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From the Russian Soul to Post-Communist Nostalgia

A CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN satirist once wrote that his fellow countrymen identified too much with the fairy-tale hero Ivan the Fool, who always gets the same mysterious assignment: "to go nobody knows where to find nobody knows what." But he knows exactly where it is and always comes home with a firebird (or at least with a princess) and becomes the people's hero. The problem is that Ivan the Fool does not know how to survive his everyday life between heroic deeds. He is often described as a lazy mama's boy who does nothing but nap and daydream on the heated furnace, waiting for a new feat. The *byt*, the everyday, is a more dangerous enemy for him than the multiheaded dragon with flaming tongues.

Two key words in this contemporary retelling of Ivan the Fool's story are *feat* and *everyday*: both were claimed to be untranslatable by various Russian scholars and writers. Roman Jakobson, in his formalist fairy tale about Russian avant-garde hero Vladimir Mayakovsky, the perpetual fighter against "the fortresses of *byt*," writes that the Russian word *byt* is untranslatable into "Western languages" because of the strong opposition to everyday routine known only in Russia.[1] Dmitrii Likhachev insists that the Russian word for "feat," *podvig*, is also untranslatable for cultural reasons: it does not refer to a specific achievement but rather to the spiritual drive itself.[2] These diverse representations of the Russian national character—satirical, formalist, and elegiac—are remarkably similar in their key structures: the opposition between *byt* (everyday existence) and *bytie* (spiritual or poetic existence), and the valorization of heroic sacrifice over both private life and practical accomplishment. The border between *bytie* and *byt* seems to parallel the mythical border between Russia and the West. There are radical differences between the representations of the "American dream"—the dream of the private pursuit of happiness in the family home—and the Russian dream that, according to the philosophers of "the Russian idea," consisted of heroic spiritual homelessness and messianic nomadism. Unpractical daydreaming is not part of the American myth of individual self-sufficiency. Privacy, on the other hand, is not important for the "Russian personality." Might this be the reason why the history of Russian private life remains unwritten?

In the summer of 1993, passing through Red Square, I found a display of new best-sellers right by the steps of the Lenin Museum: they included *The Russian*

Idea, *The Ways of Eurasia*, Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*, and *True Encounters with UFOs*. This strange collection reveals the expansion of an imagined post-Soviet geography from the Eurasian continent-ocean to outer space. Interest in national history, which emerged with the rediscovery of documents and the opening of the archives in Russia, is counterbalanced by a fascination with the philosophy of the Russian idea and its many popular variations. For the mythical tale of "eternal Russia," historical memory is irrelevant, and so are the prefixes *post* and *pre*, along with the relationships between modernism and postmodernism, Communism and post-Communism. Cultural myths, recurrent cultural narratives that might turn into obsessions, operate by bracketing history, by naturalizing (or spiritualizing) the historical past. They appear above and beyond ideology and politics and are frequently regarded as a cultural given. (The imagined community of the nation is based as much on shared forgetting as on shared history.) The bond of affection and the collective identification with the nation is established not only through common ways of life but also through cultural myths that constitute the phantasmic space of the national imagination.[3]

The opposition between *Russian* life and *private* life appears to have been first conceived by cross-cultural travellers between Russia and Western Europe and by homesick exiles. They were often unfaithful, if creative, translators who loved to defend radical cultural untranslatability. They interpreted cultural difference as cultural superiority or inferiority, despite the fact that their own patriotic vocabulary was a product of cross-cultural hybridization. A particular resistance to the idea of private life persisted in the writings of Slavophiles and Westernizers alike, along with the philosophers of the Russian idea, the Soviet Marxists, and the post-Soviet nationalists.

The notions of the "nomadic self" and "transcendental homelessness" might sound familiar to the reader of Western modernist and postmodern theory; in the Russian context, however, they date back to the nineteenth century and signify an opposition to the modern ideology of individualism and to modernization in general.[4] Russian and Soviet anti-individualistic spaces of the self—from an imagined nomadic community to an actual communal apartment, from the aesthetic niches of intellectuals and artists to the geopolitical dreams of the Eurasian Atlantis and Vladimir Zhirinovsky's empire—will be my subject here. These collective designs reveal tactics for domesticating the existing political regime and for escaping it, for carving imagined communities and building walls of exclusion. My emphasis will be on the cultural mythology of the Russian and Soviet model personality, both official and alternative, rather than on the actual practices of daily survival that I discuss elsewhere.[5] As for everyday experiences and practices, they both depend on and deviate from cultural myths and ideological models.

A comparative history of "private life"—of "model personalities," "national souls," and their cross-cultural "transmigrations"—might reveal both different

conceptions of the boundaries of the self that do not always fit into a relationship between private and public and some strikingly similar collective national dreams. Any discussion of actual cultural particularism has to begin with the history of the discourses on difference in a given culture. My mythological sketch is not so much a study of cultural particularism as it is a study of the specific ways of imagining and interpreting such particularism. This is not a variation on the theme of "eternal Russia" but rather an attempt to expose some of the mechanisms of cross-cultural mythmaking and the discreet charms of imperial nostalgia.

Spiritual Homelessness or Bad Housekeeping?

In 1927 Walter Benjamin wrote this provocative and laconic sentence in his essay "Moscow": "Bolshevism has abolished private life."[6] Moreover, the abolition of "private life" was accompanied by the abolition of the cafés, the sites of intellectual conversation, not ideological conversion. Thus "private life," in the view of the critic, seems to have vanished together with the public sphere in the Western bourgeois sense of the term; and the alienated intellectual flaneur is soon to become an endangered species. The desire to abolish "private life," however, was not unique to the Bolsheviks, although they might have taken it more literally. In fact, there is no single word for "privacy" in Russian. The closest is the concept of *chastnaia zhizn'* (literally, particular or partial life). Private or personal life is hardly featured as a fixed expression in any prerevolutionary dictionary. Moreover, the examples offered for "personal" reveal a certain bias: "An egoist prefers personal good to the common good."[7] Hence Russian personal life seems to belong more to a realm of publicly sanctioned guilt or a heightened sense of personal duty.

"Private life" in Russian is not opposed to "public life" but rather to "inner life." The private realm is an exotic land for the Russian cultural imagination; it was discovered not so much in the journeys inward but rather in the trips abroad, mostly westward. In Russia the "private sphere" is the theater of a major comedy of cross-cultural errors: European private behavior appeared affected and theatrical to the Russian travellers, while Russian everyday life struck the foreign visitor as unnatural and excessive, full of Dostoevskian "scandal" scenes.

Russian playwright Denis Fonvizin travelled to Western Europe in the 1770s and 1780s and wrote many letters and essays complaining about the inauthenticity of European existence. Fonvizin writes in a letter to his sister: "In general I will tell you that I am very displeased with the moral life of the Parisian French. . . . Everyone here lives for himself. Friendship, kinship, honor, gratitude—all this is considered a mere chimera. Be polite, that is, do not contradict anyone, be amiable, that is, lie, whatever comes to mind—those are two rules of

being *un homme charmant*."[8] Fonvizin's "Frenchman" uncannily resembles the Russian dictionary definition of an egoist that would appear a century later. The French *homme charmant*, a man who exists for himself and for the superficial theater of social life, comes to embody the foreigner or the enemy, in contrast to the Russian "personality." Besides lacking humanity, the French also "have no reason" (*pace* Descartes). In a distinctly Russian aristocratic fashion, Fonvizin laments the lack of obedient and obliging servants such as exist in Russia.[9] In his view, even the servants of Europe are men for themselves, aspiring to become "*hommes charmants*."

The Germans, in this description, are as insincere as the French, but in a different way. Fonvizin comments that private homes and streets in Germany are so clean that it seems "like an affectation" (*affektatsiia*).[10] Lack of dirt is equated with lack of sincerity, humaneness, and truthfulness.[11] Observations like these would lead Fonvizin to conclude that "Russians are better men than Germans." And what is Fonvizin's ideal of "natural behavior" and where does it come from? One of the central motifs of Fonvizin's travels was the frustrated search for Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom the Russian writer greatly admired. So the word *affektatsiia* is of French origin, and so is the conception of naturalness.[12]

While Denis Fonvizin found unnaturalness, hypocrisy, and a lack of humaneness in France and Germany, the Marquis de Custine was struck by the Russian "lack of human dignity" and the artificiality of everyday behavior. St. Petersburg's high society of the time of Nicholas I is compared to Hoffmanesque fairy tales in which the characters are dehumanized automatons that participate in a well-orchestrated and brilliant autocratic spectacle. He observes that people in Russia identify themselves with their duties to the Church, state, and bureaucracy; in other words, they do not possess an autonomous personal identity. In describing the interiors of the Russian aristocratic house, Custine notes the contradiction between exterior richness and imperial magnificence and "the untidiness of domestic life, a lack of private space and a profound natural disorder that reminds one of Asia."[13] What later Slavophile philosophers would see as a mark of Russian messianic homelessness appears here as bad housekeeping. Custine was particularly amazed that the bed, the most sacred and privately cherished piece of French furniture, was the least used object in Russia.[14] In their palaces, Russian counts slept on wooden benches, male servants napped on pillows right on the floor, and maids sometimes slept behind the staircase. Usually in a mansion there was also the "bed for display" (*un lit de parade*), a luxury item that one showed off to foreign guests but which one did not use. In Russian the "parade bed" was a kind of Platonic bed, existing more as an ideal form than as a practical piece of furniture. In Custine's view, the Russian obsession with keeping up appearances, more important than keeping "human dignity," is reflected in the many flimsy partitions that separate the magnificent "public" interiors of aristocratic palaces from their domestic interiors. To follow Custine's fairy-tale allusion,

we can see that the marquis himself failed to discover the Russian sleeping beauty in the interior of the enchanted imperial palace. Moreover, he seems to have missed the main irony of Russian culture by suggesting that the Russian air permeated by autocracy is "alien to the arts." The opposite has turned out to be true. Wherever the Russian writer slept, he would be responsible for the people's dreams—thus offering an escape from the autocratic air.

Of course, both Fonvizin's accounts of European life and Custine's *Letters from Russia* are unreliable texts, examples neither of historical research nor of balanced cultural judgment. One is a didactic text for the Russian imitators of Europe, while the other is an antimonarchist satirical pamphlet. Yet they reproduce some commonplaces in the cross-cultural mythologies of Russia and the West, and read the same philosopher of nature—Rousseau—in strikingly different manners. This only brings into focus the fact that conceptions of authentic and theatrical behavior, of natural and unnatural, changed after crossing the border. The opposition between nature and culture, private and public, did not clearly translate into other languages.

Petr Chaadaev, one of the first Russian émigrés who returned home, only to be declared a madman, developed the idea of homelessness: "We Russians, like illegitimate children, come to this world without patrimony, without any links with people who lived on the earth before us. . . . Our memories go no further back than yesterday; we are, as it were, strangers to ourselves."[15] In this letter Chaadaev, the student of French thought, echoes some travellers from the West, like de Bonald, who considered the Russian character to be intrinsically nomadic and who compared Muscovite houses to Scythian chariots—chariots without wheels. Chaadaev's conception of the Russian mission was truly cross-cultural and heterogeneous, a combination of the French Catholic philosophy of the anti-Enlightenment and the Russian literary imagination. The idea of "transcendental homelessness" is known to the Western reader not from Petr Chaadaev, but mainly from Georg Lukács, who regards it as a fundamental sign of international modernity. In Chaadaev, however, this is an inherent feature of the *Russian*, rather than the *modern*, tradition; but with one important distinction: "Russian homelessness" as a national feature, described by Chaadaev, is not a "modern" loss of home and roots, but a consequence of the Russian geographic and historical predicament; it does not foster modernization, but might hinder it.

