a Beheading, Nabokov refers to the rise of Soviet dictatorship as "one dull beastly farce."[6] Bad Russian émigré poetry also is a consistent theme throughout his books – personified as Liza in Pnin, Ivan Veen in Ada or Ardor, Kinbote in Pale Fire, and to a certain extent himself in Speak, Memory. To his circle of real and imagined émigré poets, exile from Russia implies not just a lost geographical and cultural space, but a certain degree of removal from "good" Russian poetry as well.

Scholars such as Waysband, Rydel and Strayer identify a strong vein of allusions to Tyutchev in "Cloud, Castle, Lake," and Nabokov ultimately mobilizes these allusions to exhibit a process of corruption of Russian culture in the European émigré sphere. On the train ride in a moment of lost paradise, Vasiliy starts reading "a little volume of Tyutchev" before the passengers force him to sing and join in quasi-sadistic group games. However, this paradise is not merely lost, but debased by its German surroundings. When Vasiliy decides to re-read Tyutchev, instead of the original lines from Tyutchev's «Silentium!», «Молчи, скрывайся и таи ... Мысль, изречная есть ложь»[8], he reads «Мы слизь. Речнная есть ложь». The poem is completely corrupted when the correct line is remembered, not by Vasiliy, but by the evil German tourguide

who orders him «молчать!».

As with "Silentium!" echoes of «К***» emerge in Vasiliy's consciousness, before being coopted and corrupted by the outside German world. While Vasiliy stares out the window of the moving train at the countryside, he sees «мимолетными дарами», feels «воспонимание любви» and «как бы замрет на мгновение», and notices a «глушь» - all of which are words or words that stem from the same roots as main images in Pushkin's poem: «мимолетное видение», «Я помню чудное мгновение», «в глуши, во мраке заточнения».[9] The germans further corrupt this poem in an ensuing song.

A demand that Vasily sings with the rest of the German tourists forcefully interrupts his window gazing. Interestingly, the song he is forced to sing is a sick parody of Pushkin's «К***». It retains the exact rhyme sceme (ABAB, ABAB ..., CBCB)with the same sound rhymed on every other line («ы» on the B lines). However, the A-A, C-C rhyme-words in the Germans' version are all in the instrumental case: a practice considered sloppy in tradional lyric poetry. As with the Tyutchev transformation («Мысль, изречная есть ложь» to «Мы слизь. Речнная есть ложь») this version of «К***» captures the main theme of the poem in rude parody. In the corrupted version Pushkin's theme of conquering loneliness and isolation remains, while the «добрые люди» are a grotesque substitution for the «гений чистой карсоты», especially in light of how «добрыми» they reveal themselves to be.

Refractions of «К***» continue to appear. The scene in which Vasiliy reaches the lake and castle exudes an otherworldliness or dreamlike quality, which Strayer discusses at length. Strayer argues that a transition from prosaic to poetic language in this section indicates a transition from a physical to a metaphysical space in the story.[10] This transition is far from purely textual – even the comportment of the characters shifts dramatically. Vasiliy practically reaches a state of ex-stasis when he talks to the innkeeper (himself a Germanized "corruption" of a Russian), and the innkeeper acts "as in a dream."

It is no accident that Vasiliy's seeming attainment of cultural belonging upon seeing the cloud, castle and lake, in a way a rescue from his exile, comes to him in a dream-state. The «милые черты» which save Pushkin's narrator arrive the same way: «снились твои небесные черты». However, the results of these visions differ. In the orginal poem, the speaker progresses towards a spiritual awakening: «Душе настало пробужденье." In the corrupted vision the vision leaves its residents unstirred, still asleep and without redemption.

When Vasiliy first sees the cloud, castle, and lake he transitions not just into a state of "otherworldliness," he also crosses poetic, political, and metaphysical boundaries.

The first set of boundaries are poetic ones. The literal landscape beholden by the reader is poetry itself. When describing the castle Nabokov writes that it rises «прямо из дактиля в дактиль старинная черная башня», a line which itself is composed of dactyls (- u u) until the last word. This important facet of the text is lost in the English translation. The Russian title of

the story is «Облака, озеро, башня». The first two words («облако, озеро») are dactyls from which the «башня» rises up. «Башня» is endstressed and breaks the poetic/dactylic flow of the title. This interruption by the castle, a Central European feature, is a boundry or a break with Russian cultural space, which for Vasiliy is poetic space and a connection to Russian lyrical poets.

Another set of boundaries is political. When looking at the castle, Vasiliy is deep in the wilderness on the periphery of the tyrannical German state. As shown in Nabokov's other works, distance from social centers allows traits that contradict social norms to flourish. The most striking example is Lolita, in which Humbert Humbert occupies the liminal space of a road trip to conduct his affair with Dolores. "Cloud, Castle, Lake" shares a special relationship to *An Invitation to a Beheading*. A surrealist dystopian style, Vasiliy's allusion that "this is nothing more than an invitation to a beheading!," and main characters who break the frame of narration at the end of the story almost constitute the short story as an epilogue to the novel. Nabokov's protest against the "dull beastly farce" of German government in that book therefore carries over as a preoccupation of the story as well. One of the tragedies for Vasiliy is that though he reaches a space of potential cultural and political freedom, the devices of cultural normalization are so powerful in Germany that even space which should lend itself to freethinking and disagreement becomes antagonistic to departures from the norm.

Finally, metaphysical boundaries are also present. Strayer notes that Vasiliy's rapture with the view of the castle coincides with a transition to poetic language and structure, a trope which often indicates Nabokov's exploration of metaphysical issues.[8] For Nabokov, a critical metaphysical understanding is the feeling of «потустороность», or "otherworldliness." Otherworldiness is more than just a literary mood, it is an affirmation of the power of imagination, the power to believe in other worlds, and the power to believe in an afterlife. An awareness in the reader of the existence of parallel worlds (of prose and poetry, of the story and the reader's reality, etc.) creates an awareness of "otherworldliness."

A familiar process takes place when Vasiliy sees the cloud, castle, and lake. As with the Tyutchev and Pushkin poems, recognition of Russian poetry is followed by a denial of access or appreciation, and is then corruption by Germanization. The tour prevents Vasiliy from staying, then tortures him on the train ride home. As a result, instead of escaping from oppression by crossing a political boundary and staying in the poetic, Russian-like country away from dictatorial society, Vasiliy is forced to escape across a metaphysical boundary by asking the Narrator "let him go" as a character from the story.

Nevertheless, the resolution of action is not the end of Nabokov's story. In the «other worlds» or «otherworldliness» in Nabokov's fiction, elements that construct the new space are not static;they are transformed themselves in the process. The "otherworldliness" of *Cloud, Castle, Lake* tranforms «K***» within Nabokov's

fictional world and reinterprets «К***» in the real world.

If, as Nabokov hints, Vasiliy's «моя любовь» refers to his homeland, then this suggests a reading of Alexandr Pushkin's poem «К***» that plays on many of Pushkin's ambiguous word choices. Foremost, "И я забыл … /Твои небесные черты." Nabokov plays on the word «черта» which literally means «lines» and is conventionally understood to mean the lines of the woman's face («черты лица») who inspires Pushkin. However, «черта» can also be used in the sense of geographic boundaries («черта города»). In this sense, the lines that inspire the young poet would be the boundaries of his homeland which in the context of this story are Russian lyrical poetry and not the corrupted poetry within the lines of the German state. Therefore, in place of the woman who inspires Pushkin, in the world of "Облака, озеро, башня," К*** is written to the homeland (lyrical poetry) that inspires Vasiliy Ivanovich. This is the orientation («к чему-то, к кому-то») for which Vasiliy initially searches, potentially finds in the poetic space of «otherworldliness», and then ultimately loses.

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Review of *Green Desert*

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Poetry does not translate. The original language dictates the grace of the form which communicates the theme of the writer and when translated, it simply loses its force. It is not so with the works of Olzhas Suleimenov. Perhaps the tone of his poetry is different in Kazakh but his writing retains its simple elegance and power in English. The two translators, Sergey Levchin and Ilya Bernstein, carry the meaning from Kazakh to English without losing the high aesthetic value of Suleimenov's poetry.

Perhaps the beauty of Suleimenov's words lies in the universal themes that run through and define his poetry. Born in 1936 in Alma-Ata, Suleimenov grew up as a part of the *shestidesiatniki* generation, which played a crucial role in modernizing the Russian view of culture. Suleimenov's personal background and political activism, thus, translate into a sense of internationalism in his poetry. He may come from the Kazakh steppe but he is very much a traveled man, one who understands the undercurrent of feeling that transcends cultural differences and defines the commonalities experienced by the everyday man. The tensions between what is codified as the "West" and the "East," the "Russian and the "Kazakh" or "oriental," and the "urban" and the "rural" play out in Suleimenov's poetry in a very poignant manner.

This sentiment makes itself felt throughout his works as he leaps from a rustic Kazakh mountain in poems such as "Throat of Naral" or "Native Soil" to the epicenter of the Western world in poems such as "Downpour in New York" or "Woman." Seemingly, the themes in these poems seem categorically contrary due to regional, cultural and societal differences and yet, Suleimenov and his translators unite the opposites through the shared emotion. In "Downpour in New York,"

the speaker, "crushed / by the rumps of motorized corpses" experiences the same type of alienation and disillusionment in New York that the "[t]he old man, starving, barely literate" who "crossed half the country / to find the grave— /one grave amid a thousand graves" feels in the "Native Land." Admittedly, Suleimenov connects the two characters through suffering, compelling a negative view of human experiences, but, simultaneously, there is comfort in the universality of this experience.

