Censorship, Reading, and Interpretation: A Case Study from the Soviet Union
Author(s): Peter Scotto
Source: *PMLA*, Vol. 109, No. 1 (Jan., 1994), pp. 61-70
Published by: Modern Language Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/463011
Accessed: 11-09-2017 11:15 UTC

Censorship, Reading, and Interpretation: A Case Study from the Soviet Union

PETER SCOTTO is associate professor of Russian at Mount Holyoke College.

THIS ARTICLE is a case study in two ways. I focus exclusively on a single text, placing it in a context that allows the discovery of otherwise hidden meanings. But in conducting this pursuit as a scholar, I unexpectedly confront my moral responsibility as a reader. My study itself becomes a case to be studied.

The subject of this investigation is a scholarly article, a substantial piece by Leonid Grossman called "Lermontov and the Cultures of the East" ("Лермонтов и культуры востока").[1] Taken wholly as its announced purposes suggest, "Lermontov and the Cultures of the East" would be of little interest to anyone outside a limited number of specialists. What may intrigue a wider audience is the interpretive apparatus that must be brought to bear on the text in order to read into and against silences I assume to have been imposed on it by the conditions of censorship in the Soviet Union under Stalin. My essay, then, is about the ways in which a reader gives voice to those silences, fills those blank spaces, and, less obviously, about the moral and ethical commitment readers undertake when they presume to read into such blanks and against such silences. Thus I underline the process of my reading and present my steps to understanding as no less important than the understanding achieved.

The hero of my story, Leonid Petrovich Grossman, is perhaps best known as a Dostoevsky specialist. Broadly educated, enormously erudite, insightful, and prodigiously productive, he was an outstanding scholar. Indeed, if his reputation in Dostoevsky studies had not been overshadowed by Bakhtin's, he would probably be regarded by most Slavists as the Soviet Union's most important commentator in the field.

The only other thing that needs to be said about Grossman at this point is that he was a Jew, a Russian Jew, a Russian of Jewish extraction, a Soviet citizen of Jewish nationality. The terminological uncertainty reflects another thread of this investigation: the problem

of Jewish self-consciousness among assimilated Soviet Jewry just before the German invasion.

"Lermontov and the Cultures of the East" appeared in volume 43–44 of the weighty series *Literary Heritage* (Литературное наследство), published by the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Prepared as a scholarly tribute for the hundredth anniversary of Lermontov's death, the publication is dated 1941 on the title page. The volume must have undergone its final revisions sometime after 22 June 1941, since the German invasion is mentioned both at the end of a preface by the editorial board (x) and at the end of a brief introduction (xiv–xvi). The standard publication information given at the bottom of the table of contents, however, indicates that the volume was "registered for printing" ("подписано к печати") on 24 May 1941, almost a month before the invasion. In Soviet parlance, a volume "registered for printing" had been granted its final approval and was ready to go to press. Usually, no changes were permitted once a volume was registered.

After the volume of *Literary Heritage* was registered but before it was printed, the Nazis invaded, and it must have been revised so that some reference could be made to the ferocious struggle in which the Soviet Union now found itself. Not to do so would have been unthinkable. Indeed, the references to the war have all the earmarks of interpolations, appended to the original endings of the preface and introduction.[2]

During uneventful times, the brief interval between a work's registration and publication might have been insignificant. In late spring of 1941, however, there was an enormous shift in Soviet policy and public discourse, a change in which the Soviet Union was an ally (albeit an uneasy one) of Hitler's Germany on one day and a mortal enemy the next.

"Lermontov and the Cultures of the East" thoroughly discusses Russian orientalism in the 1820s and 1830s.[3] Well written and well researched, the piece covers, for the most part, what one would expect: the connection of Russian orientalism to other, similar European schools, orientalist education in Russia, Russian translations of Eastern literature, the popularization of orientalist views in Russia, Lermontov's acquaintance with Russian and European orientalism, the reflection of the movement in his work, and so on. Near the beginning of the article Grossman discusses the assimilation of Old Testament Hebrew poetry by Russian writers (680), but this topic is not inappropriate. Hebrew and the ancient Jewish culture of the Middle East were well-established objects of attention for nineteenth-century orientalists, and Romantic verses based on Old Testament poetry were part of Europe's fascination with the East during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Russia was no exception in this regard.

What stands out is a relatively lengthy section entitled "*The Spaniards* and the Velizh Affair" ("Испанцы и Велижкое дело"; 715–35). *The Spaniards* is a play by Lermontov about the Inquisition, and while the persecution of Jews is the fulcrum of the action, there at first seems little reason for a discussion of the work in this article, on Lermontov and "the cultures of the East." The Spanish Inquisition and its attendant barbarities belong, after all, to the history of the West, not to that of the ancient or the modern East.

