

RUSSIANS ABROAD

Literary and Cultural Politics
of Diaspora (1919-1939)

The Real Twentieth Century

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Literary and Cultural Politics
of Diaspora (1919-1939)

GRETA N. SLOBIN

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and Mark Slobin

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Foreword

Greta Slobin's range as scholar was impressively broad: from Soviet fiction to post-Soviet society and culture to film. At the core of her pursuits was Russian émigré literature, particularly that of the "First Wave." Writing the history of Russian émigré literature, and of émigré literary criticism and theory between the world wars, had confronted us with a number of challenges after the end of the Cold War. To begin with, we still knew relatively little about the ways in which émigré writing began, over time, to interact with the various host cultures, and what implications this interaction had had for the relation of émigré literature and cultural and political processes in Soviet Russia. Earlier historians of Russian émigré culture, notably Marc Raeff, believed that "Russian literature in emigration remained as isolated from Western literatures as it had been in pre-revolutionary Russia, perhaps even more so."¹ More recent research, foremost by Leonid Livak, has persuasively demonstrated the Paris émigrés' intensive appropriation of French culture and, more widely, the European modernist novel, as well as their participation in French cultural life, not least as regular reviewers and critics writing for French periodicals (e.g. Yuliya Sazonova, Gleb Struve, Wladimir Weidle).

The second difficulty stemmed from the fact that we knew very little about what specific impact émigré literature and criticism actually had in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union. This was, and remains, a vastly under-researched area. Thirdly, we were yet to begin to conceptualize Russian émigré literature in the wider context of European literary movements, although some work had already been done (notably by Simon Karlinsky in his early article on Russian surrealism).

Greta Slobin's research, in both her articles and the present book, anticipated and contributed to shaping this evolving agenda. Her book is a testimony to her foresight and ability to identify areas of work that would

¹ Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad. A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 115.

yield original contributions to knowledge. In particular, I should like to draw attention to four particular aspects that make her book a significant participant in our ongoing endeavor to reach a deeper understanding of the culture and the anxieties—artistic and civic—of the Russian exiles between the wars.

To start with, Slobin offers a different, in many ways better substantiated, periodization of Russian émigré literature. Unlike the classic periodization propounded by Struve, who saw émigré literature subdivided into two chronological segments (1919-1924; 1925-1939), Slobin calls for a more nuanced picture by singling out an intermediate stage (1925-1929), which she conceives of as a time of defining borders, and of “the quest for identity and establishing the nature” of the émigrés’ mission. More important still, Slobin urges us to think of Russian émigré writing of the “First Wave” as performing, and always dependent on, a process of “triangulation.” By “triangulation,” she means the overlapping responses of émigré writing to the pre-1917 Russian literary traditions that the émigrés, particularly the older generation, had taken abroad as their treasured possession; to literary developments in the Soviet Union; and to the Western literary scene they now inhabited. Any future history of Russian émigré literature will have to rest on this framework, recognizing the effects of triangulation as foundational to Russian literature in exile.

Thirdly, in a number of the chapters that constitute the present book, Slobin identifies modernism as the discursive space in which the ideological and aesthetic boundaries of émigré writing were drawn and redrawn by its most distinguished actors, and in which continuity and rupture would sometimes appear entangled in an inseverable knot. Slobin reminds us that modernity and modernism did not always coincide, and her insightful analyses of Tsvetaeva and Remizov, her beloved story-teller, furnish evidence of the intricate politics of modernism as the true battleground of émigré literature, the terrain on which divergent ideological and aesthetic orientations met. She admonishes us that modernism can also be a force for cultural conservatism, and she insists—with good reason—that any meaningful discussion of modernism in Russian émigré writing must take into account its relativity vis-à-vis, and mediation by, European, especially French, artistic practices.

In what is perhaps the single best chapter in the book to deal with a particular literary work, Slobin, with sophistication and erudition,

detects in “The Industrial Horseshoe” a subtle ironic take by Remizov on Proust’s popularity amongst the younger émigrés, laying bare the mechanic imitation and passive mirroring of his style by the literati around *Chisla*. Last but not least, amongst Slobin’s distinctive contributions in this book is her chapter on Turgenev’s posthumous fortunes as a writer. While by now we do have solid and well-documented work on the reputations in emigration of Pushkin, Lermontov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Gogol, and Chekhov, the major missing piece in the puzzle was Turgenev. The connection she produces between Turgenev and Bunin is an especially helpful illumination of the way in which émigré writing would in turn impact on the cultural capital held by figures from the canon of mainland literature: it is Bunin’s own recognition and Nobel glory in 1933/1934, Slobin demonstrates, that leads to a positive reassessment of Turgenev’s own standing, haphazardly lowered by some of the most influential Paris émigrés just a year before that.

This text is a tribute not just to Greta Slobin’s scholarship but also to her charitable and engaging personality. Communicating with her was a privilege and a pleasure, and memories of her extraordinary human presence linger on, enriching the lives of those who have had the chance to know her.

Adelina, my wife and fellow-scholar, and I met Greta in New Haven early in 2007, although I had been familiar with her work before that and had already briefly conversed with her on one or two occasions. Katerina Clark kindly facilitated the meeting by taking us to Mark and Greta’s hospitable home in the vicinity of Middletown, Connecticut, where Greta had joined Mark upon her retirement as full professor from the University of California in Santa Cruz. There was so much to discuss: the state of the art in research on Russian exilic and émigré writing, a field in which Greta was at the very forefront of new developments; the future of the humanities; poetry and music. Greta would preserve her tremendous thirst for knowledge, her warmth, and intellectual energy throughout the time we knew her. Her illness was somehow absent during the hours of our discussions; instead, one could perceive a great conversationalist, a scholar with ideas and an infectiously inquisitive mind, and a friend of tremendous generosity, in spirit and in deed.

Later, on 13 April 2007, Greta arranged a meeting with Victor Erlich. I recall the short trip by car to his home and the hour-long conversation

with him, during which Greta graciously took a back seat, letting me ask all the questions I was eager to put to Erlich. Erlich was frail but otherwise in excellent form, and he told me about a letter by Shklovsky, by then apparently lost, in which Shklovsky had praised his book on Russian Formalism. In the background, Greta, a frequent visitor, indeed almost a part of the family, was conversing with the nurse in Polish. Our visit took place some seven months before Erlich was to pass away. When we arrived back in New Haven, Greta and I sat in the car for at least another half an hour: a dissection of the event and a retrospective examination of Erlich's career and that of some of his students.

With this book, seminal and innovative in more than one way, Greta's scholarship will live on. To those of us who knew her, her voice will be springing from the pages, her own curiosity will be feeding ours, while her wonderfully questioning sense of humor will hold solemnity in check. Her grace and intellectual determination will still be reaching those who never met her as they gradually make their way through her work.

Galin Tihanov
London, 8 April 2012

How This Book Came About

Jn Greta Slobin's last year, when advancing illness slowed her progress on this book, Katerina Clark and Nancy Condee offered to help out. They held regular conversations with Greta on how she wanted the book to develop.

In the late stages, Dan Slobin offered substantial editorial assistance, as well as recording interviews with Greta, with Mark Slobin as general coordinator. We are grateful to Alexandra Smith (University of Edinburgh), who was the principal consultant for the finished manuscript, and John-Paul Putney (University of Pittsburgh) and Roman Utkin (Yale University), whose editorial work helped us to complete the project, as well as Ron Meyer for his thoughtful translation work.

As a result of careful consultation and judicious collation, the editors feel confident that this volume represents Greta's intentions, language, and personality accurately. Portions of the essays below draw upon earlier versions that appeared in the following journals: *Slavic Review*, *Poetics Today*, *The Harriman Review*, *Canadian Slavic Journal*.

Introduction

The October Split and Its Consequences

The October Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing Civil War divided the citizens of the Russian Empire into the Reds and the Whites, creating a political schism. By 1921, when the Bolsheviks were victorious in the Civil War, many people had fled the country; ultimately more than three million were in emigration. Initially, the pervasive sense of crisis and anxiety for the future in the early years of the turbulent post-revolutionary period provided a common link between writers who remained at home and those who were in exile. Around 1925, however, the emigration converted from a state of temporary exile to a permanent community abroad, an entity separate from the Soviet Union. The brief but finite history of this community constituted “beyond the borders” of Russia between 1919 and 1939, framed by Russia’s internal upheavals and two world wars, presents an impressive story of remarkable literary, linguistic, and cultural continuity. This was accomplished despite great difficulties—the trauma of loss and displacement, economic hardship, and the insecurity of life in the foreign lands of interwar Europe.

How literature contributed to defining a national identity for this “First Wave” of Russian emigration is the question addressed by this book. The book attempts to describe the particular character of the Russian cultural diaspora by drawing on both classical and postcolonial models. The central focus, however, is the continuity of significant sections of exile culture with prerevolutionary modernism, and the way émigré writers further developed that trend. The dynamic of this further evolution can be seen in the triangular orientation of this literature. As writers sought to create a distinct national legacy they had to navigate between three points of orientation that were often in contradiction with one another: the lost homeland and its prerevolutionary literary tradition; the Soviet Union, then in the process of unprecedented political and cultural transformation; and the European host countries, especially France.

Several problematical issues emerged within the exile community in response to the challenge of defining a Russian national literature located abroad. If we agree with Timothy Brennan that “exile and nationalism are conflicting poles of feeling that correspond to more traditional aesthetic conflicts: artistic iconoclasm and communal assent, the unique vision and the collective truth,” then we recognize that the challenge for Russian writers in this emigration was daunting indeed.¹ However, despite aesthetic conflicts within the literary sphere and the potential marginalization of a diaspora, the writers in emigration sought to achieve something equivalent to that exceptional role that literature had played in the political and social life of the Russian empire since the eighteenth century by providing an alternative vision of the nation and a critique of life in the (then) autocratic, tsarist society. To understand how this role was to be upheld in the destabilizing conditions of life abroad, this book explores the often divisive internal polemics and strategies of the literary community at such a critical juncture in history.

The following chapters present several case studies of creative and critical writing by members of the older, established generation of writers, who in their aesthetic endeavors were contending with the “conflicting poles of exile and nationalism.” These case studies show how particular writers sought to further prerevolutionary literary modernism, in the face of a general cultural conservatism among the émigrés whose declared mission was to safeguard the classical national tradition, a clash that led to heated polemics between the different cultural camps.

Although isolation from the homeland and alienation from their European host countries are usually presented as the predicament of this “First Wave” of the Russian emigration, this book argues that the participation of Russian writers in interwar European modernism, particularly those of the older, already established generation, was possible because of the artistic connections that already existed between early twentieth-century Russian and European modernism. In an early overview of “problems” in the study of émigré literature, Frank Boldt, Lazar Fleishman, and Dmitry Segal reach a similar conclusion, contending that the diaspora’s conservatism did not preclude an active participation in “transnational cultural formations” in

¹ Timothy Brennan, “The National Longing for Form,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 60-61.

twentieth-century art, specifically in European modernism.² This idea is pursued further here, providing illustrations of older, established representatives of prerevolutionary modernism who now found themselves abroad, such as the poets Marina Tsvetaeva and Vladislav Khodasevich, the prose writer Aleksei Remizov, and the literary scholar and critic Dmitry S. Mirsky. A younger writer, Vladimir Nabokov (who wrote in Russian as V. Sirin), an exceptional figure among his contemporaries, will be seen as providing an intergenerational bridge to European modernism. The book also includes two writers, Andrei Bely and Victor Shklovsky, who were in Berlin in the early 1920s, but who unpredictably returned to Soviet Russia, where they had to contend with the “conflicting poles” of literary experiment and Party politics on the other side of the border.

Russians in Exile

An intense struggle waged by Russian intellectuals abroad for sustaining what they saw as true Russian culture was conducted simultaneously in several centers of the emigration: Prague, Berlin, Paris, New York, Harbin, and elsewhere. In the European branch of the emigration, our main subject here, there were distinct stages in its literary history. Gleb Struve in his *Russian Literature in Exile* (*Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 1956) identifies two. The first stage, 1919-1924, which Struve terms “The Establishment [*stanovlenie*] of a Literature Abroad,” is the Berlin-dominated period of close contacts with the homeland. Struve considers the rest of the history as one stage (1925-1939), calling it a time of “self-definition” in diasporic literature.³ I will break this second stage into two distinct periods. The first, my second stage (1925-1929), is marked by a sense among the émigré writers of the need to define borders, and the quest for identity and the establishment of the nature of their mission. My third stage (1930-1939) is the time of self-affirmation and consolidation of the diaspora’s legacy, and at the same time it saw the émigrés’ greater “accommodation” with their host countries, particularly France.

² Timothy Brennan, “The National Longing for Form,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 60-61. 8.

³ The titles for Part I and Part II, respectively, in Gleb Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii. Opyt istoricheskogo obzora zarubezhnoi literatury* (New York: Izdatel'stvo imeni Chekhova, 1956).

The first stage (1919-1924), a stormy period of postrevolutionary transition, was characterized by border crossings and intense cultural and literary collaborations, competition, and conflict. Berlin, readily accessible from Russia, was the liveliest center, with its feverish publishing activity and a busy life in the cafés and bars of the Russian Charlottenburg neighborhood.⁴ This was a remarkable time when “border crossings” were still possible and exiled Russians were connected to the homeland by visits from Soviet writers; intense cultural and literary collaborations across the divide were still possible. Visiting poets Vladimir Mayakovsky and Boris Pasternak gave public readings during their visits to Berlin, along with Andrei Bely and Aleksei Remizov, who were then there. The prose writer Boris Pilnyak arrived in February 1922 and stayed until March with Remizov, whom he considered the greatest master of ornamental prose, his chosen literary mode. The formalist theorist Victor Shklovsky also came, in his case to escape political problems as a former socialist revolutionary facing possible imprisonment at home. In fact, at this time Berlin harbored Russians of all political persuasions, with many warring literary and political groupings.⁵ While the situation in the home country appeared to be in flux, many people believed the revolution to be temporary and felt ready to return as soon as conditions at home would allow.

In publishing, too, the border was not yet absolute. Some journals were directed at both publics, and of the 80 Russian publishing houses then operating many were able to produce books with the imprimatur of Berlin as well as Petrograd or Moscow. The Berlin journal *Russian Book* (*Russkaia kniga*), founded in 1921 and from 1922-1923 known as *New Russian Book* (*Novaia russkaia kniga*), had an explicit editorial policy of publishing Russian writers, wherever they were located, as well as providing a chronicle of literary figures and events in the homeland. And Maxim Gorky in the USSR and Vladislav Khodasevich in Berlin jointly founded the journal *Colloquy* (*Beseda*) in 1922, intended to promote a dialogue between writers across the border.

Because of the fluid situation, some writers proved to be only temporary exiles in Berlin, such as Bely, Pasternak, and Pilnyak. Among them,

⁴ *Russkii Berlin: 1920-1945: mezhdunarodnaia nauchnaia konferentsiia 16-18 dekabria 2002 g.*, ed. L. S. Fleishman (Moscow: Russkii put', 2006).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 76n56.

we focus on Shklovsky, whose brief but creative sojourn in Berlin was of considerable significance in Russian letters on both sides of the border. And Bely's seminal work on Gogol, written in the 1930s after his return to the Soviet Union, is featured in Part III. In addition, because journals, Soviet and Western, played a major role in cultural and literary politics of the 1920s, we look at key statements of an important Soviet literary figure, Aleksandr Voronskii, the editor of the first Soviet "thick" journal, *Red Virgin Soil* (*Krasnaia nov'*). Founded with government money in 1921, the journal was meant to compete with the Parisian *Contemporary Notes* (*Sovremennye zapiski*, founded 1920). Voronskii's journal came to dominate the Soviet literary world, surmounting the confusion and radicalism of several of the new journals of the period, but he also provided a critique of exile culture. In this period, too, Lenin's decision in 1922 to



Aleksandr Konstantinovich
Voronskii, 1884-1937

expel 200 leading philosophers and intellectuals, among them such major philosophers of the twentieth century as Nikolai Berdyaev and Semyon Frank, contributed to the anxiety, keenly felt in the young Soviet Union, about the attrition among leading figures of the intelligentsia and the lack of support for the intelligentsia within the young Soviet republic.⁶

The early postrevolutionary years of the Berlin-centered emigration must, then, be seen as an exceptional time in the history of the emigration. In the aforementioned study of Boldt, Fleishman, and Segal, they argue that "the dates of the creation of 'Russian literature abroad' and of 'émigré literature'" are not identical.⁷ Some writers were in Berlin temporarily and returned to the Soviet Union in 1923. Among those who remained abroad, many then left Berlin, where inflation rendered life too expensive, and moved to France. As the Bolsheviks consolidated power after the victory over the Whites in 1921, they stopped issuing foreign pass-

⁶ L. Chamberlain, *The Philosophy Steamer: Lenin and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (London: Atlantic Books), 144.

⁷ Bol'dt, Fleishman, Segal, "Problemy izucheniia literaturny russkoi emigratsii," xx.

ports and closed the borders. By 1924 their government was recognized by major European states. The émigrés became cut off from the homeland. Not only did it become clear that the Bolsheviks were there to stay, but the status of Russians abroad, now truly separated from the homeland, was dramatically altered. This required urgent readjustments as the Russian exiles began to constitute settled communities in host countries, marking a transition from temporary exile to permanent diaspora.

From Exile to Diaspora

To understand the formation and cultural history of the diaspora, we will turn to diaspora studies, which became a lively field of study in the late twentieth-century world of global dispersal. Many scholars (Clifford, Gilroy, DeKoven Ezrahi, Jacobson, Naficy, Seidel, Tölölyan, and others) have addressed central problems in its formation. The current study augments their theoretical work by looking at an early diasporic community of the twentieth century that their investigations have largely overlooked—the Russian diaspora. While acknowledging that this community shares several features with other diasporas as described in their texts, such as linguistic nationalism, cosmopolitanism, hybridity, double consciousness, and bilingual play, this study of the Russian community abroad provides an important variant on the now standard current theoretical models.

Perhaps this is the time to clarify the use of various terms that are frequently used, and will be used here, to refer to the Russian exile community in the 1920s and 1930s, such as “exile,” “émigré,” “Russia beyond the borders” (*Rossia za rubezhom*), “Russia Abroad” (*ruskoe zarubezh'e*), and diaspora. In Gleb Struve’s first major history of *Russian Literature in Exile* (*Ruskaia literatura v izgnanii*), published in New York in 1956, he rejected the term “émigré” as unsuitable. It had been used for French exiles from their revolution, such as Mme. De Stael and Chateaubriand, who returned home once the revolution was over. There were also Russian political émigrés who lived in Europe intermittently under tsarism. Gleb Struve considered the postrevolutionary emigration to be “such a great phenomenon, unprecedented in world history” that he preferred the formulation of his father, Piotr Struve, who coined the term *ruskoe zarubezh'e*, “Russia Abroad” or “Russia beyond its borders” (*zarubezhnaia Rossia*), to allude

specifically to its identification with Russia.⁸ Struve titled the first chapter of his book “Exodus to the West” (*Iskhod na zapad*), a clear reference to the biblical Jewish model. Many years later, Marc Raeff followed Struve in his comprehensive cultural history of the First Wave of emigration, titled *Russia Abroad*, published in 1990. His conclusion, titled “By the Waters of Babylon,” also harked back to the Jewish diaspora model.⁹ The term “diaspora,” however, did not come into common scholarly use until the early 1960s. Between the publication of the two histories, a collection of émigré poetry titled *The Muse of Diaspora (Muza diaspory)*, edited by the Paris poet Yuri Terapiano and published in Frankfurt in 1960, marked the first time the term was used by a member of the émigré Russian community.¹⁰

As the years in Berlin showed, exile can be temporary and sometimes voluntary, but it becomes a diaspora when the exiles become forcibly separated from the homeland by a range of circumstances, generally political. As the editor of the journal *Diaspora*, Khachig Tölölyan observes, in the process the exiles produce “new collective identities and repress the memory of old ones even while they celebrate memory and roots.”¹¹

The term “diaspora” comes from the Greek word for “scattering,” first used by the Greeks living abroad in the 4th century B.C. Subsequently, the paradigmatic use of the term referred to the scattering of the Jews after the destruction of the second temple in 70 A.D. This became for generations the classic example of a diaspora, although the term was not much in use until the 1960s, when it acquired wider currency and was applied to the African diaspora in the United States and elsewhere.¹² The term has proliferated since the 1990s and extends to a range of postcolonial and global migrations of the late twentieth century, that involve political, ethnic, or economic communities that form abroad.¹³

⁸ Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 7; new Russian edition: ed. V. B. Kudriavtseva and K. I. Lappo-Danilevskii (Moscow: Russkii put', 1996).

⁹ See M. Raeff, “Conclusion by the Waters of Babylon,” *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1930* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 187.

¹⁰ *Muza diaspory: Izbrannye stikhi zarubezhnykh poetov, 1920-1960*, ed. Iu. K. Terapiano (Frankfurt am Main: Possev Verlag, 1960).

¹¹ “Re-thinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power: Diaspora in the Transnational Moment,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 28-29.

¹² R. Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1 (January 2005): 2.

¹³ Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’ Diaspora,” 2.

The traditional definition of diaspora provided by Tölölyan is modeled on a classical Jewish example. It refers to “one or more communities dispersed away from their homeland and persisting in host countries. The cause of dispersion is an overwhelming military force or an equivalent coercion, a catastrophic event.”¹⁴ As Tölölyan points out, “the diaspora survives in the form of a series of subordinate, hierarchically encapsulated enclaves with more powerful social and state formations that function as their hosts.”¹⁵ Furthermore, and this is particularly important in the Russian case, “it strives to maintain a traditional identity or to create a new one that remains distinct, unassimilated and anchored in specific institutions and practices that may be, for example, religious or linguistic ... It sustains the hope of actual or symbolic return to the homeland.”¹⁶ As we will see, the Russian diaspora fulfilled most of these conditions and consciously turned to classical Jewish history as one of its models. The finite history of the First Wave emigration presents a unique case study if examined in the context of traditional vs. global diaspora theories.

Within a relatively brief but intensely productive historical period, the Russian exiles, scattered in different geographical locations, identified themselves as a single entity: Russia Abroad. This entity more or less replicated in miniature the societal make-up of imperial Russia: the exiles were primarily Russian Orthodox, but included Jews and people of other religions and ethnicities; they also represented different economic strata. Hence, the connections that bound them were somewhat similar to those outlined by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities* in that they were both horizontal (cutting across regions and borders), as well as vertical (cutting across class).¹⁷ Also relevant to our account of this community is his suggestion that “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large culture systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being.”¹⁸ In our study of a Russian nationalism to be found “beyond the

¹⁴ Khachig Tölölyan, “The American Model of Diaspora Discourse,” in *Diasporas and Ethnic Migrants: Germany, Israel and Post-Soviet Successor States in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Rainer Münz and Rainer Ohliger (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 58.

¹⁵ Tölölyan, “The American Model of Diaspora Discourse,” 58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁷ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), x.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

borders” (of Russia) the systems are prerevolutionary, Soviet, and European. In the process of its formation, the diaspora acquired a distinct character that was unmistakably Russian, yet different from its Soviet counterpart as well as from the European host countries. In an effort to isolate the cultural and literary markers of its distinction, I turn to James Clifford’s suggestion in acknowledging the need to expand the classic understanding of diaspora with alternatives that “focus on diaspora’s borders” and its “articulations of identity.”¹⁹ As we follow the triangulated perspective that the cultural and literary identity of the Russian community abroad, it will be evident that the complex process of its formation was not that of “absolute othering but rather of entangled tensions.”²⁰

Although “othering” is a necessary move of diasporic self-definition, the “entangled tensions” convey the inevitable tension of the triangulated situation. The dynamic of émigré cultural politics confirms Clifford’s notion that “diasporic cultural longings can never be exclusively nationalist. They are deployed in transnational networks, and they encode practices of accommodation as well as resistance.”²¹ The proportions of these practices changed at various historical junctures. The diaspora was conscious of presenting a viable alternative to the Soviet cultural tradition, though never certain of its immediate impact in the homeland. The contentious, though strangely reciprocal relationship between Soviet culture and its diasporic “other” confirms Mark von Hagen’s idea that émigré culture, though created in reaction against the Revolution, was “a very important counter-model and context for the development of Soviet culture.”²² The reverse was true as well. Indeed, there was both an explicit and an implicit relationship between Soviet literary politics and émigré letters as they evolved through the twenties and thirties. As this book reveals, this relationship, in turn, affected the émigré attitude toward the host culture: the diaspora’s relations with the European context expands as, from the late twenties onward, the separation from the former homeland becomes more complete.

¹⁹ J. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 250.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 250.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 251.

²² M. von Hagen, “Toward a Cultural and Intellectual History of Soviet Russia in the 1920s,” *Revue des études slaves* 68 (1996): 299.

The mid and late 1920s, the second stage of the first emigration's history (1925-1929), were an intensely active period for the diaspora. The separation from the homeland forced the émigré community to try to formulate its identity as a national entity without a nation. One of the first major steps towards that goal was the establishment of various institutions that could strengthen social and cultural continuity, such as churches, schools, professional societies, publishers, and bookstores.