Chaadaev himself, however, was opposed to the idea of Russian superiority over other nations and considered himself to be a patriot in the Enlightenment tradition.[16] But what appeared as a lack of roots, of home and cultural legitimacy, in Chaadaev's first philosophical letter is later reinterpreted by Slavophile philosophers Ivan Kireevsky and Alexei Khomiakov as a superior Russian fate. "Homelessness" is reevaluated as a state of the soul, and what matters for the Russian spirit is a collective communion, not individual privacy. The peasant commune, idealized and dehistoricized by the Slavophiles, was seen as an example of *sobor-*

nost', a spiritual gathering and community, which is an untranslatable Russian antipode to Western individualism. *Sobornost'* is the place of communal spirituality, from the word *sobor*—literally, meeting and cathedral. The spirit, according to the Slavophiles, does not rule in the cathedral (*sobor*) nor in a religious institution, but the true cathedral is where the spirit rules.

The Slavophiles were not a homogeneous group or a political party; they were gifted, highly individualized writers and intellectuals. In their view, Russian fate was metaphysical, not political. Yet they entertained various geopolitical fantasies. The poet Feodor Tiutchev, an acquaintance of Friedrich von Schelling and Heinrich Heine, who spent twenty years of his life as a diplomat in Germany and spoke German and French exclusively at home, offers a utopian vision of a great Russia:

> Seven inner seas and seven great rivers
> From the Nile to the Neva, from the Elbe to China
> From the Volga to the Euphrates, from the Ganges to the Danube
> That's the Russian kingdom.[17]

Tiutchev's romantic poem would inspire geographic fantasies, with further border expansions, for two centuries.

Some Slavophiles insisted on changing their everyday appearances and proposed a return to pre-Petrine Russian dress. Ivan Aksakov, a philosopher of the conservative utopia, grew a beard and began to wear what he considered a traditional Russian peasant coat. His contemporaries ironically remarked that he looked "like a Persian."[18] This national return to origins thus appears as a masquerade: instead of looking French or Russian, one looks Persian; even worse, perhaps, one ends up looking like an exotic Oriental, as featured prominently in the Western European cultural imagination, but doing so in an incomparable, distinctly Russian fashion. The fashioning of cultural purity is riddled with knots of contradiction and paradoxical designs.

Yet the attack on European individualism was not limited to the Slavophiles. Another exile, Alexander Herzen, during his stay in Paris in 1862, offered a detailed critique of European petit bourgeois domesticity and the middle-class conception of the individual who cares only about his little house and a "piece of chicken" in his soup, and who turns art into mere interior decoration. Art, in Herzen's definition, cannot survive in this cozy domestic self-complacency of "limited mediocrity" and vulgarity.[19] The private here is opposed not to the public but to the aesthetic. Herzen frequently describes a democratic individual as a philistine. In his view, Russia might need to learn democracy from the West, but at the same time, Russia could teach the West about communal life and beauty. Suddenly, only a few paragraphs later in the same philosophical letter, Herzen describes his great pleasure at finding a nice private apartment in Paris: "The wing of the house was not too big, not too rich, but the position of the rooms,

furniture, everything pointed at *another* conception of comfort. Near the living room there was a tiny room, completely apart, near the bedroom, a study with bookshelves and a writing desk. I walked through the rooms and it seemed to me that after long wandering I had found again a human habitat, *un chez-soi*, and not a hotel room with a number, not the human herd."[20]

Is this the trap of a wandering émigré who suddenly succcumbs to the seduction of privacy while self-consciously seeking a different kind of haven, the unsafe one, that of permanent spiritual exiles and nomads? Why is it that here the individual "human habitat" is opposed to the derogatory "human herd" and not to the ideal commune-community? Moreover, from this description it appears that art is not opposed to privacy; rather, the two exist side by side, like the bedroom and cozy study with a writing desk and bookshelves. Herzen, a displaced traveller, is happy to finally discover "a human habitat, *un chez-soi*." The French expression itself brings self and home together and emphasizes the comfort of privacy—not as deprivation but as self-sufficiency. The home of the Russian thinker in exile is the place where the contradictions between public and private are enacted; his tastes as a public man are different from his private tastes, his own desire for a home is influenced by the Western conception of privacy—even if it is only the privacy of an exile. Why is it that the European *chez-soi* does not translate into the intelligentsia's Russian?

The Nationalization of the Soul

The "Russian soul" is not a particularly Russian idea. At the turn of the nineteenth century, historian Nikolai Karamzin spoke about national pride in Russian history, but the immortal soul that he glorified is "human" rather than Russian. Love for the homeland is found in the earliest Russian chronicles and epic poems, and Russians, like other people, are defined by religion, not by ethnic origins. For Karamzin, the adjective *rossiiskii* (from the name of the great empire) is more important than *russkii* (the name of the people), and his ideal is that of enlightened state patriotism. In contrast, the definition of Russians by one of the first intelligentsia critics, Vissarion Belinsky, subverts the official state patriotism. Russians, in Belinsky's view, are defined not so much by blood or by class but by their allegiance to Russian literature. Russians are an imagined community of readers; it is culture and education that constitute a Russian community.[21] However, what distinguishes Russians is not so much what they read but *how* they read—by passionately transgressing the boundaries between life and fiction, by wishing to live out literature and, with its help, change the world. Literature in Russia was not merely one of the branches of general education but a guide to life, a sort of nineteenth-century liberation theology. Some claim that the country of Russia was born out of Russian classical literature. The concept of personal

freedom was discovered by Russian literature at a time when very little personal freedom was available legally and only to a very small percentage of the population. The secret inner freedom, the internal drama of conscience, did not necessarily translate into external freedom, into a possibility of political or social emancipation. At the same time, however, the new self-consciousness discovered by Russian literature was much broader than the discourse on the national soul.

The soul in Russia was "nationalized" later in the nineteenth century. It was divined with the help of the German romantics, particularly Johann von Herder and Schelling, as they were creatively "misread" on Russian soil. The idea of the Russian soul developed directly in response to the German *Geist* and has something of an Oedipal relation to it (it was *ressentiment*, rather than murder). Furthermore, it was celebrated by many foreign travellers—from Marquis de Vogué on. This soul is opposed to Enlightenment reason as well as to the cultivation of the body. It is a psyche without psychology, or to put it another way, its psychology could be literary but never scientific. Russian literature is famous in the West for its psychologism; but this might be a *Western* misreading. Feodor Dostoevsky wrote: "I am called a psychologist. This is not true. I am only a realist in the highest sense of the word." And later Mikhail Bakhtin said of Dostoevsky that he saw in psychology a "humiliating reification of the human soul."[22] Perhaps it is not by chance that the word *idiot* (which, in ancient Greek, did not refer to a mentally deficient person but to the "private" individual who exists outside the public sphere) appears in the title of Dostoevsky's novel. Dostoevsky's "idiot" embodies neither simple mental deficiency nor privacy, neither disease nor dailiness, but the suffering and wanderings of the soul.

According to Louis Dumont, individualism—in two senses of the word, as attention to the individual as "an empirical subject" and as a valorization of a "moral being, independent, autonomous, and thus (essentially) nonsocial"—marks the "modern ideology" and is opposed to holism, the ideology that privileges social totality and neglects or subordinates the human individual.[23] The encounter between a more traditional culture and the dominant "modern ideology" of individualism produces strange and hybrid cases of "acculturation," revealing striking national contrasts. First in Germany and then in Russia, there is an attack on that version of "modern ideology" and a rebellion against its conception of the private individual as the model for humanity. Instead a different version of individual recognition is proposed, individual not on the level of a single person but on the level of the nation: the *Volk* in Germany and *narod* in Russia.

In fact, in Russia there are two versions of the "people's spirit" (*narodnost'*), neither of which was created by the "common people." The first was part of the official monarchist doctrine of "autocracy, Orthodoxy, and the people's spirit," developed by Nicholas I's advisor, S. Uvarov, directly from Western models and even described in French. Here "the people's spirit" stands for state policy. Being

Russian is not defined by ethnicity but by allegiance to the empire and by religion. As for the alternative, Slavophile version of the people's community, it proclaimed itself to be above and beyond politics and often in opposition to the official Church; yet many Slavophile writers were supporters of the absolute monarchy.

In his travel account, "Winter Notes on Summer Impressions," Dostoevsky develops his conception of the "Russian personality" and offers us a critique of the profane trinity of Western individualism—"liberté, égalité, fraternité." He also continues in Fonvizin's tradition of the Russian representation of Paris—the capital of a people "who have no reason," not "the capital of the nineteenth century," as it was viewed by Charles Baudelaire and Benjamin.

> *Liberté, égalité, fraternité.* Very good, what is *liberté*? Freedom. What freedom? Equal freedom for everyone to do what they wish within the limits of the law? When can one do what one wishes? When one has a million. Does freedom give everyone a million? No. A man without a million is not one who does what he wishes but one with whom everyone else does what they wish. . . . As for this equality in the face of the law, the way it is presented now, every Frenchman should take it as a personal insult. What is left? Brotherhood. This is the most curious part. . . . It turned out that in the nature of the French and Westerners in general, no brotherhood could be found. What could be found is only the personal element [*lichnoe nachalo*] of an isolated individual [*osobniak*], an increased sense of defending oneself, defining oneself, selling oneself [*samopromyshlenie*]. . . .[24]

The persona of the narrator-Dostoevsky has a lot in common with his bitterly self-contradictory creation—"the underground man." Yet in this text, the writer avoids fictional framings, or else he makes himself, Feodor Dostoevsky, into the "Russian personality" par excellence. In his novels, Dostoevsky explores the torments and paradoxes of personal freedom, the limits of human dignity and humiliation, offering us a range of eccentric individual characters and novelistic dialogues. In his journalism, the dialogue is driven by the rhetoric of persuasion and a single point of view. Here individual particularity and individual rights matter less than the idea of true brotherhood.[25] Dostoevsky's freedom appears to be a freedom *from* one thing only—the "bourgeois, private self"—and *for* one thing—self-sacrifice. Dostoevsky insists that this is not his personal poetic conception, but a "law of nature."[26] This "law of nature" that governs the Russian personality is drastically opposed to the Western legal system, which, in his view, is based on the paradoxical premise that a "lie is necessary for the truth." Dostoevsky turns the jury trial as an institution into a parody. For him it is a mere spectacle, a cunning and artful game of lying. At the end of his travelogue, he proposes his own self-consciously utopian, almost "angelic" Russian solution to the problem: "We might substitute this mechanism, this mechanistic method of uncovering the truth . . . simply by truth. The artificial exaggeration will disappear from both sides. Everything will appear sincere and truthful and not merely a game in uncovering truth. Neither a spectacle nor a game will take place on the stage but

a lesson, a didactic example."[27] Here we observe the same anticonventional, antirhetorical, and antilegalistic stance as in the discussions of "personality." Truth is the antithesis of rhetoric and game-playing. However, significantly, this search "for simple truth" is itself theatricalized: Dostoevsky offers us a spectacular morality play.[28]

Late-nineteenth-century Russian legal historians made much of the fact that there was no word for a person in the old Russian codices of laws, in which "person" (*lico*) actually referred to the negation of personal dignity and a kind of slavery.[29] Peter the Great issued a decree "On Recognizing the Fools" (*duraki*), in which fools are described as people who might have inheritances and gentry backgrounds, but are of "no use to the state." In this definition, *fool*, in early-eighteenth-century Russia, like *idiot* in ancient Greek, comes closest to the private individual. Private life appears as a dangerous joke, a fool's trick that the state should watch carefully. While all human beings may have inner lives, a valorization of private life is in fact an Early Modern phenomenon, a kind of cultural luxury that resulted from long-term changes in Europe between 1500 and 1800.[30] In Russia the separation of public and private was safely under state control for a much longer period than it was in the countries of Western Europe.[31]

The nineteenth-century conceptions of "personality" and the "Russian soul" challenge some of the European ideas of the self and society and at the same time reveal a peculiar Russian-European hybrid. The discourse on the Russian soul in Dostoevsky, like the discourse on the German folk and domestic bliss, presupposes a certain degree of racial purity.[32] In Dostoevsky's universe, Germans, Jews, and Poles are deprived of the soul. (In the Russian empire they were also deprived of legal rights.)