With the concept of universality permeating the collection, Suleimenov plunges into a brighter, more positive outlook on the human achievements in "Earth, Hail Man." He sings of the accomplishments of Gagarin and Volstok in lofty language just to interpose this praise in language teeming with references to Kazakh and Russian similarities and differences. The contrast exists not only between "Batu Khans" and "Napoleons" and "Einsteins" but also between "Batu Khans" and the "Tsiolkovskys." However, to Suleimenov, this contrast is largely immaterial as the ethnic groups are "magnificent in every tongue" and thus there should be "no divisions." He therefore criticizes the Russian exclusivist principles concerning literature and culture and urges the unification of the Oriental literary tradition with those of Russia and the West.

The divergence between the rustic and the urban environments comes out strongly in "Woman" and "Standing by the Window," where the experiences of a girl at the steppe and a woman on Broadway correspond too closely to be ignored. "Standing by the Window" depicts the experience of a father that "made [his] daughter / For men—"and the dissatisfaction he feels with the current condition. This objectification of an individual also comes to define a common cultural trend as the people in "Woman" also only become something to look at and thus constrained by their roles-- "The looked-at must be larger / than life." Suleimenov portrays the lack of humanity in rigid societal roles to demonstrate that even dehumanization of the individual is a common experience that can be seen as a unifying factor. The means of dehumanization of the two women described by the poems creates a poetic irony: as they become more attractive, be it through application of make-up or the change in their stride, they become less human. Using this exact framework of subtle ironies and paradoxes, Suleimenov elucidates his view that certain experiences may detract from the overall value of humanity but instead, these experiences add on to it by generating a common bond.

Undoubtedly, Suleimenov has powerfully impacted not only the perception and understanding of Kazakh culture within the context of the ex-Soviet Union region, but also teases out global themes to which his readers can easily relate. In a way, *Green Desert* becomes a travelogue for the individual and the world as Suleimenov brings in tidbits from all over the world to show that despite all the differences that may exist between cultures, countries and individuals, the condition of being human is common to all.

Abazov, Rafis. Green Desert: *The Life and Poetry of Olzhas Suleimenov* . Trans. Sergey Levchin and Ilya Bernstein. San Diego: Cognella, 2011.

Transforming World Through Word: The Avant-Garde Prophet and Revolution in Khlebnikov's *Zangezi*

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For Velimir Khlebnikov, the avant-garde was more than a desire to *épater la bourgeoisie* or rebel against the literary conventions of the past, it was an undertaking to transform the human spirit in order to "tune mankind into harmony with the universe … to transform the World through the Word."[1] Composed of twenty "planes", or scenes, *Zangezi*, Khlebnikov's kaleidoscopic *magnum opus*, follows Zangezi's quest to enlighten the masses and, in true Futurist style, guide them in "flying away" towards a more auspicious future. Zangezi, the Khlebnikov's alter-ego, embodies the notion of the avant-garde prophet, whose *zaum* gospels and "Tables of Destiny" revolutionize literary aesthetics and, more importantly, usher in a new era of humanity.

It is no coincidence that the Zarathustrian prophet – quite literally a vanguard – in the work is the poet Zangezi, underscoring Khlebnikov's emphasis on the transformative power of language and the importance of the poet in exhuming such power. Khlebnikov highlights this prophetic status by likening Zangezi to Jesus, manifest in the religious tonality that pervades the supersaga. An almost biblical quality is first seen in the Introduction, where Zangezi explains that each plane has "its own special god" and is "free to confess its own particular faith."[2] Like the narratives of the New Testament, each section of *Zangezi* offers different interpretations and levels of belief in Zangezi's prophecies. Zangezi's possible role as Jesus is made more explicit when Zangezi presents himself as a self-sacrificial figure in his initial proclamation to his disciples. He declares, "I have come like a butterfly / Into the hall of human life, / And must spatter my dusty coat / As signature across its bleak windows", and in the process of transforming the future of humanity is himself destroyed: "Already I have worn away / My bright blue glow…

The bright motes / Of my first freshness are gone, my wings waver / Colorless and stiff." His death is not unlike Jesus' own expiatory crucifixion.[3] Though the butterfly's wings are battered and Zangezi is rumored to have committed suicide, the final lines of the supersaga reveal that "Zangezi lives! / It was all just a stupid joke!"[4] His mock resurrection's ambiguous conclusion ultimately leaves the fulfillment of Zangezi's prophecies to his followers. Similar to Jesus' promise of life after earthly death, Zangezi offers his believers a transcendental existence of "Numbers, eternal numbers, sound in the beyond," a stark contrast to human life, "papered thick / With grayness and boredom! / The transparent NO of its windows!"[5] The numerous references to windows in this speech visually allude to the existence of something *beyond* the confines of quotidian terrestrial existence – namely, the transcendental realm of existence to which Zangezi hopes to lead mankind. Still, Khlebnikov communicates his own doubts about the likelihood of revolution and the practical consequences of his own work through the skepticism of Zangezi's audience; while some go so far to as pronounce their souls "a floor beneath [his] feet" upon hearing his sermon, others doubt Zangezi, and a few passerbys mock him while others are left befuddled by his homilies.[6]

Unlike Jesus, however, Zangezi does not depend on (the) God(s) for salvation – his prophecies are humanitarian and rely on his "transcendent faith in the human spirit" to change the future, not in heaven, but on earth.[7] Zangezi asserts this by stating "I am the God-Maker, Divificator, left all alone," so powerfully that the gods fly away upon hearing the words pronounced.[8] This astounding revelation highlights both man's role as once-superstitious creator of past religious beings and his capability of becoming a god himself. The prospect of an unfettered atheistic life frightens the people, and they question whether they were right to scare off the gods and ask themselves "who's gonna light my fire? / Yeah who's a got a light? / Who's got a cigarette?"[9] Replacing the gods of yore, Zangezi allays the commoners' fears by providing them with matches and in turn underscoring the capability of humanity, guided by Khlebnikov's poetic ideals, to save itself. In addition, that Zangezi leaves his "Tables of Destiny," which reveal the future in order to avoid ensuing catastrophes, strewn about for passerbys to stumble across highlights the fundamentally democratic nature of his message.

The means to salvation and this new realm of existence, as preached by Zangezi, lie in mankind's understanding and harnessing of the power of language. Wilhem Weststeijn notes that it is impossible to disentangle Khlebnikov's "concern for humanity and its future" from his "concern for a new language."[10] Zangezi asserts that popular language, which consists of borrowed, and thus lifeless, words, cannot redeem mankind and only original, creative language leads to salvation. The dead vernacular of the people in Planes Three, Sixteen, and Seventeen is not sufficient to propel mankind forward to Zangezi's utopian future. His rousing alliterative sermon in Plane Ten awakens the people and even the mountains to their ability to

"make," to create through original language their own mythology and future. In his thundering words "March, Manmuscle! / I am Maker, and might! / I am Mover, and may! I Matter, and might! / I am the Mighty Mower! Moving, improving!," both this aforementioned linguistic creation and the intense dynamism of language are evident.[11] The alliteration highlights language's force– even though the semantic message of the sermon is difficult to decode, its sheer phonic momentum conveys palpable intensity. Zangezi later claims that "Thus by plural number does my greatness cast its spell. / I am the Many-Maker, Multiplicator of Planet Earth," asserting the ability of language to directly shape the outside world.[12] He, and those who choose to believe him, can create other Earths simply by changing grammatical number. Language, a medium of communicating reality, has been transformed into the actual means of affecting reality. Zangezi's title, "Speechmaker" distinguishes him from the common-folk, who are trapped by their quotidian and feckless language. Yet through his sermon he transfers his divine ability to the people, who proclaim, "the power of our voices has terrified the gods!"[13] The notion of linguistic potency is an egalitarian one and falls in line with Khlebnikov's humanitarian ideals; salvation is latent in all humans and need only be tapped into to be realized, a process his invented language of *zaum* serves to actualize.

The power of language is most fully harnessed through *zaum*, Khlebnikov's "suprarational, transcendental language of the future."[14] Through the incorporation of Russian morphological components and the creation of neologisms, Khlebnikov attempted to unearth a primeval language that existed beyond the realm of meaning and logic. While the linguistic basis of such a theory is dubious, he claimed that within individual letters existed "a series of universals truths passing before the predawn of our soul" that travelled "over the government of intellect straight to the population of feelings."[15] Mirroring Khlebnikov's views, Zangezi asserts that letters "will fly to the source of pre-knowledge," suggesting that *zaum* emerges from a state before knowledge even existed.[16] His "star-language", essentially a monosyllabic subset of *zaum*, is one of the transformative forces behind humanity's progress, as Zangezi maintains, "Someday this language will unite us all, and that day may come soon."[17] The potential "may" marks the limitations of the prophet's capabilities – he can prophesize all he wants, but it is up to the reader and the people to enact the revolution. Zangezi declares that "my speech [*zaum*]... frees you from the fetters of words," and his proclamation that "Words do not exist" liberates the people from their "ancestral chains," "shattered" by the "hammer of my voice", demonstrating the revolutionary power of such a language.[18] *Zaum*'s ability to eliminate the restrictions of time is again presented when Zangezi admonishes his believers to "Let the all-seeing sounds of a universal language / Whirl away the mists of time."[19] Not only can *zaum* unbind the chains of the past, but it can also usher in the future mode of existence that Zangezi prophecies.

The strong similarity between Zangezi's "star-language" *zaum* and the languages the birds and the gods use in the beginning of the supersaga underscores the primordial quality of *zaum*. While the birds' language in Plane One is more strictly onomatopoeic than *zaum*, the contrast between the bird's colorful language and human language highlights the inexpressiveness of the latter, as demonstrated when the birdcatcher's entrance at the end of the plane silences the previously shrill birds. In the plane immediately following the birds, the gods speak amongst themselves in a *zaum*-like universal language that allows the deities of Greece, Rome, China, and Africa to communicate with each other. These two scenes at the beginning of the supersaga make the reader realize his inability to understand such magical tongues and illustrate just how far man's hackneyed language is removed from its origins. Furthermore, they necessitate the coming of an intermediary to translate them – which will evidently be Zangezi, or more generally, the poet.