Despite such gestures towards normalcy, intellectuals in the emigration were haunted by the underlying realities of their situation. They felt most acutely the loss of their homeland and of the empire, which they saw as an exclusion from history. Already in 1919 Bunin had mourned the end of Russian history: "There was Russian history, there was a Russian state, and now there is none. The Kostomarovs, the Kliuchevskys, the Karamzins wrote Russian history, but now there's no history whatsoever."²³ Don Aminado, another writer living in Paris, echoed this sentiment, declaring "It is not we who create the history of the ages."²⁴ Indeed, the sense of irrevocable loss and exit from history was a favorite theme of attacks on the emigration in the Soviet journal *Red Virgin Soil*, whose message, according to Robert Maguire, was that "the writers who fled Russia had made a clear choice, but it was a choice against history, and therefore, against art, and would be punished by artistic sterility and death."²⁵

The émigrés strove to compensate for their loss with a conscious dedication to the continuity of the national culture, which was "an essential aspect of their national identity, of their identity as educated, at whatever level, Russian people."²⁶ In manifold ways the diaspora in Europe declared its mission to sustain cultural continuity and preserve the great classical literary tradition to counteract the radical social and cultural transformation in the USSR. The cult of Pushkin was central to this purpose, and in 1925 a host of educational bodies issued an appeal to organize an annual "Day of Russian Culture" on Pushkin's birthday as a unifying holiday to

²³ Ivan Bunin quoted in *Literatura russkogo zarubezh'ia: 1920-1940*, ed. O. N. Mikhailov (Moscow: Nasledie: IMLI RAN, 1993), 53.

²⁴ "Ne my tvorim istoriiu vekov"; quoted in V. I. Korovin, "Naibolee darovityi poet emigratsii," in Don-Aminado, *Nasha malen'kaia zhizn'* (Moscow: Terra, 1994), 24.

²⁵ Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 72

²⁶ Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 10.

be celebrated wherever Russians had scattered. Holding an annual cultural celebration helped to provide a sense of unity and continuity for the émigré communities that extended across the globe from London to Shanghai.²⁷

The double significance of this event was clear. The celebration on Pushkin's birthday was a demonstrative response to the commemoration of the poet's death in Petrograd in 1921, which was not a jubilee year but provided a much-needed chance for writers to reassess their position and express anxiety about the future of literature.²⁸ But the occasion also provided émigrés with an opportunity to affirm their sense of mission, as expressed by V. A. Malakhov at the Sorbonne during the 1926 celebration: "The symbol of a national celebration is to be found not in historical but in cultural events ... states disappear, but culture is preserved and statehood is reborn."²⁹ The autonomy of national culture and its separation from the state would become important principles in the diaspora's self-definition in the next decade.

In the émigré accommodation to life in exile, memory came to replace history. In his essay "Between Memory and History," Pierre Nora suggests that memory "creates spaces [*lieux de mémoire*] when the context [*milieu de mémoire*] is no longer there."³⁰ For the Russian diaspora, literature was the space where "the eternal present of memory places remembrance in the sphere of the sacred."³¹ At one of the first meetings of the Paris literary society The Green Lamp (*Zelenaiia lampa*, 1927-1939), Merezhkovsky passionately expressed this view, where the sense

²⁷ Ibid., 211-212.

²⁸ For the importance of the occasion in 1921 for "examining and reassessing the consensual norms of the intelligentsia" and the resolution "to make the commemoration an annual national event and to have a decree passed to that effect," see Katerina Clark, *Petersburg: Crucible of Cultural Revolution, 1913-1931* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 157-159. Among the notable speeches on that occasion were those of Aleksandr Blok and Vladislav Khodasevich. Official Soviet commemoration of Pushkin's birth were decreed in 1935 and became a major national holiday from 1936 onward.

²⁹ Quoted in M. G. Vandalkovskaia, "Nekotorye aspekty adaptatsii nauchnoi i politicheskoi emigratsii (1920-1930-e gg.)," in *Istoriia rossiiskogo zarubezh'ia: Problemy adaptatsii migrantov v xix-xx vekakh*, ed. Iu. A. Poliakov (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 1995), 129.

³⁰ Pierre Nora, "Entre Mémoire et Histoire," in Pierre Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*, pt. I (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), xvii.

³¹ Ibid., xvix.

of mission borders on religious pathos: “Russian literature is our Holy Writ, our Bible—it is not books, but the Book, not words, but Logos. The logos of the national spirit. The Word is Deed. ‘In the beginning was the Word.’”³² The wording here underscores the opposition between the sacred prerevolutionary tradition and the new secular religion of the Soviet state.

Another inevitable consequence of exile was longing for the lost homeland. While Wladimir Weidle insisted on the “Russianness of the emigration as turned to the past,” Boris Zaitsev spoke of the “purifying effects of nostalgia where the poetic prevails over the memories of violence.”³³ This reaction belongs to what Svetlana Boym defines in her typology of nostalgias as “restorative nostalgia.”³⁴ It explains the popularity of such works as M. Osorgin’s novel *The Sivtsev Mews* (*Sivtsev vrazhek*), an apolitical work published in Paris in 1928, whose descriptions of the life of the middle-class intelligentsia before the revolution clearly evoked the charm of its Moscow existence.

The years 1926–1928 appear as a particularly critical juncture in the diaspora’s history. This was an important time for defining the diaspora’s borders, with rival claims as to what was the “center” and what the “periphery” of Russian literary life: was the center “there” or “here”? Despite the diaspora’s basic conservatism in literary and cultural matters, however, the lively internal debates and impassioned polemics which emerged throughout its history in serious literary journals demonstrate considerable differences among the major players of the literary community. And while the émigré mission to provide continuity and preserve the Russian classical tradition was formulated during these years, this was nevertheless a time of intense polemics, with the very identity of the emigration an implicit issue in all the exchanges. There were arguments as to whether

³² “Russkaia literatura—nashe sviatoe pisanie, nasha Bibliia—ne knigi, a Kniga, ne slova, a Slovo. Logos narodnogo dukha. Slovo est’ delo. ‘V nachale bylo slovo’”: Dmitrii Merzhkovsky quoted in *Literaturnaia zhizn’ russkogo Parizha za polveka (1924–1974): Esse, vospominaniia, stat’i*, edited by Iu. Terapiano (Paris: Al’batros, 1987), 48.

³³ V. Veidle, “Traditsionnoe i novoe v russkoi literature XX veka,” and B. Zaitsev “Izgnanie,” both in *Russkaia literatura v emigratsii*, ed. N. P. Poltoratskii (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1972), 10; *ibid.*, 4.

³⁴ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41–48. As she explains, “restorative nostalgia” stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of a “mythical homeland.”

Moscow or Paris was the current capital of Russian literature, and intense émigré debates on the role of politics in literature, partly sparked by the situation in the Soviet Union, where that issue had also become acute. Both Mirsky and Marc Slonim insisted that the center of Russian literary activity was “there” (in Soviet Russia) rather than “here” (in the emigration), dismissing the assertion of Dovid Knut (pseudonym of Dovid Meerovich Fiksmán) that Paris was the “Russian Montparnasse.”³⁵ But Khodasevich, in his 1925 article “There or Here” (*Tam ili zdes’*), gave a grimmer assessment: he objected to the émigrés’ rejection of Soviet literature for political reasons, arguing that “it is gravely ill both here and there, although the symptoms of the illness are different.” Acknowledging the split in Russian literature, however, he concluded that “God-willing, both will survive.”³⁶

The creation in Belgium in 1926 of the short lived journal *Well-Intentioned* (*Blagonamerennyi*), dedicated to the separation of politics and literature, will be central to our discussion because it gave space to airing the foundational concerns of the diaspora at this stage. Both Tsvetaeva and Remizov raised on the pages of this journal the central and ongoing concern of the emigration, that of the Russian literary language and the guardianship of its memory. The topic of history and memory also found expression in a remarkable poem by Khodasevich, “Sorrento Photographs” (*Sorrentinskie fotografii*, 1925-1926), a philosophical meditation in verse on the place of the revolution in the greater context of world history, that was published in the journal. Together with Nabokov’s essay on the capricious nature of history, “On Generalities” (originally a public lecture delivered in Russian, but the title on the manuscript is in English, 1926), the poem marked a departure from the obsessive émigré discussions about the revolution’s causes, its rights and wrongs, and various attempts to assign responsibility for the Bolshevik victory to some individual. This departure constitutes a significant marker in the evolution of the emigration.

³⁵ G. S. Smith, “Introduction: D. S. Mirsky, Literary Critic and Historian” in *D. S. Mirsky, Uncollected Writings on Russian Literature*, ed. G. S. Smith (Berkeley: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1989), 24.

³⁶ Vladislav Khodasevich, “Tam ili zdes’?” *Dni* 804 (25 September 1925): reprinted in Vladislav Khodasevich, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. John Malmstad and Robert Hughes, in 3 vols., vol. 2 (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990), 368.

On both sides of the border, rival engagements with European culture were becoming prominent features of the two Russian camps. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Party policies came to dominate Soviet literature, Soviet political and cultural presence was also becoming more assertive in Europe, as is evident in a range of activities, such as the kidnappings of White Russian generals, assassinations, and theft of archives, as well as sponsored international cultural events.³⁷ To complicate matters further, issues of nationalism, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism came to the fore not only in the diaspora, but also in the rest of Europe, which was facing the rise of fascism. As Katerina Clark shows, there was at this time another contemporary political diaspora, one of Central European writers escaping Hitler's Germany, many of whom had relocated to the Soviet Union.³⁸ Of course the Soviet leadership, aware of the complexity and instability of the European situation, was active in its international reach and extended its cultural involvement abroad, using prominent writers as ambassadors to the international Congress for the Defense of Culture, held in Paris in 1935.

As Leonid Livak points out, during these years the diaspora's ostensible isolation from French literary and cultural life, alleged to be in the name of the national mission, began to change as diaspora members took more active roles in French literary life.³⁹ One can see this particularly in the generational divide of the thirties, which created a serious rift in the literary community. Conditions were quite difficult for the younger generation of Russian writers coming of age. Many grew up and were educated in France, and were thus bilingual and bicultural. To sustain their commitment to writing in Russian, they had to support themselves, often with menial jobs. Feeling isolated from the senior cultural establishment and their journals, they were called the "unnoticed generation" in the eponymous memoir of Vladimir Varshavskii. This generation and

³⁷ E. Menegaldo, *Russkie v Parizhe, 1919-1939* (Paris: Editions Autrement, 1998; Russian translation, Moscow: Kstati, 2001).

³⁸ "Germanophone Intellectuals in Stalin's Russia: Diaspora and Cultural Identity in the 1930s," in a special issue of *Kritika* on "Negotiating Cultural Upheavals," vol. 2, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 529-551. As Clark reports, in countering Nazi propaganda about the German "nation," a challenge for these Germans abroad was to define the elusive concept of "nation."

³⁹ L. Livak, "Introduction," *Le Studio Franco-Russe*. Textes réunis et présentés par Leonid Livak. Sous la rédaction de Gervaise Tassis (Toronto: Toronto Slavic Library, 2005).

its contribution is the subject of Leonid Livak's book *How It Was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism*.⁴⁰ The younger writers, who identified with the French writers and their preoccupation with the “*malaise de siècle*” rebelled against the perceived conservatism of their elders.⁴¹ The launching of the literary journal *Numbers (Chisla)* in 1930 was a conscious move on the part of the young writers, announcing their commitment to European modernism. Livak observes that translations of Russian writers into French, which were more common than the older writers liked to admit, increased with closer contacts between the émigrés and French writers in the late twenties and thirties. Despite the generational divide, established journals published the younger writers, and many of the older writers participated in *Numbers*, as well as in the *Studio franco-russe*, also created that year.⁴² The *Studio*, created by the younger artistic generation of Russian exiles in an effort to span the gap separating their creative activity from French cultural circles, hosted regular intellectual and cultural exchanges between Russian émigré writers and thinkers and their French colleagues, where they debated the aesthetic, philosophical, and moral dilemmas of the day. Both initiatives provide a record of the Russian diaspora's growing participation in French letters, when socialist realism was being first decreed in the homeland (in 1932), and later discussed and formulated.

At this time the diaspora's literary and cultural achievements, prompted by political circumstances, enabled it to move beyond national concerns. In turning toward Europe and modernism, the émigrés became more consciously cosmopolitan. This is especially significant, considering that, from the late 1920s on, in the Soviet Union the formal experiments of modernism were falling prey to the politicization of culture. And the European fascination with the social transformations that took place in the USSR, which in the twenties and early thirties was particularly strong among French writers, ranging from the Surrealists to Gide

⁴⁰ L. Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris: Russian Émigré Literature and French Modernism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).

⁴¹ I. Kaspe, *Iskusstvo otsutstvovat'. Nezamechennoe pokolenie russkoi literatury* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2005). In this book on the “unnoticed generation” Kaspe regards the adopted self-reference as a construct, which recurs later in Soviet literary history, for example in the generation of the 1960s.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 21.

and Romain Rolland, was cooled somewhat by Stalin's autocratic policies and the Great Purge of 1937-1939. These circumstances created a propitious atmosphere for a rapprochement between French literary circles and Russian writers abroad.

Russian Letters Abroad and Modernism

The term "modernism" will need some definition, since it is used to cover a number of artistic movements, ranging from Symbolism to the avant-garde. Modernist writing, as Peter Childs has put it succinctly, is known "for its experimentation, its complexity, its formalism, and for its attempt to create a 'tradition of the new.'"⁴³ It is significant to note that this "tradition of the new" of prerevolutionary Russian modernism, a dominant trend of its Silver Age, was the subject of the first and only literary history that was produced abroad—the excellent account, *Contemporary Russian Literature: 1881-1925*, published in London in 1925 by the émigré critic and literary historian D. S. Mirsky. Followed by Mirsky's *History of Russian Literature* (1926-1927), this work remained the only book on the subject on both sides of the border until the late twentieth century.⁴⁴ Nabokov, who no doubt had access to Mirsky's books while still in Europe, referred to them after emigrating to the United States in 1940 as the "best in the market so far."⁴⁵

In general, émigrés of the First Wave were ambivalent towards prerevolutionary modernism, as Marc Raeff has shown, both to its experimental aspect and to its prophetic vision of Russia's impending doom, to be found especially in Symbolist poetry.⁴⁶ Indeed, scholars of European and Russian literary modernism agree that it "has universally been considered a literature of not just change but crisis."⁴⁷ This was especially true

⁴³ P. Childs, *Modernism*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 15.

⁴⁴ D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature from the Earliest Times until the Death of Dostoevsky* (1881) and his *Contemporary Russian Literature (1881-1925)* were combined by F. J. Whitfield in a single edition, *A History of Russian Literature: From its beginning to 1900* (New York: Knopf: 1949).

⁴⁵ Quoted in *Verses and Versions: Three Centuries of Russian Poetry*, selected and translated by Vladimir Nabokov, ed. by Brian Boyd and Stanislav Shvabrin with an introduction by Brian Boyd (Orlando, New York: Harcourt, 2008), 277.

⁴⁶ Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 105.

⁴⁷ Childs, *Modernism*, 16.

of the early part of the twentieth century as both societies were facing major historical upheavals—World War I and the October Revolution. However, the majority of émigré intellectuals were aesthetically conservative and believed that their “sacred mission” was to preserve Russian culture and secure the continuation of the Russian cultural tradition of Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky. Understandably, in the wake of historical trauma when they were navigating the “contending poles of exile and nationalism,” they wanted to hold onto the major achievement of nineteenth-century Russia, its classical literary tradition.

It is all the more ironic, then, that the survival of modernism in Russian letters abroad actually assured the continued presence of the nineteenth-century tradition that was of such concern to the conservatives. The symbolist and post-symbolist revision and appropriation of the classics was an important part of the critical and creative legacy of prerevolutionary modernism.⁴⁸ In the introduction to *Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday* (1997), Stephen Hutchings acknowledges the *fin de siècle* European influences, but insists on Russian cultural particularity, especially in prose whose “salient qualities have . . . to be sought in the monumentalism of its nineteenth-century civic culture”⁴⁹

Prerevolutionary Russian modernism presents a complex combination of nationalism and aesthetic cosmopolitanism. All the major writers and poets were well-versed in European culture and the latest artistic developments. Many of them traveled, wrote, and studied in Europe in the 1910s. This includes Aleksandr Blok, Andrei Bely, Osip Mandelstam, Boris Pasternak, Marina Tsvetaeva, and Aleksei Remizov, among others. Moreover, they experienced no conflict between their Europeanism and their intensely national preoccupations. The drive for continued experimentation and high artistic standards that were the hallmark of Russia’s early twentieth-century cultural and aesthetic “renaissance” in all the arts, including poetry and prose, created the base from which émigré writers were able not only to continue their work abroad, but also to participate

⁴⁸ A. Lavrov, *Simfonii* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1991); Greta Slobin, *A. Remizov and the Rise of Russian Modernism* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1978).

⁴⁹ Stephen C. Hutchings, *Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 8.

in interwar European modernism of the 1920s and 1930s. Even though after the Revolution the position of the Russian actors became radically altered, they could build transnational connections by drawing on the already existing, early twentieth-century base.

Not all the figures who had been prominent during Russia's Silver Age and then in emigration, however, were committed to modernism at that time, and there were lively polemics over this issue. Among the opponents of modernism were the writer Dmitrii Merezhkovsky and the major poet Zinaida Gippius, who both became politically and culturally conservative after the Revolution. Ivan Bunin, a major neo-realist who was widely known and translated abroad, was also conservative politically and had a distaste for aesthetic experiment. The critic Georgii Adamovich, a leading figure of the Paris emigration who gathered around him poets of the younger generation and whose aesthetic was based on "self-expression," engaged in heated polemics with the continuing proponents of modernism with their passionate insistence on the importance of poetic craft, such as Tsvetaeva, Remizov, Khodasevich, and, especially, the politically leftist and critically astute Mirsky. And although Nabokov (Sirin) came from the younger generation of writers, his early cosmopolitan formation, coupled with his education in Russian cultural history at Cambridge University, served to provide a link between prerevolutionary and interwar European modernism.

My third stage in the literary history of Russia Abroad (1930-1939) is a period when the emigration consolidated its identity and blossomed, both in critical and in creative writing. While the literary establishment of the older generation was itself divided during this period, significant work by the older generation contributed to the shaping of a legacy that embraced both the classical and the modernist traditions. Writers like Tsvetaeva and Remizov, as well as Khodasevich with his neo-classical orientation, produced masterpieces that rival those created in the homeland. Remarkably, even at this late stage some writers on both sides of the border espoused a common cause in their responses to the Russian classical tradition. For example, Remizov in Paris and Bely in the Soviet Union separately made a concerted effort to salvage the prerevolutionary legacy of Gogol, a writer who in the USSR was in danger of being subsumed by socialist realism. In another version, Nabokov (Sirin), in his meta-literary novel *Despair* (*Otchaianie*, 1934), took on the subject

of Dostoevsky and his role in Russian history and letters, with a parodic treatment of the subject as a meta-literary laboratory used to further the evolution of a modernist Russian literature. At the same time, as John Foster has shown, in this novel Nabokov draws on contemporary European modernists, including Joyce and Bergson.⁵⁰ Thus, in effect, by turning to the work of Russian writers of the nineteenth century, Nabokov found a way to continue the innovations of the Russian Silver Age in the context of European modernism.

This third period was also a time of changing diasporic patterns of “accommodation and resistance” in the host countries. A sense of complete separation from the homeland was at this time exacerbated by the émigrés’ anxieties about intergenerational continuity. Writing in *Contemporary Notes* in 1932, the critic Adamovich recorded the amazing fact that literature abroad “does not speak with Russia at all,” commenting on the heterogeneity of Russian émigré literature and its “lack of a common tendency,” which he regarded as symptomatic of its general confusion.⁵¹ But it was during this time that the Russian emigration forged valuable contacts with contemporary European literature and culture, French in particular, contacts that would reanimate the literary discourse within the Russian emigration. Some rapprochement with the European milieu had begun to seem inevitable, even to nationalist conservatives, who showed some casuistry as they sought precedents for this in the national past. A patriotic booklet titled *What Should the Russian Emigration Do?* (1930), co-authored by the poet Zinaida Gippius and I. Bunakov (pseudonym of Ilya Isidorovich Fondaminskii), one of the editors of *Contemporary Notes*, was intended to stoke the smoldering fires of the national mission while providing a precedent in the reign of Peter the Great for looking to Western Europe.⁵² The story of the westernizing tsar, who sent his subjects to Europe with an injunction to learn as much as possible there and bring it back for the enrichment of the country, was presented as containing a lesson for the diaspora, fostering its nascent cosmopolitanism.

⁵⁰ John Burt Foster, *Nabokov's Art of Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 74.

⁵¹ G. Adamovich, “O literature v emigratsii,” *Sovremennye zapiski* 51 (1932): 331-332.

⁵² *Chto delat' russkoi emigratsii?*, ed. Z. N. Gippius and K. R. Kotcharovskii, with I. I. Bounakov (Paris, 1930), 10.

Another historical precedent for the diaspora's rapprochement with Europe that attracted attention at this time, this one more strictly literary, was the nineteenth century classic writer Ivan Turgenev. Considered a "Russian European" during his lifetime, Turgenev settled in Europe and became well-known among the literary establishment in France, and good friends with such contemporary writers as Gustave Flaubert, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, Guy de Maupassant, and Émile Zola. Fluent in European languages, the aristocratic Turgenev continued to write in Russian about Russia and remained committed to the recognition of Russian writers abroad. Some of the émigré writers, particularly Ivan Bunin, considered to be his literary heir, began to see him as an important ally and precursor. Moreover, Turgenev as a Russian European began to be regarded as an inspiring example of how one might remain a major Russian writer while located in foreign lands. In 1930, the year when the dialogues of *Le Studio Franco-Russe* began, Boris Zaitsev published "Diary Entry: The Russians and the French," where he represents Turgenev as the "enlightened and calm spirit of a Russian European," thereby continuing a venerable tradition of "a cultural ambassador."⁵³

Among the polemics of the émigrés, one issue that came to the fore in the 1930s was the fundamental problem of whether writing in exile was sustainable given the generational change and the weakening ties to the homeland, which meant that memory of it was receding further into the past. In 1933 there was jubilation when the Nobel Prize for literature was awarded to Bunin, rather than to Maxim Gorky, the doyen of Soviet letters, and this gave the émigré writers a sense of vindication and confidence.

In that critical year, 1933, Khodasevich made a seminal intervention in the debate about the fate of Russian literature abroad with his essay "Literature in Exile" (*Literatura v izgnanii*), printed in the journal *Renaissance (Vozrozhdenie)*, which asserted the validity of writing in emigration. Khodasevich argues that the critical factor enabling Russian literature abroad to develop, and even flourish, despite the many hardships and challenges, is the national language, which took on great importance when the nation—Russia—no longer existed. Thus, Khodasevich asserts,

⁵³ B. Zaitsev, "Dnevnik pisatel'ia: russkie i frantsuzy," *Vozrozhdenie*, 4 November 1930, 3; "Annexes," *Le Studio Franco-Russe*, 579-584.

literature “beyond the borders” (of the nation) is “created by its language and spirit,” independent of territory or the state.⁵⁴

This essay by Khodasevich, engaging as it does émigré anxieties about the “conflicting poles of exile and nationalism,” begs consideration in a broader twentieth-century context. It is chronologically positioned between critical essays by Osip Mandelstam and Erich Auerbach, which also engage this issue. Mandelstam’s philological essays “Word and Culture” (*Slovo i kul’tura*, 1921) and “On the Nature of the Word” (*O prirode slova*, 1922) were written in the Soviet Union during that postrevolutionary time of sweeping change when the poet perceived “the word” as endangered. Auerbach, the prominent philologist and Dante scholar from the University of Marburg, like most German exiles, did not go to the Soviet Union after 1933. In his case, he went to Istanbul, a crossroad of East and West that had also been an important stop-over for Russians escaping the Revolution and Civil War across the Black Sea not so long before. His seminal essay on the subject of language, exile, and history, “Philology and Weltliteratur,” was written in 1954, when he had gone to the United States.

The three authors could be seen as engaging in an extraordinary dialog across time and space about the primacy of language at times of historic trauma and exile. Khodasevich, who was no doubt familiar with Mandelstam’s essays, created a critical link in the three-way “dialog.” About a decade after Mandelstam and some twenty years before Auerbach, Khodasevich mounts a striking and impassioned argument, which draws on Goethe’s notion of World Literature, citing such models for the Russian diaspora as the great exiled poets of Europe, from Dante to the Polish Romantic poets and the poets of the Jewish renaissance in the Russian empire. The essay conveys a love of the word and a sense of its primacy in a nation’s culture and history.

In notes written in 1937-1939, Khodasevich pointed to the twenty-year existence of Russian émigré literature as an incontrovertible fact. Moreover, he noted, even a superficial comparison between Soviet and émigré “literary production” would reveal differences that go beyond the obvious ideological features: “The differences are deeper and much more

⁵⁴ V. Khodasevich, “Literatura v izgnanii,” *Vozrozhdenie*, 4 May 1933. Reprinted in V.F. Khodasevich, *Literaturnye stat’i i vospominaniia*, 259.

striking: they are in language, in style, in the voice, in the very concepts of the nature and function of artistic creativity.”⁵⁵ This argument asserts the complementarity of the two traditions, even as it underscores their separation and distinction.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated in this book’s case studies of the critical and creative writing produced by Russia Abroad, linguistic nationalism and cultural continuity served the diaspora well as its guiding principles. The émigré literary legacy faced “the contending poles of exile and nationalism” and turned them into a creative principle that rendered the poles compatible. In his obituary for Khodasevich in 1939, Nabokov declared him “the finest poet that post-war Russia produced,” adding a stunning pronouncement that attested the extraordinary challenge facing Russian writers at that time, both at home or abroad: “Even genius does not save one in Russia; in exile, one is saved by genius alone.”⁵⁶ Freedom, missing in the homeland, was represented as a key factor in the diaspora’s creative existence, while the diaspora’s self-doubt and passionate polemics were seen as an inextricable part of history with its “entangled tensions.”