Dostoevsky, like his great twentieth-century admirer Nikolai Berdiaev, also condemns any expression of national or religious sentiment in other nations: the former ridicules French patriotism, and the latter criticizes "Judaic messianism" as less "universal" and more narrowly "national" than Russian messianism—the only "spiritually correct," so to speak, messianism in the world.[33] Moreover, "Russian" stands for the only true universal humanity in the writings of Aksakov and the later writings of Dostoevsky. No other nation knew how to be universal the way the Russians did: "The Russian people is not a people; it is humanity."[34] For Dostoevsky, the embodiment of the Russian soul is Alexander Pushkin. The Russian soul had found its home in Russian literature; the writer, particularly the poet, becomes a model human being and a model Russian. Artistic pursuits in the highest sense take the place of private pursuits. Culture is the only available sphere of self-fashioning, social climbing, and rebellion. Pushkin is uniquely qualified to be not only a "Russian superman" but a "universal model of humanity" as well, the one who would resolve all European contradiction and show the way of salvation from European angst. This is the logic of "Russian cosmopolitanism" according to Dostoevsky: Russians are universally human but very few non-

Russians could claim the gift of humanity at all. Instead they are conveniently represented as soulless scapegoats for all Russian ills.

In some ways the story of the Russian soul is reductive even in relation to Russian literature and culture; it does not encompass the richness, originality, and diversity of Russian artistic and spiritual expressions. Moreover, the writers who wished to dissociate themselves from Slavophilic mythologies, from Pushkin to Osip Mandel'shtam, could never completely escape "soulful" cultural interpretations. The Russian soul was the uncanny creation of a foreign ghostwriter and the Russian muse; it inhabited the haunted house of European romanticism and predicted its own fall much more spectacularly than did the fall of the House of Usher.

In the early twentieth century, the Russian soul, together with the myths of utopian community, was reborn in the writings of émigrés and foreigners. Exile seemed to breed a peculiar kind of nostalgia, not for the actual Russia but for a utopian motherland, the Russia that never existed. "The Russian soul," writes Berdiaev, "does not like to settle down in one place (*ne siditsia na meste*); it is not a petit bourgeois (*meshchanskaia*) soul, not a local (*mestnaia*) soul. In the soul of the Russian folk there is an infinite quest, a quest for the invisible city of Kitezh, the invisible home."[35] Hence the Russian home is invisible and utopian. Berdiaev's Russians are "people of the end," the messianic nation, the herald of apocalypse. And people of the end need not be concerned with everyday or private life.

Berdiaev began as a Hegelian Marxist and then turned into the philosopher of the Russian idea. In his work, as well as in the work of many others, spiritual and social missions have a similar structure—a structure of transcending the everyday and constructing or imagining utopia somewhere on heaven or on earth, or else forever lamenting its impossibility. In this symbolic rewriting of Russian history, certain historical communities acquire mythical significance; historical facts turn into symbolic, myth-generating events, and their historical specificity is erased. One mythical ideal of the Russian community par excellence is the peasant commune, which embodies "Russian communitarianism, the chorus element (*khorovoe nachalo*), the union of love and freedom, without any external guaranteees."[36] Berdiaev here develops the early Slavophile idea of *sobornost'*, which is radically anti-iconographic, antirhetorical, and anticonventional. Love and freedom are not written anywhere; they are not defined in relation to language or to convention. *Sobornost'* and true spirituality can only *be* but not *mean*; they can be intuited mystically but not read or interpreted; like a symbol, they transcend language and iconography.[37] What strikes one in Berdiaev's description of Russian communality is its peculiar intertwining of German idealist metaphors (mostly from Hegelian philosophy) with biblical imagery and a rhythmical, almost incantatory style—the style of a preacher more than a writer. There is no place in this text where the reader is allowed to doubt, to reflect, to raise a question, or perhaps to look for the source of a quotation. The text reproduces

the same totality it describes—in Berdiaev's own words, the "totalitarianism" of the Russian intelligentsia.[38] The supposedly antiauthoritarian rebellion of the philosophers of Russian *sobor* offers a form of mystical authoritarianism. We hear only one single voice in Berdiaev's work, his own, and this single highly individualized charismatic voice speaks in the name of an anti-individualist community. Berdiaev asks the reader to convert, not to converse, to have spiritual communion, not communication.

The Avant-Garde Transfusion and the Stalinist Oedipus

In 1920 Alexander Bogdanov, the author of the Socialist utopian fiction *Red Star* (1908), a former "God-builder" and later a Bolshevik, proclaimed that the new principles for the organization of Soviet life should be "collectivism and monism." The new collectivism was the opposite of individual diversity or "bourgeois pluralism." Instead it advocated a "monistic fusion" of art, politics, and everyday life in a single revolutionary fashion.[39] In 1921 Bogdanov abandoned his direct involvement with politics and aesthetics to become a director of the Institute of Blood Transfusion, a move that represented the ultimate fusion of revolutionary art and science.

In 1928 Bogdanov died while conducting one of his experiments in blood transfusion on himself—only a few years after the poet Sergei Esenin committed suicide by opening up his veins and writing the verse of his suicide note in blood, killing himself and at the same time immortalizing his personal lyrical voice. Bogdanov's case is another kind of writing in blood that cements the revolutionary collectivity and transgresses the boundaries between self and other, art and life, science and science fiction.

The ideal "Soviet person" of the 1920s appeared structurally similar to the Russian personality: self-sacrificial, anti-individualist, antimaterialistic and ascetic, above and beyond the everyday. There are some internal cultural convergences between early Marxist-Leninist ideology and Russian communitarian myths. Yet in the official Bolshevik discourse as well as in the left avant-garde manifestos of the 1920s, the new Soviet man has nothing to do with the "Russian soul" and is in fact opposed to it on the grounds of "religious idealism." Moreover, the ideal Soviet communality of the 1920s is proclaimed to be international. (Sergei Tretiakov, Benjamin's exemplary "author-producer," advocates an "Americanization of personality," but this "Americanization" has more to do with his *idea* of America—the futurist land of Taylorism—than with America as such. And even this Soviet "Americanized personality" has to be anti-individualistic.) Moreover, the ideal comrade—this term includes men and women, both equally virile—does not indulge in "bourgeois psychology"; no wonder the creation of

the new person prefigures the destruction and strict prohibition of psychoanalysis in Russia.[40]

Vladimir Voloshinov, a member of Bakhtin's circle, offers us a strong critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. In his view, social needs are much more important than sexual desires, and a person is seen as a product of "everyday ideology" more than of his or her "private" and individual unconscious: "The individual consciousness not only cannot be used to explain anything; but on the contrary, is itself in need of explanation from the vantage point of the social, ideological medium."[41] Voloshinov sees the emphasis on sexuality as an expression of *Western* "bourgeois individualism," which—predictably—leads to absurdity, decadence, and other dead ends. He claims that the struggle Freud considers internal, the individual's conflict between consciousness and the unconscious, should be, in fact, located on the level of the "everyday ideology" of the particular society and read as a struggle between official and nonofficial discourses.[42] The new Soviet primal scene is supposed to be one of a collective (and rather unerotic) intercourse, and there is no mirror in a fanciful fin de siècle frame in which a plump mama's boy can see himself reflected. In Soviet Russia, social consciousness takes over individual unconsciousness, and the dreamwork happens on a larger national level, but it uses similar mechanisms of displacement and condensation, repression and denial.

The relationship between "Russian" and "Soviet" is highly contested in the post-Soviet period. Extreme views of the relationship range from presenting the Soviet Union as a "Russophobic" state governed by non-Russians (frequently Jews or "Caucasians"), which led to Russia's destruction, to viewing the Soviet period as a brief episode in the history of the Russian empire. As far as the ideal model of Soviet personality is concerned, there is an explicit difference in its representation between the 1920s and the 1930s. In the 1920s, Soviet men and women had to overcome the ethnicity that was part of their "petit bourgeois" background. In the 1930s, Stalin reinstituted nationality; it appeared as the "fifth line" in the Soviet passport and it played an important role in official patriotism. The Soviet Union was celebrated as a gigantic ethnographic show where each ethnicity was represented by joyful couples in national costumes playing popular instruments in front of an idyllic rustic dwelling decorated with folkloristic portraits of Stalin (painted on Uzbek cotton or engraved on Yakut ivory). The patriotic musical, such as *The Cossacks from Cuban'* or *Volga, Volga*, was one of Stalin's favorite genres. It offered comic relief but at the same time helped to naturalize ideology, presenting old cultural heroes in new ideological trappings. The Soviet man, like the masterpiece of socialist realist art, had to be "national in form" and "socialist in content." The expression "Russian soul" might have been out of fashion in socialist realist jargon, but another stock expression took its place: "high soulfulness" (*vysokaia dukhovnost'*) or the high spirituality of the Russian people.