Right after these two transcendental languages comes the crude expletive of the people – "Goddam" – which underscores the temporality (colloquial expletives are among the most ephemeral of words in a given lexicon) and coarseness of human language.[20] The following conversation among the passerbys is rife with misunderstandings, unexplained references, and unanswered questions that illustrate the dire state of human communication before the aid of Zangezi's mythical *zaum*. The flotsam and jetsam of human language presented in Plane Sixteen is almost as unintelligible to the reader as the language of the gods, and is certainly much less sonically expressive. Zangezi attributes this ambiguity to "war-fear," and explains that the man's inability to speak coherently "shows us / That war exists, that it still exists," showing that war is a serious impediment to Zangezi's prophesized transformations.[21] For Zangezi, war is not merely a political problem, but a linguistic barrier preventing humanity from accessing the Ur-language, *zaum*. Having lived through both World War I and the Russian Revolution, Khlebnikov was intimately familiar with the destructiveness of war, and offered *zaum* and "letter wars" as an alternative to the internecine conflicts of the 20th century. Zangezi's believers beseech him to tell of "the clash of Alphabet's long spears, the fight of the hostile forces R and L, K and G…so that never again will we have to see war between peoples," illustrating the functional ends of the aesthetic concept of *zaum*.[22]

In addition to *zaum*'s redemptive qualities, Khlebnikov presents another aesthetic device, his "Tables of Destiny," as a means of bringing about the utopian future he envisions. These tables, comprised of mathematical formulas illustrating supposed laws of history, were designed not only to understand the past but also to predict the future in hopes of avoiding the brutal conflicts to come. In Plane Four, two passerbys pick up one of these tables, and, while not fully understanding it, note that "the lion's claw is visible in all of this! … A scrap of paper, and on it engraved the fates of nations for someone possessed of superior vision!"[23] This "someone

possessed of superior vision" is Zangezi, who again acts as an intermediary to elucidate the processes of the universe for the betterment of the people. He proclaims himself to be "the master carpenter of time," and states that "I have deciphered the timepiece of humanity, / And set its hands accurately, / Added a clockface."[24] This rhetoric of mastery harkens back to Zangezi's "I am Maker, and might!" speech, but here the dominance is extended to include both time and the universe itself.

Through his understanding of how the numbers of the universe interact to form history, Zangezi assumes his role as a prescient prophet, and, armed with this knowledge, rallies his troops forward to their glorious future. Inciting his now-enlightened army of humanity, he goads his believers on, "Planets of Earth! Forward, march!" and reminds them of what might be referred to as their '*über*-apotheosis,' shouting "if somebody calls you a god, / You rant and rave and say: / It's a lie! God only comes up partway! / He's only as high as my heel!"[25] Through both *zaum* and his "Tables of Destiny," Zangezi has cleared the way for this breed of man-gods to assume their place in the future. With "Time [as his] rifleman" and riding atop "wild sounds," he has achieved the goal of literally "tun[ing] mankind into harmony with the universe," as shown when he cries, "I am teaching / The suns of neighboring galaxies / To salute me – by the numbers – one, two! … I can stride / Back and forth / Across the centuries!"[26]

While the avant-garde impulse in *Zangezi* is fundamentally a Futurist push forwards, it nonetheless requires an understanding of and a return to the most basic elements of aesthetics – the individual phonemes of language and the numeric components of the universe – in order to reach the future that Zangezi portends. This future is a transcendental, primeval integration of art and life where each man is his own god by sheer linguistic force and the sonic clashes of letters take the places of human conflict. Yet, as the ambiguous ending evinces, Zangezi's prophecies can only propel mankind so far, and it is ultimately up to his disciples – the readers – to live them out.

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16 Khlebnikov 213.

17 Khlebnikov 204.

18 Khlebnikov 205.

19 Khlebnikov 203.

20 Khlebnikov 195. It is interesting to note that many expletives share certain phonological and syllabic characteristics, which, had Khlebnikov known, might actually point to one of the rare instances of *zaum* still present in modern human language, paradoxically apparent in the most vulgar of words. That expletives possess little semantic import also reinforces this idea of them as being the spurned and neglected remnants of *zaum*, which certainly does not reflect positively on the current state of human language.

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Sviazhsk, 2010, Isidore Bethel, Harvard



Lake Karier, Eli Keene, Columbia College



Church, Andra Mihali, Columbia College



Kazan Hooligans, Laura Mills, Columbia College



At the Gates, Laura Mills, Columbia College



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Bride and Groom near Peterhof, Alexa Voyteck, Duke University



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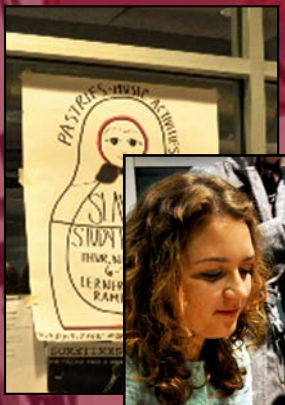
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The Museum of Russian Political Present

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That was my life

My cheeks and fingers stung from the cold as I jingled the keys to try to open the heavy apartment door. February is the worst month in Saint Petersburg, they all said, though they were quick to point out that December, January, and March are awful too. I stood, quietly cursing my decision to study in Russia in the winter, when my host mother put an end to my mental process and misery by opening the door.

"Well, what did I think?," she wanted to know.

I had just come back from the Museum of Russian Political History. Once it had been the mansion of Czar Nicholas II's favorite ballerina, and once a Bolshevik headquarters (and office of one Mr. V. I. Lenin), but at present it existed solely to showcase its country's and city's political past.

I liked it very much, I told her, but there was one thing I didn't understand.

"Oh?"

"The top floor glorifies Lenin, Bolshevism, and the Revolution. The first floor is an exhibit of the horrors of Stalin's reign and the hardships of the Soviet lifestyle. How could the museum have both when the one led to the other?"

"The top floor is much older than the main floor," she explained.

"I see."

She asked me if I had seen both. If I had seen everything about the communal living and food shortages of Soviet times.

I had.

"That was my life," she said. "Our children, they don't understand. They don't remember. When we go to the store, Sasha [her son] asks why we are getting this brand of yogurt and not that one. He doesn't know."

I hesitated. "Do people want to go back to Soviet times?" I asked.

She thought about this.

"Some young people do, because they are too young to remember. The babushki and dedushki—grandmothers and grandfathers, the older generation—do, of course."

"And your generation?"

"We do not."

"And you?"

"No, never."

Lenin's office

On the top floor of the museum, visitors can see Lenin's former writing desk and papers and pens. They can see Bolshevik banners and placards and posters. They can read of the righteous revolution and its noble causes. Of the heroics of the Red Army. Of the importance and magnitude of what happened here, in Petersburg (and then Petrograd, and then Leningrad, and now Petersburg). The system was broken, and they, the revolutionaries, the visionaries, fought to fix it. The people were starving, and they died to feed them. And they plotted and planned in that room, and it is great and glorious.

"My babushka wishes so badly that she still lived in the Soviet Union," one of my peers also studying abroad on my program mentioned.

"The way she speaks of Soviet times! She's so proud," another said.

"Do your grandparents want to return to the Soviet Union?" I asked a few Russian students in the school's canteen.

"Oh, yes."

"Why?"

"They were young then," one replied. "Young and beautiful. They want to go back to their childhood."

Another thought for a moment.

"They were born then. Grew up then. Got married then. Lived then. To them, the Soviet Union is life. What they're living in now—what is this?"

Stalin's maze

The main floor's exhibit is a labyrinth. Visitors wander through, reading of the disconnect between Communist idealism and the Soviet reality, of the terrible times under Stalin, of the continued repression and oppression of the leaders who followed. Of what was endured not only in political purges, but in everyday life.

"It's funny," one girl in my program said. "My host-mother's mother loved the Soviet Union, but my host-mother always rails against it. She talks about how hard it was."

"Your parents don't want to go back to Soviet times?" I asked the students in the canteen.

"No, never."

"Why not?"

"They talk about how hard it was for them. How hard it was to buy groceries."

Under construction

There was not much about modern Russian politics in the Museum of Russian Political History. One sign read that the election of Petersburg native Vladimir Putin will bring in a new age of political prominence to the city. The sign was from 2003. One wall proudly displayed pictures of Medvedev and his cabinet. That was all.

"What about you?" I asked the students. "What about young people? Do you wish you lived under Soviet times?"

"We weren't really alive then. We don't

know."

"My sister does," one told me. "There was stability. Everybody knew that they could go to school and get a job. And she likes Belarus, because it is peaceful there, and she thinks that Soviet life was like that."

"I don't want to go back," another said. "It was different. That doesn't mean it was better."

There were only two floors in the Museum of Russian Political History. Perhaps there always will be, and the history will stay locked away, untouched, as such.

But what if, five or ten or twenty years from now, there was another? How would it tell the story of Russian politics? What would that even mean?

My cheeks and fingers stung from the cold as I jingled the keys to try to open the heavy apartment door, and I wondered, because that history has not happened yet, and so I could not know.