Grossman's thesis is that Lermontov's real concern in the play was the "Velizh affair"—a ritual-murder trial that caught in its snares the Jews of Velizh, a small provincial town in western Russia.[4] The affair began in 1823 when, a few days after Easter, the body of a small Russian boy, covered with what appeared to be puncture wounds, was discovered in a swamp outside the town. Several Russian women of doubtful reputation subsequently accused prominent members of the Jewish community of murdering the child to obtain his blood for ritual purposes. A district court readily dismissed the charges against the Jews in 1824. The court, to its credit, was apparently ruling in compliance with a directive, issued in 1817 in the name of Alexander I, stipulating that "henceforward Jews shall not be charged with murdering Christian children without any evidence and purely as a result of the superstitious belief that they are in need of Christian blood" (Dubnow 75).

The ruling did not end the case. The investigation was reopened, and it fell into the hands of the anti-Semitic governor of the district and his sadistic assistant. With a truly Gogolian mania, they kept the matter alive until 1834, when an inquiry by Count Nikolai Semenovich Mordvinov, president of the Department of Civil and Ecclesiastical Affairs of the Council of State, showed the case against the Jews to be without merit. Following Mordvinov's finding, the Council of State exonerated the Jews of Velizh of wrongdoing, ordered that any still held in prison be immediately freed, and sentenced their original accusers to exile in Siberia. Emperor Nicholas I ratified the council's decision on 18 January 1835 (Dubnow 82).

The Jews of Velizh suffered greatly during the twelve years of the affair. Many were imprisoned for years, several died in confinement, some were questioned under torture, and the town's synagogues were closed. The poisonous atmosphere surrounding the investigation inevitably affected the entire community. One grim footnote: when the decision of the Council of State was brought to the emperor for his signature, he appended a handwritten note indicating that while he agreed with the verdict for legal reasons, he did not have "the inner conviction that the murder has not been committed by Jews. Numerous examples of similar murders . . . go to show that among the Jews there probably exist fanatics or sectarians who consider Christian blood necessary for their rites" (Dubnow 83).

The problem with Grossman's hypothesis centers on Lermontov's probable knowledge of these events. Lermontov began writing *The Spaniards* in 1830 and completed it in 1831—four years before the Velizh case was settled. For the sixteen-year-old writer to have based his play on the affair, modeling some characters on historical figures (as Grossman contends), he would have had to have some detailed knowledge of the incidents at a time when they seem unlikely to have been a major topic of news in Moscow or Saint Petersburg. Grossman speculates that the youthful Lermontov must have learned about the trial through a web of family and social connections leading to some of the government officials deeply involved in the case (721–26). At the end of this part of his discussion, Grossman concedes that his evidence is circumstantial, and he has no precise information on the depth of Lermontov's knowledge of the Velizh affair (726). He concludes, however, that

> [w]hat is important here is not individual correspondences or particular coincidences between an old court case and Lermontov's dramatic poem but the pervasive atmosphere of torment and grief, of organized injustice and the doom of an entire nation, that played itself out in the Russian reality of that time and could have conveyed a sense of profound hopelessness to Lermontov's first tragedy.
>
> [з]десь важны не отдельные соответствия или частные совпадения старинного следствия с драматической поэмой, а та общая атмосфера мук и скорби, организованной неправды и всенародной обреченности, которая раскрылась в русской действительности той поры и могла сообщить тон глубокой безнадежности первой трагедии Лермонтова. (726)

Despite these hedges and caveats, Grossman goes into extraordinary detail in his description of the case, recounting the abuses of the investigators, the manifold sufferings of the Jews, and the poisonous atmosphere of the town to the point where he seems almost to lose sight of his announced topic, Lermontov's play. Why did Grossman stray so far from what was supposed to be the point?

When I began to read Grossman's article, I thought of it simply as one source of data for my research. The volume was simply a container for the information I was after, while the time and circumstances of the article's production were of little interest. "Grossman" was a name, a marker in the card catalog, a heading in bibliographies around which had accumulated the titles of a number of books and articles. If I noticed idiosyncracies of time, place, or personality in my source, I viewed it as my job to filter them out to get at the disembodied information I needed for my work.

When I began to suspect that there was more to this section of the article than a discussion of *The Spaniards,* that the detailed account of the Velizh affair was not an aberration but might

be of essential significance, a new range of possibilities for reading the section arose. It became vitally important to understand exactly who the author was and when as well as under what historical circumstances the part was written and published—all to understand what Grossman had intended in his discussion of the play, a purpose that he could not let out into the open.

I realized I had to jettison not only the premises that accompanied my initial, positivistic reading of the article but also the tenets of what I understood as postmodernist or deconstructive reading. The author's intent, his identity as a coherent biographical, moral, and psychological personality, the paradox of definite meaning in language that I suspected was aimed obliquely toward meaning—these became fundamental for me. I felt, quite simply, responsibility toward Grossman: not to read his words in this way would have been to deprive him of his voice, a voice directed, however covertly, against the silences dictated by an all-pervasive censorship.