Hannah Arendt suggests that a complete lack of interest in everyday prob-

lems and an orientation toward "a great task that occurs once in two thousand years" were among the main qualities that Heinrich Himmler searched for in his SS men.[43] She presents the totalitarian man as a kind of armed bohemian for whom war is home and civil war, fatherland—a lonely man isolated from normal social relationships, who has "lost the capacity for both experiences and thought."[44] For the Soviet man, loneliness and isolation, alienation and sadness are declared to be major bourgeois vices; life in the Soviet Union, in Stalin's words, "has become merrier, life has become better." Yet, as in the German model, in the socialist realist hagiography, the orientation toward the future is fundamental. Stalin's ideal man was acculturated into ideology and good Soviet manners, given a mythical Soviet biography. His was a bildungsroman in which the main event was emancipation of the revolutionary conscience, a rite of passage accomplished through breaking the traditional ties of family, friends, and social circles.[45]

If in the twenties the official discourse of communality was sharply directed against the family and in favor of collective comradeship, in the thirties the family metaphor was back. It was often presented as a new family, with Stalin in the roles of lover, father, husband, and grandfather of the people. In other words, the nuclear family was enjoined again to avoid the "leftist excesses" of free love and occasionally also to ensure the proper supervision of the members of the family. In this larger-than-life Soviet patriarchy, Stalin was the patriarch and Pavlik Morozov, the young pioneer and hero of collectivization, his most faithful son. His portrait was a part of the visual propaganda of Soviet schools from the 1930s through the 1980s, and his hagiographic biography offered Soviet schoolchildren ideological lessons and a helping of heroic fairy tales.

The story of young pioneer Pavlik Morozov, who informed on his natural father, accusing him of being a kulak, is the Soviet version of the Oedipal myth—only the secrets of blindness and the metaphysical conversation with the Sphinx are lacking. The story of blindness was not a part of socialist realist education; what was emphasized, rather, was didactic transparency, not the riddle of vision and visibility. In the time of *glasnost'* the popular journal *Ogonek* published new documentary evidence claiming that the boy was manipulated by his natural mother, who was jealous of the father, a man who happened to be not even a kulak but an impoverished *seredniak* (a "middle" peasant just barely above the poverty level). This new revelation shows that the story of the hero-pioneer Pavlik Morozov was only a tragic family romance in the most traditional sense, a story of private obsessions, and not a didactic Soviet fairy tale. Yet the piece in *Ogonek* proves as timely and mythological as the legend of the young pioneer itself.

In memoirs written in the 1960s through the 1980s, survivors of Stalinism meditate on the fate of the individual and the role of the Russian and Soviet intelligentsias. They shed some light on the actual practices of daily survival of those who were fortunate enough to have escaped the camps, and they reveal

various degrees of deviation from and allegiance to the official mythology. Nadezhda Mandel'shtam offers us an anatomy of personal compromise during the Stalin years. Mandel'shtam rereads Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* after the war and engages in a dialogue with him about personality, the individual, and the fate of a nation. In her view, the disease of the twentieth century is "the shrinking of the personality" but the reason for it was hardly bourgeois individualism. Stalinist Russia created two types of nonpersons: the ones (among whom she includes herself) who lived in a torpor with a single thought—"how to survive the burden of the times"—and the egocentrists who thought only to save themselves and who "are ready to do anything for an instant of pleasure."[46] The difference from Dostoevsky is that Mandel'shtam's "egocentrist" has distinctly Soviet origins; the loss of personality is a result of state power, not of the national spirit. In her view, the Dostoevskian national idea and the messianic individualism of a nation could lead to the paranoic isolation from the world that was the Soviet Russian experience in the twentieth century. The homelessness that she and her husband experienced was, unfortunately, not a poetic metaphor. One's "I" could be taken away as well as one's home or even one's room in a densely populated communal apartment: "The 'I,' shrunken and destroyed, sought refuge anywhere it could find it, conscious of its worthlessness and the lack of a housing permit."[47]

Lidia Ginzburg, cultural critic and disciple of the formalists in the 1920s, elucidates further the mechanisms of survival during the war and the epoch of Stalinist terror in degrees of compromise and betrayal.[48] In her view, "people operated through mechanisms of adaptation, justification, and growing indifference—only for some people these mechanisms worked with interruptions, instances of human decency. Among those who functioned or 'coincided' with the regime were honest believers, the self-hypnotized and the cynically resigned. In the years of Stalin's terror the 'untruth' resided not in the general ideological worldview, but often in the intonation, in the ostensible public display of one's agreement with the regime." This excessive display of allegiance and collaboration was a public display of eliminated private life and of absolute coincidence between inner thoughts and official ideology.[49]

Kitchen Communities of the 1960s: Privacy as an Aesthetic

In the postwar and especially in the Stalinist epochs, "the everyday life of Soviet working people" and its "imminent improvement" were discussed more widely than before both in the official press and during the informal gatherings of the intelligentsia of the thaw. The latter rewrote the official "collective" as an unofficial association of friends, a rather casual community of transient soul mates who had their most important conversations in the small, overcrowded

kitchens of a few noncommunal apartments. Occasionally one of the soul mates would inform on another one, and occasionally one would be called to the KGB. (The Soviet joke of the thaw describes it like this: "Great progress was made in Brezhnev's time: the plans are now fulfilled better and more quickly. In Stalin's time the joke-teller would serve ten years in prison; now it is only three.") In some ways this imaginary community of 1960s friends and joke-tellers ironically flaunted its own fragility. The community was not based on blood but rather on a shared mythology of the urban intelligentsia, which enjoyed a wide prestige at the time. By the late 1960s, "privacy" began to be seen as the only honorable and uncompromising response to the system of public compromise. It was not an escape, but rather a way of carving an alternative space and a way of personalizing and de-ideologizing (to use a favorite term of perestroika intellectuals) the official maps of everyday life. Joseph Brodsky, in his autobiographical essay "Less Than One," describes one of such "kitchen communities of readers," offering a kind of elegy to the postwar urban "lumpen-intelligentsia" that made ethical choices "based not so much on immediate reality as on moral standards derived from fiction":

> This wasn't, as it might seem, another lost generation. This was the only generation of Russians that had found itself, for whom Giotto and Mandel'shtam were more imperative than their own personal destinies. Poorly dressed but somehow still elegant . . . they still retained their love for the non-existent (or existing only in their balding heads) thing called "civilization." Hopelessly cut off from the rest of the world, they thought that at least that world was like themselves; now they know that it is like others, only better dressed As I write this, I close my eyes and almost see them in their dilapidated kitchens, holding glasses in their hands, with ironic grimaces across their faces. "There, there . . ." They grin. "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité . . . Why does nobody add Culture?"[50]

This was an eccentric community of Leningradian "spiritual exiles" who nostalgically worshipped a fictional "civilization" in their crammed communal kitchens. Rebelling against the imposed collectivity of Soviet life, they created a community of their own, carving extra dimensions in Brodsky's "room and a half."[51] The imagined community was not joined solely by high art, but also by unofficial urban popular culture that included the so-called auteur songs by the new bards. (The status of those tapes reflected the status of the intelligentsia itself. Many of the lyrics were neither prohibited nor officially published—at least not until much later; they were memorized together with familiar melodies and preserved on tapes that circulated widely in cities and towns all over Russia.) The songs of the popular bard of the time, Bulat Okudzhava, rediscovered everyday life and celebrated insignificant incidents of daily existence that were outside the grand historical picture—the streets of one's childhood, the last trolleybus, transient loves. Okudzhava has one short song about ordinary life on Arbat, one of the old Moscow streets that for him became his vocation, his "homeland," and

even his religion. The worn-out words such as *religion* and *homeland* come from official-speak, but this Arbat religion consists only of minor everyday epiphanies on street corners.[52]

The bards of the thaw did not try to invent a new language as the revolutionary poets of the 1920s had done; rather they rediscovered a *private intonation*, a private colloquial language that became the eclectic poetic slang of the 1960s intelligentsia. Many of their lyrics appear similar to those of European bards; the distinction lies more in their contexts than in their texts. The Soviet bards sang about urban loneliness, personal sadness, joy, and alienation, but mostly their songs were about *the right to solitude*, the right to sing about private emotions and to put them in the foreground. Most Soviet people at that time lived in overcrowded communal apartments, lonely perhaps but rarely alone; hence the moments of self-conscious alienation and the recognition of solitude were cherished. The right to sing of solitude was like the right to privacy, an unofficial right carved out with unofficial everyday artistic practices. (This was only fifteen years after Andrey Zhdanov's persecution of Mikhail Zoschenko and Anna Akhmatova for being "too lyrical" and personal.) After the events of 1968, and the entrance of Soviet tanks into Czechoslovakia, a few members of the thaw generation became dissidents, and their private lives became literally equated with the political underground. But the majority limited themselves to the gentle subversion and minor private retreats from the public li(f)e.

To sing "Oh Arbat, my Arbat, you are my fatherland" in the 1990s has very different connotations than it had in the 1960s, since Arbat has now become the premier commercial street of Moscow. Here street life has been rediscovered, and various flaneurs and vendors have found their fleeting pleasures in buying and selling totalitarian kitsch.

Post-Soviet / Postmodern?

The August 1991 coup d'état was a heroic and comic denouement of the Soviet grand narrative as well as of the main narrative of Sovietology. (A poet from the thaw generation, Evgeny Evtushenko, wrote a post-Soviet fairy tale dedicated to the events of the coup that until recently was on the Russian best-seller list.) The collective experience of resistance during the coup was perceived by many as uplifting and cathartic: intellectuals and workers of all ethnic origins, postmodern artists, and new entrepreneurs came together on the barricades. In a peculiarly postmodern fashion, on the day before the events Soviet TV broadcast an adaptation of *The Non-Returner*, Alexander Kabakov's apocalyptic science-fiction novel that predicts a victorious military coup in the early 1990s. But occasionally life only pretends to imitate art and is, in fact, cheating on it. The people of Moscow

and St. Petersburg did not behave like people of the end and fought for their imperfect present. Some ironic Russian journalists have suggested that the abolition of the Soviet Union was a theatrical necessity: the people who had participated in building the barricades became bored and disenchanted with their daily grind, and the new, exciting, risky event was uplifting for their imaginations.[53]

With the end of the Soviet Union, there was a mass perception of the loss of some kind of Soviet communality and of a unified Soviet cultural text, a Soviet master narrative that had produced a distinct kind of conformism as well as a distinct form of dissidence. This feeling of loss, reflected in the new post-Soviet press from left to right across the political spectrum, was either partially celebrated or partially mourned, but there was no clear agreement as to what exactly constituted that cultural text in the first place.