Things Were Better When They Were Worse:

Generation S and Russian Nostalgia for the Old Soviet System

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For two-thirds of a century, the former Soviet Union was governed according to a communist system in which the government decided the type and number of goods to produce, allocated jobs and determined what people could study, say and even believe. One might think that anything would be better than such a system, and that no one would be sorry to see it gone. Yet Russians and other former Soviet citizens from what I will call "Generation S," those who were already set in their ways when the system changed suddenly at the end of the 1980s, have nostalgia about their communist past. As long as I can remember, I have heard them speak longingly about the days when people would sit around tables in small apartments through the night, eating, drinking, and discussing art, literature and even, whispering, politics. People can express themselves and their opinions in countries with democratic political systems, but in the countries with a command economic system, like the former USSR, it was forbidden because everything was planned and could not be criticized. It seems that when there were few jobs that really stood to make a profit, there was little pressure to rise early and be productive, and that before the capitalist profit motive took over, people cared more about the arts and about other people's opinions. Was that enough to make up for the rationing of foods, cramped conditions, frequent power cuts—let alone the limits on freedom? Using evidence from my own experience and arguments partly based on the essay "We Would Not Have Come without You: Generation of Nostalgia" by Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, I will argue that the perception of nostalgia and attitudes toward the past are linked to the values and morals of a certain time and place, and that for this reason one generation cannot always agree with or even understand the perceptions and feelings of another.

The communist system required students to work during the summer without pay, billing it as an act for the common good and for a better future. The young people worked on farms, slept in tents, cooked food on fires and picked vegetables. I learned this from my grandmother, who once showed me a picture of her classmates on such a farm. Despite the harsh conditions, dirt and hard work, they had big smiles on their faces. Looking at this picture, I wonder: why do they look so happy? I cannot help but think how awful it would be to work for a whole summer in dirt, to live in those conditions and not to have the freedom to pursue my own interests. It is even worse facing the prospect that your job and your whole live were also already planned. Yet it seemed that kids were happy and well-motivated. Moreover, today, as older adults, many people from that same generation say they find it scary to live in a world where people have to make their own decisions and find their own way in life. My generation, by contrast, cannot understand why they say they prefer the old ways. Apparently, there is something in our value system that makes it impossible for us to see this era in the same way that Generation S does.

In their essay, Hirsch and Spitzer explore the nostalgia of Holocaust survivors about their long-lost home towns, villages and cities. The authors write about how their parents visited Czernowitz, a Ukrainian city that was an important cultural center and home to many Jews before World War II. There, the Hirsch family had been persecuted when the Nazis spread across Europe, as were so many other Jewish families. As the authors note, Czernowitz is located 50 kilometers north of the Romanian border and is one of the cities that expelled all its Jews, resulting in their descendants being spread throughout the world.(253) Nonetheless, the name "Czernowitzer" still sticks to the majority of Jews who regarded this city as home.

Why do Hirsch's parents want to go back to the places that harmed them? According to the authors, the answer lies in *nostalgia,* once a medical term for a literal pain of being away from home, but which expanded in the nineteenth century to include a longing and even a romanticized, bitter-sweet feeling about something lost: "including the yearning for a 'lost childhood,' for 'irretrievable youth,' [and] for a vanished 'world of yesterday.'" (258) Nostalgia is a longing for a home that no longer exists, for a past that will never be present again. This helps me to understand the feelings of Generation S about the old communist system: they romanticize and sentimentalize about it *because* it is lost. The old system is, like an individual's youth, "irretrievable," and members of Generation S are free to recall only its supposed "good" aspects and to allow memory to make the old times seem better than they were. As Hirsch and Spitzer put it, "a past reconstructed through the animating vision of nostalgia can serve as a creative inspiration and [can be] 'called upon to provide what the present lacks.'" (258-259)

In the case of the Soviet past, communism had promised a great future and had motivated society to work toward it. People believed in these promises and followed their leaders.

Then, the new leaders of modern Russia promised freedom through democracy and prosperity through capitalism. In practice, however, only a small percentage of the people in Russia today are rich enough to have power in society and to enjoy those assured gains. Given that these promised dreams failed to come true after the onset of the capitalist system, it is little surprise that many from the older generation believe they need the communist system again. They see their dreams reflected only in the past and, rightly or wrongly, convince themselves that if the communism system had not collapsed, people would live better today. If the current government expanded the middle class, promoted positive social programs and reduced crime and corruption, members of Generation S would probably be more satisfied with the present and would have less reason to have nostalgia about the past. Nonetheless, this view does not account for the difference in values between the older and younger generations, which also contributes to the generational differences in perception of the old system. Much of the reason that the government does not push for the changes suggested here is that equality and social welfare, values on which Generation S was raised—are no longer promoted by the leadership of Russian society. Instead, my generation has been taught to value wealth and individual success, and we have trouble understanding the nostalgia our elders feel for an era in which the old values are discouraged.

Values are principles that we believe in and that motivate us to achieve our goals. Holocaust survivors and their children, like Hirsch and her parents, are from different generations which give them different values. As the authors explain, one's values are a major influence on what one does or does not view with nostalgia. Holocaust survivors have nostalgia about their pre-war past, and, after so much suffering and denigration, they place a value on equality with other people in the present. To fulfill the emotional needs these feelings create, many return to their homelands, where they can relive the past and feel that they are not different from other people. Nostalgia helps them connect the past and present and live by values that are important to them. In contrast, their children feel ambivalent about the return to the abandoned home. Children of Holocaust victims typically lack memories of the pre-war era and tend to harbor more anger, aversion and bitterness, causing a rift in with the previous generation's nostalgia.

In the case of my own historical time and place—the Soviet Union and its transition into independent republics and from communism to capitalism—Communism promoted equality and friendship, whereas today the main goal is money. The values of communism, such as equality and the betterment of all people through art and education, were adopted by Generation S. The lack of a private sector, moreover, meant that profit did not motivate all activities, leaving people free to pursue value-bases goals. In turn, the government's role in planning the economy provided the possibility of economic and social equality for all. Free education offered opportunities for intelligent young people to work together, to make friends and to

find love. In this environment, values were influential, and determined and motivated people's behavior.

Contrasted, the values during the two eras and systems appear very different. My generation's success is measured in political power and money. Today, freedom of business allows people to take big risks and to generate extra capital. Money is the source of power, and all doors are open for the wealthy. As a result, the desire to achieve economic power has become an obsession that makes many individuals ruthless and cruel in their dealings with others in the search for profit. Money can also put words in people's mouths, so bribery and corruption have become the norms of our society—and such new norms affect perception of the past.

People's values and morals change over time, which can cause a reevaluation of history. Social morals and personal values are linked to the history of each country and people. Twenty years ago, members of Generation S woke up and became citizens of Russia, a new country. Everything in Russia has changed since that time: there is a new government, a new economic system, new morals and new priorities. This historical shift has caused new values to emerge, and the values of the new generation shaped its perception of communism. According to the new values, my generation sees communism in a negative way and cannot understand our elders' nostalgia. Thus, when we hear members of the older generation utter the common phrase, "Things were better when they were worse," we struggle to understand what they mean—or, we disregard their feelings as foolish and based on out-dated values and morals.

Values and morals motivate people to behave in certain ways and cause them to perceive the world differently. Historical shifts cause morals to change and change people's perceptions of the past and present. My generation and Generation S have different attitudes toward communism. But what about democracy and freedom? Are these the right ideals for the current era? The recent economic crisis that began in the USA and spread worldwide showed that the free market economic system is not perfect, and that the consequences of any ideology or action are never immediately clear. In fact, we cannot judge the present because we are blind to its implications: we do not know how things will turn out, and we view our world through the lens of values that are acceptable in our time. These values, like those of the past, will eventually become suspect. Maybe someday people will create a "perfect" society in which everyone will be "happy." We can be sure, however, that people will not always agree on what makes this society perfect.

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Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Organic Farming

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After completing my third year of university in New York City, almost done with my bachelor's degree in Russian Language and Literature, I decided to spend the summer in Bulgaria working on totally natural, self-sustaining organic farm. The farm I chose, Rodovo Imenie Izvorche, is run by a couple, Kosi and Alia, and is located in the hot, dry hills near Elhovo in Southern Bulgaria. Their project isn't exactly a farm; it's an eco-system. They have fourteen dekars of land, on which they have built a one-room, straw-bale house with a clay floor and are in the process of planting a forest. They have dug several small lakes—ponds, really—in which to keep rain water. Once the trees grow large enough for shade and protection from the wind, and once the irrigation system is under control, they will turn their attention to a big garden, in which they will grow everything they need to survive. But they are already doing a pretty good job at surviving: by the house they grow garlic, onions, beans, peas, wheat, lentils, and dill. They have another, secret, garden by the river where they grow cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelons, pumpkins, zucchini, radishes, more beans, potatoes, beets, cabbage, lentils, and several other vegetables whose Bulgarian names I don't recognize. As of now, the only crops ready for eating are garlic, onion, dill, the peas and beans by the house, and radishes. But I am amazed to learn how much you can do with these few vegetables, especially when you have honey and stinging nettles to eat also. Not surprisingly, Kosi and Alia are (mostly) vegan, and Alia tries to eat only raw food.

In principle, Kosi and Alia do not use resources which they cannot provide for themselves. There is no running water; dishes, clothes, hands and faces are washed with water taken from one of the ponds with a bucket, and drinking water is gathered in recycled bottles from one of the

nearby springs. There are no showers or baths—bath time means taking off your clothes and wading into the pond; and the toilet is a hole in the ground. There is a small amount of electricity available in the house (though the small generator which produces this electricity is often moved around the property to fuel various pumps and irrigation systems), and internet is only (occasionally) available in Sahsa's (a neighbor) trailer.