The reevaluation of the diaspora’s legacy would come later, in the post-war period, when a critical historical perspective was gained by some of its players who were then still alive. For example, Adamovich, who in 1932 had expressed anxiety about its variegated quality or hybridity, came to consider this its strength in his evaluation of 1962, when he looked at the legacy of the First Wave in contrast to the more monolithic culture of the Soviet 1930s.⁵⁷

Self-consciously distinct from Soviet literature, the diaspora created a rich literary legacy that was indisputably part of the great national tradition, and found affirmation and legitimacy in Europe before it was possi-

⁵⁵ V. Khodasevich, untitled notes on Russian émigré literature (n. p. ca. 1937-1939), 4 p., typescript with handwritten corrections. Mikhail M. Karpovich Papers on Vl. Khodasevich, Bakhmeteff Archive on Russian and East European History and Culture, Rare Book M.L., Columbia University, New York.

⁵⁶ Nabokov’s obituary for Khodasevich first appeared in *Sovremennye zapiski* 69 (1939): 263-264. In English: *Triquarterly* 27 (Spring 1973): 83-87; also as “On Khodasevich” in *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), 223-227.

⁵⁷ G. Adamovich, *Vklad russkoi emigratsii v mirovuiu kul’turu* (Paris: s. n., 1961), 6-9.

ble in the homeland, something which occurred only in the late twentieth century. But the possibility—the dream of return—had hung over the First Wave from the very beginning. After the war it became a recurrent theme of general histories of the emigration. Struve, in the introduction to his *Russian Literature in Exile* of 1956, formulated a mythic vision of “return” and a sense of the diaspora’s potential contribution to a united Russia: “literature abroad is a flow temporarily diverted from Russia and, when the time comes, it will fall into the main riverbed . . . Its waters . . . may perhaps contribute more to the enrichment of the riverbed than the waterways in Russia proper.”⁵⁸ He insisted that there was “one Russian literature” despite the political divide, a position that formed the basis of a pioneering French multi-authored history of twentieth-century Russian literature, published in Paris in 1987.⁵⁹ The theme of return became more explicit a decade later in an essay by Nikolai Andreev in which he amplifies Struve’s notion of the “two streams” but more importantly suggests a “broad role” for diaspora literature that would include “all that purports to be literature and that appears in Russian outside the Soviet Union.”⁶⁰ Andreev thus represented the younger generation that welcomed the heterogeneity of voices and the “variety of ideological phenomena of Russian life” in diaspora.⁶¹ Also, following Khodasevich, Andreev proclaims the principle of “linguistic nationalism,” with language as the defining, suprapolitical feature of Russian literature, crucial for reunifying both “streams.”⁶²

And, as discussed in the Epilogue to this book, a symbolic “return” to the homeland would be realized by the end of the twentieth century, in post-communist Russia, with publications of émigré authors and numerous academic studies of the diaspora legacy, including Struve’s history. The fulfillment of the “vision of return” in post-communist Russia and the new possibilities for the creation of “one Russian literature” allow us to reformulate the “contending poles” of history, exile, and nationalism.

⁵⁸ Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 9.

⁵⁹ *Histoire de la littérature russe: Le XX siècle*, ed. E. Etkind, I. Serman, and V. Strada (Paris: Fayard, 1987). In Russian: *Istoriia russkoi literatury, XX vek* (Moscow: Progress, 1995).

⁶⁰ N. Andreev, “Ob osobennostiakh i osnovnykh etapakh razvitiia russkoi literatury za rubezhom,” in *Russkaia literatura v emigratsii*, ed. Poltoratskii, 21.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 19.

Part I

*Defining Émigré
Borders and Missions
in the Twenties*

Chapter IA

Border-Crossings in Postrevolutionary Exile (1919-1924): The Embrace of Shklovskian “Estrangement”

Victor Shklovsky left the Soviet Union for Berlin in 1922, forced by political circumstances—namely, his affiliation with Socialist Revolutionaries in 1918, which cast a shadow over his political allegiance, even though he switched sides later. In Berlin he became actively engaged in the Russian literary community and its writers’ organizations. Although he returned to Moscow in 1923, this brief interlude abroad turned out to be a period of intense creativity for him—not only critical but literary as well. While in Berlin, Shklovsky published two important books, both printed by Helicon in 1923. The first, *The Knight’s Move*, was a collection of short pieces, written between 1919 and 1921 in Moscow, Petrograd, and Berlin for the small Petrograd newspaper *The Life of Art*. The immediately striking detail about *The Knight’s Move*, dubbed as “irreverent” by Victor Erlich, was its two prefaces—one aimed at the exiles, the other addressed to young literature students at home. The second Berlin publication was *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love*, an experimental epistolary novel,

Because of the Berlin experience, one of the key concepts Shklovsky developed in the early Formalist theory of art, that of *estrangement* or *defamiliarization*, found a venue for productive “historical metamorphoses” abroad.¹ The etymology of Shklovsky’s term (*ostranenie*) spans several semantic fields, beginning with its definition as the key artistic device in his early Formalist statement “Art as Technique” (1917). With its root *-stran-* from the Russian *strana* (country) and *strannyi* (strange), along with the related *strannik* (wanderer), the term encompasses a broad net of semantic

¹ Svetlana Boym, “Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt,” *Poetics Today* 26:4 (Winter 2005): 584.

associations revolving around distancing from the familiar. As G. Tihanov notes in his essay, “The Politics of Estrangement: The Case of the Early Shklovsky,”² it is important to recall that Shklovsky first used the term in 1915 and that “most of Shklovsky’s early essays were written in the years of World War I.”³ The term, which arose in the time of historical trauma of the war and then the Revolution, points to the role of perceptual habits which need disturbance in order for the renewals necessary in art to emerge. It is interesting to note that Tihanov dispels the radicalism usually associated with Shklovsky, on account of his theoretical position and alliance with the Futurists, and emphasizes his social conservatism, which after the Revolution was “above all the political conservatism of an intellectual opposed to the Revolution,” extending to his distrust of the Futurists who espoused it.⁴



Victor Borisovich Shklovsky,
1893-1984

In the period following the October Revolution of 1917, the term *estrangement* was tied to a theory of artistic freedom and extended to the “dislocation” or “*dépaysement*” of exile.⁵ We will consider its implications in Shklovsky’s brief Berlin sojourn and his subsequent return to the Soviet Union. Since the semantic unfolding of the concept of *estrangement* in Russian emigration transpires in relation to Soviet cultural politics, we will consider it in the context of domestic critical literary debates in the new Soviet state as well as its implication in exile.

The mood of “impermanence” and “liminality” in the early 1920s describes the state of *estrangement* of Russians in Europe, who represented a full array of class and political views. Among the prominent Russian literary figures in Berlin were the two masters of Russian modernist prose, Andrei Bely and Aleksei Remizov. Both practiced forms of *estrangement*

² Galin Tihanov, “The Politics of Estrangement: The Case of the Early Shklovsky,” *Poetics Today* 26:4 (Winter 2005): 665-696.

³ *Ibid.*, 671.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 672.

⁵ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 290-291.

in life and work in prerevolutionary Petersburg and continued to develop its possibilities in creative genre innovations in Berlin and Paris. As we will see, despite its inherent instability, the Berlin period witnessed creative projects and collaborations among these writers and their friends across the border.

Changing Semantics of *Estrangement*: At Home and Abroad

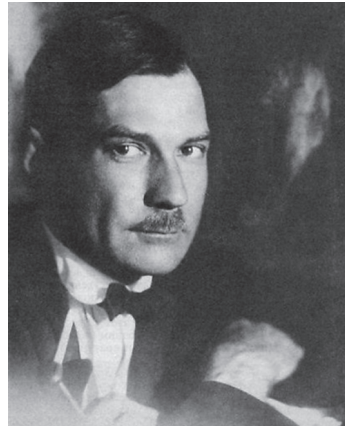
The challenges that the Russian exiles faced in the first years of the Revolution were closely tied to the Soviet cultural and political situation. Shklovsky followed this situation closely for personal, political, and artistic reasons. Especially important for the writers were the debates on the role and nature of art in the new socialist society, becoming more intense after the end of the Civil War in 1921.

An important venue for Soviet writers was *Red Virgin Soil*, founded in 1921 to provide a competitive and challenging response to the Parisian *Contemporary Notes*. Edited by a brilliant critic, Aleksandr Voronskii, *Red Virgin Soil* would go on to print some of the best writers of the twenties. Among them were Fellow Travelers or writers like Shklovsky, who championed literary experiment and proclaimed their independence from politics. Shklovsky was close to these writers, including Zamyatin, Babel, Zoshchenko, Olesha, and others who would become classics of the period. The task of forging paths for the new prose fell to Voronskii, who had a prominent and complex position among various political groups which were contending for power, including the far-left and aggressive Proletcult. His editorials endeavored to adjudicate the struggle for artistic direction and primacy among rival groupings at home. It is not surprising that his other important interlocutors were the émigré writers, whom he also addressed on the pages of the journal in a decidedly polemical tone.

In an authoritative history of *Red Virgin Soil*, Robert Maguire confirms that the new journal's message was clearly aimed at writers who left Russia, and who thus had made "a choice against history, and therefore, against art, and would be punished by artistic sterility and death."⁶ Here, emigration was seen as a form of radical *estrangement* from Russia and its

⁶ Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s*, 72.

literary life, a betrayal punishable by artistic death. Indeed, writing in the journal in 1921, Voronskii drew a dividing line between the two literatures, stating that “the war is over, but the struggle continues.”⁷ The political divide was deemed irreconcilable. The bourgeois West was now the enemy and Voronskii warned that the spiritually bankrupt émigré spirit was “seeping through the cracks to the new state in order to seek comfort and escape from the suffocating atmosphere of émigré trifles.”⁸ In the early postrevolutionary years of struggle in the country, devas-



Evgenii Ivanovich
Zamyatin, 1884-1937

tated by revolution and civil war, the future of literature at home became a battleground for contending forces in cultural politics. Though himself a moderate, Voronskii’s position was politically charged, and his words were intended to carry great rhetorical impact, both at home and abroad.

Already in the first issue of *Red Virgin Soil*, Voronskii reviewed contemporary journals, both domestic and foreign, singling out the first issue of the Petrograd *Dom iskusstv* in 1921.⁹ Especially relevant for Shklovsky and others in Berlin was Voronskii’s response to Zamyatin’s essay “I am afraid,” with its warning that real Russian literature will not come about unless “we will stop looking at the Russian demos as at a child that needs protecting, as long as we will not be cured of the new catholicism, which is no less than the old fears of the heretical word.”¹⁰ Insisting that literature was written by madmen and heretics, Zamyatin also expressed anxiety that “the real future of Russian literature may be its past.”¹¹ As we will see, this anxiety will become a leitmotif in postrevolutionary critical literature.

⁷ Aleksandr Voronskii, “Ot redaktora,” *Krasnaia nov’ 1* (1921): 26.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26. My translation.

⁹ Aleksandr Voronskii, “Ob otshel’nikakh, bezumtsakh i buntariakh,” *Krasnaia nov’ 1* (1921): 292.

¹⁰ Evgenii Zamyatin, “I Am Afraid” (1921) in *The Soviet Heretic*, trans. Mirra Ginzburg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Voronskii was predictably sarcastic about Zamyatin's fears and countered them with a statement about "the deep crisis of ideology of western bourgeois civilization," concluding therefore that "the literary Olympus now gathered abroad is 'the pit' (*dno*)."¹² However, Voronskii's scathing message revealed his own anxiety that the writers in exile were a threat. Aimed at them as well as at his compatriots, the message came with a strong counter-challenge to Zamyatin: a new writer and a new reader will appear in the homeland.

Victor Shklovsky, engaged in his own literary struggle, which continued while abroad, acted against Voronskii's dire warning, exploring possibilities in both directions. Ironically, like Voronskii's damning address to the émigrés, Shklovsky's move registered the historic moment of the dramatic dialogue between the metropolis and the diaspora concerning the future of Russian literature. Unlike Voronskii, however, Shklovsky addressed the émigré writers as allies, rather than mortal enemies, thus defying the prohibition assigning them to "sterility and death."

As a Formalist, Shklovsky was staking out a position on the extended battleground of ideologically charged cultural politics of the early twenties. The polemical thrust of *The Knight's Move* was announced right in the opening of the first preface, addressed to the émigrés. In terse syncopated phrases, Shklovsky commented on the chess metaphor of the title, citing the reason for the knight's "sideways move" as analogous to the nature of art as conditionality (*uslovnost'*), an immanent system with its own laws, the theme of the book. His comment that the knight "moves sideways, with detours, because the straight path is closed to him," would be understood by contemporaries as a hidden allusion to political pressures at home.¹³ Thus, the author's declaration of his own "sideways move"—"writing for the Russians abroad"—registered the connection between *estrangement* as an artistic device, able to circumvent politics, as well as a possible marker of exile.

The second preface, titled "A Scroll" (a reference to the ancient manuscript tradition), illustrated another aspect of *estrangement*. Originally written for home consumption, the preface was a response to two Russian literature students, Lev Lunts and Nikolai Nikitin, who asked Shklovsky

¹² Voronskii, "Ob otshel'nikakh, bezumtsakh i buntariakh," 292.

¹³ Viktor Shklovskii, *Khod konia. Sbornik statei* (Moscow/Berlin: Gelikon, 1923), 10.

to talk about art. Once again, Shklovsky proceeded in a “sideways” move, explaining a Formalist approach to narrative through parable, rather than directly with theory. In order to illustrate the frame narrative composition of story within a story, he *defamiliarized* it in stages: first, by using as his example a legend of St. Nicholas, which he then compared to a fragment from an unknown Hindu epic, *Hitopadesh*.¹⁴ In a relatively brief space, Shklovsky contrived to introduce the ancient art of storytelling, with its own immanent laws, while at the same time pronouncing strong warnings against the regimentation and centralization of art.

In the argument between Voronskii and Zamyatin, Shklovsky sided with the latter in *The Knight's Move*, speaking against “regulating art” as if it were a “movement of trains,” echoing the metaphor in the opening chapter of Zamyatin’s futuristic dystopian novel *We*, published abroad in 1920, where the state poet, D 503, compared the predictable beauty of official verse to a train schedule. Shklovsky stated: “The greatest misfortune of Russian art is that it is not allowed to move organically the way the heart moves in a man’s chest: it is being regulated like the movement of trains.”¹⁵ Here Shklovsky referred to the “organic” model of Formalism, also called the morphological method. In contrast to what is usually considered as Shklovsky’s “mechanistic” model, these approaches to the study of literature “turned to biology and its subject matter—the organism—as their model.”¹⁶

Shklovsky proceeded indirectly in his argument by creating a whimsical figure of a millipede (*tysiachenozhka*) which, on the advice of a turtle, introduced centralization to manage its 978 feet. However, “chancellorization and bureaucratism” impeded its movement, so the millipede reconsidered its decision. It concluded: “Viktor Shklovsky was right when he said, ‘The greatest misfortune of our time is that we regulate art without knowing what it is.’”¹⁷ So the millipede implored: “Citizens and comrades ... look at me and you will see the folly of over-regulation! Comrades in revolution, comrades in war, leave art at liberty, not in its own name, but in the name of the fact that it is impossible to regulate the unknown.”¹⁸

¹⁴ Shklovskii, *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁶ Peter Steiner, *Russian Formalism: A Meta-poetics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 68.

¹⁷ Shklovskii, *Khod konia*, 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

This exhortation helps explain Shklovsky's "sideways move" in his address to the émigrés, which appeared as a sly strategy to garner allies for the political battles at home. As we saw from Voronskii's sharp rejoinder to Zamyatin, arguments about the independence of art in the Soviet Union were ideologically charged already in 1921, when the boundaries between literature at home and abroad were still fluid.

In the two prefaces and the essays that follow, Shklovsky attempted to engage a wider audience of Russian writers, including those who had recently gone abroad, precisely because they would be sympathetic to his aesthetic position and free from political pressures at home. Such were the essay's addressees, Lunts and Nikitin, the younger Serapion Brothers, a group of independent writers who considered Zamyatin their leader.

Shklovsky's tactical move in the dialogical arrangement of the two prefaces, which speak to each other and to their respective audiences, served to stake out a position on the literary battleground in the Soviet Union. With his usual aplomb, Shklovsky placed himself squarely in the center of the polemic on the nature of art and its relation to *byt*, or everyday social reality. The expectation that Soviet art must reflect social transformation divided writers into enemy camps. While some avant-garde artists, like the Constructivists, incorporated the struggle of the new *byt* with the old in their art, Shklovsky reiterated the autonomy of art and its independence from life. He conducted arguments with Futurist and Formalist friends at home, some of whom, like Mayakovsky and Brik, had joined the Narkompros or the National Education Commission in 1918 and modified their former position, now insisting that new art must contribute to the creation of a new social reality. The two former friends were his primary intended audience in this book, as he signaled in the footnote to the first essay "Ullia, Ullia, Martians," dedicated to the memory of a great Futurist poet, Velimir Khlebnikov. In the section "On Art and Revolution," Shklovsky reminded his former Futurist allies that they had "freed art from *byt*" in their prerevolutionary poetry, where *estrangement* was the hallmark of aesthetic innovation.¹⁹

As history would show, this was the last possible moment for Shklovsky to restate the radical Formalist position, since heated debates in the Soviet Union were becoming more antagonistic and would fall eventually

¹⁹ Viktor Shklovskii, "Ullia, Ullia, Marsiane!" in *Khod konia*, 38.

under Party control. In a most pointed statement in the book, Shklovsky argued that the Futurists only “recognized the legacy of centuries” when they proclaimed that “art was always free from life, and its color never reflected the color of the flag over the city citadel.”²⁰

Part of Shklovsky’s argument with the Futurists refers to the connection between their avant-garde aesthetic and the Formalist conception of *estrangement*, in which poetic language is always a foreign language. As an example of *estrangement* in verbal art, Shklovsky cited the approach of the Scythians, a postrevolutionary literary group composed of established writers, whose lineage proceeded from the stylistically complex nineteenth-century writer, Leskov, to the contemporary Remizov, in whose work the literary device of using “folk” language in prose resulted in the fusion of the literary language with folk idiom, an example of “estrangement.” As Shklovsky reminded his Futurist friends, this was done for aesthetic, and not for political reasons.²¹

Shklovsky’s association with Remizov’s innovations in verbal art went back to his early pathbreaking essay “Art as Technique” (1917), where *estrangement* was shown to be the indispensable artistic device that disrupts the habitual and awakens perception: “The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception ...”²² While Shklovsky drew his classic examples of *estrangement* from the works of Leo Tolstoy, “whose work is generally known,” he also cited Remizov as an important contemporary writer who incorporated orality and premodern narrative genres in his prose.²³ Shklovsky historicized this approach by referring to Pushkin’s pioneering efforts to create a modern poetic idiom in the early 1800s “by introducing oral or vulgar vernacular and combining the language of the folktale with the elegant eighteenth-century poetic idiom.”²⁴ This practice of linguistic *estrangement* by Russia’s greatest poet, an innovation that led to “the consternation of his contemporaries,” served to support Shklovsky’s argument.

²⁰ Ibid., 39. My translation.

²¹ Ibid., 37.

²² Viktor Shklovsky, “Art As Technique,” in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Rees (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 20.

²³ Ibid., 23.

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

Shklovsky was inspired to follow this particular argument by the research of the Moscow Linguistic Circle. A counterpart of the literary Formalists in Petersburg, The Circle's original members included Roman Jakobson and Piotr Bogatyrev, the great linguist and folklorist of the twentieth century. They conducted research in the language of poetry, as well as in the folk and oral traditions as sources of verbal art.²⁵ Shklovsky used Remizov as a writer-practitioner, who turned to ancient narrative and folklore as a rich repository of linguistic creativity, especially to the "secret" or "erotic" fairytales and riddles as a great source of *defamiliarization*.²⁶

Estrangement in Remizov: Modern/Archaic

Remizov's complex literary style, based on *defamiliarization* from the traditional literary language and genre of nineteenth-century fiction, was dubbed by some contemporaries as incomprehensible as "hieroglyphics," a reaction reminiscent of Pushkin's time. It is not surprising that Shklovsky turned to this modernist writer again while in Berlin, in his experimental epistolary memoir about love, literature, and politics, *Zoo, or Letters Not about Love*. In "Letter Five" he featured Remizov in a remarkable literary portrait as a figure for whom life and art present an inseparable totality, imbued with whimsy and dream: "Remizov's life—constructed to his specifications and authenticated with his own tail—is most inconvenient, but amusing."²⁷ Shklovsky captured Remizov's essential quality in his portrait of the writer as innovator in *Zoo*, citing his striking phrase motto: "I can no longer begin a novel with 'Ivan Ivanovich was sitting at the table....'"²⁸

Shklovsky admired Remizov's literary experiment especially now, after the Revolution, for going against the Soviet requirement of using *byt* or everyday reality in literature: "he wants to create a book with no plot, with no 'man's fate' lodged at the base of the composition" (22). The book, titled *Russia in Writ* and published in Berlin in 1922, was hard to define in

²⁵ Steiner, *Russian Formalism*, 16-17.

²⁶ For the history of these tales and their role in literary innovation, see Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's Fictions: 1900-1921* (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press 1992).

²⁷ Viktor Shklovskii, *Zoo, ili pis'ma ne o liubvi* (Berlin: Gelikon, 1923), 27.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

terms of genre. It was a compilation of authentic old documents, deeds, and personal letters that Remizov had collected during his travels in provincial Russia and now provided with commentary. He conceived the idea for this book in revolutionary Petrograd. Wishing to recreate the collective history of Old Russia, Remizov wrote in the introduction “Across centuries I traverse the verbal Russian earth ...”²⁹

Continued interest in formal innovation after the Revolution found both writers engaged in the creation of an experimental autobiographical epistolary genre in Berlin.

Shklovsky wrote *Zoo, or Letters Not About Love* (1923) and Remizov published two important books at this time. *Kukkha: Rozanov's Letters* (1923), was a work where citations from the posthumously published correspondence between the two friends (Rozanov died in 1919) were accompanied by Remizov's ironic commentary on the state of contemporary Russian literature. *Akhru* (1922), dedicated to Blok's memory, was written in the form of an ongoing conversation with the poet, as in the ancient genre of correspondence with the dead. It also evoked the context of literary life before and after the Revolution. Perhaps the most striking fact for our discussion was that both books included the text of the Constitution of Remizov's mock literary society, The Great Free Order of the Apes (*Obezvelvolpal*), mentioned in Shklovsky's *Zoo*. It was invented in 1907 and functioned informally, with illustrious charter members, among them Blok, Akhmatova, Zamyatin, and other Petersburg writers. The society was declared “official” in 1917. The Ape Manifesto, written in Glagolitic or Ethiopian letters, and the Constitution, were also published in the *Bulletins of the House of Arts* in Berlin in the February/March issue of 1922.

The “Manifesto,” presented as a “found” manuscript, was heir to the eighteenth-century tradition of social satire through *estrangement*, exemplified by Swift, Montesquieu, and Voltaire, where the hero, away from his country, finds the local behavior unfamiliar and, in the process of



Aleksei Mikhailovich
Remizov, 1877-1957

²⁹ Quoted in Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's Fictions: 1900-1921*, 66.

interpreting it, reveals a critique of his own society. Similarly, the Ape Constitution, written in the style of chancellery prose, critiqued human society, contrasting it with the anarchic social order of the Ape Kingdom, arranged “according to strict rules to which everyone conforms freely.” The anarchic, utopian space of the Kingdom “destroyed all borders, border posts, and visas—go wherever you wish, live just as you like.”³⁰

Shklovsky Back in the USSR

Although he returned to the Soviet Union in 1923, Shklovsky strove to remain a cosmopolitan, “the product of that aspect of Russian culture that was formed at the crossroads of Russia and the West.”³¹ Shklovsky’s next collection of essays, *The Third Factory* (1926), written after the return to Russia, was generally seen by historians as a conciliatory attempt to respond to Marxist criticism of Formalism and Futurism.³² Yet he expressed his ambivalence in a chapter ironically titled “I Write About How Objective Reality Determines Consciousness, While the Conscience Remains in Disarray.” The interplay of these terms appeared later in the book in a letter addressed to Boris Eikhenbaum, a fellow Formalist, with an implicit reference to Remizov: “As far as objective reality is concerned, it certainly does determine consciousness. But, in art, it runs counter to consciousness. My brain is busy with the daily grind. The best thing in life is morning tea.”³³

This ironic aside, a “sideways move,” was a literary reminiscence, via Remizov, of the most contradictory character in Russian fiction, Dostoevsky’s *Underground Man*, a contrary critic of social utopia who insisted that the world may collapse, but “I must always have my tea.” It was cited in the fragment “Revolution or a Cup of Tea?” (*Revolutsiia ili chai pit’?*) in

³⁰ Aleksei Remizov, *Akhru: Povest’ Peterburgskaia* (Berlin: Z. I. Grzebin, 1923), 66. My translation.