One of the leaders of the Moscow underground culture of the 1970s and 1980s, poet and artist Dmitrii Prigov, sees in the end of the Soviet Union the end of a culture-centric Russian universe, the end of that imagined community of readers of Russian literature that began to dissolve with the demise of censorship. In the text "Wishes of Good Health to You, Gentlemen of Letters," which is not without some hellish Dostoevskian ambiguities, it is ironically suggested that the "writers fighting for the Europeanization of Russia, the writers possessed by quite noble and progressive impulses . . . are digging their own grave, or, if you wish, are cutting that beautiful century-old branch on which they sit; and as a result they will confront a complete disappearance of Russian literature as an even remotely significant sociocultural phenomenon."[54] Prigov's own art is a great depository of Soviet folklore and Russian myths; among his characters we find the ordinary poet-everyman, such as his own alter ego Dmitrii Aleksanych, lonely policemen who drink beer in the House of Writers, and garbage collectors who have mystical revelations. His works are abundant with found objects from Soviet everyday life, borrowed or stolen relics of the Russian cultural text, and quotations from Pushkin to Alexander Solzhenytsyn. He often reflects on the myth of the poet in Russian culture, the poet who was supposed to be a second government and the conscience of the nation:

> I, for one, am an ordinary poet
> and just because of our Russian fate
> I have to be the conscience of the nation
> But how to do that if I don't have any conscience
> Maybe I have a few poems, but no conscience
> So what's there to do?[55]

Prigov's intonation is colloquial and almost naive. His everyday language seems to water down poetic metaphors, slogans, literary commonplaces. He often breaks poetic rhythms—not in an avant-garde fashion but in an ordinary fashion,

as if he had been simply interrupted by outside noise and the chaos of daily routine. His poetic line remains imperfect and unfinished, like a conversation in which the poet and his addressee had suddenly lost interest. Yet the idea of sincerity that played such a key role in the Russian cultural self-definition, from Fonvizin to Dostoevsky and up to Evtushenko, is dear to the poet's heart. His is the "new sincerity," sincerity in quotation marks, the only kind that an honest post-Soviet survivor can afford. Prigov occasionally plays the role of the last lonely policeman of the lost Empire of Russian Letters. His books, which are now in print for the first time in his thirty-year career, in their format look like stylized versions of the prohibited samizdat editions of the 1970s. Yet Prigov's imperial nostalgia is ironic. It allows him to inhabit various styles and personae and to delay the apocalyptic predicament that haunts many of his fellow artists.

It is very important to distinguish the nuances of nostalgia and not to condemn it entirely in the name of history and progress. Nostalgia has to do with a personal memory of experiences, and with personal affections and the ways of making sense of them. The word *nostalgia* has two roots—*nostos* (home) and *algia* (longing). I would provisionally suggest two types of nostalgia. The first one, the utopian one, emphasizes *nostos* and dreams of rebuilding the utopian greater Patria—some version of "the Russia that we lost," to borrow the title of a recent film. The second one emphasizes longing and is enamored with desire rather than with the referent itself. This ironic nostalgia permeates the works of many post-Soviet artists, members of the former underground. They reconfigure and preserve various kinds of imagined community and offer interesting cultural hybrids—of Soviet kitsch and memories of totalitarian childhood that emerge in painting and conceptual art, of avant-garde techniques and commercial stylizations that are visible in the best programs of auteur-television (a phenomenon particularly striking in Eastern Europe in general). New twenty-year-old artists rebel against the ironic palimpsest of the veterans of the Brezhnev-era underground and hark back to the Russian avant-garde or to what they, together with Prigov, call the "new sincerity." As for the new curators, they attempt to combine the Russian charismatic persona of the master of artistic ceremonies with the new *imadzh* of the Western-style manager of a nonprofit organization.

The state of culture in the new Russia, although less central to the new national self-definition, is far from apocalyptic. Now it is the Russian democratic press and the new television programs that allow for greater input from artists and intellectuals. These media are continuing some of the traditions of Russian culture and recent postmodern art by offering humorous yet biting satires of the extreme right, by providing daring investigative reports, and by experimenting with the media themselves and undermining the boundaries between high and low culture. At the moment, Russian television appears to be much more diverse in style and range of programming than American television.

Post-Soviet/Antimodern: From the Eurasian Atlantis to Zhirinovsky's Communal Apartment

The utopian nostalgia of the extreme right has also flourished in the post-Soviet period. In Mikhail Gorbachev's time, the future-oriented ideology of the avant-garde and socialist realism was replaced by a backward glance of commemoration. The past, in contemporary Russia, has turned into a kind of future perfect, or future imperfect (both are clear deviations from Russian grammar). There has been great confusion about what is to be commemorated and what is to be forgotten. In 1993 I confirmed what Walter Benjamin observed some sixty-five years earlier: all the street clocks in Moscow still show different times.

The opening of the archives in the late 1980s allowed, for the first time, the meticulous work of documentation—done by groups such as Memorial and its many branches—dedicated to the preservation of historical memory, especially of the Stalinist period. At the same time, the belief in concealed facts, hidden national treasures, and various conspiracies that prevents Russians from knowing their true history persists. Everyone has become an amateur historian, on the left and on the right. The new grassroots nationalism (including some groups with strong ties to the KGB and former Soviet *nomenklatura*) represents a peculiar folklorization of high-cultural nationalist or imperialist theories.

Besides the Slavophiles, Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer*, and the formerly prohibited philosophers of the Russian idea like Berdiaev, one of the most popular rediscoveries is the geopolitical fantasy of Russia-Eurasia, the continent-ocean, the lost Atlantis.[56] The borders of the Russian empire and Stalinist Soviet Union are now regarded as the geographically "natural" borders of Eurasia, where all different peoples were (or should be) voluntarily united under Great Russia. The concept of "colonization" applies only to the vandalistic "Romano-Germanic" West and their geographically unnatural exploits. Eurasia, of course, is not merely a specific geographic entity, but a state of the soul, a worldview, a spiritual continent. Russia-Eurasia is a resolution of the contradictions between the East and the West, a synthesis of Europe and Asia (excluding China, India, and Indonesia) and a world of its own. Russia-Eurasia is the dream of total self-sufficiency and the isolation of the imperial continent and its spiritual world from the alien "Romano-Germanic people." Eurasia will be an ideocracy, a state where the idea of truth governs, not the laws. The notion of property in general and private property in particular is also seen as a dangerous "Romano-Germanic concept" that will not be needed for the holistic ethico-religious worldview of Eurasia. The Eurasian personality is not "egocentric" but symphonic, choral (*sobornaia*), ready to sacrifice itself not for the people or the state but for the "Eurasian world." The Eurasian idea harks back not to the romantic folk spirit or pan-Slavism of the

nineteenth century Slavophiles but rather to the "new Middle Ages" and the religious theocratic state with its Russian Orthodox foundations. In fact, the specifics of time, space, and actual history and historicity are irrelevant for this nostalgic utopian fundamentalism. Moreover, the separation of spheres of existence—of art, culture, everyday life, religion, politics—will be further abolished. The great Russian literature that was an imaginary homeland of the nineteenth-century intellectual will no longer play a crucial role in the Eurasian empire, which will be ideocratic and not culture-centric.

The original Eurasians were a small group of young Russian exiles of the 1920s, including talented writers and intellectuals such as the philologist Nikolai Trubetsky, the historians M. M. Shakhmatov, G. V. Vernadsky, and L. P. Karsavin, the musicologist P. P. Suvchinsky, the geographer and economist P. N. Savitsky, the legal scholars V. N. Il'in and N. N. Alekseev, and the religious philosopher Georgi Florovsky (who later abandoned and criticized the movement). Their centers were Prague, Paris, Belgrade, and Sofia, and they were part of a larger movement called "Changing Landmarks." They grew progressively more pro-Soviet, and in some cases even pro-Stalinist, and were described as "Eurasio-Bolsheviks." In the 1930s, with their influence decreasing in exile, they thought of proselytizing in the Soviet Union and of organizing their own party, which, in their view, would naturally supplant the Bolsheviks. (In their opinion, the Bolsheviks just needed to see the national connotations behind their thinly disguised social and class discourse.) Some planned to return to the Soviet Union and while abroad were recruited by the KGB.[57]

Trubetsky supported his Eurasian theory with his research on Indo-European etymology as well as ethnography. He claimed that the terms for spirituality in Russian share roots with Turkish and Iranian languages, while the vocabulary of material culture and the body came from the West.[58] Thus the religious and philosophical opposition of mind and body, of spiritual and material, as well as all social and class oppositions are translated into the language of nationalism. Even in traditional folk dances, the Russian chorus personality is opposed to "'Romano-Germanic" individualism and conventional couple behavior.[59] Individualized sexuality is a part of the Romano-Germanic individualized worldview, while communal rhythmical pathos is part of the realm of Eurasia.

Eurasianism was a masterpiece of the utopian exilic imagination. Like the Russian soul, the Eurasian soul is nomadic. In this mythical history, the Eurasian world first realized itself in the empire of Genghis Khan, and now its spiritual center has moved to the Russian empire. Eurasian nomadism is radically opposed to the wandering of "rootless cosmopolitans," alienated residents of the metropolis, or to the unfortunate displacements of exile. "All kinds of cultural cosmopolitanism and internationalism deserve decisive denunciation," wrote Trubetsky in his essay "On True and False Nationalism."[60] Romano-Germanic individualism

and cosmopolitanism are described as "the worst kind of chauvinism." Eurasian nomadism is "natural," patriotic, and meaningful. It appears that people forced into exile and disappointed with their new and not particularly hospitable homeland translated their own isolation into a metaphysical and political principle of exclusionary empire—the opposite of modern alienation or the indifferent democratic state. Perhaps they saw in the dream of Eurasia and in the victory of the Eurasian party a redemption of their senseless exile. While living in the West, estranged both from the actual concerns of their ex-compatriots who remained in the Soviet Union and from their often unfriendly or indifferent Western neighbors, they imagined a world completely isolated and disconnected from their present existence, a world that preserved the flavors of the motherland and yet was also self-sufficient and superior to anything existing in the present. Intellectuals of the Eurasian movement might have asked important questions about the particularity of Russian culture and history, but their utopian answer only helped to distort and mythicize those questions.

In all fairness to the émigré intellectuals, the best critique of Eurasianists and their less talented acolytes came in the late 1920s from their fellow exiles in the social democratic and liberal camps. Eurasians were criticized for authoritarianism, Communo-Bolshevism, and for the denial of "human culture." Émigré sociologist N. I. Chebyshev wrote in 1927: "Eurasianism is a by-product of exile. It got nice and brown on the margarine of cheap diners, it simmered in the reception rooms where they waited for their visas, and it went into flames in fights with a concierge. It brewed on the illiteracy and the lack of knowledge about Russia of those who were forced into exile by revolution and madness at a time when they were only teenagers."[61] The ironic violence that is done to Eurasians in this quotation comes not from *what* the critic says but *how* he says it—in his linguistic and stylistic register. Chebyshev descends from the metaphysical heights of Eurasian discourse into a colloquial style with everyday cooking metaphors. He places the Eurasians back in the everyday of exile, into all things quotidian, present and foreign, that they so carefully eliminate from their texts. The pathos of isolationism and superiority might be merely the result of a petty quarrel with a "Romano-Germanic" concierge. The evocation of the cheap margarine of fellow exiles might have been cruel, but so was forgetting it.

The fate of some of the original Eurasians was tragic; many who collaborated with Stalin were shot, and some were arrested when Russian troops entered Prague and spent years in the labor camps. Their ideas became a part of the intellectual camp folklore and were salvaged from oblivion with the help of some of their Soviet followers, including Lev Gumilev. He was the son of Anna Akhmatova and the poet Nikolai Gumilev (shot during the Red Terror in 1921), who himself spent over a decade in the gulag, where he might have met former Eurasians. In the 1970s and 1980s, Gumilev, a scholar of Eastern civilization, taught a number of unofficial seminars and had a large following among the urban intel-

ligentsia, due to his family aura, personal charisma, and nearly dissident status. By the late 1980s, Gumilev's theories had taken a strong racial bent. In his revision of ancient Russian history, the main enemy of the Russian people was the kingdom of Jewish Khazars, who waged a total war against the Russian "ethnos" by way of a cruel elimination of the ethnic aristocracy and by disinformation, "which, as is well known, was prescribed by their religion."[62] (Ironically, the Russians survived that war and the Khazars did not.) Gumilev distinguished between a "super-ethnos" and an "ethnos-parasite." If an ethnos-parasite enters the super-ethnos, the latter seen as an organic part of the soil and local landscape, it "cannot find an ecological niche for itself and has to live at the expense of the others" (141–42). His attack, focused on the Khazars and the ethnos-parasite—both code names for Jews in the Soviet context—goes beyond the more moderate and metaphysical program of the Eurasians.