Leonid Grossman was born into the family of a Jewish physician in Odessa in 1888. At the end of the nineteenth century, Odessa was the third-largest city in the Russian empire and had become one of the great metropolitan centers of Russian Jewry. A port with a large and diverse non-Russian population, the city supported both a Jewish ghetto and a community of prosperous, ambitious, assimilating Jews who wished to become fully enfranchised participants in the Russian empire's European-oriented elite culture (Herlihy; Zipperstein). Odessa's Jewish population gave Russian literature the likes of Isaac Babel, Eduard Bagritsky, Lev Slavin, and Ilya Ilf. Boris Pasternak's father, Leonid—important in his own right as a painter and illustrator—also came from a family of Odessa Jews. It was from the same milieu that many of the great Russian Jewish pianists and violinists emerged around the turn of the century.

That Grossman graduated from the city's prestigious Richelieu Gymnasium in 1906, that he subsequently studied law at the Faculté de Droit in Paris and at Novorossiskii University (while he also cultivated his literary interests), that after obtaining his legal degree in 1911 he lived in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Paris, and Munich—all this clearly indicates that he belonged to Odessa's European-oriented elite. His life's work was devoted to Russian literature, particularly Russian literature and its European contexts.[5] In all respects, then, he appears to have been the model of an assimilated Russian Jew who owed his primary allegiance to Russian culture—or was he?

There are no broad-based, systematic studies of Jewish self-consciousness among Russia's assimilating and assimilated Jews during the first several decades of this century—that is, at the time when Leonid Grossman came to intellectual maturity.[6] Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that many of the Jews who became a vital part of Russia's cultural scene during these years had their Jewishness much on their minds. The explosive growth of an independent Russian-language Jewish press after the abolition of the tsarist censorship in March 1917 indirectly attests to this self-awareness (Altschuler x), while the testimony of Isaac Babel, Leonid Pasternak, Boris Pasternak, Osip Mandelstam, and Ilya Ehrenburg shows each of them trying to come to terms with his Jewish origins in his own way.[7]

If Grossman completed his studies at the gymnasium in 1906, he was probably in Odessa in 1905—a year of anti-Jewish pogroms. The Odessa pogroms are among the most horrendous on record, and even if Grossman and his family remained unscathed, the seventeen-year-old boy must have felt the shock waves that shook the Jewish community throughout the city, throughout Russia, and, indeed, throughout the world. This conclusion is, of course, speculation. It seems more than likely, however, that events underlining the precariousness of being a Jew in Russia were part of the important experiences of his adolescence.

Tangible evidence that Grossman was not indifferent to the problem of being a Jew in Russia comes from 1924, when he was an established scholar. In that year, he published a short book entitled *The Confession of a Jew* (Исповедь одного еврея), in which he traces the fate of a little-known Jewish intellectual, Avraam Kovner, who had engaged Dostoevsky in a lively

correspondence on the "Jewish question." To Kovner's biography Grossman appended a shorter work, "Dostoevsky and Judaism" ("Достоевкий и юдаизм"), which takes a hard look at the novelist's anti-Semitism, something that Dostoevsky criticism had previously passed over in silence (Goldstein xxv). It seems plausible that in the title *The Confession of a Jew* Grossman refers to himself to the degree that Dostoevsky and Kovner represented two sides of his personality: his respect and love for Russian culture, and especially for Dostoevsky, whom Grossman knew to be a convinced anti-Semite, and his connections to the world represented by Kovner.[8]

A version of the same concern wells up again some ten years later, in 1934, in "Dostoevsky and Government Circles of the Seventies" ("Достоевский и правительственные круги 70-х годов"), one of the last major pieces on Dostoevsky that Grossman wrote during the 1930s. The article persuasively argues that during the last decade of his life, Dostoevsky drew close to the reactionary elements of the court and shared the anti-Semitic beliefs current in circles close to the tsar.[9]

An announcement in the *Literary Gazette* (Литературная газета) shows that Grossman delivered the section on *The Spaniards* and the Velizh affair as a paper at the Institute of World Literature sometime before the end of April 1941 ("В Институте"). At the same time, Solomon Mikhoels staged *The Spaniards* at the Moscow State Yiddish Theater. Grossman, in fact, reviewed Mikhoels's production for the newspaper *Soviet Art* (Советское искусство) in May 1941 ("Лермонтов в Еврейском театре"). Moreover, costume sketches and a photograph of a model set for the production illustrate Grossman's discussion of the play in *Literary Heritage* (729, 731).

Soviet sources describe Mikhoels only as a distinguished actor and the artistic director of the Moscow State Yiddish Theater from 1928 until his death, in 1948. However, from August 1941 he also served as chairman of the Soviet Jewish Antifascist Committee, a group of prominent Jewish public figures and intellectuals organized by the Soviet government after the German invasion to enlist world Jewish support for the Soviet war effort. During the war, the appeals of the committee and its revelations of atrocities in Nazi-occupied territories retaken by the Red Army were successful in gaining Jewish financial support, particularly from America and Great Britain.