³¹ Olga Panchenko, *Viktor Shklovskii: Tekst-Mif-Real’nost’ (k probleme literaturnoi i iazykovoï lichnosti)* (Szczecin, Poland: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 1997), 58.

³² Richard Sheldon (*Viktor Shklovsky: an International Bibliography of Works by and about Him* [Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1977], xi) writes that although the book was an attempt to respond to pressures “that was not actually the book which actually emerged” and was defiant. Victor Erlich (*Russian Formalism: History-doctrine* [The Hague, Mouton, 1969], 131) states that the book reflects the malaise in the movement.

³³ V. Shklovskii, *Tret’ia fabrika* (Moscow: Krug, 1926), 103.

a cycle of Remizov's chronicle of the Revolution, titled "The Honeymoon" (*Medovyi mesiats*), serialized in the four issues of the Berlin monthly *Epopeiia* (1922-1923), edited by Andrei Bely. Both Remizov and Shklovsky continued the rebellion against social determinism and regimentation of art by choosing "a cup of tea" as an antidote.

Remizov was no doubt the implied interlocutor of the second preface of *The Knight's Move*, where Shklovsky illustrated his ideas about *estrangement* in narrative by telling a story of St. Nicholas, Remizov's favorite saint, known in Russian under many names as a miracle-worker and protector of the poor. This was a perfect Remizovian reference, since St. Nicholas often appeared to people in the guise of a poor wanderer or *strannik*, etymologically related to *estrangement* (*ostranenie*) through its root *stran-*. Shklovsky was clearly familiar with Remizov's first group of legends of St. Nicholas, in his early collection of Russian legends, *Limonar'*, published in 1908. Remizov's legends for the modern audience, along with his collection of fairytales, *Sunwise* (*Posolon'*), published in 1907, were hailed by contemporary writers such as Bely, Briusov, Voloshin, and others.³⁴

Remizov continued to write legends of St. Nicholas throughout his life, with several collections published in Russia (1916-1918), and later in Berlin and Paris. In *The Knight's Move* Shklovsky's choice of the story of St. Nicholas was probably not accidental, since Remizov's modern renditions of the legends of this popular Byzantine saint provided an illustration of the generative narrative possibilities of this "traveling" or stock motif, found throughout medieval literature. As we will see, it will be central in Remizov's writing in exile.

Estrangement: Diasporic Longing and Linguistic Nationalism

During his Berlin sojourn, Shklovsky had plenty of opportunity to become familiar with diasporic longing as part of the exile condition. He undoubtedly read Remizov's memoir *Akhru*, dedicated to Blok and later included in his great chronicle of the Revolution, *Whirlwind Russia* (Paris 1927). Recalling the poet's complaints that writing had become impossible after the Revolution, Remizov responded that emigration was a "desert"

³⁴ Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's Fictions: 1900-1921*, 66.

that now has made it impossible for him: “if one is fated to perish, it is better to perish at home, in poverty, in Russia.”³⁵ This acute expression of the “predicament of diaspora”—the longing of exile, a feeling of liminality, and the sense that things are “happening in Russia”—was fueled by the struggle for survival of writers and artists abroad. Unlike Remizov, Shklovsky took the risk and chose to return, while Remizov remained poor but creatively prolific in exile.

Indeed, the émigrés, now literally *estranged* (*ostranennyye*) from the homeland, facing considerable economic hardship and isolation in the host countries, continue to identify themselves as Russian writers. Aware of living out the *estrangement* principle as homeless wanderers (*stranniki*), they continue to write in their native, now “strange” or foreign language in their host country, conscious of the curse of the Marxists, like the editor of *Red Virgin Soil*, Voronskii, who argued that for a writer emigration is death. As we have seen, even an established writer like Remizov was not immune to that anxiety.

Germany’s economic decline led to the closing of publishing houses, forcing émigrés to move elsewhere. Remizov, along with many other writers, left for Paris in 1923.³⁶ As the Communist Party tightened its political grip on literary life around 1925, and the border crossings ceased, the émigrés were forced to reconsider their situation and reassess the relationship between the homeland and the diaspora. This dialogue became more one-sided as émigré writers, whose existence was now taboo in the homeland, continued to debate issues of literature, politics, as well as *byt*, away from home.

To counteract their isolated condition and to preserve linguistic and national identity, the émigrés considered themselves on a sacred “mission” to safeguard the Russian language and culture from Bolshevik misuse. Some tended towards literary “conservatism,” subscribing to Zamyatin’s fear that “the future of Russian literature will be its past.” Commenting on the situation in his 1925 essay “There or Here?” Khodasevich concluded that Russian literature is “gravely ill both here and there, although the

³⁵ Aleksei Remizov, *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'*, edited with commentary by Boris Filippov (London: Overseas Publications, 1979), 503.

³⁶ Thomas R. Beyer, “The House of Arts and the Writer’s Club in Berlin, 1921-1923,” in *Russische Autoren und Verlage in Berlin nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: A. Spitz, 1987), 33.

symptoms of the illness are different ... God willing, both will survive.”³⁷ By this time the émigrés had established a remarkable network of cultural institutions—newspapers, schools, churches, libraries, and publishers that assured cultural continuity, including an annual “Day of Russian Culture,” celebrated from 1926 onward in Russian communities scattered around the globe, from Shanghai to Paris and San Francisco.

The Diaspora and Soviet Cultural Politics

While Remizov continued his literary experiment in emigration, Soviet cultural politics at the end of the first revolutionary decade were moving towards the assertion of Party control and Stalin’s Cultural Revolution of the First Five Year Plan, 1928-1932. By the end of 1927, Voronskii was dismissed as editor of *New Virgin Soil*, due to his association with Trotsky. According to Maguire, he was also at odds with the Party, since he was opposed “to the ‘activist’ or ‘dialectical’ view of literature ... for direct political ends” (2000: 426). Voronskii modified his early ideological stance and was now closer to Shklovsky’s position in *The Knight’s Move* and the millipede’s observation that “... art is anything but a vehicle for propaganda ...”³⁸

The embattled Formalists modified their approach to literary study, since it was no longer possible to argue for the independence of art as a separate system. In 1928, the last year of the Futurist journal *The New Left*, Iurii Tynianov, a brilliant Formalist theoretician living in the Soviet Union, and Roman Jakobson, now the vice-chairman of the Prague Linguistic Circle, published a collaborative piece, titled “Problems of Study of Language and Literature” (1928). Known as the Tynianov/Jakobson theses, it was composed of eight brief points stating that the study of literature requires “a correlation between the literary series and the other historical series.”³⁹ The authors conceded the importance of *byt*, or social context in literature, and the thesis is generally seen as the end of Formalism.⁴⁰

³⁷ Vladislav Khodasevich, *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 3 vols., vol. 1 (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1990), 368.

³⁸ Shklovskii, *Khod konia*, 16-17.

³⁹ Iurii Tynianov and Roman Jakobson, “Problems in the Study of Literature and Language,” in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 81.

⁴⁰ Steiner, *Russian Formalism*, 241.

Political pressures on Soviet writers were increasing. The Serapion Brothers disbanded when the vicious campaign against Fellow Travelers was conducted in 1929. The following year, the artistic community was shaken by the suicide of Mayakovsky, whose last note, with the line “my love boat crushed against *byt*” spoke to the impossibility of art’s survival under the conditions of the time. In a milestone essay about Mayakovsky’s tragic death, “On a Generation that Squandered its Poets” (1931), Roman Jakobson, who remained abroad, put the blame on Russian *byt*, or the “immutable present,” that crushes the “creative urge toward a transformed future.”⁴¹ He wrote of “the revolution and the destruction of the poet.”⁴²

That year Shklovsky was viciously attacked in the press and recanted, in his “Monument to Scientific Error,” which was also a defense of Formalism.⁴³ A general depression and sense of foreboding set in as it became clear that literary and artistic life in the Soviet Union was coming under Party control. By 1932, all literary groupings were disbanded and the tenets of Social Realism became obligatory for all. Shklovsky’s and Zamyatin’s anxiety about the regimentation of art in the early twenties was now a reality.

In these circumstances, Shklovsky’s Berlin address to the émigré writers in *The Knight’s Move* acquired a new resonance. The broader implications of his concept of *estrangement* in its connection to the “dépaysement of exile,” and his insistence on art’s independence from *byt*, would become crucial for Russian writers struggling to continue and preserve the language and culture in the diaspora.

The Separation between Literature and the Homeland

The viability of Russian literature abroad and the survival of exiled writers was being debated in émigré circles. Now really isolated from the Soviet Union, many argued that memories of the homeland and bonds with the Russian language had weakened with time, especially for the younger

⁴¹ Roman Jakobson, “On a Generation that Squandered its Poets,” in *Verbal Art, Verbal Sign, Verbal Time*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 111.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴³ V. Shklovskii, “Pamiatnik nauchnoi oshibke,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 27 January 1930.

generation of writers who grew up in Europe. A response to these concerns came from the poet and critic Vladislav Khodasevich in his seminal 1933 essay “Russian literature in Exile.” He turned to Shklovsky’s semantics of *estrangement* and literature’s independence in relation to *byt*, using them as constructive features of literature in the diaspora. Khodasevich argued against émigré conservatism and against those who think that literature, torn from its national soil and way of life, cannot survive for long or continue to develop: “The nationality of literature is created by its language and spirit, and not by the territory where its life transpires, nor by the *byt* it reflects.”⁴⁴

Khodasevich invoked the principle of art’s independence from social environment or *byt* in order to demonstrate that writing is possible in the deterritorialized diaspora, where the condition of *estrangement* from the homeland becomes a productive possibility rather than the “death” or “sterility” threatened by Voronskii. Like Shklovsky, Khodasevich cited prominent examples of literature in exile, with the place of honor given to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as “the greatest creation of world literature.” We also know how important it was also for the Russian Acmeists, Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelstam, who remained in internal exile.

The way Khodasevich constructed the argument would be close to Shklovsky’s heart, since the émigré poet continues the conversation along lines no longer possible in the homeland. Khodasevich was emphatic in recounting historical precedents of diasporic creativity, when “works were created in emigration that were not only great as such, but also spurred further development of national literatures.”⁴⁵

Estrangement and Diaspora: The Jewish Model

Among his examples of creativity in exile, Khodasevich cited the Polish Romantic poets, as well the Jewish poets of the Hebrew Renaissance that took place in the diaspora on Russian soil at the end of the previous century.⁴⁶ The connection with the historic Jewish diaspora as a productive model of *estrangement* in its “historical metamorphoses” emerges at the

⁴⁴ Vladislav Khodasevich, “Literatura v izgnanii,” 258.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁴⁶ Although Khodasevich considered himself Russian, his parents came to Russia from Poland; his mother was Jewish.

time when the Russian émigrés' struggle for survival and sense of mission become acute. Just a year later, in 1934, Khodasevich wrote an obituary essay about Chaim Nachman Bialik, a great Jewish national poet and chief representative of the Hebrew poetic revival in the Russian diaspora, who had emigrated to Palestine.⁴⁷ A conjoined reading of "Russian Literature in Exile" and the Bialik obituary point to the Jews as a model for imagining a future for the *estranged* Russian national tradition at the time of its historical discontinuity and geographic dispersal.

The two essays represent a culmination of a project that began in Russia before the revolution, in 1916. Khodasevich, along with Leib Yaffe, edited *Jewish Anthology: A Collection of Young Jewish Poetry (Evreiskaia antologiia. Sbornik molodoi evreiskoi poezii)*, a book of Hebrew renaissance poetry, in Russian translation. Its publication in the Moscow Jewish publishing house Safrut in 1918, immediately followed by a second printing, was a historic first whose cultural significance was to become apparent in the near future.⁴⁸ The collection, introduced by the brilliant Jewish scholar of Russian literature, M. O. Gershenzon, contained translations by distinguished Russian Symbolists: Briusov, Viacheslav Ivanov, Sologub, and Khodasevich. The quality of translations gave expression to the admiration for poets who succeeded in revitalizing the ancient national language of a nation without a homeland, snatching it from oblivion.⁴⁹ Many Jews living in the Russian Empire did not know Hebrew, the language of Bialik's great poems. As in one contemporary comment, they were "strange to the strangers and semi-strange to their own people."⁵⁰ The case of Russian Jews was that of extreme *estrangement* from both their national culture and that of the host country, Imperial Russia, where they lived "beyond the pale," deprived of civil rights. The Jewish poets represent an extraordinary confirmation of the possibility of creating national literature in exile.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁸ For the history of the Hebrew poetic renaissance and its significance in the Russian and European contexts, see: Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time and Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁴⁹ For the role of this anthology for Russian writers before and after the October Revolution, see: Greta N. Slobin, "Heroic Poetry and Revolutionary Prophecy," *Judaism* vol. 51, no. 4 (2002): 408-418.

⁵⁰ Z. Kopel'man, "Istoriia etoi knigi" (1922), in Vladislav Khodasevich, *Iz evreiskikh poetov* (Moscow and Jerusalem: Gersharim, 1998), 14.

The collection, retitled *The Jewish Anthology* (*Evreiskaia Antologiia*), was subsequently reprinted in Berlin in 1922, the year Khodasevich also published a book of his Russian translations, *From the Hebrew Poets* (*Iz evreiskikh poetov*). In the introductory essay to the recent Israeli edition of that volume, Z. Kopelman makes a revealing comment about the poet's approach to the project, where his *estrangement* from the Hebrew texts (he did not know the language and collaborated on the translations with Yaffe) is seen as a positive factor: "Khodasevich, with his 'un-Jewish eye' was sensitive to the 'inner anachronism' of the works he translated."⁵¹

After the October Revolution, the Russian émigrés, like the Jews before them, were now the outcasts of history forced to become "the people of the Book." The émigré sense of "mission" came to be held as "sacred" by the older generation of writers, such as Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, who expressed this in Biblical terms at a literary gathering in Paris in 1926: "Russian literature is our Holy Writ, our Bible—not books, but The Book, not words, but The Word. Logos of the national spirit. The Word is deed. 'At the beginning was the word.'"⁵²

In his own thinking about the *estrangement* of exile and its "historical metamorphoses," Khodasevich followed a more creative path. Although not in sympathy with the Shklovskian mechanistic approach to the study of the literary text "as a sum of its devices," he was closer to the organic model of Formalism. In his essay, Khodasevich singled out the principles underlying the literary process, with emphasis on its organic nature: "Literature remains alive when it is in the process of constant movement. It is alive as long as natural processes take place like blood circulation."⁵³ This enables him to argue against émigré conservatism, because "the spirit of literature is one of eternal combustion and renewal."⁵⁴

In his own poetry after the October Revolution, Khodasevich echoed the Jewish poets' notion of greater time, using the device of *collocation* to connect the past and present with the future. The opening poem from the collection *The Way of the Grain* (*Putyom zerna*), written in December 1917, was inspired by both Chaim Nachman Bialik and Shaul Chernikhovskii. At this historic juncture, after the fall of the Russian Em-

⁵¹ Z. Kopel'man, *ibid.*, 53

⁵² *Literaturnaia zhizn' russkogo Parizha za polveka (1924-1974)* (Paris: Albatros, 1987), 48.

⁵³ Khodasevich, "Literatura v izgnanii," 258.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

pire, Khodasevich likened the nation to nature, with its eternal cycles of renewal, death and resurrection:

So too does my soul go the way of grain
Once descended into darkness, it will die and come alive again.

And you, my country and you, her people,
Will die and come alive, having passed through this year,—

Since a single wisdom is given to us:
Every living thing must go the way of grain.

(translation by David Bethea)⁵⁵

Over a decade later, in exile from “his country and its people,” Khodasevich reconsidered literature’s diasporic status in relation to the homeland. In “Russian Literature in Exile”⁵⁶ he was emphatic that “the language and spirit create national literature and not the territory where its life transpires ...” In his statement, Khodasevich undoubtedly echoed Marina Tsvetaeva’s extraordinary essay, “The Poet and Time,” written in the Paris exile a year earlier (1932), where she declared that “every poet is an émigré” and “a Jew.”⁵⁷ In fact, her declaration and the two essays of Khodasevich, on Bialik and on exile, are among the most eloquent twentieth century statements on *estrangement*, on writing, on the “predicament of diaspora” and its “historical metamorphoses.”

⁵⁵ David Bethea, *Khodasevich: His Life and Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 141.

⁵⁶ Khodasevich, “Literatura v izgnanii,” 258.

⁵⁷ Marina Tsvetaeva, “Poet i vremia” in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v dvukh tomakh*, 1 (New York: Russica, 1979), 372.

Chapter 1B

Language, History, Ideology: Tsvetaeva, Remizov

*Bol'she, chem russkomu—vselenskomu skazochniku
i bol'she, chem skazochniku—vselenskomu serdtsu:
Aleksiu Mikhailovichu Remizovu (tishaishemu)—
vse-taki prozevannomu sovremennikami!*

A dar—ot sud'by

(To someone who is more than a Russian storyteller—he is the universe's storyteller; and more than a storyteller—he is the universe's heart: to Aleksei Mikhailovich Remizov (the Meek), nevertheless overlooked by his own contemporaries!

And his gift came from his fate)

—Marina Tsvetaeva

More than the admiration of one writer for another emanates from Tsvetaeva's inscription to the poem "The Swain" (*Molodets*), sent to Aleksei Remizov from Vsendra, near Prague on 15 May 1925.¹ Completed in December 1922, the poem followed "The Tsar-Maiden" (*Tsar'-devitsa*) and "Side Streets" (*Pereulochki*), as the last of the trilogy of pseudo-folk poems with sources from Aleksandr Afanasev's collection.² Dedicated to Boris Pasternak with an epigraph from a Russian epic (*bylina*), this poem "of passion and crime, passion and sacrifice" was an apt offering to Remizov, with whom Tsvetaeva became personally acquainted in emigration.³ The laudatory inscription reveals not only Tsvetaeva's admiration for Remizov, but also her keen sense of the essential attributes of a great writer.

¹ The Natalia Kodriansky Collection. Courtesy of Adina Cherlein (a private collection).

² Simon Karlinsky, *Marina Tsvetaeva: The Woman, Her World, and Her Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 142.

³ Ariadna Efron, *Stranitsy vospominanii* (Paris: Lev, 1979), 157; A. Remizov, "Rossiia v pis'menakh," *Blagonamerennyi* 1 (1926): 136.



Marina Tsvetaeva,
1892-1941

Aleksei Remizov was a leading innovator in prose of the Symbolist period who was called by contemporaries a “magician of the word”; his writing was unmistakably recognizable by its intonation and diction of archaic, folk, and colloquial Russian. With a flourish of hyperbole, Tsvetaeva presents a string of comparative adjectival clauses where each defies the preceding one, hailing Remizov as “more than Russian, a universal storyteller, more than storyteller, a universal heart.” This is fitting for Remizov, who was concerned with establishing his metapoetic cosmogony from the very beginning, but also points to a similar focus

in Tsvetaeva’s own poetry.⁴ Another epithet, the archaic Russian superlative adjective “the quiet one” (*tishaihemu*), is a reference to Remizov’s historic namesake, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, that signals his identification with the medieval popular religious tradition. However, a dramatic switch from the laudatory tone set by the message so far marks the next phrase in the inscription: Remizov was “missed by contemporaries after all,” despite his remarkable attainment. The tribute now appears complete with the ironic acknowledgment of a shared reality, an expression of a growing lack of recognition of their stature and talent, both in the Soviet Union they have left and in the émigré literary community of which they are now a part. Yet the one-line phrase that ends the inscription, “but the gift is from fate” (*a dar—ot sud’by*), offers a swift comeback with the highest mark of real talent that affirms at once its primacy and independence from judgment by contemporaries. This echoes Marc Slonim’s description of Tsvetaeva, of her “unshaken certainty of a poet in being unlike anyone else [*nepokhozhest’*], in her gift—from God—from birth—from fate.”⁵

As innovators with an archaist bent and a passionate interest in Russia’s premodern tradition, Tsvetaeva and Remizov projected the aware-

⁴ Jerzy Faryno, “Mifologizm i teologizm Tsvetaevoi,” *Wiener slawistischer Almanach*, Sonderband 18 (Vienna: Gesellschaft zur Förderung slawistischer Studien, 1985): 242n32.

⁵ Marc Slonim, “O Marine Tsvetaevoi,” *Novyi zhurnal* 100 (1970): 169.

ness of difference, of being “alone,” not understood by conservative émigré critics. The folk sources of “The Swain” and the complementary text of the inscription underscore Tsvetaeva’s regard for Remizov as “a living treasury of Russian speech,”⁶ a bearer of a shared Muscovite past that becomes all the more important in exile. The place of birth was a significant literary fact in their creative biographies that evolved during a period of artistic flowering of the Russian Silver Age, centered in St. Petersburg. To the predominantly Western orientation of the Symbolists, as native Muscovites, they contributed the Old Russian cultural heritage. And while there is no commemoration of a specific moment of transmission of a “poetic gift,” such as Tsvetaeva’s offering of her Moscow to Mandelstam or to the senior poets, Blok and Akhmatova, she was undoubtedly familiar with Remizov’s work quite early on.⁷ It is most likely that Remizov’s acclaimed 1906 collection of fairytale miniatures, *Sunwise (Posolon’)*, an extensive compendium of folk texts with an acknowledgment of sources, became an important model for her abiding interest in Russian folklore, folk culture, and ethnography.⁸

The appropriation of the Moscow heritage held dual importance for Tsvetaeva and Remizov. It offered access to Russia’s premodern culture, whose limitless resources of verbal riches could feed their linguistic utopianism: a passionate preference for the “elemental” (*stikhiinyi*) character of the Russian language that exceeds all borders, breaking grammatical or canonical rules. At the same time, this utopianism implied a rebellion against all constraints, including the political; hence their identification with rebels from the turbulent seventeenth-century history of Muscovite Russia—Avvakum, Razin, and Pugachev. I would like to consider briefly the significance of this dual heritage as a mark of Tsvetaeva’s poetic stance before 1917, sustained after emigration, focusing on its paradoxical role in the aftermath of the Revolution as reflected in her diary of the revolutionary period, *Omens of the Earth (Zemnye primety)*. Remizov’s chroni-

⁶ Karlinsky, *Marina Tsvetaeva*, 133.

⁷ See the chapter “Exchanging Gifts: Tsvetaeva and Mandelstam,” in Gregory Freidin, *A Coat of Many Colors: Osip Mandelstam and His Mythologies of Self-Presentation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). See also Marina Tsvetaeva, “Nezdeshnii vecher,” *Izbrannaia proza v dvukh tomakh. 1917-1937*, ed. A. Sumerkin (New York: Russica Publishers, 1979), vol. 2, 136.

⁸ Here I agree with Jerzy Faryno, who makes a distinction between folklore, as influence in terms of genre, and that of “popular culture” (*narodnaia kul'tura*) (5).

cle of the Revolution, *Whirlwind Russia* (*Vzvikhrennaia Rus'*), published in Paris in 1927, will provide a context for this discussion.⁹

Both Remizov and Tsvetaeva responded to the loss of Old Russia with profound shock and grief. First and foremost, the Revolution changed the writers' relationship to language, no longer just a great poetic resource to be mined and cultivated. The elemental force or *stikhiia* of the anarchic, rebellious Russia that had been a great poetic resource now became an actual active threat. I would like to demonstrate how the bond they forged with the deeper linguistic strains of collective cultural memory played a crucial role in their struggle for personal and poetic survival at a time when that memory and the nation were threatened with destruction. Tsvetaeva's diary and Remizov's chronicle are representative of the literary memoir, which emerges during this period as an important genre that allows writers to probe the inherent tension between art, life, and history, and reveals the inevitable conflict between aesthetics and politics.¹⁰ The single dominant device that connects the fragments is the voice of the author/subject, speaking in a range of intonational and lexical registers: syncopated, breathless, emphatic, angry, playful, passionate. The language of the works is performative, where "saying something is doing something recognizable."¹¹ The recognizable act performed here is that of writing, named and referred to throughout.

As a native Muscovite, Remizov represented Russianness in the Petersburg literary circles once he settled in the capital in 1905. The peasant speech and lore of Old Russian culture was still very much in Moscow where Remizov grew up as a child of a prominent merchant family, exposed to the traditional patriarchal way of life that he observed at home, on the street, and in the neighborhood of St. Andronik Monastery. He memorialized the cultural and linguistic Moscow heritage in his earliest short stories and in his first long novel, *The Pond* (*Prud*) (1903-1911), as well as in stylized apocryphal legends and fairytales.¹² In an essay written in 1908, Evgenii Anichkov remarked on Remizov's contribution to the Petersburg literary scene as an innovator who introduced the lesser known

⁹ For a discussion of the chronicle, see Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's Fictions*, Chapter 6.

¹⁰ On literary memoirs of this period, see Karlinsky, *Marina Tsvetaeva*, 75-76.

¹¹ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 6.

¹² Slobin, *Remizov's Fictions*, especially Chapter 3.

aspects of traditional Moscow culture and language into contemporary literature, a writer “whose soul remained ancient Muscovite.”¹³ Conscious of his role, Remizov recalled that when he arrived in St. Petersburg in 1905 as a young writer returning from northern exile, he was “struck by the poverty of vocabulary and incorrect speech.”¹⁴ Remizov’s role as a carrier of the national tradition was especially evident in his dialogue with Aleksandr Blok, the Westernizer, begun when Remizov first came to Petersburg in 1905 and continued until 1921, the year of Blok’s death and Remizov’s emigration.¹⁵ This relationship can be seen as a gift exchange similar to that between Tsvetaeva and Mandelstam.