Gumilev's theory seems to offer an unfortunate marriage of Eurasianism and the Stalinist campaign against "rootless cosmopolitans" who, after all, ended up in the same gulags with the Eurasians (that happened to be their common "ecological niche" in Stalinist Russia). Moreover, a specifically Soviet anti-Zionist campaign in the 1960s and 1970s was directed more toward domestic politics than toward foreign affairs; the campaign was not only a form of state-sponsored anti-Semitism, but also a KGB code name for dissidents who, their actual ethnic origins notwithstanding, were declared agents of international Zionism. While some (initially) moderate Russian nationalist writers from the village-prose tradition enjoyed unspoken official patronage from the Brezhnev government, most of the urban intelligentsia of the 1960s through the early 1980s avoided anti-Semitism; it was the domain of the official Soviet discourse, promoted in a euphemistic manner as a campaign against Zionism. So there are many sad ideological paradoxes in the recent, born-again Eurasianism that in the 1990s serves to naturalize the borders of the former Soviet Union and graft Soviet prejudices onto the Eurasian ones. The key difference between the Eurasian ideas and the ideas of liberal nationalists or democrats who are trying to redefine Russian patriotism is that for the Eurasians there is no concept of human subjectivity as such—however incomplete and imperfect it might be; the national is written in the genes (not in language or culture) and is the primal foundation of the personality. As Yugoslav émigré writer Danilo Kiš wrote in the 1970s, "Nationalists do not see people as particular persons but as nationalists of a different kind, members of a different group, and hence for a nationalist the motto is not 'nothing human is alien to me,' but 'whatever is not mine (Serbian, Croatian, French) is alien to me.'"[63]

By the 1990s, radical Eurasian ideas—Gumilev's fancy pseudoscientific discussion of "biosphere and ethnogenes," combined with mystical revelations from two books, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and *The Book of Vlas*, both widely recognized historical forgeries—entered the popular culture of the extreme right

and new versions of Great Russia far surpassing those of the Eurasian imagination began to flourish.[64] The Eurasian continent-ocean is too small to contain the "treasures of Russian history." In this rewriting, proto-Russians were possibly descendants of Atlantis and, surely, of Aryans and Phoenicians, Trojans and Sumerians. (The Sumerian past is disputed by Hungarian nationalists who also regard the great Eurasian Genghis Khan to be proto-Hungarian; Serbian, Albanian, Greek, and Turkish nationalists have claims on Troy; and for Atlantis, it is an international utopianists' battleground.) The extreme right-wing Petersburg newspaper *Pages of Russian History* publishes "history lessons" complete with linguistic analyses.[65] It claims that it has been hidden from the Russian people that proto-Russian words can be found all over the world: Mesopotamia comes from two Russian words—*meshanie potomstva* (mixing progenitors). The leader of the Trojans, Aeneas, also has a Russian name—Venet (the Slav). Following this logic, Venice should be the capital of the Slavs. The name *Rus* has a double meaning—dispersed all over the world (*rasseiny*) and blond, white-skinned (*rusye*)—just so they won't be confused with other diasporic groups. But the biggest discovery and surprise concerns Mount Zion, which apparently derives its name from the Slavic root *siiat'* (to shine)—a peculiar twist on the anti-Zionist campaign. This could all be seen as a parody of Trubetsky's scientific linguistics, or as the peculiar revenge of popular etymology, a paranoic linguistic move that turns geography into Slavic lexicography. The discourse of Russian untranslatability thus acquires a new meaning. It is not about purifying contemporary Russian and changing the name of St. Petersburg to Sviatopetrograd, as was proposed earlier by Solzhenytsyn, who declared that foreign importations to Russian are "degradations of the soul." In fact, according to this "history lesson," there are hardly any truly foreign words left—worthy of any attention—that do not have proto-Russian roots or suffixes. This is a peculiarly literal reading of Dostoevsky's model of Russian cosmopolitanism. Even the phoenix is a Russian bird: it is only another name for the original firebird. Moreover, the proto-Russians are described as the greatest phallic worshippers, having preserved that cult much longer than the peoples of the decadent West. Hence Mother Russia finally regains her missing masculine powers.[66]

The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, Zhirinovsky, represents the most extreme, almost parodic personification of post-Communist nostalgia of the nationalist type. He appears like Dostoevsky's paltry devil and one is never sure whether he is merely a figment of someone's feverish imagination or the ultimate threat of evil. One of his shadow foreign ministers has said about him: "Zhirinovsky is a state of the soul"; one of the early articles in the democratic press examining his appeal was entitled "The Russian Soul in a Tank?"[67] Zhirinovsky proposes to reinstate the borders of the Russian empire from Alaska to Finland, to invade Turkey, to spread radioactive waste in the Baltics, to turn Kazakhstan into a "scorched desert," and more. While many have commented that the name

of his party is a misnomer, he claims that he renews the "historical tradition of the Russian progressive liberal movement of the nineteenth century." (A rather unfortunate appropriation.) In mock-historical fashion, he advocates a return to the imperial gubernatorial division of the empire instituted by Peter the Great, a division that would finally do away with any trace of national sovereignty. His nostalgia is not for the old Slavophile's village commune but for the imperial "people's spirit."

Recently, on a Moscow street, I came across a book entitled *The Zhirinovsky Phenomenon*.[68] Deceived by the scholarly look of the book, which claims to investigate the "man that arouses the most controversy" and is written by "leading sociologists" and "doctors of philosophy," I soon realized that this was a veiled form of Zhirinovsky's party propaganda and that it looked like those deceptive Soviet political editions that masquerade as scientific objectivity. Yet the book has none of Zhirinovsky's preposterous rhetoric. It came out from the publishing house Kontrolling (a very recent acquisition in the Russian vocabulary) in a series called "The Mysteries of Power and Organization" that began with a new translation of Machiavelli. The first chapter, entitled "Personality and Image" (*imadzh*—another key post-Soviet term), portrays Zhirinovsky as a "Western-educated man" who speaks the Russian "mother truth." The book offers a moderate, professional self-fashioning of Zhirinovsky through a series of photographs: family pictures, wedding shots, portraits of him at his writing desk with a brooding expression and dramatic lighting (the caption reads: "He resolves the most complicated problems"), and even a casual photo of the hero lying on his sofa, reading, dressed in a turtleneck and knitted cardigan, looking like any other member of the intelligentsia who loves the look of Yves Montand in the 1960s. The caption says, "Inside, I am a calm, ordinary man." So Zhirinovsky opts for both a Russian soul and Western privacy. He both denounces the conspiracy of "Western Snickers and Mars chocolate bars" and enjoys Western advertisements. By no means does he fashion himself in a traditional Russian costume.

Benedict Anderson writes that the imagined community of a nation is often based on the biographical or autobiographical model; biography as a mass-cultural genre, a product of nineteenth-century romanticism, coincided with the development of a national conscience. Zhirinovsky's autobiography is an interesting example of a story of personal and national resentment. Here is how Zhirinovsky remembers the insults and injuries of communal life, reaching a Dostoevskian pitch:

> I had no place to play—not in the room, not in the corridor. There was always a line for the toilet, and it stank, because it always stinks in the toilet if there are no air fresheners. . . . But if ten or eleven people stand in line for the toilet every morning, there is no time for air fresheners. And some smoked in there, which was also disgusting. Since my childhood I had been enveloped by this poisonous cigarette smoke. I was in everybody's way, because I was the smallest one in the apartment. And this is the law of the elders in the communal

apartment—to take it out on the smallest one. Everyone would push me, say something rude. . . . And who would defend me? I had neither father nor brother. . . . [What follows is the story of an irresponsible young stepfather, for whom the mother cares at the expense of her son.][69]

The syntax of the autobiography is extremely simple, as if written in the voice of a child, unmediated by adult reflection. This is not the merely artistic device common to autobiography, the free, indirect discourse that an adult author uses to let the voice of his younger self come through. Time and distance are eliminated completely; the humiliation occurs over and over again in the present and the resentment cuts through time.

Zhirinovsky's communal apartment is the perfect setting for a Freudian family romance pregnant with mythical possibilities—the evil stepfather, the ghosts of a true father and true mother(land), and so on (I leave this for future social psychoanalysts to pursue). The communal apartment of Zhirinovsky's childhood smells of bad collectivity; the child is enveloped in poisonous smoke, yearning for an air freshener—hardly a common commodity in the postwar Soviet Union, but certainly a perfect metaphor for stagnation. The drama of homelessness and bad housekeeping here acquires a new twist; the communal apartment is a pseudohome, the true home being great Russia. The individual resentment will be played out on the national level, and the unhappy family romance will be taken out of the context of individual biography and put into the national history. The story could have been read as the rebellion of an individual caught up in the stifling atmosphere of imposed official collectivity, whose only escape would be in the solitary reading of his favorite classic—Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy*. But the aesthetic escape did not suffice in the case of Zhirinovsky. In a grandiloquent gesture he equates his own humiliation with that of the people. Which people? The Russians who live "nearest abroad" (that is, in the former Soviet republics), the true patriots. But the people matter only as an abstract principle, since he rejected and was rejected by each actual community he encountered in his childhood, from his communal apartment neighbors to his peers. He saves his love and ambition for the largest and most important community—great Russia.

Some journalists have pointed out that Zhirinovsky offers us a mythical biography, that his building was not so bad by Soviet standards and that he, moreover, went to a privileged school, where it is frequently suggested he might have been approached by the KGB. But what matters here are mythical fantasies and their calculated emotional appeal to audiences. (In fact, at least sixty percent of urban citizens in the Soviet Union—including the writer of this article—have lived in communal apartments with no better air than the one described in the autobiography. Contrary to the principle of socialist realism, milieu does not necessarily determine conscience, and a variety of escapes from communal apartments are possible.)

Zhirinovsky's autobiography, as well as his political program, cannot be read literally. Looking for referents and trying to make sense of them might be instructive, but it is also futile. His language is virtually nonreferential; it is tactical and performative. He learned it in the Soviet period not from the Aesopian language of the Soviet intelligentsia—with its subtle doublespeak, metaphors, and understanding with half-words—but from the official Soviet language that promised all constitutional freedoms and rights in the bright future. As for the nation's enjoyment, he is ready to promise more than a fleeting gratification. He offers no more nor less than "orgasm on a national scale" as soon as he comes to power (a peculiar national therapy that combines Hitler's methods with those of Wilhelm Reich). In comparison with Zhirinovsky's rhetoric, the rhetoric of the democrats appears unspectacular. Economists and politicians like Yegor Gaidar seem allergic to populist rhetorics; in reaction to the excess of charismatic demagoguery on the other side, some democrats refrain from making any gratifying promises and do not engage at all with the national imagination, with popular dreams or even, in some cases, with people's everyday preoccupations. When asked about the threat Zhirinovsky poses for the future, many have responded that what is really dangerous is not so much Zhirinovsky himself (who, everyone hopes, will soon run out of hard currency to pay for his extravagant rhetoric), but his potential, his seductive populist appeal as a nationalist model personality. In the fantastically difficult situation of post-Soviet Russia there is the distinct possibility that one of Zhirinovsky's many doubles might in fact come to power. In that case, all of the subtle distinctions I have made among the nuances of post-Communist nostalgia will become simply irrelevant.