In 1943 Mikhoels, together with the poet Itzik Fefer, traveled to the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Mexico on a fund-raising tour. (The *Encyclopedia Judaica* notes that "the visit was regarded as the first step in renewing the contact between Soviet Jews and world Jewry that had been severed since October 1917" [Slutsky 63].) After the war, Mikhoels became an unofficial spokesman for Jewish causes within the Soviet Union. His mysterious death in Minsk in 1948—a brutal killing later shown to be the work of the secret police—proved to be the prelude to the large-scale anti-Semitic campaign that was an integral part of Stalin's postwar drive against Western influences in the Soviet Union (the "anticosmopolitan" campaign).[10]

Grossman's apparent association with this prominent Jewish activist is suggestive. The almost simultaneous appearances of Mikhoels's production of *The Spaniards* and Grossman's interpretation of the play could well have been a coincidence; the conjunction could also signal a two-pronged attack on silences enforced by censorship.

After the Soviet-German rapprochement in May 1939 and before the invasion of June 1941, no open criticism of Nazi Germany was permitted in the Soviet Union. Particularly untouchable was the topic of Hitler's persecution of the Jews in Germany and in German-controlled areas. The Jews of the Soviet Union were cut off by their government from information about the calculated destruction of their people and were not allowed any public expression of anger or concern about what was being done by a Soviet ally. This condition must have been all the more frustrating because before August 1939 Nazi Germany's persecution of the Jews was regularly deployed as propaganda in the Soviet press. Even worse, Jews from border areas recently incorporated into the Soviet Union as a result of the Soviet-German pact brought with

them fresh, firsthand knowledge of what was going on in eastern Europe, yet they could not bear public witness (Gilboa 12–14; Levin 342–45).

As 1941 approached, Grossman and Mikhoels must have seen an opportunity to speak for Soviet Jewry against this silence—though they knew they could speak only indirectly. The year was the hundredth anniversary of Lermontov's death, an occasion that would be observed throughout the Soviet Union. During such jubilee years, the works of the feted authors were treated with reverential awe and could be publicly presented as part of the official celebration. Mikhoels must have seized on this chance to produce *The Spaniards.* That he had the destruction of European Jewry on his mind is evident from his discussion of the production published in May by *Theater Week* (Театральная неделя). While carefully avoiding any specific reference to Nazi Germany, to anti-Semitism per se, or even to the war, he notes that "in our time, when in the capitalist world there is the assertion of a biological chasm between nations . . . the resonances of *The Spaniards* seemed extremely relevant to us" 'в наши дни, когда в капиталистическом мире существует утверждение биологической пропасти между народами . . . нам показалось чрезвычайно современным звучание трагедии «Испанцы»' (12).

Grossman, for his part, had already provided an interpretation of the play that directed his audience to look beyond the text to its historical circumstances. (Recall that his discussion of the play was first presented publicly in April.) By suggesting that the play embodied a historical analogy that Lermontov chose not to speak of directly, Grossman threw open the door to further analogical interpretation. If the play contained one historical analogy, might it not be appropriate to look for others, closer to the time and place of the current production? Might it not be possible to look to twentieth-century Europe and the depredations of a fascist state then allied with the Soviet Union?

Grossman drove his point home in his review of 11 May, reminding his readers that Lermontov's play demanded that its interpreters fill in a gaping silence:

> The producer of Lermontov's early tragedy is faced with a particular difficulty—how to give the play a proper ending. As is known, the last page of the manuscript of *The Spaniards* has been lost, and the text breaks off with Naomi's death scene. A closing chord is absent. The play can be concluded with a depiction of the procession that leads the condemned Fernando to his death (as did the Voronezh theater in 1939). The State Yiddish Theater chose a different course—less effective perhaps but revealing more profoundly the idea of the drama. Carrying Naomi's body and accompanied by the aged Sarah, Moisei exits into an unknown distance—the eternal wanderer, bent under an immeasurable burden of grief, alone and rejected, but preserving the moral strength and vital wisdom of his ancient people. This mute scene brings the play to a remarkable conclusion.
>
> Перед постановщиком юношеской трагедии Лермонтова возникает особенная трудность—дать правильное завершение спектакля. Как известно, последняя страница рукописи «Испанцев» утрачена и текст обрывается на сцене смерти Ноэми. Заключительный аккорд отсутствует. Можно заключить спектакль изображением позорной процессии ведущей осужденного фернандо на казнь (так поступил Воронежский театр в постановке 1939 г.) Госет пошел другим путем—менее эффективным, но более глубоко раскрывающим идею драмы. Моисей с телом Ноэми в сопровождении старой Сарры уходит в неведомые пространства—вечный скиталец, согнувшийся под бременем безмерной скорби, одинокий и отверженный, обреченный на изгнание, но сохранившийся моральную силу и жизненную мудрость своего древнего народа. Эта немая сцена замечательно завершает пьесу.