When I first found Rodovo Imenie Izvorche farm on the Internet through the organization WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), I was strongly drawn to the description. After a long year of sitting in libraries and writing papers fueled by caffeine and sugar, I loved the idea of living close to nature, working with my hands, and eating raw vegetables for three months. It sounded like a fantastic summer. But my choice didn't seem so obvious to many people. Everyone wanted to know: what is a Russian literature major doing on an organic farm in Bulgaria? I answered that I was channeling Tolstoy: living like a peasant, doing physical labor, staying away from the corrupting influence of meat, alcohol, cigarettes, and sexual relations. It also helped my case that this farm is based on The Ringing Cedars of Russia, a nine-part series by contemporary Russian author, Vladimir Megre. I typed up a grant proposal for thesis-related research, collected my $2,400 check, packed one bag, and headed for Bulgaria. The first days on the farm were difficult. Sixteen hours of relentless sun and no shade, constant physical work, limited drinking water and even more limited food, and zero access to the outside world had me in a bit of a panic. The first full day, Kosi and Alia fed me a (very tasty) bean goulash-type thing. I ate a lot of it because I wasn't sure how often cooked food would be available, and the only thing I had seen consumed up until this point was a few spoonfuls of honey and a bowl of boiled nettles. The dish was made from a type of bean which "cleans your organism," and the first night I spent lying awake, tossing and turning and sweating, getting up every half hour to run outside and vomit into the grass. The next day, I was sure Kosi and Alia would be worried when I told them about my night of vomiting, but they just smiled and said the bean had worked—my "organism" was being cleaned. They told me to grab a hoe, and, without breakfast, with literally not a thing in my stomach, I started a long morning of working in the sun. From hunger or from heat or from whatever sickness I was sure I had contracted, I felt dizzy and faint. I saw red spots whenever I bent to pull a weed with my hands, and I imagined all kinds of terrible scenarios that were bound to take place out here in the middle of nowhere. I started planning my escape—it was a two mile walk to the car (a stick shift, which I couldn't drive), and from there it would take at least two hours by foot to get to the nearest shack, let alone a town with internet or a hotel. I could just throw down my hoe and make a run for it, but I would probably pass out from dehydration or heat stroke before I got half-way to Elhovo.

I cursed my chosen Tolstoyan path. Why was I determined to make myself miserable to experiment with the ideology of a writer who wasn't even my favorite? Instead of

Tolstoy I was channeling Solzhenitsyn and his gulag literature. Here I was finding out what that one day in the Siberian camp really felt like to Ivan Denisovich. Why hadn't I decided to channel Dostoevsky instead? I could have spent the summer in an orphanage, working with angelic little children. Doestoevsky knew how important bread was; he knew that a person with an empty stomach cannot function well. I thought about Brothers Karamozov while I slashed the throats of little weeds with my hoe and cried silently. I thought about Rakitin, a monk, who was one of the few unambiguously negative characters in the novel. He followed the rules of monastic life literally and extremely; he fasted for weeks at a time, eating only wild mushrooms from the forest where he would wander alone and hallucinate (from the mushrooms or from hunger we do not know). Here I had ended up with a couple of Rakitins, I thought. They read all kinds of mystical literature, including the quite crazy Ringing Cedars of Russia books, and they took it all literally. Several homeopathic healers recommended long-term fasting, they told me. Not eating can cure your body from almost any disease; the body can go months without food, and it will start to perform better the cleaner and emptier it becomes. This was only my second morning, and already I was out here in the fields, hallucinating like Rakitin. I thought about father Zosima, the good monk in The Brothers Karamozov. Father Zosima was a sinner—a warm, humane, kindly sinner. Even in the monastery he retained his love of sweet fruit preserves, a fondness for which he was criticized after his death. I longed for father Zosima and his fruit preserves … and a big piece of bread … and a shower … and a bed … and internet access … I got used to the conditions very quickly. The food situation improved every day—cooked vegetable dishes accompanied by raw vegetable salads were prepared regularly, and once my "organism" was all cleaned out, I had no trouble keeping it all down. The heat was difficult to work in, but as a California native, I am used to being uncomfortably warm in the summer. I begged one of the neighbors to pick up a bottle of sunscreen for me next time he was in town, and Kosi and Alia had a jar of homeopathic red goo (Saint John's Wort and olive oil) which worked very well on sunburns.

As the weeks passed, I really started enjoying the work. And with the work, I started to get used to the life style. I learned to scythe and spent whole days cutting grass for the horses to eat in winter; I dug ditches for irrigation pipes with a pickaxe; I weeded with the hoe; I weeded with my hands; I got blisters, and they turned to calluses; I got eaten alive by mosquitoes; I learned that rubbing garlic on the bites keeps them from itching too badly; I ate enough raw garlic that eventually the mosquitoes stopped biting; I learned how to correctly saddle the horse to the cart; I learned how to ride in the cart without falling out of it on the bumpy dirt roads; I even learned how to drive the horse cart one morning when I was given the choice: stick shift or horses; I planted tomatoes and cucumbers and beans by the river; I gathered wild strawberries from fields; I gathered herbs from trees in town; I learned how to weave a basket; I harvested fresh honey; I helped with the cooking, and

learned that food tastes just fine even when the dishes are washed with cool lake water and no soap; I learned that my hair does not need to be washed every day—once or twice a week will do just fine.

The part of the farm which was the hardest for me to get used to was the ideology that went along with it. I read the first of Megre's Ringing Cedars of Russia books, in which Megre meets a woman, Anastasia, who has lived her entire life alone on the Taiga in Siberia. Anastasia—despite living her entire life out of doors—is the most beautiful woman in the world: she has a perfect figure, perfect skin, perfect hair. Despite never having any formal education, she is the most brilliant woman in the world: she knows every language, math, science, astronomy. She can sing perfectly, dance perfectly, and tumble like an Olympic gymnast. But these are not even her most remarkable traits. She is telepathic, and communicates with the wild animals amongst whom she lives in harmony. She can see the past, present, and future anywhere in the world, and if she tries hard enough, she can change them. She knows all about aliens and their flying saucers, but she considers them—and us—primitive creatures. She alone retains all the powers that ancient man possessed. But she told Megre to write the books to inform us that we too can possess these powers again if we give up technology and town life and start living purely. The path to purity entails moving to a fourteen-dekar plot, building a house from natural materials, and creating a self-sustaining eco-system.

I was fascinated—and a little terrified—by the extent to which my hosts, Kosi and Alia, believed in every word Anastasia had written through Megre. They had given up their families, jobs, and lives in the city, to move to the dry hot hills and start living like ancient man. They had only started the project four years ago, so they were not at the final state yet—they still bought produce from town, used cell phones, owned a car—but their sights were unfalteringly set on a pure and simple future, which, they were sure, would enable them to possess powers which we only read about in science fiction novels. Their sincerity impressed me; their reasoning and methodology frustrated me. I loved the project they were working to create, but I couldn't identify with their reasons for creating it.

I was working hard, learning new things, losing weight, and getting a great tan, but a month into my stay, I was still asking myself the question that I had so cavalierly answered before I arrived: what is a Russian literature major doing on an organic farm in Bulgaria? I had plenty of great photographs and stories, but was any of this wild adventure useful? Was I actually doing any thesis-related research like I told my university I would? I obviously couldn't write my thesis on Megre—he was in an interesting social phenomenon, but his books were not exactly literature. I was realizing plenty of benefits from Tolstoy's labor-filled, vegetarian lifestyle, but none of that was very surprising.

But then one morning, I had a bit of a revelation. I woke up at five-thirty to begin a mass irrigation project of the entire property (using only a bucket and a watering can). We had to start early so we could finish the bulk of the work before the sun

got too unbearably hot. This particular morning, there was a heavy fog hanging over everything. My laundry, which I had hung outside my door on a rope, was soaking wet. Amongst the wet grass, hundreds of spider webs glistened from dew. I was wearing hiking boots and the same short red shorts I had worn every day, and as I began walking in the tall grass from tree to tiny tree, my boots and legs became soaking wet. Hundreds of tiny, sticky little leaves clung to my legs. I looked down, annoyed, and tried in vain to brush them away. And then I remembered: Father Zosima and his sticky little leaves in The Brothers Karamozov! Other characters are annoyed by the leaves, but Zosima embraces them as a tiny, but very important, piece of life. How good it is to be alive in a world with sticky little leaves! They are so simple, but so real. They are considered insignificant by most, and yet solicit a reaction—whether it be of annoyance or joy—from everyone. I spent the morning in a haze of happiness; with every tree I watered I realized anew how Dostoevskyan this farm and this experience really were. Dostoevsky writes about life and how good life is, even when it is shrouded in a mist of unpleasantness. In his literature, good and bad are not distinctly defined: his murderers are absolved, his prostitutes are saintly, his monks can be flawed and kind or perfect and cruel, his children can be pure and angelic or sick and disturbed. In the bleak trajectory of a Dostoevsky novel, almost every character has a moment of pure good, a mystical experience of understanding and communion with a fellow human being.

This was no different from what Kosi and Alia were trying to achieve, I realized. They used different terminology: "telepathy," "teleporting," "ringing cedars," "rays of energy," but their goal was familiar. They only wanted to maximize their Dostoevskian moments—which we all have—and make a life of love, peace, and harmony. Their methods were even somewhat Dostoevskian; when they came across something they needed (from their garden or from a tree in town or from a garbage dump in Sofia) they borrowed it. They didn't worry about possessions or buying or selling—they were just like stinking Lizaveta, the holy fool in Brother's Karmozov, who is simply taken care of by the earth and other people.

But still: what is a Russian literature major doing on an organic farm in Bulgaria? I would not have been able to realize these Dostoevskian lessons right in front of me if it had not been for my Tolstoyan lifestyle. In my every-day New York college life, I have very few opportunities to learn about life. I learn about literature and history and linguistics and writing, but with all of that information to take in, it's hard to find time to think. And what is there to think about there? Everything is comfortable; everything is easy. I have a hot shower, a nice bed, a soft chair, a never-ending supply of entertainment (books, New Yorker magazines, movies, television, a library of 3,461 songs on iTunes), and any kind of food I could possible want at any moment I could possibly want it. In New York I don't pay attention to the time of day—if it's dark I can just turn on the light. I don't pay attention to the season—watermelon and bananas are always on sale at the market. I don't pay attention to the amount of water

I use—I don't have to refill the sink with a bucket from the lake. In New York I hardly ever see bugs; it is possible to spend an entire day without going outside; exercise is something I have to try to fit in.