Although Tsvetaeva came from the intelligentsia and grew up in a very different neighborhood, her Moscow was a city of churches and religious wanderers that she evoked in the 1916 Moscow cycle of *Mileposts I* (*Versty I*): “the Moscow rabble—the holy fools, thieves and flagellants” (*moskovskii sbrod—iurodivyi, vorovskoi, khlystovskii*).¹⁶ Tsvetaeva believed that the Moscow-Kaluga road, traveled by pilgrims, would also be there for her, should she become weary of the world. And in this city, “rejected by Peter,” she would be “happy even in death” (*Gde i mertvoi mne/ Budet radostno*). In a letter to George Ivask, Tsvetaeva asserted that she was the first poet to write this way about Moscow.¹⁷ Her mastery of colloquial and peasant speech was undeniable. According to Simon Karlinsky, Tsvetaeva “confronted the question of her reciprocal connection to various aspects of her native culture” in her cycle *Verses about Moscow* (*Stikhi o Moskve*). He argues that her 1916 collection *Mileposts I* represents “her assertion of her inalienable right to this Muscovite patrimony” and suggests that her first real exposure to colloquial Russian came from her wide travels with Sofia Parnok in 1915, rather than in the Revolution, as Ariadna Èfron claims in her memoirs.¹⁸

¹³ Evgenii Anichkov, “Sta’ia o tvorchestve Remizova, A. M.” Unpublished typescript. Collection of Y. F. Lavrov, St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, f. 414, n. 15.

¹⁴ Aleksei Remizov, *Podstrizhennymi glazami* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1951), 92.

¹⁵ See Z. Mints, Introduction to “Perepiska s A. M. Remizovym,” in *Aleksandr Blok. Noye materialy i issledovaniia*, vol. 2. *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 92, ed. G. P. Berdnikov et al. (Moscow: Nauka, 1981), 63-142. See also A. Pyman, *The Life of Aleksandr Blok*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978-1980).

¹⁶ From the poem “Seven Hills,” in “*Stikhi o Moskve*.” From *Versty I*, in *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, ed. A. Sumerkin (New York: Russica Publishers, 1980), 218.

¹⁷ Karlinsky, *Marina Tsvetaeva*, 65.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

About a decade later, in emigration, Marc Slonim admired Tsvetaeva's colloquial Russian of a "true Muscovite."¹⁹ And in his 1925 review of "The Swain," Vladislav Khodasevich noted the masterful richness and variety of her vocabulary that included words now rare, thus making the poems difficult to understand for readers "both there and here," because of a widespread forgetting of Russian.²⁰ Support for Khodasevich's apprehension came from Tsvetaeva herself the following year in the Belgian journal *Well-Intentioned* (*Blagonamerennyi*), where she published "The Flowerbed" (*Tsvetnik*), a compendium of quotations from reviews written during 1925 by the émigré critic, Georgii Adamovich, with her brief acerbic comments. Adamovich deplored the regrettable presence of "pseudo-folk art" style in contemporary writing and criticized Tsvetaeva's "The Swain" as an example of this practice; his claim that he was willing to give credit for her verbal "inventiveness" and his "admiration for her knowledge of the Russian language" belied his intolerance. Tsvetaeva noted this contradiction, along with his telling misquotation of the dedication to Pasternak that, she added, came from a *bylina*, available in any anthology.²¹ In the first issue of this journal, Remizov published a chapter from his continued work on *Russia in Writ* (*Rossia v pis'menakh*), a compilation of Old Russian documents with his commentary (the first volume appeared in Berlin in 1922). Remizov echoed Khodasevich in expressing concern for the state of the Russian language and was emphatic about the importance of knowing its past and reading old documents and texts, indispensable both "in Russia where Russians are living, and abroad, where Russians happen to live."²²

The passion for the word that Tsvetaeva and Remizov shared included its visual aspect. Writing to Aleksandr Bakhrakh in 1923, Tsvetaeva ex-

¹⁹ Quoted in Veronique Lossky, *Marina Tsvetaeva v zhizni* (Tenafly, NJ: Ermitazh, 1989), 214.

²⁰ V. Khodasevich, "Zametki o stikhakh (M. Tsvetaeva, 'Molodets')," *Poslednie novosti*, 11 June 1925.

²¹ Marina Tsvetaeva, "Tsvetnik: Zveno za 1925 g. 'Literaturnye besedy' A. Adamovi-cha," *Blagonamerennyi* 2 (1926): 130, 136. Her essay "Poet o kritike" also appeared here. Both pieces are reprinted in Marina Tsvetaeva, *Izbrannaia proza v dvukh tomakh: 1917-1937*. Tsvetaeva cites other critics who have attacked both her work and Remizov's, and concludes that a study of literary politics of this period will be a task of future historians.

²² Aleksei Remizov, "Rossia v pis'menakh," *Blagonamerennyi* 1 (1926): 136.

plained her preference for prerevolutionary orthography: “Let the word also exist graphically” (*Daite slovu i graficheski byt'*).²³ Marc Slonim confirmed her strong dislike for the new orthography, which she unwillingly adopted in 1925.²⁴ A lover of calligraphy, for whom the visual aspect of the word was indispensable, Remizov not only continued to write in the old orthography, but often used Glagolitic in his handwritten manuscript albums and charters given to members of his mock literary society, *Obezvelvolpal*.²⁵ To her friends' surprise, Tsvetaeva also used Glagolitic in a dedication on a copy of *After Russia (Posle Rossii)* (1928).²⁶ In their poetic cosmogony, events and dates have metapoetic significance as they do in popular tradition: both note that they were “marked” from birth; both were born on the day of John the Baptist. She attributed her verbal gifts to this association with Ioann Predtecha.²⁷ Remizov referred to the day as the holiday of Ivan Kupala, memorialized by Gogol, which marked the Ukrainian midsummer night celebration when magic is released and witches and goblins emerge.²⁸

In his essay on Tsvetaeva's prose, Joseph Brodsky called attention to her “linguistic excess” and noted that Tsvetaeva was closer to folklore, to the stylistics of incantation (*prichitanie*), than other twentieth-century poets.²⁹ In her 1932 essay “Art in the Light of Conscience” (*Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti*), Tsvetaeva elucidated the importance of folkloric sources for her creativity, verging on transgression, with “The Swain” as a prime example: “Blasphemy. When I am writing my ‘Swain’—vampire's love for a girl and a girl's for the vampire—I am not serving any God: I know what God I am serving” (*Koshchunstvo. Kogda ia pishu svoego “Molodtsa”—liubov' upyria k devushke i devushki k upyriu—ia nikakomu Bogu ne sluzhu: znaiu kakomu Bogu sluzhu*).³⁰ For Tsvetaeva, “art as temptation is pos-

²³ Aleksandr Bakhrakh, “Pis'ma Mariny Tsvetaevoi.” Letter of 30 June 1923. *Mosty* 5 (Munich, 1960): 307.

²⁴ Slonim, “O Marine Tsvetaevoi,” 158.

²⁵ For samples of calligraphy and charters, see *Images of Aleksei Remizov*, ed. Greta N. Slobin (Amherst, MA: Mead Art Museum, 1985).

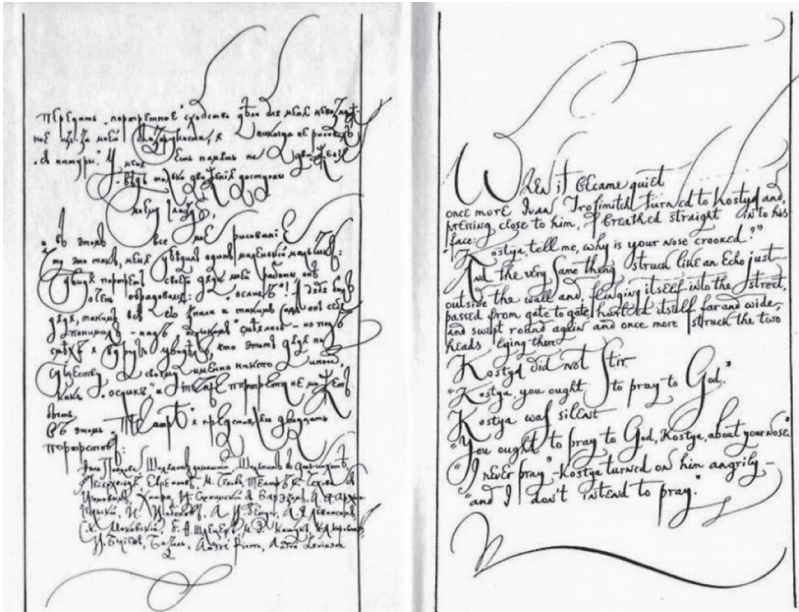
²⁶ Lossky, Véronique, *Marina Tsvetaeva i Frantsiia: novoe i neizdannoe: doklady simpoziuma “Tsvetaeva-2000”* (Moscow: Russkii put', 2002), 125.

²⁷ Jerzy Faryno, “Mifologizm i teologizm Tsvetaevoi,” 242, fi. 32.

²⁸ Slobin, *Images of Aleksei Remizov*, 5.

²⁹ Iosif Brodskii, “Predislovie. Poet i proza,” in Marina Tsvetaeva, *Izbrannaia proza*, vol. 1, 12-16.

³⁰ Marina Tsvetaeva, “Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti,” *Izbrannaia proza*, vol. 1, 395.



Remizov's calligraphic style from "Teatr."
 Courtesy Center for Russian Culture, Amherst College.

sibly the last and most irresistible seduction on earth" (*iskusstvo—iskus, mozhnet byt' samyi poslednii, samyi neodolimyi soblazn zemli ...*). But more than that, she points to native folklore as the source of temptation and transgression that shape her poems: "All my Russian things are elemental, that is, sinful" (*Vse moi russkie veshchi stikhiiny, to est' greshny*).³¹ Her associative etymology acquires incontrovertible power through a pattern of lexical equivalents that resemble precise algebraic equations: "art = temptation" (*iskusstvo=iskus*) and "elemental = sinful" (*stikhiinyi=greshnyi*), where the root *stikh* also means "verse."³² She asserts that the realm of poetry is a "third kingdom with its own laws" (*Tret'e tsarstvo so svoimi zakonami*).³³ Tsvetaeva's romantic emphasis on the nature of poetic gift (see the inscription to Remizov) as god-given and elemental underlies a confession made earlier in a letter to Aleksandr Bakhrakh that, although

³¹ Ibid.

³² On the connection between *stikh* and *stikhiia* in Tsvetaeva's poetry, see Svetlana Boym, *Death in Quotation Marks: Cultural Myths of the Modern Poet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 221.

³³ Tsvetaeva, "Iskusstvo pri svete sovesti," 395.

she had lived with poetry since birth, “only now [has] she learned the difference between trochee and dactyl.” She asserts that “I write as I live, by ear [*na slukh*], that is, on faith [*na veru*].”³⁴ Remizov had a similar conception of an innate gift for words and considered the ear indispensable for finding the right intonation and modality of the phrase that “must be shaken ... tested by ear” (*Frazu nado vstriakhnut’ ... proverit’ na slukh*).³⁵ Transgression and play with the boundaries of sacred and profane figure in Remizov’s writing from the beginning.³⁶

The Revolution marked a major watershed in the work of Remizov and Tsvetaeva. The writing of the diaries, begun in 1917, proceeded in fragments throughout the Revolution and the Civil War. Tsvetaeva undoubtedly read the chapters from Remizov’s chronicle that first appeared in Bely’s journal *Èpopeia* in Berlin, in 1921. Tsvetaeva collected her writing from the “Notebooks and Notes of 1917-1920” for a book to be titled *Omens of the Earth* (*Zemnye primety*), which was to have been published by Helikon in Berlin, but was rejected on the ground of its “political” content. In letters to Roman Gul’ from 5-6 March 1923, Tsvetaeva attempted to assure him that “the book has no politics: it has terrible truth, the impassioned truth of cold, hunger, anger, and the year” (*politiki v knige net: est’ strashnaia pravda: pristrastnaia pravda kholoda, goloda, gneva, goda!*).³⁷ In this aphoristic statement of great elocutionary force, with an implacable denial of politics underscored by an alliterative, rhythmic string of rhymed two-syllable words at the end, she defined her autobiographical space, her right to passionate subjectivity or truth that is at once terrible (*strashnaia*) and impassioned (*pristrastnaia*). Tsvetaeva was aware that, ironically, this work was as likely to have been rejected in the Soviet Union for identical reasons. Although the diary was not primarily political, its poetic counterpart, poem cycle *The Demesne of the Swans* (*Lebedinyi stan*) (1917-1920), was counter-revolutionary in its royalist sentiment. Here Tsvetaeva appeared “in a new literary role which she deliberately chose at that time, that of chronicler of the momentous period in which she was living.”³⁸

³⁴ A. Bakhrakh, “Letters of Marina Tsvetaeva,” 304.

³⁵ N. Kodrianskaia, *Aleksei Remizov* (Paris, 1957), 41.

³⁶ Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov’s Fictions*, 35.

³⁷ Marina Tsvetaeva, *Izbrannaia proza*, vol. 1, 445.

³⁸ Simon Karlinsky, *Marina Tsvetaeva*, 70.

The confrontation with the “chaos” of existence in the first days of the October Revolution became for Remizov and Tsvetaeva a confrontation with verbal violence. They were caught in the “whirlwind” of history that drew them into the midst of a verbal eruption, but not one of their own making: it came from the agitated masses encountered everywhere on trains, tram stops, streets. In the first poem of the Revolution, “The Twelve” (*Dvenadtsat’*), written in January 1918, Blok transposed the chaos of Petersburg streets to music by allowing them to speak in this symphonic work, composed of a range of genres of popular culture, particularly urban folklore, including the city romance, gypsy romance, army romance, urban and prisoner’s ditty. Blok’s poem was greatly admired by Remizov and Tsvetaeva as they struggled to register the cataclysm and its immediate consequences in their writing. A chapter in *Whirlwind Russia* (*Vzvikhrennaia Rus’*) entitled “To the Stars: In Blok’s Memory” (*K zvezdam: Pamiati Bloka*) is Remizov’s homage to Blok that draws a deep connection between the two works. In her cycle *Demesne of the Swans*, Tsvetaeva included a poem “To Blok” (*Bloku*) whose “holy heart” appeared before the square and who, despite the ills that have befallen the land, “has not stopped loving you, Russia!”³⁹ The actual process of writing becomes a means of survival and sustenance for Remizov and Tsvetaeva. She calls the diary her *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, where the reordering of the terms of Goethe’s title suggests the difference in her condition: writing in order to survive the poet’s tragic present rather than the past. Remizov attests that Blok died when “he could no longer hear music,” while he himself almost died when he could no “longer see dreams, his ‘autobiographical space.’”⁴⁰

The street speaks in Remizov’s chronicle through snatches of conversation, occasional encounters, as well as news items, slogans and decrees of the revolutionary order. The motley voices reflect the confusion of a nation at the crossroads. The writer’s grief and mourning, initially expressed in the controversial “Lament for the Destruction of the Russian Land” (*Slovo o pogibeli russkoi zemli*), written in October 1917, are counterbalanced by the sheer energy of verbal creativity, play, theatrical-

³⁹ *Lebedinyi stan* (1917-1920). In Marina Tsvetaeva, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy, vstupil’naia stat’ia, sostavlenie, podgotovka teksta i primechaniia* E.B. Korkinoini (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel’, Leningradskoe otdelenie, 1990), 180.

⁴⁰ Antonella d’Amelia, “Avtobiograficheskoe prostranstvo Alekseia Remizova,” in A. Remizov, *Uchitel’ muzyki* (Paris: Presse libre, 1983), xvii.

ity, and humor. Laughter provides relief in the phantasmagoric reality of cold and hungry Petrograd. The narrator's identity as a writer whose unique perspective dominates the text lends authority to this account of the uprising, composed of dreams and "the word that accidentally reached the ear not deafened by noise, and fragments of events spied by the eye."⁴¹ A similar foregrounding of the poetic self allows Tsvetaeva to assert the right to her "impassioned" objectivity: "I do not even stand for the composite of my earthly omens, I stand only for the right of their existence, for the truth—of what is mine" (*ia ne stoiu dazhe za sovokupnost' svoikh zemnykh primet, a stoiu tol'ko za pravo ikh sushchestvovaniia i za pravdu svoego*).⁴² Tsvetaeva transposes daily reality into the poetic world, the "third kingdom with its own laws," where art and life are inseparable as they are for an audience that, after a performance of a mystery play, rushes to tear Judas apart.⁴³

As we will see, Tsvetaeva's defiant stance dominates everyday encounters, where the threatening "voices of the mob," no longer "the folk" (*narod*) but "chaos," and the voice of the writer now inevitably clash. Like Remizov, who writes in Petersburg, a city "torn by strife," Tsvetaeva faces "Moscow's various plagues" with an arsenal of poetic tools: manipulation of temporal perspective; transposition and translation of incidents from daily life into a mythological realm; theatricality, with props and various forms of verbal play, often improvised on the spot; arid subversion of the verbal icons of the new state. Tsvetaeva's diary is an extraordinary record of a poetics of survival, when the terms of canonical poetic dualities, such as *byt* (the daily grind) and *bytie* (being), and *poet i chern'* (the poet and the mob) are forced beyond metaphor into a Joycean "nightmare of history."

The struggle for survival requires verbal self-defense and new self-definition. With the maximalism and verve that distinguish her poetry, Tsvetaeva now captures the elemental (*stikhiinyi*) sense of the time in the diaries, describing encounters that inevitably elicit her involvement in street scenes. Instead of the expected fear and anxiety, she presents these scenes as a chance to be immersed in the language that seems to have broken all dams and assaults the receptive ear in public places: streets,

⁴¹ Aleksei Remizov, *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'*, 105.

⁴² Tsvetaeva, "Otryvki iz knigi 'Zemye primety'" in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 117.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 108.

trams, trains, offices. Tsvetaeva actively engages the street adversary, most likely a “class enemy,” in a dialogue that becomes a verbal duel (*slovesnyi poedinok*) in which she participates by choice: “I, not wanting to miss the dialogue” (*Ia, ne zhelaia upustit’ dialoga...*).⁴⁴ In this one-to-one combat, on the battlefield of words, she is on her turf, invincible and victorious. In moments of potential danger, Tsvetaeva acts like a *bylina* “heroine,” accomplishing miraculous feats. And as a true heroine she knows her strength: “verbal game! The one thing where they can’t beat me!” (*slovesnaia igra! To, v chem ne sob’iut!*).⁴⁵ When a crude soldier challenges her on the street “Comrade miss, look, she’s put on a hat” (*Tovarishch baryshnia, ish’, shliapku natsepila*), she looks down at his feet, ready with a swift comeback, a rhymed play on his words: “Look, he’s put on a rag” (*Ish’, triapku natsepil*).⁴⁶ The audience or the crowd surrounding them breaks into laughter and, to everyone’s relief, tension ceases as the class conflict is subsumed by the verbal wit of her repartee.⁴⁷

The dialogue with “another’s word” extends to the newly emerging verbal icons that include signs, slogans, and acronyms. By framing these elements of revolutionary *byt* in her narrative, Tsvetaeva subverts the new lingo and subjects it to an acerbic critique. She took a job in Narkomnats, one of the many acronyms that she abhorred and that she was told referred to nationalities (The National Committee on Nationalities). Her response—“What kind of nationalities, when there is the International?” (*Kakie zhe natsional’nosti kogda Internatsional?*)—is another brilliant, witty comeback with a stab at the incongruity of the new ideology.⁴⁸ She collected nonsensical newspaper items, such as the ridiculous rhetorical paean to dried fish (*vobla*) from the Menshevik paper *Always Forward* (*Vsegda vpered*): “Oh, you, the only dish/ of the Communist land” (*O ty, edinstvennoe bliudo/ Kommunisticheskoi strany!*).⁴⁹ The same satirical wit is seen in the self-definition of a verbally innocent political instruc-

⁴⁴ Tsvetaeva, “Moi sluzhby” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 67.

⁴⁵ Tsvetaeva, “Iz dnevnika: Smer’ Stakhovicha (27 Fevralia 1919g.)” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 79.

⁴⁶ Tsvetaeva, “Moi sluzhby” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 67.

⁴⁷ Marc Slonim confirmed Tsvetaeva’s militant defense of language, writing that in arguments about words or word choice she became “an amazon” (*voitel’nitsa*). See “O Marine Tsvetaevoi,” 158.

⁴⁸ Tsvetaeva, “Moi sluzhby” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 50.

⁴⁹ Tsvetaeva, “Otryvki iz knigi ‘Zemnye primety’” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 110.

tor: “It’s not at all hard! Just get up on a trash can and yell, yell, yell!” (*Sovsem ne trudno! Vstanesh’ na musornyi iashchik—i krichish’, krichish’, krichish’*).⁵⁰

Fiction becomes a frame of reference in the effort to capture the incongruity of daily reality that, for Remizov, exceeds even the Gogolian imagination: “No Gogol would ever see as much as there was in Russia during these years.”⁵¹ And Akakii Akakievich becomes for him the epitome of the “little man” who rebels against the revolution meant to liberate the oppressed. Tsvetaeva’s first job in the office of records, located in the building of a former tsarist prison, consisted of making lists of newspaper articles about those who had been executed. She seized the irony of the situation with a joke based on an association with Gogol’s *Dead Souls*: “Should one register the ones who’ve been shot?” (*Rasstreliannykh perepisvat’?*).⁵² Tsvetaeva is reminded of Gogolian characters not only by the petty vices of people all around her but also by the rising new institutions: she sees Nozdrev (crooks), Korobochka (“How much are dead souls on the market now?”), Chichikov (a natural speculator), and Manilov, who personifies new institutional banality (“Temple of Friendship,” “The House of a Happy Mother”).⁵³

This points to another narrative strategy that consists of a process of translation of unfamiliar, unrecognizable reality into “familiar” terms that constitute the poet’s personal system of values: uncompromising maximalism, idealism, sense of honor. Thus she transposes “real” events into a “symbolic” system of myth.⁵⁴ This symbolic system is based on the cultural heritage that combines both literary and nonliterary sources—poetry, myth, folklore, history—that have shaped her poetic system and provided cultural heroes: Tristan and Iseult, Stenka Razin, Marina Mnizek, Orpheus. Thus, in order to go down the dark, slippery stairs of an institutional kitchen that she hated, she transposed the act into a “Virgin’s descent into hell or Orpheus’ into Hades” (*Skhozhdenie Bogoro-*

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Remizov, “Nikakoi Gogol’ ne uvidit stol’ko, kak bylo v eti gody v Rossii,” in *Vzvikhrennaia Rus’*, 374.

⁵² Tsvetaeva, “Moi sluzhby” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 50.

⁵³ Tsvetaeva, “Cherdachnoe: iz moskovskikh zapisei 1919-1920 g.” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 87.

⁵⁴ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

ditsy v ad ili Orfeia v Aid), with the kitchen as a “fiery inferno” (*Kukhnia: zherlo. Tak zharko i krasno, chto iasno: ad*).⁵⁵ The transposition of reality into myth becomes part of “theater for oneself.”⁵⁶ When sitting next to a soldier on the train, she calls him Stenka Razin almost involuntarily, they become friends and she reads her poems to her astonished and appreciative neighbor.⁵⁷ The irony of the fact that the story she recalls from Russia’s past history is no less violent than its present is irrelevant: the myth from the past becomes a refuge in the turbulent present. This process of mythmaking becomes a part of daily life: the milkman who comes and says, “I shall not leave you” (*ia vas ne ostavliu*), appears as God the Savior, since “Only God can say this, with milk, in Moscow, in the winter of ’18” (*Tak mozhet skazat’ tol’ko Bog—ili muzhik s molokom v Moskve, zimoi 1918 g.*).⁵⁸ By the same token, an Armenian vendor, gravely weighing potatoes, becomes “an Archangel of Communist Judgment” (*Arkhangel kommunisticheskogo Strashnogo Suda*).⁵⁹

The ability to manipulate temporal perspective appears key in Tsvetaeva’s effort to capture and convey the “terrible truth” of the present: “The whole secret is to be able to see a hundred years ago as if it were today, and today as if it were a hundred years ago” (*vsia taina v tom, chtoby sto let nazad videt’, kak segodnia, i segodnia—kak sto let nazad*) (108). The apprehension of the present is a critical act for her as a poet: “I perceived the year 1919 with some exaggeration, as people would do a hundred years from now” (*ia vospriniala 19-yi god neskol’ko preuvelichenno,—tak, kak tol’ko ego vosprimut liudi cherez sto let*).⁶⁰ The poet’s vision not only reveals temporal relativity, but anticipates the historian who regards the past from a considerable distance. Hence her “heightened” perception of the year 1919, a legendary year in the revolutionary annals, becomes a projected prophetic vision of reality.

The past history of Old Russia acquires immediacy and particular meaning for Tsvetaeva and Remizov at this time. In the “Lament for the

⁵⁵ Tsvetaeva, “Moi sluzhby” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 55-56.

⁵⁶ N. Evreinov, *Teatr kak takovoi* (St. Petersburg: Izd. N. I. Butkovskoi, 1912).

⁵⁷ Tsvetaeva, “Vol’nyi proezd” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 39-43.