The play's producers give one silence (the lost page) voice as another silence (the "mute scene") that speaks to the audience profoundly.

In reporting the Velizh affair, Grossman focuses not simply on the persecution of Jews by the tsarist authorities but also on the steadfast courage of the victims, who for twelve years refused to be silenced and refused to admit any guilt in the face of extraordinary pressures, a community that spoke out until it was finally exonerated. Grossman and Mikhoels tried to speak out as best they could. They should not be

censured for not protesting as directly as their predecessors. To speak out in Stalin's Russia on so sensitive an issue could be tantamount to suicide, and Grossman and Mikhoels knew that after the purges of 1937 there were few, if any, Mordvinovs left alive to defend them. Thus when in the spring of 1941 they chose to speak against the silence, they used the ambiguity of their own silences to get their message across.

At this point, the gap between the registration and the publication of the volume including Grossman's article becomes important. When the volume came back for revisions, Grossman must have understood that the political climate had changed since he wrote the article. If public criticism of Nazi Germany was impossible in May, it was the order of the day by the end of June, and it appears that Grossman took this opportunity to uncover one of the layers of his allegory.

In what sounds like an interpolation in the penultimate paragraph of the section on *The Spaniards,* Grossman praises Lermontov's play as a work capable of "mobilizing" its audience "to do battle" 'мобилизирующее на борьбу' against the "modern cannibals" 'современных каннибалов' of fascism (735). The phrase "modern cannibals" unmistakably recalls a characterization of anti-Semitism attributed to Stalin in a speech made in 1936 by the Soviet foreign minister, V. M. Molotov.[11] By tacitly quoting Stalin and Molotov, Grossman covered his position with the aura of unimpeachable authority. But his bow to authority can also be read as a subtle reminder of the hypocrisy of that power. It was Molotov, after all, who signed the pact that gave Nazi Germany the opportunity to begin its conquest of Poland in September 1939, and it was Stalin who saw that the Soviet Union remained a steadfast ally of Hitler's until the June invasion finally shattered Soviet illusions.

If Grossman's allegory points outward to Hitler's Germany, it could also point inward to the Soviet Union. After Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned Poland in September 1939, the large Jewish population of eastern Poland came under Soviet control. Jewish refugees fleeing the atrocities in German-occupied Poland poured into the eastern part of the country. Though the Jews in eastern Poland initially greeted Soviet rule with relief, they soon found their situation deteriorating. As part of an intense campaign of Sovietization, the new authorities closed synagogues and eliminated independent Jewish educational institutions, publishing houses, and cultural organizations. Refugees from the west, at first treated benignly by their new rulers, were later ignored and harassed and finally deported. The NKVD decimated Jewish political organizations, arresting, deporting, and sometimes executing Bundists and Zionists.[12] Soviet Jewish writers who traveled to the freshly "liberated" areas became newly aware of the region's rich Jewish religious and cultural life only to find their government dismantling it (Levin 342–45). It seems possible that Grossman knew what was going on, perhaps through his ties to Mikhoels's theater, and found in the Velizh affair a likeness to the events of his own time and place.

Beyond this portion of Jewish suffering, the Soviet populace as a whole endured successive waves of terror and paranoia that washed over the country throughout the late 1930s. Especially hard hit were the remnants of the old cultural elite—a group to which Grossman also owed allegiance. Indeed, Grossman's account of the Velizh events, with its staged trials, forced confessions, and investigative apparatus run amok, sounds like nothing so much as the Russia of the purge period. The ostensible focus of his piece, *The Spaniards,* points in the same direction.

Grossman knew that the Spanish Inquisition was for Dostoevsky more than a symbol of a narrow-minded and militant Catholicism. The fanatic Grand Inquisitor embodied the dark side of revolutionary socialism, the face that fully revealed itself in the Soviet Union under Stalin. True, Grossman was not writing about Dostoevsky in "Lermontov and the Cultures of the East," but the novelist could not have been far from his mind, for Dostoevsky was in a way also a victim of the purges.

While the conservative, nationalistic Dostoevsky underwent a scholarly renaissance during the 1920s, in the 1930s he became the focus of an acrimonious ideological debate. By the second half of the decade, he was under attack by

orthodox critics, and it became increasingly difficult to write about him honestly. Grossman, though never much of an apologist for the reactionary side of Dostoevsky's politics, had almost nothing on the novelist published from 1935 until Dostoevsky's rehabilitation in 1956.[13] The appearance of a grand inquisitor in the 1941 article on Lermontov suggests the shadowy presence of the banished Dostoevsky and thus, perhaps, hints at another aspect of the silence against which Grossman struggled.[14]

Closing this case, I find myself compelled to say along with Grossman that "what is important here is not individual correspondences or particular coincidences . . . but the pervasive atmosphere of torment and grief, of organized injustice and the doom of an entire nation, that played itself out in the Russian reality of that time."