On Rodovo Imenie Izvorche farm, I am often tired, uncomfortable, hot, hungry, even bored. It is so important, I think, to feel bad in order to understand and appreciate what is good. The hunger makes the food taste great; the tiredness makes sleeping on the ground among the bugs pleasant; the heat makes my baths in the pond refreshing; the isolation and boredom forces me to connect with Kosi and Alia is a way that I have avoided connecting with three years of college roommates. Russian literature is about all of these things, the good and the bad. And so, finally, to answer the question that everyone wants to know: how could I begin to understand Russian literature without spending time on an organic farm in Bulgaria? This has been one of the most valuable and enlightening experiences of my life, let alone my college career, and I truly believe that any person, regardless of his or her major or profession or economic status, has a lot to learn from working on an organic farm like Rodovo Imenie Izvorche.

The Great Chernovtsy Circus, September 1990

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I. Ursula: the Friendly Motorcycle-Driving She-Bear!

Just because Ursula could not speak did not mean that he didn't have a lot on his mind. It was not a coincidence that this was the afternoon that he spotted the milky Ukrainian autumn horizon through a tear in the old, green striped tent as he drove around the perimeter of the circus ring. Ursula had been planning to escape this crumbling enterprise for seasons, and now was his chance.

Ursula had been misrepresented his entire life in every way but one. Marketed by Valery the Ringmaster as the real-life 1980 Moscow Olympics mascot *Mishka*, he lived in a hovel of a cage flanked by a banner that read: "Ursula: the Friendly Motorcycle-Driving She-Bear!"—gender and personality claims that the pacified, castrated black bear could not readily refute. The one truth to Valery's thinly spun yarn was Ursula's penchant for driving. Being on top of the rattling, rusty motorcycle that the ringmaster had trained him to drive around in neat little circles reminded Ursula of something from his black bear collective unconscious that he couldn't quite place—chasing rabbits through forests, perhaps, or feeling the splash of the cool river upon his fur as he pawed haphazardly at salmon.

Ursula was no longer sure if his feet had ever even touched the moist, rotting leaves of an evergreen forest floor, or if he had simply begun to take Valery's histrionic announcements as truth. Every Saturday and Sunday before Ursula's performance, Valery would stand before an audience of large-cheeked, wild-haired children and tell them of how "Ursula, brave, friendly, motorcycle-driving she-bear, was brought to mother Russia—in this very cage—" he would point to where Ursula sat, pawing anxiously at the bars, "from the wild forests of the United States." The crowd would gasp with Cold War pride at the circus

performers' successful heist from the evil threat across the seas. Nastia would tug at her mother's flower print shirt, asking if it was true that the acrobats leapt from trees to distract the forest guards while Borya, the Strongest Man in the Eastern Bloc, lifted Ursula above his head with his right hand and killed the guards with his left. (It was not. The Soviet school system taught everyone to perform actions with their right hands, so how could it be?)

All of the mothers in the audience who were disturbed by such questions wouldn't even have to bother to lift a hand to smack their petulant children on the head, for then Ursula would be let out of his cage by Anya, the gangly blonde Czech acrobat, and led to the motorcycle. The crowd would hush as Ursula's hulking paws would gently, gracefully, position themselves above the footpegs of the motorcycle. He would saddle himself into the seat and wait patiently for Anya to sit behind him, her thin, calloused hands making their way around his furry midsection. Without needing the slightest prodding (although Valery would sometimes yell at him anyway, just for show), Ursula would start up the engine and begin his odyssey inside the tent's one-hundred-and-thirty-foot perimeter. Ursula could see the audience members in the half-empty bleachers giggling and clapping through the haze of sand that his sputtering motorcycle kicked up. Anya's hands would slowly work their way through the knots in his fur and he would groan contentedly.

It was a typical Sunday, and Ursula's mind was clouded with typical Sunday thoughts—how he would be relegated to spending the next five days in his cage, waiting for the moment when Anya's stringy hair would come into view and her hand would slide between the cage bars to unlatch the double-sided lock. He would resist the urge to bite off her malnourished fingers and suck on each one like fish spines. His self-control would be rewarded with five glorious fifteen-minute sessions on these two days during which he got to escape the confines of the bars and feel the moist tent air slither through his fur. Anya would slip him a piece of boiled chicken from that night's *bouillon* after each performance and he would curl his paws tightly around the morsel's exposed leg bone. Anya would let out a mucous-laden giggle and hobble off to perform, off away from Ursula as she always did.

II. Anya & Andrej, Our Astounding Airborne Acrobats!

About a year ago, Andrej had suffered a serious head injury while in the air. He didn't remember anything from the incident and Anya wasn't willing to talk about it, but it was one of Borya's favorite stories to rattle off in his broken Russian. "Of course I do remember when this happen! I was thinking Andrej die, the way his back just *snap*—" Borya would histrionically clap his gargantuan hands against one another "—onto the floor." He would pause, "But, he live, and this is good." Borya would take a cursory look around him to check for KGB types before continuing quietly, "It is very hard to find a good acrobat in the Soviet economy."

Andrej no longer talked, but he certainly did still swing. He flipped in the air past Anya, ignoring the way his heart jumped

with desire every time he caught a glance of her and with fear whenever his eyes glimpsed the floor. Every time he reached for Anya's hands he could see himself falling to the sandy floor below, feel his bones bend, hear them shatter into twenty tiny pieces and lodge themselves in his flesh. But he would regain his composure with enough time to flash her a grin, just as the crowd gasped and clapped.

"I'm worried about Ursula," Anya said to Andrej as she hung off of his ankles fifty feet off of the ground. She swung herself onto the other trapeze and waited to pass him again before continuing, sneaking a glance at Ursula's cage to see the bear staring forlornly up at her. "He's been anxious," she swung back to the platform and again towards Andrej, "restless whenever I come near, that poor baby." She and Andrej made the final jump onto the platform and he turned to her, nodding, considering mouthing that *he* was the one she should be falling in love with, not some bear. Anya started down the ladder before he could move his lips out of a halfhearted smile.

III. Borya, the Strongest Man in the Eastern Bloc!

Once Anya and Andrej had descended, it was time for Valery to introduce the act that always resulted in muffled squeals of erotic rapture from the sexually frustrated mothers in the crowd. "Children, gentlemen, and," Valery would pause, winking at the crowd before continuing, "ladies of the crowd! Our following performer has come all the way from Belarus to demonstrate to you his unimaginable feats of strength. I bring to you," the two bored drummers posed on the side of the stage began a halfhearted drum roll, "Borya, the Strongest Man in the Eastern Bloc!"

Strutting onto the stage with the air of a cock fresh out of the coop, Borya's greased muscles flexed and shone even in the muted light of the tent. The drummers held up fifteen-year-old sun-bleached posters of Borya, showing him with slicked back black hair and a winning smile that had now all but been replaced by a comb over and silver-colored mercury caps. Borya stepped onto a raised platform at the center of the tent's ring and gestured to the "heavy" metal objects in front of him.

As he bent down to grasp the comically oversized dumbbell, his striped sleeveless shirt strained against his back and tore in a neat line down his spine, a common occurrence that made Valery sigh out of the sight of the audience. "More of the budget to be put towards *your shirts*!" he would hiss at Borya before and after these performances, threatening to purchase larger shirts for him.

Today, instead of warning Borya against over-flexing his cotton when Valery had pulled him aside, the ringmaster had a favor to ask. "There's going to be a reporter from *Czjas* in the audience, some office-looking brunette with glasses, and I need you to pick her for your act."

"Valery," Borya had hissed, "you know I only go for the fair haired. A brown haired, this I cannot do."

"Oh no," Valery had grabbed Borya by the shirt, making the strong man stumble forward, "You'll do it. If you want to be able to afford to keep your job and your stupid always-ripping shirts, you'll do it."

"Fine," Borya had hissed as he pulled away and walked towards the ring.

"And now, for my big act," Borya scanned the audience for the bustiest women, "I will lift two lovely ladies, one in each hand!" Borya had thoroughly rehearsed his Russian for this act, making sure to pronounce each "g" in the strong way that was considered "cultured" by the citizens of Chernovtsy. He walked over to a young woman with rich red curls tumbling across her shoulders sitting in the front row, offering her his hand. She blushed and receded into her seat before a mousier friend nudged her forward onto the ring with a vicarious look of glee.

He heard a cough and turned, looking straight at a woman in the third row with her hair in a tightly pinned bun. *She must is being the reporter,* he thought, noting the differences between her and the lust-stricken red-haired and blonde housewives that surrounded her. He sighed, deciding that underneath her thick glasses and unfortunately tailored shirt she was not someone that he would kick out of bed. "Madam," he bent over, exposing his bulging quadriceps to an altogether not disappointed audience member behind him, "Would you do me the kindness?"

"I'm, um, I," the woman stuttered, quietly her pen rapping against the notes in her small graph-paper notebook, "I'm on assignment, I shouldn't."

"Assignment!" Borya hollered so everyone in the tent could hear. "Ladies and gentlemen, a *writer* is had in our midst! An artist!" his Russian slipped back into its general disrepair out of newborn excitement. Borya supposed that this wasn't so bad after all; he had always wanted to have poems written about his vein-covered arms, the blackness of his moustache. He twirled said moustache in anticipation with a free hand, grasping the woman out of her seat with his other.