⁵⁸ Tsvetaeva, “Otryvki iz knigi ‘Zemnye primety’” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 108.

⁵⁹ Tsvetaeva, “Moi sluzhby” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 66.

⁶⁰ Tsvetaeva, “Cherdachnoe: iz moskovskikh zapisei 1919-1920 g.” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 87

Destruction of the Russian Land,” Remizov writes: “Wretched and dumb I stand in the desert, where once was Russia. My soul is sealed.”⁶¹ The passing of Old Russia marks the end of time—“Time is lost; it is no more; it ran out”—and of God.⁶² In Tsvetaeva’s folk-style lament in *Demesne of the Swans*, written in syncopated rhythms with short, breathless phrasing of incantation, the dying sons of Russia who are both red and white call out to her, “Mother!” but “without will without anger.”⁶³ For both writers, the Petrine rule represents the initial modern rupture from that past. In the poem addressed “To Peter” (Petru) from *Demesne of the Swans*, Tsvetaeva refers to him as “the founder of the Soviets” (*Rodonachal’nik—ty—Sovetov*) and of “ruins.”⁶⁴ Remizov interpolates a narrative from Peter’s time in the chronicle, with a focus on the obscure craftsmen and engineers who built his palaces, bridges, and gardens. In the “Lament,” Peter is the “mad horseman” who “destroyed the Old Russia,” yet Remizov interjects a surprising note of hope in the possibility that “he will raise the new one from perdition.”⁶⁵

Throughout the diary, Tsvetaeva’s defiant assertion of her “omens” emerges as a source of strength. While in her major essay, “The Poet and Time” (*Poet i vremia*, 1932), she deemed the involvement with history as inevitable “you can’t jump out of history” (*iz istorii ne vyskochish’*)—as a poet she superseded the historian.⁶⁶ As a Muscovite, she was able to put the resources of spoken and folk Russian at her disposal to good use in “verbal duels.” The laws (*zakony*) of her poetic system enabled her to subvert the new verbal icons as well as to use her identification with the historical rebels, Razin and Pugachev, in order to reject the social restrictions imposed by the Bolsheviks and remain on the side of anarchy. She proclaimed herself to be “an inexhaustible source of heresies”

⁶¹ Remizov, “Obodrannyi i nemoi stoju v pustyne, gde byla kogda-to Rossiia. Dusha moia zapechatana,” in *Vzvikhrennaia Rus’*, 185.

⁶² Remizov, “I vremia propalo, net ego, konchilos,” *ibid.*

⁶³ Marina Tsvetaeva, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, 185.

⁶⁴ Marina Tsvetaeva, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, 182. It is interesting to note in this connection that an issue of *Nezavisimaia gazeta* from 9 June 1992 devoted a large section to Peter the Great as the “Bolshevik on the Throne,” with excerpts from V. Kliuchevskii, G. Fedotov, and N. Berdyayev.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Slobin, *Remizov’s Fictions*, 144.

⁶⁶ Tsvetaeva, “Poet i vremia,” 370.

(*Ia neistoshchimy i stochnik eresei*),⁶⁷ and in her role of heretic she forged a crucial anchor in the face of and in opposition to present history. Tsvetaeva embodied the “romantic radicalism” that “can embrace the local, sensuously specific, and irreducibly individual,” and that seeks “to shipwreck an abstract idealism” of the universalizing ideas of revolutionary radicalism.⁶⁸ Remizov also affirmed free will, whose elemental freedom he likened to the “whirlwind” (*vikhr*) that runs counter (*naperekor*) to any imposition.⁶⁹

Along with Remizov, Tsvetaeva remains a verbal utopian who believed that language supersedes both history and ideology. In their love of the Russian language, Tsvetaeva and Remizov recall the linguistic nationalism and utopianism of the Futurists, Khlebnikov, Kruchenykh, and Mayakovsky, who in their writing called for the exclusive use of an endless Russian language.⁷⁰ The resort to the indigenous culture is typical of nationalist writers who “attempt to create a version of history for themselves in which their intrinsic essence has always manifested itself....”⁷¹ Tsvetaeva’s longing for Russia transposed the land into a “poetic space,” and in “The Poet and Time” she quotes Rilke: “There is such a land—God, and Russia borders on it.”⁷² Tsvetaeva amplified this statement and pronounced Russia a natural boundary (*prirodnaia granitsa*), a geographic personification of the poetic realm, her “third kingdom with its own laws.” She declared that every poet was by nature a rebel and an émigré, “even in Russia”; consequently, only a person for whom Russia was defined by conventional borders could fear forgetting her. Echoing Tsvetaeva, Remizov wrote with disdain about the émigrés who bemoaned their losses in endless conversations, while he had gained “the most passionate emotions,” words and dreams.

⁶⁷ Tsvetaeva, “Otryvki iz knigi ‘Zemnye primety,’” in *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 120.

⁶⁸ Terry Eagleton, “Nationalism: Irony and Commitment,” in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Said (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 31. Although Eagleton writes about Ireland, his statement is applicable to Russia.

⁶⁹ Aleksei Remizov, *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'*, 98.

⁷⁰ Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, “A New Word for a New Myth: Nietzsche and Russian Futurism,” in *The European Foundations of Russian Modernism*, ed. Peter I. Barta in collaboration with Ulrich Goebel (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1991), 246.

⁷¹ Seamus Dean, “Introduction,” in *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, Eagleton et. al., 9.

⁷² Tsvetaeva, “Poet i vremia,” 372.

Yet, Tsvetaeva's certainty of the incompatibility of aesthetics and politics differs sharply from the stance of the Left Futurists.⁷³ In "The Poet and Time" she cites her experience of the public readings of "The Swain" and *Demesne of the Swans* as proof. After a reading of the former (in emigration), she was asked whether the poem was about the Revolution. Though surprised by the question, she suggests that to dismiss it as a sign of ignorance would be just as ignorant, because the work itself is revolutionary—all the more so since her counter-revolutionary poems from *Demesne of the Swans* drew an unexpected response from a red audience (at home): "It's all right. You are a revolutionary poet, anyway. You've got our tempo." She made a clear distinction between two types of poets: "a poet of the revolution" and a "revolutionary poet." Remizov belonged to the latter, while Mayakovsky, as a tragic exception, was both.

Tsvetaeva was not alone in her debate with the conservative émigré critics. Her 1926 essay "The Poet on Criticism" (*Poet o kritike*) appeared in the above-mentioned issue of *Blagonamerennyi* together with a short piece by Mirsky, entitled "On Conservatism: A Dialogue" (*O konservatizme: Dialog*). Here the author answers questions from a naive émigré reader who thinks that his responsibility is to protect the past tradition, and who complains that he does not understand Pasternak's *My Sister—Life*. Mirsky's position is close to Tsvetaeva's, and his ironic answers state clearly that literary conservatism is impossible because art is revolutionary by definition: it "creates new values"; poets are ahead of their readers because they create what is "new"; and "Pasternak and Marina Tsvetaeva may not be immediately appreciated, but I also have to make an effort to get to the British Museum from my house."⁷⁴ In this context, Tsvetaeva valued Remizov's dedication to the writer's calling as "a feat of a soldier standing guard who had done more for Russia than all the émigré politicians put together."⁷⁵

⁷³ "Poet i vremia," *Izbrannaia proza*, vol.1, 367-380. In this context, see the following publications with the critiques of the left avant-garde: L. Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy, and the People's Republic of China* (London: Collins Harvill, 1990); B. Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin. Die gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion* (Munich: C. Hanser, 1988).

⁷⁴ *Blagonamerennyi* 2 (1926): 92.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Marc Slonim, "O Marine Tsvetaevoi," *Novyi zhurnal* 100 (1970): 171-172.

Chapter 1C

Double Exposure in Exile Writing: Khodasevich, Teffi, Bunin, Nabokov

This chapter explores the role and semantics of memory in the recollections of native citizens abroad as one of the main *topoi* in émigré writing. In his *Exile in the Narrative Imagination*, Michael Seidel's classic definition of an exile as "someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another," points to the dual consciousness of displacement.¹ We will begin with the "Sorrento Photographs," a poem Vladislav Khodasevich wrote while living in Sorrento in 1925-1926. As an emblematic text of exile memory, this extended meditation on the subject will provide a point of departure for our discussion. The poem opens with the accidental "double exposure" of a forgotten old negative and segues into a projection of images of Russian cities onto sites along the Amalfi coast.

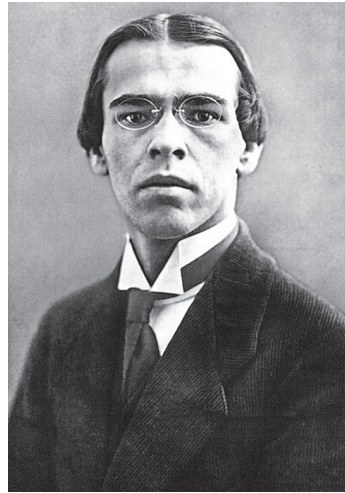
The brilliant device of "double exposure" would become indispensable in contemporary prose, where it was used to situate the exile in history, revealing hidden relations between memory of the past and the actual present. This device prompted recollections of Russian cities of the exiles' past as experienced in the European metropolitan centers, enabling writers to reflect on the inherent tensions of the diasporic condition, with its dual consciousness of place and time. These reflections center on vagaries of émigré memories of cities in Nadezhda Teffi's microcosm of Russian Paris, Bunin's Franco-Russian Paris, and Nabokov's Russian Berlin. Teffi's satirical stories present characters rooted in the past—beset by nostalgia, they remain profoundly alienated from the City of Light. Bunin's exceptional late story, "Paris," captures the subtle ways

¹ M. Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), ix. Seidel cites this definition from a study of the history of exile, funded by the United Nations: Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study* (London: Harrap, 1972).

that enabled the émigrés to dwell in both the Russian and French Paris, and in two languages, as Russians. The young Nabokov/Sirin, writing in Berlin, is striking for his stance against nostalgia, choosing creative modes of exile memory that participate in European modernity and literary modernism.

Khodasevich

In Khodasevich's poem "Sorrento Photographs," memory is revealed through the "double exposure" of Moscow and Petersburg onto the site of the classical world. Indeed, fascination with memory goes back to ancient Greece, where manuals on the "theater of memory" or Mnemosyne underscored the importance of remembering cities and their architecture. The treatises emphasized the visual sense of sight as the strongest, with memory trained on the recollection of specific architectural detail.² This was considered especially important when the site was lost in an earthquake or wartime. In the Jewish tradition, the destruction of the temple, followed by exile, resulted in devotion to Jerusalem as the sacred city, memorialized in prayer and poetry. This sustained the scattered Jews in their millennial longing in the diaspora. In *Booking Passage*, Sidra de Koven Ezrahi reminds us that Psalm 137 generates the poetic vocabulary of exile: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning, let my tongue cleave to my palate ..."³ Following these ancient models, we will observe how memory of the lost homeland, focused on its two cities, Moscow and Petersburg, shaped Russian diasporic literature in the struggle for cultural and national continuity, declared as the diaspora's sacred mission.



Vladislav Felitsianovich
Khodasevich, 1886-1939

² F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 4.

³ Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000), 9.

Writing in 1925-1926, Khodasevich appears cognizant of the complex structure of layers of memory, of its rich symbolism, but also of its unreliability. He opens "Sorrento Photographs" with an accidental and whimsical "double exposure" of a forgotten old negative of a goat whose horns are "butting Vesuvius." This incongruous dream-like image (familiar from the *commedia dell'arte* tradition of the goat-cuckold) emerges from beneath the film of the lush Italian landscape of the Amalfi coast. By analogy, the forgotten negative leads to a superimposed recollection of two key images of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Khodasevich creates an imaginative context for an instance of involuntary visual memory that reveals the implications of the historical trauma of the Revolution. The poem represents an exception in his cycle, *European Night* (1926-1927), imbued with acute alienation in the modern European metropolis, Berlin and Paris, where the impoverished poet wanders, struggling with the possible loss of poetic voice in the dark angst of exile.⁴ These cities and the life they offer appear grotesque to the eye of the poet-observer, captive in his claustrophobic exile condition. This acute sense of alienation, however, is absent from "Sorrento Photographs." Situated in the classical world, this poem has a humorous opening, where a "scatterbrained" photographer's inadvertent and mischievous "double-exposure" changes the mood, prompting the exile's free imaginative meditation on memory and history.

Indeed, the photographer's chance "forgetfulness" of the old negative triggers two specific visual memories of native Russia in stereoscopic images. Note that the speaker's memory, as involuntary as it is highly symbolic, offers precise recollections of cultural, topographic, and architectural detail in both instances. First, projected onto the Amalfi Pass is a vision of a "dilapidated house" in a humble quarter of Moscow during the funeral of a janitor, Saveliev, whose plain pine coffin is being carried out of a basement to the sound of a traditional women's lament. From the memory of an Orthodox funeral in Moscow, the city of medieval churches, the narrative switches to the present in a description of a Catholic religious procession in Sorrento at dawn on Good Friday, when an effigy of the Virgin is carried into the cathedral. As the lyri-

⁴ For a brilliant analysis and translation of the poem, see David M. Bethea, *Khodasevich: His Life and Art*, 300-316.

cal “I” of the observer continues on a motorcycle ride along the sinuous coastline, with Naples and Mount Vesuvius rising out of the fog, there is a vision of Petersburg—an upside-down reflection in the Bay of Naples of the angel atop the Peter and Paul Cathedral, an ironic architectural detail of this massive, forbidding site of imperial power, now a symbol of its past glory and fall. The two Russian “double-exposures” connect the two cities of Moscow and Petersburg and symbolically convey the sense of exile as death after the fall of the empire, succeeded by a secular Soviet state.

In David Bethea’s acute observation, the narrative sequence works so as “to foreshorten the ‘distant’ viewpoint of these two memories as the ‘nearer,’ more recent, viewpoint of the third memory is sandwiched in-between, describing a Roman Catholic procession...”⁵ The complex juxtapositions of the “nearer” and “distant” memories—of the Orthodox and Catholic rituals of death and resurrection, and of Petersburg as a recent necropolis with the historic “Pompeian horror” as background—inform the observer’s perspective. Indeed, they encapsulate the radical historical event of the Revolution within the greater time of ancient and Christian historiography.⁶

The poem offers striking insight into the complex processes of memory and its role in history. After the sober images of Russia projected onto the site of the Amalfi coast, the moment of levity, found in the initial image of the negative of the “mischievous photographer,” returns as the poem ends on a light note, with acute observations on memory as capricious, akin to dreams and “probably just as false.” Despite the justified skepticism concerning memory’s validity, corroborated by Freud who deemed that “memories are in themselves unconscious. They can be made conscious ...,” the speaker nevertheless appreciates the invaluable insight they offer.⁷ The release of “involuntary” memory of the two cities, with their traditional association of church and Empire, has an important function. Through its imaginative therapeutic reworking, memory enables the poet to look toward the future without apprehension. The poem

⁵ Ibid., 30.

⁶ I am indebted to Hayden White for this suggestion.

⁷ S. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), 578.

concludes with a surprisingly open-ended visionary question: “and what will overlay in turn/ the shadow of Sorrento photographs?”

What makes this optimistic question possible and how does it inform the representation of exile, memory, and imagination? The sublime landscape of the classical world, the scene of empires past and of a deadly volcanic eruption, enable the poet to move beyond the exile’s nostalgia or angst to encompass a greater sense of history and to imagine its continuity, rather than the paralysis of rupture. This move also allows a singularly positive sense of modernity to emerge, away from the oppressive grotesque of the urban metropolis of Berlin and Paris in the rest of the *European Night* cycle. The two symbols of modernity—the camera that executes the “double-exposure,” along with the motorcycle conveying the “I” along the coast—are instrumental in creating the “distant” and the “nearer” perspective, enabling the “involuntary” memory to emerge.

Contemporary Prose

While the visionary poem of Khodasevich offers remarkable insight into the workings of exile memory, with the clear parameters of its temporal and spatial relations, the poet’s understanding of the vagaries of memory and the broad historical perspective remain exceptional in the literature of the first decades of Russia Abroad. Our discussion of émigré prose will follow how the semantics of “double exposure” as a device, featured by Khodasevich, shapes the narrative strategies of writing on exilic recollection, focusing on the role of native cities in foreign settings. This will allow us to observe how different projections of the past onto the present affect the dynamics of diasporic “accommodation with, as well as resistance to, host countries and their norms.”⁸

The stories differ from this exceptional poem—they resemble the rest of the *European Night* cycle, with their emphases on the pain of exile, encumbered by memories of the past. The stories point to several phenomena affected by this condition. They focus on problems of bilocality and dislocation, revealing what Doris Sommer dubs as the exile’s “split con-

⁸ J. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 251.

sciousness,” inherently tied to “grammar trouble.”⁹ We will consider how both bilocality and bilingualism contribute to the workings of memory in the difficult process of “accommodation,” which involves translation of the foreign cultural context into familiar terms. Writers depict Russian characters in European cities as they contend with the spatial and cultural alienation of everyday reality. But instead of the broader historic meditation found in “Sorrento Photographs,” with the careful balance between the “near” and “distant” perspective, the stories evoke vivid images of the distant familiar past that threaten to disrupt and even submerge the present of the Paris or Berlin settings.

Unlike the speaker in “Sorrento Photographs,” who is firmly planted in the landscape of the Amalfi coast and imagines a greater historical perspective that enables him to contextualize his country’s predicament, most of his Russian contemporaries are caught in up in the struggle with the constant challenges of everyday life in foreign cities. Events of the recent past and a sense of dislocation in the uncertain present contribute to the exile’s “resistance” to the new places of residence, exacerbated by the inhospitable conditions in the host countries. Moreover, once in Europe after 1917, Russian émigrés suffered a double-estrangement—a loss not only of the Russian, but also of the European home as they knew it during earlier travels and study abroad. This reinforced “resistance” rendered accommodation all the more difficult. As mentioned earlier, Khodasevich conveys painful alienation in the *European Night* cycle. Andrei Bely experienced this difference acutely. As Aleksandr Lavrov states in his essay “The Two Germanies of Andrei Bely” (*Dve Germanii Andreia Belogo*), the earlier connection with German culture and writers, especially Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, was as formative for Bely as was Russian culture.¹⁰ Thus, during his 1905-1906 trip abroad, Bely described his fascination with Munich, an artistic and cultural center, finding that “every German is a bit of a genius, when he drinks beer and smokes a pipe ...”¹¹ As Lavrov demonstrates, the contrast with Bely’s experience fifteen years later,

⁹ D. Sommer, “Introduction,” in *Bilingual Games. Some Literary Investigations* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 7.

¹⁰ A. Lavrov, “Dve Germanii Andreia Belogo,” *Europa Orientalis* 22:2 (2003): 39. See also “Strana geniev” in *Deutsche und Deutschland aus russischer Sicht*, ed. L. Kopelev (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006). The same was true for Vassily Kandinsky.

¹¹ Lavrov, “Dve Germanii Andreia Belogo,” 43.

during his stay in Russian Berlin (1921-1923), was all the more striking then, when the city had become but a stage for a display of his personal crisis and the angst of temporary exile.¹² Another contemporary living in Berlin, the philosopher Fedor Stepun, who had studied philosophy in Heidelberg as a youth, writing in his 1923 essay “Thoughts of Russia” (*Mysli o Rossii*), was strikingly explicit about his return to an unwelcoming Europe, indifferent to the Russian experience: “exile to Europe for us turned out to be an exile from Europe.”¹³

To combat their sense of displacement, the émigrés hastened to create the *lieux de mémoire* that had become indispensable “because there are no longer the *milieu de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience.”¹⁴ One way to achieve this was through a recreation of Russian enclaves in foreign cities to provide an illusion of familiarity and to allow an unhampered use of the native language as a way to counteract loss.¹⁵ As the stories demonstrate, these émigré “micro-archipelagos” of identity offered the necessary “stable structure of social relations informed by the material articulation of the national spirit.”¹⁶ Hence the use of such toponyms as Russian Paris or Russian Berlin indicated that they were not identical with the French or German capitals. Moreover, the Russian toponyms rendered the actual Paris or Berlin alien in the émigré psyche. As late as his last American novel, *Look at the Harlequins!* (1974), Nabokov recalls Russians living in interwar Berlin and Paris, where the hero refers to the émigré section of the city as “Passy na Rusi.” [Passy-on-the Russian-Riverbanks]¹⁷ This was the area of Russian nursery schools and cafes, bookstores and publishers. Émigré stories take place in Russian neighborhoods transplanted by memory, which provide ample evidence of the domestication of foreign

¹² Ibid., 41-42.

¹³ F. Stepun, “Mysli o Rossii,” *Sovremennyye zapiski* 17 (1923): 351-352.

¹⁴ Pierre Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History” in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, under the direction of Pierre Nora, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁵ K. Solivetti, M. Paolini, “Paradigmy ‘izgnaniia’ i ‘poslannichestva’: Evropeiskii opyt russkoi emigratsii v 20-e gody” in *Europa Orientalis* 22:2 (2003): 145-170. I would like to thank A. Shishkin for this reference.

¹⁶ Ibid., 169.

¹⁷ V. Nabokov, *Look at the Harlequins!* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974; reprinted, Vintage Books, 1990), 87.

urban space through the superimposition of the familiar on the foreign, a variant form of “double exposure” of the past on the present, essential in mapping the urban toponymics of exile.

Teffi

There was no better ethnographer of Russian Paris than Nadezhda Teffi, whose satirical stories provided a complex and witty depiction of émigré existence as she diagnosed both the symptoms and dangers of exile memory. Presented as “involuntary” in “Sorrento Photographs,” memory and the superimposition of the past on the present are shown to be willful and obsessive in her characters, beset by nostalgia or “longing.” As Svetlana



Nadezhda Teffi,
1872-1952

Boym has shown, the typology of nostalgia ranges from a “restorative” to a destructive state, akin to illness.¹⁸ In Teffi’s Paris it is the latter, with the “familiar” or the “preserved” Russian culture carried as part of émigré luggage. This coexists with the “alien” aspects of the land of residence, confounding the “near” and “distant” perspective of the hapless protagonists, so that the latter appears more real than the immediate context, which is almost obliterated. The condition of nostalgia is often confounded with memory and endangers life.

The exile’s ubiquitous longing, along with the daily confusion of existence dominated by displacement, are the central themes of Teffi’s tales. Using bilingualism as a symptom of “split consciousness” of Russians in Paris, Teffi creates a gallery of characters who contrive to keep up a semblance of native “*byt*.” Her stories are populated by Russian cabbies, seamstresses, milliners, shopkeepers, hairdressers, and poor teachers. She subjects the émigrés, whose memory dwells in the homeland and dominates consciousness, to an ironic examination. The title story of the collection, *Nostalgia*, dissects this condition, defined as a “disease,”

¹⁸ S. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.

whose victims turn passive and “do not believe in anything, do not expect anything, do not want anything. They died.”¹⁹ They are more interested in the news from “there” than “here.” These people even transpose the stock landscape of the homeland to Paris, and to the detriment of their immediate surroundings: “their *l’herbe* [grass] is not our *travka-muravka* [Russian “grass” with a folksy rhyme—G. N. S.]; their trees may be very nice, but foreign; they do not understand Russian.”²⁰

Language is key as Teffi stakes out an essentialist monolingual position taken to an extreme: “You cannot translate a Russian soul into French ...” (*Perevedite russkuiu dushu na frantsuzskii iazyk ...*).²¹ The absurdity of this exclusive position of cultural nationalism, where the past outweighs the present, is evident in the story titled “The Dacha Season” (*Dachnyi sezon*). It conveys geographic displacement in the opening statement, where the oral intonation of *skaz*, reminiscent of Zoshchenko, expresses an opinion of the collective reader: “In Paris we observe a phenomenon that is strange to us foreigners—there are no seasons in Paris” (*V Parizhe net prirodnykh sezonov*).²² This condition is underscored when the categorical statement is paraphrased with an emphatic intonation as if of a logical outcome: “There are no natural seasons” (*sezonov prirodnykh net*).²³ By contrast, the four Russian seasons, along with their requisite items of clothing, are perceived as part of natural order of things, while in Paris “all is upside down” and “straw hats are worn in February.”²⁴

In her critique of the émigré rejection of the “present” in “resistance” to exile, Teffi is aware of the dangers inherent in the totalizing anxiety of loss. The story “Raw Material” (*Syr’e*) comments on such opinions of her compatriots that bemoan the futility of transporting the trappings of Russian culture to Paris, where “a Great Sadness” (*Velikaia Pechal’*) is ever-present. The fear of losing cultural memory deepens the sadness: “Even Tolstoy and Dostoevsky ... are remembered more and

¹⁹ N. Teffi, *Nostal’giia. Rasskazy, vospominaniia* (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989), 161. The collection represents stories from different periods. Quotations in the text refer to this edition (translations are mine—G. N. S.).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 162.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 164.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

more rarely.”²⁵ They have become irrelevant in this existence “beyond the grave,”²⁶ hence the anxiety that Russian literature will be forgotten. This negative argument extends to émigré writers and when one of them remembers that he was once an author, the response is: “How can one write? Our way of life is dead” (*nash byt umer*).²⁷ Teffi’s irony recalls the curse of the Soviet critic, Voronskii, that writers in exile would face artistic sterility and death; she responds with irony to both Soviet and émigré critics, combating such statements of extreme negativity in an attempt to restore the exiles’ shattered sense of identity and chart the creative possibilities of memory.