In trying to read into the silences that I suspect lurk in Grossman's article, in trying to give some definite voice to them, I have spun out a chain of analogies, a series of more or less probable readings whose possibility rests on the capacity of language to do more than strictly denote. Clearly, the ability of language to slip its moorings in this way is essential to anything written to subvert censorship. To recognize the vital importance of this linguistic property in this situation is not, however, to deny language all meaning and thereby render it subject to an endless series of corrosive "deconstructions."

If not identifiable in language itself, the promise of coherent meaning can be located in the relationship between speaker and listener, writer and reader. This comment is not a demonstrable statement of linguistic or psychological fact but a formulation of moral responsibility. The responsibility becomes all the greater when this relationship is complicated by the kind of stringent censorship that existed in the Soviet Union when Grossman wrote his article. Under a regime that commands silence on some issues and demands public professions of orthodoxy on others, careful attention to real meaning in words hedged and shrouded by silence becomes a vital aspect of communication and, ultimately, of communion. Leonid Grossman knew his responsibility. As readers, we have no decent choice but to shoulder our own.

Notes

[1]All translations are my own.

[2]The onset of the war delayed the publication of the volume. In two reviews from 1948 and 1949, the volume is described as having appeared in 1943 (Ivanov, "Еще раз" 187, "Лермонтов" 203).

[3]Although Edward Said pays scant attention to imperial Russia in *Orientalism*, the nation—with its vast possessions in Asia—developed one of the most important and productive traditions of orientalism in Europe. For a good introduction, see Frye, who argues that the establishment of this discipline in Russia from the eighteenth century on was an important stage in the process by which Russians came to view their country as a part of Europe and different from Asia.

[4]The best account in English of the Velizh affair can be found in Dubnow. Grossman's Russian-language sources included Gessen (Архив and Истории).

[5]Published biographical information on Grossman is extremely sketchy. The sources I have found the most helpful are Kasack and the entries under "Гроссман, Леонид Петрович" in Писатели современной эпохи, Литературная энциклопедия, and Краткая литературная энциклопедия.

[6]Some statistics on the sense of national identity and on the process of assimilation of the Soviet Jewish population as a whole are available in Pinkus (135–37) and in Nove and Newth.

[7]On the Pasternaks see Gibian; on Babel see Sicher; on Ehrenburg see Goldberg. On Mandelstam see Cavanagh; Freidin; and Isenberg. For a broadly focused study of Jewish identity and literature in Russia, see Nakhimovsky.

[8]In a striking passage in the foreword of *The Confession of a Jew*, Grossman writes of Kovner:

> He came to know many things during his long life: the oppression and gloom of impoverished Lithuanian ghettos under Nicholas I, study of the Talmud in tumbledown synagogues, the miserable and mind-numbing atmosphere of the "Yeshiva seminaries"—that whole fantastic and agonizing round that swallowed his early years up entirely.
>
> The shadows of a joyless childhood are followed by the first glimmerings of his adolescent consciousness. A new, delightful time begins for him, a time for secretly reading forbidden books and becoming acquainted with the strivings of human thought beyond the boundaries of the closed circle of a talmudic education. This opens onto the exciting epoch of his acquaintance with Russian literature and of his passionate engagement with the tempestuous period of cultural reevaluation [that took place in Russian society during the 1860s]. This passion for the contemporary

currents of Russian thought at last leads the young Talmudist to participating in the propagation of new ideas, to passionate literary activity, and to the great dream of becoming the leader and transfigurer of his own people.

За долгую жизнь он узнал многое: гнет и мрачность нищенствующих кварталов Литвы в эпоху Николая I, изучение Талмуда в ветхих молельнях, жалкую и одуряющую среду «ешиботных бурс»—весь этот фантастический и мучительный уклад, поглотивший целиком его ранние годы.

Полоса безотрадного детства сменяется первыми проблесками отроческого сознания. Наступает сладостная пора тайных приобщений к запретным «берлинским» книгам и жадного знакомства с исканиями человеческой мысли за пределом замкнутого круга талмудической образованности. Открывается затем возбужденная эпоха его знакомства с русской литературой и пламенного увлечения бурным периодом культурных переоценок. Это горение современными течениями русской мысли приводит, наконец, юного талмудиста к участию в пропаганде новых идей, к жаркой литературной работе, к высокой мечте стать вождем и преобразителем своего народа. (5)

[9]Seduro characterizes Grossman's 1934 article as "a clear example of the enforced adaptation of literary scholars to the ideological requirements of the 1930's" (183). Both Pachmuss (326) and Goldstein (xxv) accept this view. Nevertheless, Seduro credits Grossman with keeping his work "on a serious scholarly plane" (189), and Goldstein commends Grossman for not "sacrificing his integrity" (xxv). Seduro writes that "the factual side" of the article is "not open to doubt" (189), while Goldstein says that Grossman's thesis rests "on the basis of irrefutable facts" (xxv) and that the article underpins much of the sixth chapter of his own book (191n6). To my mind, the 1934 article is the logical outgrowth of an interest in the reactionary side of Dostoevsky's politics that had already emerged in Grossman's work by 1924. Although Grossman shaded his rhetoric to suit the tenor of the times, the purpose of his 1934 piece was (as Seduro shows) to respond to Arkadii Dolinin, who had argued that after a conservative period during the 1860s, the writer returned to the ideals of his socialist youth.