"I'm not an artist," she sighed, reluctantly stuffing her notebook and pen into her purse as Borya pulled her along, "I'm a reporter—for *Czjas.*"

Borya swung her over next to the redhead, "I will lift a modest artist, too." He turned to the audience and raised his arms to the women's waists. "Please give your hands to my two lovely volunteers!" He squeezed the redhead's hips and she, unfailingly, giggled and loudly stated her name. He did the same to the reporter, but she simply gasped quietly and muttered, "Sonya Andreyevna."

"Excellent! I will now raise Irina and Sonyechka up to the sky with only one hand each!" The audience erupted in applause and Irina beamed and blushed.

IV. Our Ringmaster, Valery!

Backstage, Valery was getting another idea. As was often the case for Andrej, he was the unfortunate first one to walk by Valery and was thus Valery's sounding board of choice.

"I have figured out a way to get us out of this economic slump, Andrej! Declining attendance," he motioned to the hardly half-filled bleachers, "shifting image," he pointed to the banners of the perkier Borya clumped against the side of the tent, "being able to afford Borya's stupid shirts, everything!" Andrej simply nodded, knowing this could

not be going anywhere good. "You saw the reporter in the audience, yes?" Valery pointed out at the ring, to where Borya was grabbing Sonya and Irina by their bottoms and holding them above his shoulders. Andrej nodded again. Valery was grinning as he spoke, his half-degenerated yellow teeth and browning gums peeking out from behind his lips, "Well, I am going to let her take Anya's place and go on a ride with Ursula. Just a few laps around the tent, a little something extra so her story makes the front page. It'll be great press." Andrej knew that this was likely a terrible decision—Anya had been trained to work with bears—but also knew that if it worked it would make Anya extremely jealous of the reporter, perhaps so jealous that she would snap to her senses about the bear. He nodded once again, this time smiling.

V. And Our Guest Star, Sonya Andreyevna Popova!

Valery grabbed a tousled but smiling Sonya and dragged her over to the side of the ring while Borya continued by lifting various children. "Sonya Andreyevna," Valery used his most formal tone, "I have a proposition for you. You can have the luck of being *the first one* to participate in our newest audience participation performance with Ursula."

Sonya cocked an eyebrow, "The bear?"

"Yes, our friendly motorcycle driving she-bear!"

"You want me to get on a motorcycle with a *bear*?"

"Oh," Valery laughed, "not to worry; she's extremely safe. She has never strayed from this little circle, and we have trained her to be a pure herbivore." Valery could see Sonya's apprehension, "It would be great for your story! It might even get the front page, with that kind of spectacle."

"Yes," Sonya contemplated the matter, tightening her bun, "You're right about that." She glanced back at the strong man. "Sure," she shrugged, "Why not."

"Excellent," Valery smiled and rubbed Sonya's arm in appreciation.

Andrej and Borya were tightening the chinstraps of Anya's bright red helmet around Sonya's jaw line. She couldn't remember the last time she had done anything spontaneous, and it felt invigorating. "Now, ladies and gentlemen," Valery stood on the podium in the center of the ring, "we have a guest rider today! Our prominent local reporter, Sonya Andreyevna Popova, will be accompanying Ursula, our friendly motorcycle driving she-bear, on her laps around the tent!" The audience clapped wildly, and Valery beamed.

"Come on," Anya had to tug Ursula out of his cage. "Valery wants you to ride with Sonya now. He thinks you can help the circus." Ursula's claws retracted when he noticed the hope in Anya's eyes and he finally slipped out onto the sandy floor. Anya grabbed his front paw and patted his back as she walked him over to the motorcycle, unconsciously untangling the knots in his fur as they walked.

Andrej and Borya stood on the side of the ring, Borya with his arm around the blushing redhead. "Eh, Andrej?" Borya prodded him in the side with a small barbell that he had been lifting, "I can see your eyes, you have a crush." The redhead

giggled and Andrej looked back at Borya, his eyes wide. "I have seen way you look at him," Borya continued. "Listen, I have had knowing Valery a long time and I happen to know that he might like to be right up inside your alley." Andrej waved his hands dismissively and scuttled away, glad that he was freed from the conversation by his inability to speak. "Those pansies," Borya turned to the redhead, "Don't know how to be confronting of their sexuality problems!" He squeezed the redhead tightly, covertly slipping his hand past her shoulder and over her breast.

Anya leaned over to Ursula before leaving him near the motorcycle, "Just pretend that she's me." Ursula looked over at the motorcycle only to see some *woman* leaning against it as though she had the right to take Anya and his ride away from him. Valery and Anya sat Ursula onto the motorcycle first, and then propped Sonya up behind him. "Just do the same thing as always," Anya whispered in his furry ear as she helped him start the engine of the motorcycle. Valery backed off and jingled the change in his pocket, imagining himself bathing in a vat of sun-warmed rubles.

This was not, Ursula realized soon after kicking off, the same ride as always. Sonya's hands were stiff; her nails clawed into his skin. She kept making squeaky wheezing sounds, as though she had never been on a motorized vehicle. Every time Sonya's fingers flexed against Ursula's stomach he thought more and more about how long it had been since he'd had a proper hunt. He looked around the tent to see the faces of the audience members alight with animalistic glee and resentment trickled down his empty esophagus.

It was then that he caught a glimpse of the muted sun peeking through a side entrance to the tent, behind his cage. He looked to his side to see Borya with his arm around the redhead's chest, nudging Andrej into Valery. Anya had gone to the changing tent where she could watch Ursula's grace on the bike without him seeing her, so as not to make him nervous. To the bear, though, Anya had run away to other, more profitable circuses to ride newer motorcycles with younger bears, never to return. As the motorcycle sped up and the human grins became a blur, the bear realized that Anya, a human, could never have possible truly felt anything for him. He began to wonder why he hadn't just bitten off her fingers like he had wanted to in the first place.

The bear revved the motorcycle's engine and headed straight for the slip of light between the tent's flowing flaps, hitting a loose corner stake as his wheels passed it. The noise from the engine blocked out Sonya's screams, and he emerged into the milky Ukrainian autumn afternoon like a newborn cub as the tent collapsed behind him in a sea of sun-mottled green.

Telling Stories

Boris Vassilev

School of Engineering and Applied Sciences,
Columbia University

I still remember when you, mother, had me, four and clumsy, sit on your lap and type out the letters to court documents on your old typewriter. You would tell me which letters to click, and I would jam my finger onto the key, awaiting the clack and the eventual metallic ding as the roller ran to the end, starting a new line. You were bright-eyed then. You were a judge by trade. You would tell me about the cases you had, ranging from the tragic, the woman whose kids had to be taken, to the humorous and alarming, the antics of a harmless crazy stalking around the courthouse with a massive cleaver in his back pocket. I was in awe of your power of justice and finality.

Father, I remember the days that you took me with you to the research institute. Together we played Tetris on the computer there, the first one I had ever seen. You used to put me on your shoulders when we went places after that, back when I wasn't taller than you. We would go to the zoo in our chortling red Lada and scrunch up noses at the peculiar, assaulting smells coming from the big cat cages. You were a biochemist, a researcher. You were the happiest man in the world the day you defended your dissertation. I wanted to be you.

You, we three, left this life and moved to the United States when I was a week shy of seven. It was foreign, uninviting. The border agents confiscated our cured meats, *ribitsa*, due to regulations unknown. In the coming months, we spent days in just one another's company, as we learned the language but still didn't make any friends. Even the weather challenged us with unfamiliar humidity, we found ourselves confronted at every turn. The situation slowly improved with time.

You tell stories about the way things were. My favorite has always been about how I was a hero from birth. It was the worst of shortages right after I was born, in 1989. Milk this time. The delivery trucks

came early in the morning, with long lines of old pensioners, *babichki*, already waiting to buy up the stock. Luckily, people with small children were allowed to skip to the front of the line to buy milk. There was no need to prove the baby someone was carrying was truly theirs so, in infant form, I was regularly loaned to neighbors from the apartment hall, and used to get milk. The way you tell it, Mother, I saved the entire apartment block from dire hunger and a cruel, milk-less death.

It would take me years to figure out, but I know now why you left, that place we romanticize as home and keep close even though it's fifteen years since. The home you left even though it meant discarding entire decades' worth of irreplaceable education, friendships and professions. You discarded it so that I could have a chance, so that you could have my brother, because to you the fate of family, your children, has always been stronger than any personal pursuit or goal. I hope to one day understand this sacrific truly, but for now I can just be in awe of it. Thank you Mother, thank you Father.

Meanwhile, we still tell stories, but now I try to write them down. The one about the electricity rationing and the diesel tank engine our dentist kept to run on off days, or how I almost destroyed our apartment building when I put a pair of tweezers into the electrical socket, blowing out the fuses for every other floor in a spectacular pyrotechnic display.

I Loved You Once by Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin

Translated By

Hilary Rasch

Northwestern University

I loved you once: perhaps I
love you still
With feelings buried in my
soul not dead;
But let me not disturb you
more, be tranquil
For never have I wished to
make you sad.
I kept love secret, not
expecting more;
Too shy and insecure, I lived
in pain.
I loved you my way, gently
but with candor,
And hope God gives you love
like mine again.

Я вас любил: любовь еще,
быть может
В душе моей угасла не
совсем;
Но пусть она вас больше не
тревожит;
Я не хочу печалить вас
ничем.
Я вас любил безмолвно,
безнадежно,
То робостью, то ревностью
томим;
Я вас любил так искренно,
так нежно,
Как дай вам бог любимой
быть другим.

After An Execution in Geneva by Konstantin Sluchevsky

Translated By

Hilary Rasch

Northwestern University

Oppressive day… how lazily you passed…
An execution: I saw the scaffold,
Its weight pressed down, the head that rolled,
The sun which glittered on the axe.

Dead. His head was bouncing like a ball.
The executioner wiped his crimson hands,
And there were calls for watchers to disband,
Which viewers heard but slowly if at all.