Teffi’s wittiest and most poignant expression of “foreignness” and dislocation in the famous story “*Ke fer?*” belongs to a former Russian general who finds himself stranded in the midst of ceaseless traffic in the Place de la Concorde, the heartbeat of Europe. As he looks around at the “sky, the square, the houses, and the gaudy, chatty crowd,” the full force of the drama of his schizoid existence and confusion explodes in the exasperated, brilliantly amalgamated bilingual question “*Ke fer? Fer-to ke?*” Teffi adds the flourish of a Russian particle *-to* to the French colloquial translation of “what’s to be done?” (*chto delat’?*), a witty paraphrase of one of Russia’s “accursed questions” and the title of Chernyshevsky’s famous socialist utopian novel, considered the predecessor of the October Revolution. Thus the bilingual pun of the story’s title brilliantly grasps the linguistically-manifested split consciousness: it reveals both the general’s dislocation and the irony of history, of which he is supremely unaware.

In her exploration of the predicament of exile, of the uses and misuses of memory in a “split consciousness,” Teffi demonstrates the dangers of excessive dwelling in the past, when “resistance” exceeds “accommodation.” Concerned with the challenge of the exile condition, the vagaries of memory, and with the continuity of the literary tradition, Teffi treats the themes of longing and dislocation without sentimentality. Her irony and the masterful use of bilingualism is a medium for representing the cultural clash through interlingual punning, pidgin Russian and Russified

²⁵ Ibid., 167.

²⁶ Ibid., 168.

²⁷ Loc. Cit.

French, which connects her work with that of her contemporary, Ivan Bunin, as well as with her younger compatriot, Vladimir Nabokov.

Bunin



Ivan Alekseevich
Bunin, 1870-1953

In contrast to Teffi's stories, Bunin's "Paris" (1940), written at the end of the historical period of the First Wave emigration, presents a striking departure. It examines the simultaneous practices of both "resistance" and "accommodation" in their interaction.²⁸ In this way it can be seen as a transitional text between the visionary "Sorrento Photographs" and Teffi's exclusively Russian Paris. This story is as exceptional in Bunin's émigré period as "Sorrento Photographs" was in the *European Night* of Khodasevich. It is part of the collection *Dark Alleys (Temnye Allei)*, which Bunin wrote toward the end of his remarkably creative life, during and after World War II. Most of the stories, set in Russia just before or on the eve of the Revolution, provide stunning descriptions of native settings in poignantly tragic tales of love. "Paris," however, is a story of requited love, uncommon for the writer. The story adds to the extraordinary "grammar of love" in his *oeuvre*. By incorporating bilingual code-switching, Bunin carefully placed his two characters on the borderlines of French and Russian Paris, using exile toponymics as a test study of split consciousness and bilingualism.

²⁸ I. Bunin, "Parizh," *Temnye Allei. Sochineniia v trekh tomakh*, v. III (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1982). Quotations from the text refer to this edition (translations are mine. —G. N. S.).

The man and the woman in the story are Russian émigrés who remain nameless and are referred to in the gender-marked third person pronoun. They dwell quite ably in two languages and in two toponyms, Russian and French Paris, whose geography is precisely mapped out. They meet on a wet night in late fall in a small Russian restaurant in the Russian Passy neighborhood, where she works as a waitress. When she addresses him in French, he is taken aback and immediately wants to ascertain that she is Russian. As she explains, she speaks French because of Parisian customers who frequent the restaurant. He, in turn, describes himself as “an old Parisian” and his French is replete with proverbs he learned while living in Provence. As he resorts to them at certain moments in their conversation, it becomes clear that these are mostly misogynist commonplaces, which serve as a superficial layer in emotional and cultural adaptation, what Sommer calls a “bilingual prosthesis.”²⁹

After three encounters, they have a date for a night out on the city. Bunin is careful in providing specific street and metro directions to orient the reader as the two protagonists cross the sections of the city that, like the two languages, remain distinct and separate in their consciousness. The first part of the evening is spent in the center of French Paris, at a cinema near the Étoile. The cinema, a site of modernity, plays its part; the action film on the screen with a Chaplin look-alike does not interest the couple, but they become “connected by intimacy” in the dark auditorium, which allows their conversation and acquaintance to continue. Not surprisingly, however, they are both bored with the film and agree to leave. They go across town to Montparnasse, to the favorite Russian gathering place, the café La Coupole, where they have a sumptuous dinner. The specific urban mapping is significant in the swift development of their attachment, since the night ends in his apartment in Russian Paris. Their emotional understanding is admirably direct as they become lovers and decide to move in together. The story’s narrative is composed of three parts, following nature and calendar cycles: it begins in the fall, continues through the winter and up to Easter, when he suddenly dies of a heart attack. This structure parallels the underlying significance of exile as the ultimate separation or death, allowing only an intermittent resurrection in their meeting and love.

²⁹ Doris Sommer, ed., *Bilingual Games*, 8.

The city is central in Bunin's masterful story, as it demonstrates how "the split of language and being" enables the characters to function in everyday life.³⁰ Their grasp of French, however, is superficial, a conscious gesture of "accommodation" to foreign culture that serves them well in protecting the deep repository of quintessentially Russian traits that reveal emotional directness and capacity for intimacy. As they exchange their pre-history in brief remarks, it is understood as part of the larger émigré history, with commonly recognizable components and references that include the Civil War and stages of exile, beginning in Istanbul. Although a possibility of happiness exists in Bunin's pre-war Paris, it is tenuous and tragically short-lived. Despite the protagonists' conscious accommodation to their Parisian existence, it remains secondary to their Russian past, which dominates the present. The two toponyms—Russian and French Paris—remain safely distinct in their consciousness.

Nabokov

The younger writer Vladimir Nabokov took up the challenge of finding a way out of the self-enclosed exile universe. Although memory was central in his work, Nabokov disparaged the banality of nostalgia and the émigré "resistance" to the reality of life in European cities. While his early work was replete with evocations of beloved Russia, he was as ironic about the émigré insistence on dwelling in the past as was Teffi. Aware as he was of the tension in exile toponymics, Nabokov's predilection for the modern metropolis of Berlin set him apart from his compatriots, who clung to the Russian enclaves and disparaged modernity.

His last Russian novel, *Dar (The Gift)* (1937), situated in Berlin, provides a very careful mapping of its German and Russian sections. The novel's hero, a young writer Fedor, is interested in the coexistence of the two Berlins and he is closer to the speaker of "Sorrento Photographs" in his awareness of juxtaposing the "distant" and "near" perspectives, seeking to retain the temporal relationship between them. While walking or riding the bus, Fedor partakes of the entire city, with an acute awareness of its sites and the visual pleasures they offer. Fedor notes "a multitude of streets diverging in all directions ... and skirting the above-mentioned

³⁰ Ibid., 7.

places of prayer and refreshment ...,” noting “to the right ... the gates of a tram depot with three beautiful birches standing out against its cement background ...”³¹

Nabokov is careful to mark the invisible border separating the two Berlins: “Crossing Wittenberg Square, where, as in a color film (*kak v tsvetnom kinematografe*), roses were quivering in the breeze around an antique flight of stairs that lead down to an underground station ...”³²

As the narrator approaches Russian Berlin, we note that the camera of “Sorrento Photographs” is now replaced by a movie camera, serving

his minute observation of the local scene, its ubiquitous characters, and their habits: “As always happened when he came to this street, ... he met an elderly, morbidly embittered St. Petersburg writer...”³³ The rest of the chapter is devoted to the internal discourse of the tightly knit émigré literary community of Russian Paris and Berlin, in which prominent literary personalities and their respective positions are mentioned and discussed with either irony or admiration. The latter attitude is reserved for Khodasevich, whom Nabokov considered the greatest émigré poet.

Acutely aware of the “double exposure” syndrome, Nabokov knows how involuntary memory functions, so that the distance between points in the “near” Berlin is automatically transposed into the “distant” Petersburg or Moscow. Thus, when Fedor moves from the old apartment to new lodgings where he will meet his beloved and become a writer, memory plays its part in his calculations: “The distance from the old residence to the new was about the same as, somewhere in Russia, that from Pushkin Avenue to Gogol Street.”³⁴ We note the ironic general designation “somewhere in Russia,” which generalizes the compulsive act of memory, though it remains highly symbolic.



Vladimir Vladimirovich
Nabokov, 1899-1977

³¹ V. Nabokov, *The Gift* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1970), 173.

³² *Ibid.*, 178.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

Playing with the exile toponymics and the “distant” and “near” perspective, Nabokov renders the foreign setting of the present as self-consciously irrelevant. Thus he graphically demonstrates how the nostalgic illusion of living in the past functions in Russian Berlin: “... so that it seemed as if on this German street there had encroached the vagabond phantom of a Russian boulevard” (*bluzhdal prizrak russkogo bul'vara ...*).³⁵ In a move reminiscent of the “mischievous photographer” of “Sorrento Photographs,” Nabokov explores the device of double-exposure in the spectral phantasm of a remembered Russian cityscape. Manipulating the “distant” and “near” possibilities of the camera perspective, he goes a step further and reverses the superimposition. He imagines a street in Russia “with several natives taking the air, swarmed with the pale ghosts of innumerable foreigners flickering among those natives like a familiar and barely noticeable hallucination.”³⁶ This device of reversal will be used many years later in Nabokov’s *Speak, Memory*, where he conveys a typical émigré attitude towards the “spectral Germans and Frenchmen in whose more or less illusory cities we, émigrés, happen to dwell.”³⁷ The ability to change the spatial and temporal perspective, proffered by Khodasevich, becomes an indispensable instrument of the writer’s craft in Nabokov’s ironic take on the workings of memory: it allows his hero to distinguish between appearance and reality, between the past and the present.

Most importantly, however, this ability has great implications for the writer’s craft. It allows Nabokov to transpose involuntary memory into the creative sphere of the imagination when his narrator, Fedor, declares himself to be a “seeker of verbal adventures” (*ved' ia-to sam lish' iskatel' slovesnykh prikliuchenii*), thus defining his priorities.³⁸ As a writer, Fedor is also acutely aware of the tensions inherent in dual consciousness and bilingualism. While riding a city bus, he notes another local urban site that instantly contrasts with a great city of his past: “along the tooth-paste advertisement upon it swashed the tips of soft maple twigs—and it would have been pleasant to look down from above on the gliding street

³⁵ Ibid., 178.

³⁶ Ibid., 178.

³⁷ *Speak, Memory. An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 276.

³⁸ Nabokov, *The Gift*, 157.

ennobled by perspective”³⁹ However, Fedor’s mind wanders inward to the contradictions of his émigré existence and the meager living he makes by tutoring English: “... rushing from lesson to lesson, wasting his youth on a boring and empty task, on the mediocre teaching of foreign languages—when he has his own language, out of which he can make anything he likes ...” He comes to realize that the city, foreign or remembered, along with his native language, constitute the potential tools of his craft.

At some point Fedor reiterates Teffi’s proverbial “*Que faire*” question and in his answer assigns a specific place to the ever-present memory of the homeland: “... and ‘what to do now?’ Ought one not to reject any longing for one’s homeland, for any homeland besides that which is with me, within me, which is stuck like the silver sand of the sea to the skin of my soles, lives in my eyes, my blood, gives depth and distance to the background of life’s every hope?”⁴⁰ And while Fedor proclaims internalized memory to be an indelible part of his being, he also understands its role: it creates a precious perspective of “depth and distance” in any subsequent life experience. He is also supremely aware that involuntary memory is always there, ready to surface at any moment: “Someday, interrupting my writing, I will look through the window and see a Russian autumn.”⁴¹

The device of the double exposure, discovered by Khodasevich a decade earlier, is now a part of the writer’s arsenal. In his creative exploration of the device and imaginative potential of cities in the late 1930s, Nabokov creates an evolving typology of memory. While marking stages in the evolution of his exile consciousness, Fedor detects a significant change from the acute, almost physiological longing of earlier recollections: “Gradually, as a result of all these raids on the past of Russian thought, he developed a new yearning for Russia that was less physical than before”⁴² This corresponds to the Russian version, but not in an exact translation, which would read “... gradually, ... he developed a new, a less landscape-rooted longing for Russia” (*Postepenno ... v nem*

³⁹ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 187.

⁴¹ Ibid., 187.

⁴² Ibid., 215-216.

razvivalas' novaia, menea peizazhnaia, chem ran'she, toska po Rossii...).⁴³ This significant instance of an inexact translation serves a purpose: It designates the proper place of memory both in Nabokov's evolution as a bilingual writer and in the history of émigré culture. It is interesting that the English translation of this passage omits the epithet "*peizazhnaia*" in describing the stock visual image of nostalgia. Ironically, even Nabokov, who was involved in preparing the English version of the novel, must have thought the term and its semantic associations untranslatable! Nabokov's novel stands in sharp contrast to the uncritical and obsessive recollections of the past of the émigré community that Teffi satirized in her stories.

The poetics of exile memory of native cities reaches its apogee in Nabokov's remarkable story "The Visit to the Museum" (*Poseshchenie muzeia*, 1938), which concludes more than a decade-old history of double exposure.⁴⁴ In Nabokov's Russian period there was always a clear realization that there is no return home. The first person character of the story, a Russian émigré residing in Paris, plans a trip to a French provincial city, when his friend, a fellow émigré, asks him to find a painting by a French painter, once belonging to his grandfather. It is purported to be hanging in the local museum and he is to purchase it back, if possible. During the planned visit to the museum, where the painting is actually found, the narrative takes an unexpected turn. Nabokov uses the device of the "dream" when the hero is "transported" back to Russia, but the familiar pavement and streets of his native Petersburg do not provide the reassurance of "restorative nostalgia." Instead, the narrator experiences extreme dislocation, since the beloved old sites have been transformed into "a factual Russia of today, forbidden to me, hopelessly slavish, and hopelessly my own native land."⁴⁵ As in "Sorrento Photographs," the old Petersburg no longer exists. The story of reverse estrangement in the once familiar city underscores an important discovery, made earlier by Fedor

⁴³ V. Nabokov (V. Sirin), *Dar*, in *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000), 384.

⁴⁴ "Poseshchenie muzeia" was first published in *Sovremennye zapiski*, LXVIII (Paris, 1939). It was included in a collection *Vesna v Fial'te* (New York, 1959). English translation: V. Nabokov, "Visit to the Museum," in *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 281.

⁴⁵ Op. cit.

in *The Gift*, that memory is indeed distinct from reality—the recreation of the past can occur only in the imagination. Nabokov captures the creative potential of memory as a trope in the evolution of exile literature.

Moreover, as the memory of prerevolutionary Petersburg comes to grips with the Soviet Leningrad fantastic, the story presents what Maxim Shrayer aptly dubbed “the paradox of recognition.”⁴⁶ The alienation now stems not from Paris or Berlin, but from the internalized memory of the beloved native city, which has no counterpart in its irrevocable transformation in historical reality. The ending is succinct, as the narrator somehow manages to return abroad from the long dream sequence, swearing that he would never again attempt to fulfill “commissions entrusted one by the insanity of others,” that is, by the Russian émigré burdened with nostalgia.

This story of the imaginary journey from Paris back to Petersburg has important implications for the evolution of the First Wave of émigré literature at the end of two decades of its history. “The Visit to the Museum” has great bearing on the 1930s diasporic debates concerning the writer’s responsibility to the classical tradition in the context of the émigré mission, dedicated to its continuity. According to Aleksandr Dolinin, the story is also significant as a “meta-reflection on the Petersburg myth.”⁴⁷ The rich nineteenth-century tradition reaches its conclusion here: like the grandfather’s portrait, it now belongs in the museum of literary history. Nabokov’s story marks not only the limits of nostalgia and memory as it assigns them to the imaginary sphere, but it also seeks a broader perspective that opens new creative venues for an émigré writer in the context of European modernism.

Conclusion

The centrality of cities in émigré writing is tied to their dynamic role in exile memory. The poem and prose considered here provide ample evidence that Russian writers living abroad defied Voronskii’s curse of “death and sterility.” Their work demonstrates that a creative use of vi-

⁴⁶ M. D. Shrayer, *The World of Nabokov Stories* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999), 62.

⁴⁷ A. Dolinin, *Istinnnaia zhizn’ pisatel’ia Sirina. Raboty o Nabokove* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii Proekt, 2004), 356.

sual memory of native cities recalled in the European metropolis allowed their writing to participate in both the continuity and the evolution of the national literary tradition. The “double-exposure” syndrome in exile imagination reveals a complex chronotope of disparate histories, of simultaneous dwelling in dual temporalities and languages. Prerevolutionary Moscow and Petersburg find their counterparts in Naples and Sorrento, or in Paris and Berlin. Following Khodasevich, writers tapped the creative potential in the play of double exposure to connote the extreme dislocation of exile and the rich vein of visual and linguistic memory. Khodasevich’s contemporaries, Teffi and Bunin, depicted life in Russian Paris, exploring the possibilities for a future life in the diaspora. Nabokov realized the full creative potential of memory and the dynamic importance of cities, turning dislocation and bilingualism to his advantage. More than that, Nabokov accomplished something that was not possible in his native land at the time—he moved beyond the traditional literary mythologies of St. Petersburg. His work continued the experiments of prerevolutionary Russian modernism and participated in a European modernism where cities and memory play a central role, thus contributing to the rich twentieth-century tradition of exile writing.

Part II

*Diaspora:
The Classical Literary Canon
and Its Evolutions*

Chapter IIA

The Battle for the Modernists' Gogol: Bely and Remizov

One of the important acts of the Symbolists' project was a revision of nineteenth-century classical literary tradition. Considerable attention focused on one of its towering figures, Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852), whom the moderns regarded as an exemplar of high art and verbal mastery. The Gogolian direction of modernist prose, along with the critical essays of its major writers, reflects this phenomenon. Great indebtedness to the master is especially notable in the writings of Andrei Bely and Aleksei Remizov. His work left a conscious imprint in their prerevolutionary fiction and became central in their critical prose of the thirties, the years of the modernists' last stance in the USSR. The championing of Gogol as a modern master extends into the postrevolutionary period through the mid-thirties. These years are especially crucial: they precede the impending decree on Socialist Realism as the exclusive literary style in the Soviet Republic of Letters. They also coincide with the blossoming of émigré literature and its self-confidence vis-à-vis the motherland. Among the main cultural figures engaged in the battle for the modernists' Gogol, along with Bely and Remizov, were artists in all spheres of culture: Meyerhold in the theater, Shostakovich in music, and Kozintsev in film. Gogol's work and his biography become an indelible part of creative consciousness of modern artists as of the writers of the Silver Age, who considered themselves to be his heirs.

Work on Gogol appeared at various dates and places of publication: Bely's book *Gogol's Artistry (Masterstvo Gogolia)* was published in Moscow in 1934, and Remizov's Gogol chapters in his collection of critical essays, *The Fire of Things (Ogon' veshchei)*, were published in Paris in 1954. Despite these differing dates, both Bely and Remizov were work-

ing on the Gogol materials from the late twenties to the early thirties. What unites them is the commonality of their approach in a continued, uninterrupted dialogue with the master, to whom their early work and the culture of the Silver Age are indebted. Indeed, in their critical work, what is most perceptible is the close and consistent attention to specific details and the deeper significance of Gogolian style. Moreover, these older writers' meditations on Gogol are imbued with their consciousness of personal responsibility for continuing the cultural traditions of the Silver Age, as well as for the future of Gogol's legacy in the time of swift and radical social change in postrevolutionary Russia.

The battle for Gogol in the twenties and thirties, including the many contradictory interpretations of his work, exemplifies the drama of Russian literature during the period of the first cultural revolution, when the past role of literature is undergoing reevaluation with consequences for its future. The stages of this battle and its main principles reflect the complex process of creation of the Soviet canon, implicated in state politics up to the hegemony of Socialist Realism decreed in 1932 with Stalin's decree "On the Reconstruction of Literary and Art Organizations." It is in the foreground of this process that the battle lines were drawn between the modernists and the new Soviet critics.

The consciousness of the far-reaching importance of this transitional period reflected in the work of Bely and Remizov was shared by their contemporary, Ivanov-Razumnik. In his introduction to the 1925 publication of a collection of essays, *Contemporary Literature* (*Sovremennaia literatura*), he is quite clear that only an unbiased critical evaluation of its past can enable an understanding of its present and mark the probable paths of its future. According to the editors of the extensive correspondence of Bely and Ivanov-Razumnik, this collection "saw the light of day after prolonged delays and without its editor's name." It was in fact the last time the name of this major representative of Silver Age criticism appeared in print.¹ In the essay "A Look and Something" (*Vzgliad i nechto*), printed under the pseudonym Ippolit Udush'ev, or "Short-of-breath," Ivanov-Razumnik provides valuable insights into the literary

¹ *Andrei Belyi — Ivanov-Razumnik: Perepiska*, edited by A. V. Larov and John Malmstad (St. Petersburg: Feniks, 1998), 16.

process of the time: “It is quite likely that, after a great creative wave of ascent in Russian literature of the first quarter of the century, we may be witnessing its abatement, which can also continue for some decades”² In order to understand how Bely and Remizov positioned themselves in this context, it is useful to heed Ivanov-Razumnik and remember the prior history and some of the central premises of the prerevolutionary reception of Gogol from the turn of the century onward.

The Prerevolutionary Period

One of the earliest statements of change in the modernist reception of Gogol was the speech of Innokentii Annenskii, “Gogol’s Artistic Idealism,” on 21 February 1902, dedicated to the anniversary of Gogol’s death. Annenskii appears to protect Gogol from the conventional realist interpretation, that is, of an ideological interpretation of his work: “Russian literature does not have a work of greater realist energy. That which we designate as Gogol’s *realism* is something higher: it is not so much precision, as the beauty of depiction, its highest intelligence and expediency. ... The symbols of the great Russian epic are ‘grand and fine for the real world.’” A few years later, in his 1906 essay on “The Aesthetics of *Dead Souls* and Its Legacy,” Annenskii points to the *locus classicus* of Russian literature. “Pushkin and Gogol. Our two-faced Janus. Two mirrors of the door that separates us from our antiquity.” His words had a momentous effect on his contemporaries, the writers who would be Gogol’s heirs. Whereas Pushkin was the crown of old Russia, Gogol was something utterly different, as he “stood facing the future of Russian literature with terror and torment. He stands before it as a genius ... People did not go to Gogol, they went onward from Gogol.”³

In fact, the year 1906 marks a heated polemic concerning Gogol’s legacy. Vasily Rozanov takes a different position, advocating a resistance to Gogol and a return to Pushkin, thus marking the trend which would come to be known as “beautiful clarity” from the eponymous statement of Mikhail Kuzmin in 1910. Bely and Remizov will be the conscious

² In *Sovremennaia literatura. Sbornik statei* (Leningrad: Mysl’, 1925), 161.

³ I. Annenskii, “Estetika ‘Mertyvkh dush’ i ee nasledie,” *Kniga otrazhenii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1979), 228.

Gogolians in this context. Gogol's preeminence in the early twentieth century was announced by the unveiling of the writer's monument in 1909. The complex cultural history leading up to its creation is emblematic of the cultural wars surrounding the centennial of Gogol's birth. Contemporaries were reminded that, even during his lifetime, Gogol had never belonged to himself, but was always the subject of the Empire, of society and the church. In his book, *Russia: People and Empire: 1552-1917*, the British historian Geoffrey Hosking writes in the chapter on "Literature as Nation Builder" that the "battle for Gogol, for the second part of *Dead Souls* became emblematic ...for the position of writers in his time ..."⁴

The Symbolists, in their revision of the nineteenth-century canon as established by Belinsky and the radical critics of the sixties and seventies, also took stock of that past before reevaluating the significance of Gogol's legacy for their time. The difference in their position is evident from a rather expressive note in Blok's diary of 1913:

Satire. There is no such thing. It is the Belinskys who shat on the word and did it to the point that artists, including myself, are capable of being fooled when thinking of "attacking the mores." ... The Belinskys came and said that Gogol and Griboedov "ridiculed" ... And here begins the deformation of Russian consciousness—of language, of genuine morality, religious consciousness, conception of art, down to the smallest detail—and a complete destruction of taste.⁵

The prerevolutionary critical approach to Gogol continues in the 1924 monograph of V. Gippius, in which he offers a philosophical, rather than sociological interpretation of pathos in *Dead Souls*. He claims that if the novel became subject to social and historical interpretations, it was not Gogol's will. This is precisely what Belinsky understood. And this is precisely what Soviet critics understood in following Belinsky.

⁴ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (London: Harper Collins, 1997), 298.

⁵ *Dnevnik Aleksandra Bloka*, ed. P. N. Medvedev (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo pisatelei v Leningrade, 1928), 218-219.

Postrevolutionary Shifts

After the Revolution, the Formalists made an important critical shift away from the nineteenth-century philanthropic and social approach to Gogol, in which Akakii Akakievich's poignant implosion in "The Overcoat"—"Why do you torment me . . . , gentlemen?"—was treated as an expression of the anguish of the "poor clerk." In the words of Visarion Belinsky, it sounded the tragic significance of Gogol's comic prose. The pointedly modern title of Boris Eikhenbaum's essay "How Gogol's 'Overcoat' is Made" (1919), focused instead on the exotic verbal gestures of Akakii, who favored and repeated particles in his often monosyllabic rejoinders. These are the mainstay of the Gogolian *skaz*, or representation of orality in print. This finding bears affinity with the modernists' Gogol. However, the old philanthropic interpretation found a second life in Soviet criticism from the thirties onward. At that time the last battle for the modernist Gogol continued in both realms of the divided Russian nation, providing the context for the conscious efforts of Bely and Remizov in championing and rescuing "their" Gogol.