For a recent response to the question of Dostoevsky's anti-Semitism, see Morson.

[10]On Mikhoels and the Jewish Antifascist Committee, see Gilboa 42–86, Levin 379–97, and Schwarz 202–05. While all these scholars are highly critical of the committee, treating it as a tool of Soviet propaganda, none of them calls into question Mikhoels's commitment to Soviet Jewry. For a detailed and balanced presentation of the committee's relation to the Soviet regime, see Redlich.

[11]Here is the relevant portion of Stalin's statement as quoted by Molotov: "National and racial chauvinisms are survivals of antihuman habits characteristic of the period of cannibalism. Anti-Semitism, as an extreme form of racial chauvinism, is the most dangerous survival of cannibalism" 'Национальный и расовый шовинизм есть пережиток человеконенавистнических нравов, свойственных периоду каннибализма. Антисемитизм, как крайняя форма расового шовинизма, является наиболее опасным пережитком каннибализма' (3). Molotov's speech, published in *Pravda* (Правда) on 30 November 1936, indicates that Stalin made the statement to the Jewish Telegraph Agency on 12 January 1931. McNeal, however, marks the appearance in *Pravda* as the earliest known publication (139).

On Stalin's and Molotov's statements on anti-Semitism, see also Schwarz 292–96.

[12]On the condition of the Jewish population in areas newly annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939, see Gilboa 17–19, Levin 335–59, and Schwarz 222–24.

[13]From 1936 to 1955, there appeared only two items by Grossman devoted wholly to Dostoevsky: the preface to Grossman's edition of a Dostoevsky notebook (1936) and a piece written for a Moscow newspaper to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the novelist's death (1941). (See Belkin et al.)

[14]During the height of the "anticosmopolitan" campaign of 1948–49, "Lermontov and the Cultures of the East" was attacked in the journal *October* (Октябрь) by one Sergei Ivanov, who seems to have made something of a career in those years enforcing the party line in Lermontov studies (he had previously attacked Boris Eikhenbaum's work on Lermontov). In addition to including Grossman among certain "cosmopolitan 'scholars'" 'космополитствующих «учёных»' who had "been trying . . . with all their might to reduce all the work of the great Russian poet to epigonism, to imitativeness, to apprenticeship before Western European literatures" 'всеми силами . . . старающихся свести всё творчество великого поэта к эпигонству, к подражательству, к ученичеству у западноевропейских литератур,' Ivanov exhibits particular displeasure at the suggestion that Lermontov could have been influenced by the Bible and at Grossman's focus on a "Jewish theme" 'еврейская тема' in Lermontov's work ("Еще раз" 188, 190–91).

Works Cited

Altschuler, M. "Russian Publications on Jewish Topics in the Soviet Union." *Russian Publications on Jews and Judaism in the Soviet Union*. Comp. B. Pinkus and A. A. Greenbaum. Jerusalem: Soc. for Research on Jewish Communities, 1970. ix–xvi.

Belkin, A. A., et al., eds. Ф. М. Достоевский: Библиография произведений Ф. М. Достоевского и литературы о нем, 1917–1965 [F. M. Dostoevsky: Bibliography of the Works of F. M. Dostoevsky and Works about Him, 1917–65]. Moscow: Kniga, 1968.

Cavanagh, Clare. "Synthetic Nationality: Mandel'shtam and Chaadaev." *Slavic Review* 49 (1990): 597–610.

Dubnow, S. M. *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*. Trans. L.

Friedlander. Vol. 2. Philadelphia: Jewish Pub. Soc. of Amer., 1918.

Freidin, Gregory. *A Coat of Many Colors: Osip Mandelstam and His Mythologies of Self-Presentation*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1987.

Frye, Richard N. "Oriental Studies in Russia." *Russia and Asia*. Ed. Wayne Vucinich. Stanford: Hoover Inst., 1972. 30–51.

Gessen, Iu. I. Архив графов Мордвиновых [Archive of the Counts Mordvinov]. Vol. 8. Saint Petersburg: Skhorokhodova, 1903.

———. Из истории ритуальных процессов: Велижская драма [From the History of the Ritual-Murder Trials: The Velizh Drama]. Saint Petersburg: n.p., 1906.

Gibian, George. "*Doctor Zhivago*, Russia, and Leonid Pasternak's *Rembrandt*." *The Russian Novel from Pushkin to Pasternak*. Ed. John Garrard. New Haven: Yale UP, 1983. 203–24.