Unfortunately, in the mid-1990s, the mythical opposition between Russia and the West has acquired new currency, and now it predominates over economic, social, or historical differentiations, over the distinction between Soviet and post-Soviet, capitalist and socialist. The "West" and various non-Russian agents within Russia often appear as rhetorical scapegoats that substitute for a more complex and self-reflexive analysis of the Russian situation in the international context. Is there a way out of this traditional discourse on Russian identity? In his last book published before he died, Yuri Lotman revises his own paradigm of Russian culture based on the opposition of *byt* and *bytie* and proposes a cautiously optimistic prognosis for the future. In his view, the end of the Soviet Union might precipitate the end of the Russian binary cultural system perpetuated by the ethical extremism of Russian intellectuals and ideologues, and characterized by the vision of history as an alternation of stagnation and explosion and by the desire for total destruction of the "old world" to make way for a new utopia.[70] The new post-Soviet situation offers the possibility of slow evolution toward an unpredictable historical future that would be neither a copy of the West nor the perpetuation of the Russian apocalyptic predicament. Russia would move toward a new cultural paradigm in which changes are more evolutionary than explosive, and

catastrophes neither affect all spheres of existence nor shatter the entire life of the country. Eventually there would be a new space for private and public life. "To lose this chance would be a historical catastrophe"—these are the last words of Lotman's last book.

Meanwhile, in a time when the prefix *post* has become excessively fashionable, many formerly untranslatable words have entered Russian in their stylized, markedly foreign form: *mental'nost'*, *identichnost'*, *manadzher*, *sponsor*, etc. If in the Soviet past private life was not to be brought into the public sphere, now there is a newspaper called *Private Life* (*Chastnaia zhizn'*) that specializes in personal ads: cries of loneliness and searches for "Western" husbands and wives. One woman reader, in response to the newspaper's verse contest, wrote a teasing line that reflects all the paradoxes of the new and still untranslatable (or at least unprecedented in any Western language) post-Soviet *byt*: "What is to be done? I don't despair. I have no personal life but I have a 'private one.'" Here "private [life]" is placed in quotation marks; it is only the name of a newspaper, a new cliché of post-Soviet language but not yet a "property" of still-deprived Russian citizens.

Notes

1. Roman Jakobson, "On the Generation That Squandered Its Poets," in *The Language in Literature*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Mass., 1987). Russian cultural mythologies and specifically the opposition to the everyday and the role of aesthetics in the making of national identity are discussed in detail in my book *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994).
2. Dmitrii Likhachev, *Zametki o russkom* (Moscow, 1984), 11. Likhachev also writes that two Russian words—*volia* (freedom) and *udal'* (courage)—are connected to the Russian landscape, the enormity of the central Russian plain.
3. On the bond of affection and the "pursuit of happiness" in the life of a nation, see classical texts by Johann von Herder, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Joseph-Ernest Renan. For more recent elaboration of the roles of affection and enjoyment in the national imagination, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), and Slavoj Žižek, "Enjoy Your Nation As Yourself," in *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham, N.C., 1993). I use the phrase "imagined community" in a broad sense in relation to both national and aesthetic dreams.
4. For Russian thinkers, the "window to the West" turned into a magic mirror in which they saw mostly their own reflections. Conversely, Russia was an exotic playground for Western travellers, "the land of a firebird" or of tyranny in the nineteenth century, and the land of a possible communist utopia or, alternatively, of the totalitarian gulag in the twentieth century. The topos of "Back in the US/SR" is discussed in my article "From Russia with a Song: From Stalinist Fairy Tale to Bye, Bye, Amerika," *New Formations* 22 (Spring 1994).
5. See Svetlana Boym, "Living in Common Places: The Communal Apartment," in Boym, *Common Places*. On the concept of the model personality in the Russian context,

see Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone-Nakhimovsky, eds., *Semiotics of Russian Cultural History* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985), especially the essays by Yuri Lotman and Lidia Ginzburg. See also Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, Calif., 1989), and the introduction to Svetlana Boym, *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991).

6. Walter Benjamin, "Moscow," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, 1986), 108.
7. "Samotnik lichnoe blago predpochitaet obshchemu"; Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivago velikorusskogo iazyka* (St. Petersburg, 1882), 259. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.
8. Denis Fonvizin, *Izbrannye sochineniia i pis'ma* (Moscow, 1947), 236–37. The journey abroad makes Fonvizin, like the Marquis de Custine fifty years later and like Feodor Dostoevsky after him, more tolerant toward his own motherland.
9. Ibid., 239.
10. "Vse ulitsy i doma zdeshnie tak chisty, chto uzhe pokhodit na afektatsiiu"; ibid., 255.
11. Ibid., 237, April 1778.
12. Yuri Lotman offers a semiotic explanation of this cross-cultural difference. He writes that a "neutral middle-class" or European behavior becomes sharply semiotized when transferred to Russia at the time of Peter the Great, and that the image of European life was "replicated in a ritualized play-acting of European life." The areas of "non-specialized," "natural," and nonritualistic behavior became the areas where "teaching" was most needed. The travellers' accounts are particularly interesting because they often combine personal and national self-fashioning; the journey abroad is a kind of ritual, a border crossing in every sense of the word. Yuri Lotman, "Poetics of Everyday Behavior" and "Decembrist in Daily Life," in Nakhimovsky and Stone-Nakhimovsky, *Semiotics*.
13. "L'intérior des habitations est également triste, parce que malgré la magnificence de l'ameublement, entassé à l'anglaise dans certaines pièces destinés à recevoir du monde, on entrevoit dans l'ombre une saleté domestique, un désordre naturel et profond qui rappelle l'Asie"; Marquis de Custine, *Lettres de Russie* (Paris, 1975), 67.
14. Ibid., 167–68.
15. Petr Chaadaev, *Philosophical Letters and Apology of a Madman*, trans. Mary-Barbara Zeldin (Knoxville, Tenn., 1969), 37. In Russian, P. Ya. Chaadaev, *Sta'i i pis'ma* (Moscow, 1989).
16. Chaadaev wrote to Alexei Khomiakov: "No, a thousand times, no. This is not how we loved our motherland in our youth. . . . we wished her well-being, good institutions, and sometimes dared to wish her some more freedom . . . but we never thought of her as the most powerful or happy country in the world. It never occurred to us that Russia personified an abstract principle . . . that she has an ostensible mission to incorporate all Slavic people and in this way to renew humankind. . . ." This Slavophilic nationalism was for him an abstract idea, a deception, an untruth: "Thank God, I always loved my fatherland for its own sake and not my own. Thank God, I have never contributed either in verse or in prose to the seduction of my fatherland from its true road. Thank God, I never accepted abstract theories for the good of my motherland"; ibid., 188. I do not attempt to provide here a comprehensive intellectual history of the Russian national conscience, but only to point to some key issues in the critique of individualism. For a more detailed analysis, see Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy* (Oxford, 1975), and Liah Greenfeld, "The Scythian Rome," in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

17. Feodor Tiutchev, "Russkaia geografiia," in *Russkaia zvezda: Stikhi, stat'i, pis'ma* (Moscow, 1993), 195.
18. Quoted in Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Stanford, Calif., 1979), 93.
19. Alexander Herzen, "Koncy i nachala, pis'mo pervoe," in *Sochineniia v drukh tomakh* (Moscow, 1986), 353–56.
20. Ibid., 356.
21. Vissarion Belinsky writes: "Our literature has created the morals of our society, has already educated several generations . . . has produced a sort of special class in society that differs from the 'middle estate' in that it consists not of the merchantry and commoners [*meshchanstvo*] alone but of people of all estates who have been drawn together through education, which, with us, centered exclusively in a love of literature"; "Thoughts and Notes on Russian Literature" (1846).
22. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (Moscow, 1979), 71. I am grateful to Alexander Etkind for this insight. See his book *Eros nevozmozhnogo: Istoriia psikhoanaliza v Rossii* (St. Petersburg, 1993).
23. Louis Dumont, *Essai sur l'individualisme: Une perspective anthropologique sur l'idéologie moderne* (Paris 1983), 303–4. In Dumont's view, one could never speak of a complete victory of individualism, even in the European context: "On the one hand, it is omnipotent, and on the other hand, it is perpetually and irrevocably haunted by its contrary"; ibid., 30.
24. Feodor Dostoevsky, "Zimnie zametki po letnim vpechatleniiam," in *Iskaniia i razmyshleniia* (Moscow, 1983), 186.
25. Ibid. The "I" has to sacrifice itself to society and "not merely not demand his rights, but on the contrary, give them up unconditionally for society." Dostoevsky stresses that what he seeks is not "depersonalization" (*bezlichnost'*) but self-sacrificial "personality" (*lichnost'*) in the highest sense, a much more developed and higher sense than the "personality" known in the West. The Russian "developed personality" does not depend on the fortress of self—of privacy and individual rights—and is ready to dedicate itself for the sake of the society.
26. This appears as a paradox, a vicious circle of never-ending self-sacrifices not really for the sake of human life but more for the sake of inhuman "life elsewhere"—self-sacrifice for the sake of self-sacrifice itself, the perpetuation of self-annihilation. Dostoevsky's brotherhood is perhaps even more unrealizable than the French bourgeois *fraternité*—at least in this world; it is a brotherhood of the dead.
27. Feodor Dostoevsky, *Dnevnik pisatelia* (A writer's diary), vol. 26 of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh* (Leningrad, 1984), 53–54. In this view, Russia contributes to the world not "enlightenment" but illumination (*ozarenie*), not material abundance but spiritual communality, not individuality but personality, not "individual freedom" but liberation of the soul (though the "liberated soul" will have to have Russian blood). That was Russia's messianic role. On Dostoevsky's *Dnevnik pisatelia*, see Gary Saul Morson, introduction to *A Writer's Diary*, by Feodor Dostoevsky, trans. Kenneth Lantz (Evanston, Ill., 1992), and *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's "Diary of a Writer" and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin, Tex., 1981).
28. Before 1864, Russia had a primarily prosecutorial system, with no defense and a frequent practice of extortion of confessions under torture. The defense was introduced only in 1864 together with jury trials, which did not become central to Russian legal practices. The authority of the prosecutor did not always contribute to the "uncovering of simple truth." Many confessions were extorted; not all confessions were "sin-

cere." But, of course, Dostoevsky is speaking about a Russian utopia, not actual everyday Russian practices.