Oppressive day… how lazily you passed…
I dreamed that I lay frightened on a wheel;
I writhed in pain that people should not feel
From being stretched across the wheel, harassed,
Extended across in aching motion
Till I transformed into a ringing string, Still alive and somehow singing
And on the guitar of some starving nun.

The black hag crooning hoarsely over me
While she with bony fingers plucked away,
She sang "The heart's desire is its key," So plaintively I sang along with her.

Тяжёлый день...ты уходил так вяло...
Я видел казнь: багровый эшафот
Давил своею тяжестью народ,
И солнице ча топор сияло.

Казнили. Голова отпрянула как мяч!
Стёр полотенцем кровь с руки палач,
И эшафот поспешно разобрали;
Пришли пожарные и площадь поливали,

Тяжёлый день...ты уходил так вяло...
Мне снилось: я лежал на страшном колесе,
Меня коробило, меня на части рвало,
И мышцы лопались, ломались кости бсе...

Я всё вытягивался в пытке небывалой
И став звенящею, чувствительной струной,
К монахине какой-мо исхудалой
На балалайку вдруг попал живой!

Старуха чёрная гнусила и хрипела,
Коцтлявым пальцем дёрграла меня,
<<Б крови горит огонь желанья>>-пела,
И я вторил ей, жалобно звеня!...

Hamlet by Boris Pasternak

Translated By

Hilary Rasch

Northwestern University

Hamlet

Sound dies down when I come onto the stage.
Standing pressed back against the red curtain,
I try to hear in silence's echo
What will take place in my life for certain.

The twilight of the night which faces me
I see through thousands of opera glasses.
Father, Abba, if You could possibly
Let this cup of suffering pass me by.

I love your rigid and stubborn design,
And am content to play the chosen role.
But now it seems that another drama
Is being acted, so leave me solo.

But the order of the acts has been planned,
And the end is coming without question.
I am alone and Pharisaism reigns.
Living is not a walk across the plains.

ГАМЛЕТ

Гул затих. Я вышел на подмостки.
Прислонясь к дверному косяку,
Я ловлю в далеком отголоске,
Что случится на моем веку.

На меня наставлен сумрак ночи
Тысячью биноклей на оси.
Если только можно, Авва Отче,
Чашу эту мимо пронеси.

Я люблю твой замысел упрямый
И играть согласен эту роль.
Но сейчас идет другая драма,
И на этот раз меня уволь.

Но продуман распорядок действий,
И неотвратим конец пути.
Я один, все тонет в фарисействе.
Жизнь прожить - не поле перейти.

A Trio of Children's Poems to Be Read Aloud by Grown-ups

The Violin - A Little Bit Nervous

Translated By

Sarah C. Vitali
Princeton University

The violin was going to pieces, beseeching,
and suddenly burst into tears
so childishly
that the drum couldn't bear it:
"That'll do, that'll do, that'll do!"
And, tired out,
Didn't stay for the violin's speech,
Ducked out onto gleaming Kuznetskiy and left.
The orchestra looked on coldly as
the violin cried herself out
without words,
without tact,
and only a stupid cymbal
clanged out from somewhere:
"What's all this?
What's it for?"
But when the helicon,
copper-faced,
sweaty,
cried,
"Nitwit,
sissy,
pipe down!"

Скрипка издергалась, упрашивая,
и вдруг разревелась
так по-детски,
что барабан не выдержал:
«Хорошо, хорошо, хорошо!»
А сам устал,
не дослушал скрипкиной речи,
шмыгнул на горящий Кузнецкий и ушел.
Оркестр чужо смотрел, как
выплакивалась скрипка
без слов,
без такта,
и только где-то
глупая тарелка
вылязгивала:
«Что это?»
«Как это?»
А когда геликон —
меднорожий,
потный,
крикнул:
«Дура,
плакса,
вытри!» —

I got up,
clumsily waded through the notes
bending under the terror of the music stand,
And for some reason cried out,
"My God!"
And threw myself around her wooden neck:
"You know what, violin?
We're terribly alike:
See,
I cry out, too,
And don't know how to prove anything!"
The musicians laughed:
"What a pretty pickle!
He's found his wooden bride!
Idiot!"
But I couldn't care less!
I am a good person.
"You know what, violin?
Let's do it –
we'll live together!
Well?"

1914.

— *Vladimir Mayakovsky*

я встал,
шатаясь полез через ноты,
сгибающиеся под ужасом пюпитры,
зачем-то крикнул:
«Боже!»,
Бросился на деревянную шею:
«Знаете что, скрипка?
Мы ужасно похожи:
я вот тоже
ору —
а доказать ничего не умею!»
Музыканты смеются:
«Влип как!
Пришел к деревянной невесте!
Голова!»
А мне — наплевать!
Я — хороший.
«Знаете что, скрипка?
Давайте —
будем жить вместе!
А?»

1914.

— *В.В. Маяковский*

Giraffe

Translated By

Sarah C. Vitali

Princeton University

I've noticed today that your gaze is quite sad,
That your delicate arms round your knees are tight-wrapped.
But listen: in a far, far-off land, by the shores of Lake Chad,
Exquisitely roams the giraffe.

His bearing is graceful, his tenderness rare,
His hide with a magic design has been traced
With which only the moon would endeavor compare,
As it breaks and it sways on the mists of wide lakes.

From afar he could pass for the sails of a ship,
And his gait is as fluid as happy birds' flight.
The world sees some things that could make your heart skip
When he hides in his marble-like den for the night.

Сегодня, я вижу, особенно грустен твой взгляд,
И руки особенно тонки, колени обняв.
Послушай: далеко, далеко, на озере Чад
Изысканный бродит жираф.

Ему грациозная стройность и нега дана,
И шкуру его украшает волшебный узор,
С которым равняться осмелится только луна,
Дробясь и качаясь на влаге широких озер.

Вдали он подобен цветным парусам корабля,
И бег его плавен, как радостный птичий полет.
Я знаю, что много чудесного видит земля,
Когда на закате он прячется в мраморный грот.

I'm well versed in exotic lands' stories and songs,
The dark maiden's tale and the young chief's refrain.
But you've gasped in the dark, heavy haze far too long;
You don't care to believe in a life without rain.

How could I describe to you gardens superb?
The palm trees, the smell of unthinkable herbs…
-You're crying? Just listen… in a faraway land, by the shores of Lake Chad
Exquisitely roams the giraffe.

1908

— Nikolay Gumilev

Я знаю веселые сказки таинственных стран
Про черную деву, про страсть молодого вождя,
Но ты слишком долго вдыхала тяжелый туман,
Ты верить не хочешь во что-нибудь, кроме дождя.

И как я тебе расскажу про тропический сад,
Про стройные пальмы, про запах немыслимых трав...
- Ты плачешь? Послушай... далеко, на озере Чад
Изысканный бродит жираф.

1908

— Николай Гумилёв

Old Woman Shut The Door

Translated By

Sarah C. Vitali
Princeton University

A Folktale

Before the Sabbath holiday,
Before 'twas time for bed,
A woman took to making stew,
To frying, baking bread.

The fall was in full force outside,
A damp, cold wind did roar.
The old man shouted to his wife:
"Old woman, shut the door!"

"My only job's to shut the door,
I've nothing else to do.
For all I care, the door could stand
Ajar 'til Timbuktu."

And thus continued 'twixt the two
The spouses' endless fight,
Until the old man came up with
A way to make things right:

"Let's you and I sit quiet here,
And who shall speak once more,
Who lets a single word slip out,
That one shall lock the door!"

Народная сказка

Под праздник, под воскресный день,
Пред тем, как на ночь лечь,
Хозяйка жарить принялась,
Варить, тушить и печь.

Стояла осень на дворе,
И ветер дул сырой.
Старик старухе говорит:
- Старуха, дверь закрой!

- Мне только дверь и закрывать,
Другого дела нет.
По мне - пускай она стоит
Открытой сотню лет!

Так без конца между собой
Вели супруги спор,
Пока старик не предложил
Старухе уговор:

- Давай, старуха, помолчим.
А кто откроет рот
И первый вымолвит словцо,
Тот двери и запрет!

An hour went by, and then two.
The couple sat like mimes.
The fire had long since gone out.
The corner clock beat time.
And then the clock at last struck twelve,
The door was still unlocked.
Two strangers, aided by the dark,
Come in the house unblocked.

The guests began: “All right, then, so,
Who lives here in this house?”
The couple sat there silently,
Drool gathered in their mouths.

The nighttime guests took from the stove
A little pie apiece,
Some giblets and a cockerel –
The lady kept her peace.

They found tobacco, right and rich,
- the old man’s finest loot! -
They drank some beer right from the cask;
The couple still sat mute.

The guests ran off with all they could,
The threshold they went ‘round,
“Their pies are underdone,” they said,
While wand’ring through the town.

“My pies aren’t underdone, by God!”
The woman loudly swore.
The old man answered from his seat,
“Old woman, shut the door!”

— Samuil Marshak

Проходит час, за ним другой.
Хозяева молчат.
Давно в печи погас огонь.
В углу часы стучат.
Вот бьют часы двенадцать раз,
А дверь не заперта.
Два незнакомца входят в дом,
А в доме темнота.

- А ну-ка, - гости говорят,
- Кто в домике живет? –
Молчат старуха и старик,
Воды набрали в рот.

Ночные гости из печи
Берут по пирогу,
И потроха, и петуха,
- Хозяйка - ни гуту.

Нашли табак у старика.
- Хороший табачок! –
Из бочки выпили пивка.
Хозяева - молчок.

Все взяли гости, что могли,
И вышли за порог.
Идут двором и говорят:
- Сырой у них пирог!

А им вослед старуха: - Нет!
Пирог мой не сырой! –
Ей из угла старик в ответ:
- Старуха, дверь закрой!

— Самуил Маршак

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