Gilboa, Yehoshua. *The Black Years of Soviet Jewry: 1939–1953*. Trans. Yosef Schachter and Dov Ben-Abba. Boston: Little, 1971.

Goldberg, Anatol. "Ilya Ehrenburg." *Jews in Soviet Culture*. Ed. Jack Miller. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1984. 183–213.

Goldstein, David. *Dostoevsky and the Jews*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.

Grossman, Leonid. "Достоевский и правительственные круги 70-х годов" [Dostoevsky and Government Circles of the Seventies]. Литературное наследство [Literary Heritage] 15 (1934): 83–162.

———. Исповедь одного еврея [The Confession of a Jew]. Moscow: Frenkel', 1924. Jerusalem: Veiskopf, 1987.

———. "Лермонтов в Еврейском театре" [Lermontov at the Jewish Theater]. Советское искусство [Soviet Art] 11 May 1941: 3.

———. "Лермонтов и культуры востока" [Lermontov and the Cultures of the East]. Литературное наследство [Literary Heritage] 43–44 (1941): 673–744.

"Гроссман, Леонид Петрович" [Grossman, Leonid Petrovich]. Краткая литературная энциклопедия [Shorter Literary Encyclopedia]. Moscow: Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1964, 399–400.

"Гроссман, Леонид Петрович" [Grossman, Leonid Petrovich]. Литературная энциклопедия [Literary Encyclopedia]. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Kommunisticheskoi Akademii, 1930. 25–27.

"Гроссман, Леонид Петрович" [Grossman, Leonid Petrovich]. Писатели современной эпохи: Био-библиографический словарь русских писателей XX века [Contemporary Writers: A Biobibliographic Dictionary of Russian Writers of the Twentieth Century]. Moscow: n.p., 1928. 104–06.

Herlihy, Patricia. *Odessa: A History, 1794–1914*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986.

Isenberg, Charles. *Substantial Proofs of Being: Osip Mandelstam's Literary Prose*. Columbus: Slavica, 1987.

Ivanov, Sergei. "Еще раз о комментаторах Лермонтова" [Once Again on Lermontov's Commentators]. Октябрь [October] 26.5 (1949): 187–91.

———. "М. Ю. Лермонтов и его комментаторы" [M. Iu. Lermontov and His Commentators]. Октябрь [October] 25.11 (1948): 201–03.

Kasack, Wolfgang. *Dictionary of Russian Literature since 1917*. New York: Columbia UP, 1988.

Levin, Nora. *The Jews of the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of Survival*. Vol. 1. New York: New York UP, 1987.

Литературное наследство [Literary Heritage] 43–44 (1941).

McNeal, Robert. *Stalin's Works: An Annotated Bibliography*. Stanford: Hoover Inst., 1967.

Mikhoels, Solomon. "Испанцы Лермонтова" [Lermontov's *The Spaniards*]. Театральная неделя [Theater Week] 16 (1941): 12–13.

Molotov, V. M. "Речь тов. В. М. Молотова о новой Коституции" [Speech of Comrade V. M. Molotov on the New Constitution]. Правда [Pravda] 30 Nov. 1936: 1–3.

Morson, Gary. "Dostoevsky's Anti-Semitism and the Critics: A Review Article." *Slavic and East European Journal* 27 (1983): 302–17.

Nakhimovsky, Alice. *Russian-Jewish Literature and Identity: Jabotinsky, Babel, Grossman, Galich, Roziner, Markish*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992.

Nove, A., and J. A. Newth. "The Jewish Population: Demographic Trends and Occupational Patterns." *The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917*. Ed. Lionel Kochan. London: Oxford UP, 1970. 125–87.

Pachmuss, Temira. "Dostoevskij in the Soviet Criticism of the Early 1930's." *Slavic and East European Journal* 6 (1962): 322–33.

Pinkus, Benjamin. *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Redlich, Shimon. *Propaganda and Nationalism in Wartime Russia: The Jewish Antifascist Committee in the USSR, 1941–1948*. East European Monographs 108. N.p.: n.p., 1982.

Schwarz, Solomon M. *The Jews of the Soviet Union*. N.p.: Syracuse UP, 1951.

Seduro, Vladimir. *Dostoyevski in Russian Literary Criticism, 1846–1956*. New York: Columbia UP, 1957.

Sicher, Efraim. "The Jewishness of Babel." *Jews in Soviet Culture*. Ed. Jack Miller. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1984. 167–82.

Slutsky, Yehuda. "Anti-Fascist Committee, Jewish." *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Vol. 3. Jerusalem: Macmillan, 1971–72. 62–65. 16 vols.

"В Институте Мировой Литературы" [At the Institute of World Literature]. Литературная газета [Literary Gazette] 20 Apr. 1941: 1.

Zipperstein, Steven. *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1985.