29. Professor Vladimirsky-Budanov, quoted in *Encyklopedicheskii slovar': Rossiia* (St. Petersburg, 1898), 532. The decree lifting the obligatory service to the state for nobility was passed in 1762, a century before the abolition of serfdom. Moreover, the 1649 Code of Laws does not recognize any value of a human being as such; there is, in fact, no abstract concept of a person who could inflict or suffer from insult or dishonor. Everyone, including the clergy, is described according to his or her occupation and place in the state hierarchy; on the other hand, the professional associations, guilds, and unions that protected their members under analogous circumstances in Western Europe did not have rights in Russia either.
30. On all the paradoxes and historical developments of the Western cultural conception of privacy, see Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, eds., *A History of Private Life*, 5 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1987–1991). Yet the conception of Russian (Muscovite) culture as merely "deprived" of many familiar stages of Western social development (such as the Renaissance, the Reformation, or Roman law) misses its central mechanism, its ability to turn what might appear as a deficiency into a virtue and to create an effective political culture suited to its needs. (See Edward Keenan, "Moscow Political Folkways," *Slavic Review* 45 [1986].) In the Russian case, even where there was more secular urban culture than is customarily believed, there is a consistent tendency to devalue it. The Slavophile philosophers tend to rewrite Russian history as a challenge to the Western conception of progress. In the later rewritings, the richness and specificity of Russian historical experience was frequently conflated with messianic nationalism. Every moment when Russia appears to "lag behind the West" is treated as a sign of Russian superiority over the West. Russia is seen as Europe's savior from the barbaric invasions from the East, the only country that did not succumb to the trap of secularization but preserved "true humanism" and unity against the European and American "division of labor," specialization, and division of the spheres of experience.
31. At the time of Peter III and Catherine the Great, nobles were encouraged to study in order not to incur "the wrath of the monarch." Hence permission to be cultured came from the monarch and went hand in hand with liberation from obligatory service; Vassily Kliuchevsky, "Nedorosl' Fonvizina," in *Istoricheskie portrety* (Moscow, 1990), 353. (I am grateful to Thomas Barran for his help and advice on this matter). Until the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of "civil rights" was not relevant in Russia. The laws of inheritance were such that parents had virtually unlimited power over their offspring, and husbands over their wives. Even after the emancipation of 1862, peasants did not have full rights, nor did certain non-Russian ethnic groups, including Poles, Germans, and Jews, who had very limited rights to acquire land. Jews did not have freedom of movement either, and lived in the Pale of settlement. Very few groups were in any position to develop a taste for the private.
32. This might not be the case with Herder himself, as Dumont argues, but with some of his later interpreters. See Dumont, *Essai sur l'individualisme*, 134–52.
33. Nikolai Berdiaev writes: "The Germans, the English, and the French are chauvinists and nationalists on the whole; they are full of national self-assuredness and self-complacency. What is national about Russia is precisely her supernationalism, her freedom from nationalism. . . . Aggressive nationalism, forceful Russification, is alien to the Russian people. This is what makes Russia original (*samobytna*) and different from any other country in the world. Russia has to become a liberator of the world"; "Dusha Rossii," *Iskusstvo Kino* 3 (1990): 65.

34. Ivan Aksakov, quoted in Nikolai Riazanovsky, *A Parting of Ways: Government and the Educated Public in Russia 1801–1855* (Oxford, 1976), 192.
35. Berdiaev, "Dusha Rossii," 68. See also George Kline, *Religious and Anti-religious Thought in Russia* (Chicago, 1968).
36. Nikolai Berdiaev, "Russkaia ideia," in *O Rossii i russkoi filosofskoi kul'ture* (Moscow, 1990), 87. The Russian "communitarian spirit" is regarded by Berdiaev in opposition to Western European knighthood.
37. Berdiaev, like Dostoevsky and Khomiakov before him, opposes Western "society" to Russian "community" and Western "civilization" to Russian "culture," which is based on "the democracy of true spirituality." The will to life and the will to culture are contradictory in Berdiaev: culture is defined as the "great disaster of life," so the enjoyment of life is the major enemy of "culture." Society is connected to the idea of association—a limited and voluntary connection between individuals that allows for their relative autonomy. "Society" is thus an association of independent individuals, not a fraternity of soul mates.
38. "The Russian intelligentsia always tried to develop a holistic or totalitarian (*totalitarnoe*) worldview in which truth (*pravda-istina*) would be united with fairness (*pravda-spravedlivost'*)"; Berdiaev, "Russkaia ideia," 69.
39. Alexander Bogdanov, "The Paths of Proletarian Creation," in *Russia of the Avant-Garde*, ed. John Bowlt (New York, 1988), 181.
40. For the fascinating history of psychoanalysis in Russia, see Etkind, *Eros nevozmozhnogo*.
41. Vladimir Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 12. According to Voloshinov, Freud overestimates the sexual side of human behavior at the expense of the social side.
42. Vladimir Voloshinov, *Freidizm* (New York, 1983), 178–85. I would suggest reading Voloshinov's critique of Freud not only as a Marxist critique of psychoanalysis but also as a Russian cultural critique of Western individualism.
43. Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism* (New York, 1968), 14.
44. Ibid., 15. Of course, there is no immediate causal relation between the lack of interest in the everyday and the totalitarian personality, and there are many differences between Russian and German traditions, particularly in their attitudes toward domesticity and privacy.
45. See Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, 1981).
46. Nadezhda Mandel'shtam, *Kniga vtoraia* (Moscow, 1990), 12.
47. Ibid., 13.
48. Ginzburg writes that the tragedy of the Russian modernist intelligentsia consisted in their occasional blindness toward the changes that had taken place by the late 1920s, a blindness that was due to their "contradictory impulses and the great incompatibility between the modernist complex of individualism and elitist spiritual life and the complex of the populist tradition and the will for a just social system"; Lidia Ginzburg, *Chelovek za pis'mennym stolom* (Leningrad, 1989), 310. Note that the words *individualism* and *elitist* are used here without their common derogatory connotations.
49. Ibid., 335. At the end of her notes written in 1980, Ginzburg meditates on Soviet defense mechanisms and the ruptures in the system: "In the course of life all kinds of defense mechanisms worked. They comfortably enveloped us, so that we would not scream in horror. We did not see the full picture of the lived life, only a part of it. And this part adapted to us or we adapted ourselves to it. And now at times I experience a retrospective horror. The 'abyss of humiliation' opens in front of me. How did we walk into this abyss, step by step, not missing anything. . . ."

50. Joseph Brodsky, "Less Than One," in *Less Than One* (New York, 1986), 30.
51. Aesthetic pursuits were not limited to members of the intelligentsia or the educated elite. I discuss elsewhere how the ordinary neighbors of the communal apartment decorated their rooms, a minimal oasis of privacy in the overcrowded collective; Svetlana Boym, "Archeology of Banality: The Soviet Home," *Public Culture* (Winter 1994).
52. Your pedestrians are not exalted people,
With pounding heels; they hurry on their way.
Oh my Arbat, you are my religion,
Your roadway lies beneath me.

I will never get over loving you,
Even loving forty thousand other roadways.
Oh my Arbat, you are my native land,
No one could ever come to the end of you.

For the bilingual edition, see Bulat Okudzhava, "Song of the Arbat," in *Sixty-five Songs*, ed. Vladimir Frumkin (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980). The English rendering does not capture the poem's colloquial language or, more especially, intonation, nor can it convey the peculiar melancholic and ironic voice singing it.
53. On media coverage of the coup and the role of postmodern artists in it, see my article "Power Shortages: The Soviet Coup and Hurricane Bob," in *Media/Spectacles*, ed. Marjorie Garber, Jann Matlock, and Rebecca Walkowitz (New York, 1993).
54. Dmitrii Prigov and Svetlana Beliaeva-Konegen, "Krepkogo vam zdorov'ia, gospoda literatory," *Strelec* 70, no. 3 (1992): 209.
55. Dmitrii Prigov, untitled poem in *Lichnoe delo no* (Moscow, 1991), 266. The first officially published collection of Prigov's poetry was *Slezy geral'dicheskoi dushi* (Moscow, 1990). Most of his work circulated in samizdat and was known through unofficial poetry readings in Moscow apartments and abroad.
56. See "Evraziistvo: Opyt sistematicheskogo izlozheniia" (Paris, 1926); Nikolai Trubetsky, "Iskhod k vostoku" (Sofia, 1921); I. A. Isaev, "Utopisty ili providzy?" (Moscow, 1992), all collected in the recent comprehensive anthology *Puti Evrazii*, ed. I. A. Isaev (Moscow, 1992), which I purchased near the Lenin Museum. It offers a good bibliography and a scholarly account of the movement.
57. Among those recruited to the Soviet Union was Sergei Efron, husband of Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva, who was arrested and shot soon after his return in 1939.
58. Nikolai Trubetsky, "Verkhi i nizy russkoi kul'tury," in Isaev, *Puti Evrazii*, 333–35.
59. "In contrast to Romano-Germanic dances, in which the constant touching of the lady by her male partner, with a general poverty of technique, acquires a certain sexual character, Russian-Asian dances resemble ritual fights, competitions in dexterity and rhythmical discipline of the body"; ibid., 342–43.
60. Trubetsky, "Ob istinnom i lozhnom nacionalizme," in Isaev, *Puti Evrazii*, 324.
61. N. I. Chebyshev, *Vozrozhdenie* (Paris, 1927), quoted in Isaev, *Puti Evrazii*, 428.
62. Lev Gumilev, *Drevniaia Rus' i velikaia step'* (Moscow, 1989), 141–42.
63. Danilo Kiš, "On Nationalism," in *Why Bosnia?* ed. Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz (Stony Creek, Conn., 1993).
64. *The Book of Vlas* was first mentioned in the pages of an obscure San Francisco journal, the *Firebird*, where it is considered to be the chronicle of pagan priests. The book tells the story of five thousand years of Slavic civilization and shows that Russians were the true descendants of the Aryans, the first Indo-Aryan people, who spread their culture throughout Europe with the help of the Phoenicians. See Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York, 1993).

65. *Stranitsy rossiiskoi istorii* (the organ of the National Liberation Movement), no. 2, 1993.
66. This is, by the way, a major shift in the gender of Russia. Russia was usually presented by the philosophers of the Russian idea as a bride or a mother who, in Berdiaev's view, always chose a wrong (Germanic) knight for herself.
67. Dolores Poliakova, in *Soiuz*, supplement to *Izvestiia*, July 1991. Poliakova examines one of Zhirinovsky's first entrances into national politics—his speech at the Congress of People's Deputies: "The candidate is spitting out the 'mother truth' without subtext. He is advertising his own persona without any restraint. He doesn't give a damn about audience reaction, and the deputies are all well entertained, laughing, grabbing the arms of their armchairs so that they don't lose their parliamentary balance." It strikes one as an extreme combination of histrionics and claims to sincerity, of self-advertisement and appeal to Russian "mother truth."
68. *Phenomen Zhirinovskogo* (Moscow, 1992).
69. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, *Brosok na iug* (Moscow, 1993), 12.
70. "The price of utopia" was experienced only by the generation following the revolution, while the contemporaries of the revolution were intoxicated by the radical poetry of the "New Earth and New Heaven" and were not aware of the ruthlessness of their historical experiment. See Yuri Lotman, *Kul'tura i vzryv* (Moscow, 1992), 265–70.