As noted earlier, the end of the twenties and the early thirties represent a transitional period in Soviet history and in the cultural revolution. The 75th anniversary of Gogol's death was observed in 1927, and it became frighteningly clear once again that Gogol now belonged to the new state. In 1931 his remains were moved from the Danilov to the Novodevochii Monastery, and the symbolic stone from Golgotha, along with the cross, were taken away.⁶ This treatment continued into the late Stalinist period, when in 1951 a new tombstone, with a bust by N. V. Tomskii, was placed on the grave, where the dark face of the writer now had a smile. The hundredth anniversary of Gogol's death, 1952, was commemorated with the opening of a new monument, with the inscription "from the government of the Soviet Union."⁷ In Nosov's brilliant remark, "the monument becomes the actor of capricious history, the sort that only one person could have invented—the one who it seemed lay in peace underneath it for eternity."⁸

⁶ V. D. Nosov, *Kliuch k Gogoliu* (London, 1985), 95.

⁷ Boris Zemenkov, *Pamiatnye mesta Moskvvy* (Moscow, 1959), 124.

⁸ Nosov, *Kliuch k Gogoliu*, 90.

Bely's Struggle for Gogol

Bely was at work on *Gogol's Artistry* from August 1931, as he writes in the Author's Introduction: "My study is a modest effort to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of 'Nikolai Gogol's' first work seeing the light of day."⁹ Bely's letters to Ivanov-Razumnik during this period reflect the drama of working on the book in the complex conditions of literary life in the thirties. This correspondence is an invaluable resource which conveys the atmosphere of the time. In a letter to Ivanov-Razumnik of 21 February 1932, Bely writes: "I am working like a ...: in all directions at once: I run to GIKhL [the publishing house], I am writing 'Gogol', becoming more and more intricate and slower (a lace of images, connected by citations)."¹⁰ In a letter of 5 July, Bely writes about publication plans: "During all this time I achieved one thing: the three books, *Masks*, *Gogol*, and *Beginning of the Century*, will all, in principle, come out this year.... *Gogol* was given to Voronskii for a reading and he gave me all sorts of compliments, that he is excited about it; and this decided the book's fate. ... Voronskii was really supportive with *Gogol*, arguing that every university students needs it."¹¹ Bely also explains the significance of Voronskii's reaction during this period: "This approval really buoyed me, because working on it for nine-and-a-half months, I really had no idea what it is I wrote (perhaps nonsense); morally, the feeling was unpleasant and I almost decided that perhaps I won't write any more, thinking that I may have written myself out."¹²

At the same time, Bely is aware of the historic importance of his book, as he points to Gogol's uninterrupted role, in which his heirs are not only Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Turgenev, but also "Mayakovsky, Sologub, Blok, and Bely."¹³ Speaking of the transmission history of Gogol's legacy, Bely writes: "Gogol twice passed through our literature like a wind: In the middle of the last century and at the beginning of this one; 'young pre-revolutionary writers' learned a great deal from Gogol."¹⁴ Bely's own con-

⁹ Andrei Bely, *Gogol's Artistry*, trans. Christopher Colbath (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 38.

¹⁰ *Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik: perepiska*, 694.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 703-704.

¹² *Ibid.*, 704.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

nection with Gogol lasted to the end of his life. George Nivat writes that Bely's work on his last novels coincided with a return to Gogol as writer and critic, and "as a result of his constant re-reading of Gogol, there is the verbal 'mosaic,' the fireworks of hyperbole in *Masks*, as well as the book on *Gogol's Artistry*."

As a writer and critic, Bely was mostly interested in the technical analysis of Gogol's art, of his "stylistic devices," since he felt that "however much is written on Gogol's style, little has been said."¹⁵ He sets forth the methodology of his work: "The goal of this project is narrow" and consists of "an introduction to Gogol's vocabulary, to elements of his poetic grammar."¹⁶ Bely provides a description of his method as a structural analysis of text: "finishing a chapter on plot, I finish the palpation of Gogol's great mastery: the palpation revealed three superimposed layers: meaning, image, and verbal; thought equivalent to the style, verbal art, tendency, color, rhythm; there is no clear boundary between them ..."¹⁷

In a direct departure from the previous century's critical tradition, Bely refuses to deal with Gogol's "humor," and instead directs attention to the unity of "form and content."¹⁸ This approach is evident in the chapter on "Imagery and Sound in 'Terrible Vengeance.'" Bely's description of the master's *chiaroscuro* is intricate and precise: "Every scene of 'Terrible Vengeance' is composed of moments, some quite little, others consciously thrown into obscurity, as into a dream ..."¹⁹ Bely submits the tale's colors to an analysis, noting the dominant red along with black and blue, remarking that "a specific color accompanies each of the three main characters."²⁰ He also undertakes a detailed analysis of the tale's rhythm and demonstrates that "Terrible Vengeance" is a song-tale, "imbued throughout with the sounds of folk *lad* ..." and "with the rhythm of laments." He shows how the tale can be "retold in short lines, paying attention to pauses and to rhythmic pulse," when "verbal repetition

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

¹⁶ Bely, *Gogol's Artistry*, 42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 73.

turns a rhyme.”²¹ As we will see, this type of analysis will also dominate Remizov’s study.

Bely’s struggle for Gogol, however, began in 1926, well before the writing of his book, during the polemic surrounding Meyerhold’s staging of Gogol’s “Inspector General.” In his book on Meyerhold, Rudnitsky underscores the significance of the staging and of the reaction to it:

“Meyerhold’s intent was to stage not the ‘Inspector,’ but Gogol as a certain artistic whole, Gogol as a style, Gogol as a special world, as Russia. . . . The history of theater had not experienced anything like the discussion that broke out around the ‘Inspector.’ Dozens of passionate disputes, countless numbers of contradictory reviews—both flattering and critical, as well as epigrams, and feuilletons”²²

The symbolic significance of Gogol in the literary battles of the cultural revolution is graphically revealed in two artistic events. Both the reactions to Meyerhold’s staging of the “Inspector General,” along with responses to Shostakovich’s opera “The Nose” (1930) convey the period’s atmosphere in sharp outlines. The ideological underpinning of the polemic are evident in the satirical verse feuilleton of Demyan Bedny (*Izvestiia*, 27 January 1927). Using folk rhymes and verbal puns, Bedny pans the production as anachronistic, its aesthetic harkening back to the prerevolutionary symbolist journal *The Golden Fleece*, and its nonsensical character attributed to the virulently anti-revolutionary émigré writer, Dmitrii Merezhkovsky. It is clear that the attack on Meyerhold’s aesthetic is ideologically based and tied to the Silver Age aesthetic.

Bely took an active part in the polemics in 1926 with a public lecture on “Gogol and Meyerhold,” published the following year, which conveys the flavor of the polemic: “For two months there has been an outcry in Moscow: Meyerhold insulted Gogol . . . Gogol laughed in a healthy laughter and Meyerhold killed that laughter; for a century Gogol’s theater was carried by the ‘shields of tradition’; Meyerhold broke the shields and Gogol fell, splintering into smithereens. How to restore Gogol?” Furthermore, Bely notes the national symbolism of the struggle for Go-

²¹ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

²² Konstantin Rudnitsky, *Meyerhold the Director*, trans. George Petrov (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1981), 350.

gol: “it behooves Moscow, all of Moscow, to go against Meyerhold; Moscow, which did not see Meyerhold’s ‘Inspector’, is agitated: blood was sucked out of our national genius ...” The polemically charged tone of Bely’s answer carries an ironically simple advice to his contemporaries: “re-read Gogol while his text has not yet been destroyed by Meyerhold.” This is the advice Bely will follow in his book on *Gogol’s Artistry*, as if creating an exemplary teaching aid for serious critical reading and analysis.

In the last chapter of his book, Bely affirms that the “evolution of the Gogolian tradition continues,” adding that “it is only half-a step from Mayakovsky to Meyerhold.”²³ Bely poses a provocative question: “What constitutes the modernism of the staging?” He answers by asserting that the “lamentation about ‘the distortion’ of Gogol is laughable, when there is actually a ‘restoration’ of live Gogolian gesture.”²⁴ Then he challenges the opponents: “Meyerhold took Gogol out of the very coffin of his *Collected Works*.”²⁵ If anything, these words represent a definite continuation of the prerevolutionary reevaluation of Gogol’s legacy by the modernists, who were intent on rescuing Gogol from Belinsky’s canon.

Bely’s defense of the historic significance of Meyerhold’s staging as a “last achievement not only of the Russian, but also of world stage,” and as “a sign that Gogol, the master lives on in us,” finds further proof in Remizov’s reaction to the traditional staging of the play. In the Gogol chapter in his book, *The Fire of Things*, Remizov writes about “Inspector General”: “I don’t know a more boring play. And even though every scene has comic situations, still, the boredom is staggering. This is the feeling I had since childhood, when we were made to go see ‘The Inspector’. It’s comical, but somehow not quite funny.”²⁶

The last chapter of *Gogol’s Artistry* and Bely’s Meyerhold lecture show that he was quite conscious of the drama of this historic moment, experienced as the end of an era which he had represented up to that time. At the same time, there are some heterogeneous, strange phrases and into-

²³ Belyi, *Masterstvo Gogolia*, 340.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 315.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 319.

²⁶ A. Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei; sny i predsonè: Gogol’, Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Dostoevskii* (Paris: Oplëshnik, 1954), 102.

nations noticeable in his analysis that crop up from the immediate Soviet historical context. For example, there are some anachronisms through which Soviet reality slips in: “Chichikov, deprived of land ownership, is a proletarian.”²⁷ Bely recalls various interpretation of Gogol’s contemporaries, such as Chernyshevsky, who understood just what frightened Aksakov, and that was precisely that “Gogol felt the rhythm of future revolutions.”²⁸

Ivanov-Razumnik noted this as well and, having read Bely’s book *Gogol’s Artistry* in its entirety as it appeared posthumously, he wrote to the writer’s widow, K. Bugaeva, on July 1, 1934: “I am reading this book (parallel with Gogol’s works) already for the third time, with a pencil in hand. The book is stunning—but who among us didn’t know that B. N. [Boris Nikolaevich] was brilliant, bringing to life everything that he touched.” He remembers their discussions as Bely read parts of the book which now reflects their polemics: “I still find unacceptable two aspects of this book: the ‘Pereverzev’ and the ‘Merezhkovsky’ aspects. For me these are the dark spots.”²⁹ At the same time, Ivanov-Razumnik explains that B. N. knew that he could not get the book through the “censorship and publishing Thermopylae, without giving it a Marxist turn and in this he was wrong ... And what point was there in talking about ‘class’ and ‘dynamics of the capitalist process’? All the more so that the rest of the book is absolutely admirable, that is about 3/4”³⁰ Earlier that spring he had written to his wife about reading “this stunning book.”

The tragedy of Gogol’s last years was in the situation of conflict for the writer, because “the struggle between command and demand is sickness.”³¹ These words are also applicable to Bely in the last years of writing. He contributed to the writers’ collection *How We Write* (1930), where he speaks of the difficulties of writing in the first years of working on the book, noting that “writing that’s rubbish pleases more,” and that “Bely, the artist, is a dreary one ... The reader is angry, the critic is

²⁷ Bely, *Gogol’s Artistry*, 106-107.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁹ Lavrov, A.V. and John Malmstad, “Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik: preduvedomlenie k perepiske” in *Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik: perepiska*, 21.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

³¹ Bely, *Gogol’s Artistry*, 113.

angry ... Bely is hard to understand.”³² In writing about himself, Bely is aware of the difficulty of his last novels, because they are “in conflict between ‘today’ and ‘tomorrow’, between the art of the book and that of life, between the study and the auditorium...”³³ These words convey the complexity of the writer’s position at the time of the Great Divide of Stalin’s Cultural Revolution and the adoption of Socialist Realism.

Remizov

Along with Bely, his illustrious contemporary, Remizov was well aware of Gogol’s historic importance and, along with Innokentii Annenskii’s maxim of 1906, Remizov affirms with a witty flourish the great legacy of Pushkin and Gogol: “It all began with Pushkin, and continued on from Gogol” (*S Pushkina vse nachinaetsia, a poshlo ot Gogolia*).³⁴ In the chapter titled “Though the Road is Endless” (*Khot’ bespreryvnaia doroga*), Remizov writes: “Speaking of Gogol, one must first of all remember that he was one of the most gifted among the gifted ever born on this earth. And as the most gifted and unlike anyone else, he was a loner on this earth.” Continuing further the modernist critical tradition, Remizov writes: “The charm of Gogol’s word is unique and he came to this word with an unusual knowledge.”³⁵ And the kinship with the master and the extremely personal nature of Remizov’s work on the writer, whom he was always reading, is expressed most simply as “an indirect form of confession.”

Remizov continued to think about and work on Gogol during the years of emigration. Because Remizov had been living abroad since 1921, Bely could not include him among Gogol’s heirs. Although Remizov’s book of literary essays, *The Fire of Things*, was not published until 1954, his essays on Gogol, as his writing on Turgenev, date back to the early thirties. In his letter of 29 February 1952 to Natalia Kodrianskaia, Remizov writes: “Gogol’s Fate, which will be part of the book, *The Fire of Things*,

³² E. Nikitina, *Gogol’ i Meyerhold: sbornik* (Moskva: Izdatel’stvo literaturno-issledovatel’skoi assotsiatsii TS.D.R.P., 1927), 22-23.

³³ *Ibid.*, 321.

³⁴ Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei*, 123.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

was written twenty years ago.”³⁶ Several publications in press attest to this. Among them are “Gogol’s Nature” (*Priroda Gogolia*) and “Gogol’s Secret” (*Taina Gogolia*) in *Volia Rossii*, 819 (Paris, 1929). In his “Graphic diary” (*Graficheskii dnevnik*), Remizov describes a dream in which he saw M. O. Gershenzon (died in 1926), to whom he says: “I am writing about Gogol and it would be interesting to hear you on that”³⁷ Work on Gogol continued in the post-war period. In the Bakhmeteff archive there is a note, where Remizov speaks of “Gogol’s wake” and his reading: “I am reading ‘The Moon Flight’ (*Lunnyi polet*)—the dream of the philosopher Khoma Brut, from ‘Vii’ (written in 1833—117 years ago, when Gogol was twenty four years old).”³⁸ “Learning to write like Tolstoy isn’t much. It is the same as learning to speak according to Stolpner. Gogol is something else altogether: reading him one can follow his verbal architectonics.”³⁹ At the same time, Remizov, along with Bely, reminds his contemporaries about “learning how to read Gogol” (*A Revizora nado nauchit’sia chitat*).⁴⁰

This is how Remizov explains his own method of reading Gogol: “Only that which had no proof, like faith, the source of legends, that brings historical document to life.”⁴¹ Remizov thinks of a creative biography and of human history, in terms of “the battle and change of myths: the myth of the divine, the myth of freedom, of love.” He explains his approach as a creative process: “The choice of literary material is not guess work or whatever happens to be at hand. And what does it mean that something arrested my attention? It is an encounter and a memory of the past.”⁴² Remizov’s words on the fiftieth anniversary of Turgenev’s birth present his method: “To enliven the bones—only legend can breathe life into them, and only in legend does memory of a person live on ... Legend is the breath of life”⁴³ An organic connection between Remizov’s method and Gogol’s work, and the mythological conception

³⁶ Kodrianskaia, *Aleksei Remizov*, 247.

³⁷ Bakhmeteff Archive, Alexei Remizov Manuscripts, Box 1, Kladi v meshok - doma razberem. Sny. 2/VII/1933-22 XII, 1933.

³⁸ “Polet Gogolia,” Bakhmeteff Archive, Alexei Remizov Manuscripts, Box 3 (1950).

³⁹ Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei*, 30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 139.

of the writer's own creative identity is confirmed by such scholars as V. E. Vatsuro.

In his literary analysis, Remizov considers dream as "a literary device."⁴⁴ At the same time, dream is also a means of cognition and, in fact, "in Russian literature it is rare that a work foregoes dreams ... dreams supply knowledge, consciousness, and foresight."⁴⁵ Remizov is interested in how "hyperconscious meaning is conveyed in" creativity.⁴⁶ He delineates an alternative idea of creative realism, one in which "dreams as a special reality (essence) ... first appear in Pushkin."⁴⁷

Remizov's analysis of the "Terrible Vengeance" confirms the tale's importance for both writers. Remizov's collection in the Bakhmetev archive contains a text of the dreams of Katerina and Pan Danila from the tale, copied in an even hand with underlining of especially expressive phrasing. A detailed study of such passages reveals Remizov's "internship." The dream of Pan Danila is followed by a commentary in which Remizov analyzes the deep structure of Gogol's style in a detailed analysis of the dream, noting nuances of light: "seven stages of dream—seven color bands: 1) pale gold, 2) transparent blue, 3) rose with a quiet ring, 4) black, 5) dark-blue with silver, 6) black, 7) resounding rose." This is followed by an analysis of the Gogolian syncretism, where synaesthesia is indicated: "the passage of words into a sounding crescendo, the transformation of light into sound, passage from eye to ear, color can speak as colors have various sounds."⁴⁸

Remizov also underscores the historical and literary significance of these dreams. For example, the complex dream of Pan Danila, who sees Katerina's dream in his, is considered as the single such example in literature: "To see in a dream what someone else is dreaming is a rare phenomenon, found maybe only in Lermontov." In the chapter "The Moon Flight" (*Lunnyi polet*), he writes about the dream in "VII": "The only dream among human dreams with flesh and blood and breath."

In his remarks on the Gogol criticism, Remizov continues the modernist dialogue about Gogol, while carrying on a polemic with both the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 128.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 30

émigré and Soviet critics. He continues his conversation with the late Symbolist contemporaries Annenskii and Blok as he writes in a chapter titled “The Tadpoles”: “The soul knows more than consciousness.”⁴⁹ There is an echo of a prerevolutionary conversation with Blok, who in his essay “Gogol’s Child” wrote about the writer’s “unvanquished inner anxiety” and its source in “the creative torment, which was Gogol’s life.” The poet thought that “like a woman, Gogol carried his progeny under his heart” and that child is Russia, whose “sparks appeared to Gogol like a blinding vision in a brief creative dream.”

Remizov is close to Bely when he affirms that Gogol’s role in Russian literature has remained uninterrupted, underscoring Gogol’s importance for such writers as Dostoevsky, Turgenev, and Tolstoy.” Following Dostoevsky, Remizov continues his aphorism about “The Overcoat”: “And besides all of Russian literature came from under Gogol and without *Dead Souls* there would be no *War and Peace*.”⁵⁰ In speaking of contemporary literature, Remizov mentions Gogol’s importance for Bely’s prose and underscores an important discovery he made in Bely’s critical work: “Bely’s view of Gogol as a poet in prose, who erased the boundary between ‘verse’ and ‘prose,’ is of enormous importance: as if it weren’t clear that for poetry everything is form and there are no special forms.”⁵¹

In the drafts of the book, preserved in the Amherst archive, there are versions of the Gogol chapters, along with texts not included in the published edition. It would appear that preparing the book for the centennial of Gogol’s death that was to be celebrated in the Soviet Union in 1952 (the book came out in 1954), Remizov was aware of the significance of his collection, since his contemporaries had been silent for some time, especially Bely. In this context, it is worth noting what Remizov did not include in the book, especially his remarks about sexuality in Gogol. In speaking about Gogol’s character, Shponka, for example—who is 38 years old, unmarried, and not fond of women—Remizov saw this as autobiographical, underscoring Gogol’s remark: “If he were to marry, he would not know what to do with her.” Remizov adds, however, that

⁴⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁰ Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei*, 66.

⁵¹ Ibid., 130.

“theoretically Gogol was not innocent, he knew details that are familiar only to those with experience in seduction.” These remarks leave no doubt that Remizov was familiar with Freud and the Russian Freudian school. It is all the more interesting that Remizov understood the drama of Gogol’s sexuality but left such analysis out of his volume. The connection between the writer’s sexuality and his creativity would become a subject of Western scholarly research some twenty years later.

An uninterrupted connection with Gogol becomes especially important after the Revolution. In his experimental chronicle of the revolutionary years, *Whirlwind Russia*, Remizov addresses Blok in a chapter dedicated to the poet’s memory with a question: “How to write?” His answer to the question places Gogol at the center: “Gogol is the most contemporary writer. Gogol!—to him is turned the soul of the new emerging Russian literature with its word and its eye.”⁵² Remizov’s chronicle provides the proof for this with a description of the hero of “The Overcoat,” Akakii Akakievich, who returns to revolutionary Petrograd in the chapter titled “Sabotage.” Akakii Akakievich is a skeptic who refuses to work and to submit to authority, even when threatened with prison: “...so, if I must be destroyed, so be it, but I don’t want to work and that’s all there’s to it.”⁵³ Remizov provides fantastic descriptions of life in revolutionary Petrograd: “Terrible and strange things are occurring in Petrograd, things even Gogol didn’t dream about.” To this, we can add that a “recanonicalization” of the Russian classics taking place just over a decade later would not have occurred in either Pushkin’s or Gogol’s dreams.

In his book of essays Remizov carries on a polemic with critics in emigration and in the Soviet Union: “Six years after his death, in 1958, there appeared an article by Pisemsky concerning the publication of Part II of *Dead Souls*. Pisemsky’s words about Gogol’s fate as a writer, who was poked by critics to this day, going on to advise readers to love this charming writer, “because this love will serve as a beginning of mutual understanding and interests.”⁵⁴ Remizov cites Pisemsky: “There are probably few among great writers who took so long in becoming favorites

⁵² Remizov, *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'*, 514.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 236.

⁵⁴ Remizov, *Ogon' veshchei*, 22.

of the reading public as had Gogol.” And further, “finally society had to be educated by his followers before it was able to *understand* the significance of his work, to *love* it, and having studied it, to take it apart into sayings.”⁵⁵ The approach to Gogol’s legacy has a personal significance for Remizov and the following words are relevant to writers’ fate in general: “But before public opinion was solidified, how much insulting lack of understanding and ignorant reproaches he had to sustain!”⁵⁶

The full meaning of these words for Remizov is further confirmed by a note found in the Amherst archive: “Seventy years (1933) after Pisemsky’s article (1856), the Paris Russian journal *Numbers* aimed straight at the brow, if not the eye, to begin anew!” Remizov is referring to the speech of A. N. Alferov, “The Émigré Everyday” (*Emigrantskie budni*), which was presented to a meeting of the Green Lamp (*Zelenaia Lampa*) literary society, with the text printed in the journal.⁵⁷ Alferov speaks of “the émigré desire to preserve their way of life,” something that literature could help with, but unfortunately, it does not serve as “a source of observations,” which could help readers figure out the complexities of émigré life. Moreover, older writers don’t understand the younger ones, who are trying “to find themselves.” This is followed by Alferov’s advice, which Remizov referred to above with such irony: “Why shouldn’t writers try to *love* the reader; only such a feeling can lay a path to mutual *understanding* and interest to one another.”

It is not hard to understand Remizov’s reaction. Both he and his contemporary, the poet Marina Tsevtseva, were often reprimanded that their writing is difficult to understand. Curiously enough, it is possible to discern some coincidence between émigré and Soviet criticism with its emphasis on “social command” and on direct reflection of Soviet reality in literature. As Remizov reminds us, “Gogol didn’t readily decide to include his early stories in his *Collected Works*. It could not have been otherwise; a work of art is not measured by the ‘what for’ and by ‘utility’ but for its ‘viability and indissoluble impressions.’”⁵⁸ It becomes increasingly clear that for both Remizov and Bely, Gogol as a verbal artist remains a

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Chisla* 7 (1933).

⁵⁸ Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei*, 25.

model of aesthetic criteria precisely because of his “viability and indissoluble impressions.”

Although, because of a difference in their circumstances, Remizov’s book could not have as acute a sense of Soviet reality as had Bely’s, there are references to current conditions there in *The Fire of Things*, such as the above-cited comments on writers and readers. In Remizov’s chapter on Nozdrev from *Dead Souls*, there is an explanation of Gogol’s phrase “the subtlest superfluosity” as the “highest degree of perfection.”⁵⁹ To Gogol’s expression Remizov adds words that sound like a comment on Russian utopianism: “I want perfection not only in things, but also in human beings.”⁶⁰ There are also amusing anachronisms, such as “Chichikov’s father was occupied with psychoanalysis.”⁶¹ Remizov’s wit comes through in sharp puns, one of them addressed to another critic of the Paris emigration, Georgii Adamovich: “It’s not the Gogols here, but the sober heirs of Adam, we the Adamoviches, have fractured imagination.”⁶²

Russia’s Stalinist context is more apparent in Remizov’s themes from *Dead Souls* in his drawing albums, found in the Paris archive of N. Reznikova. The drawings are complementary to the critical essay on the novel in the *Fire of Things*. The albums are composed of drawings with subtitles, which sometime consist of quotations from the novel and other times present new texts. The whole is a sort of meditative riff on Gogol’s masterpiece, composed for Remizov’s own time. The text to the three drawings from “Resurrection of the Dead” (1931), correspond to the novel: “And there I will resettle them all! To the Kherson province! Let them live there!”⁶³ The paraphrase of Gogol in the text to the comical portrait of Chichikov appears to continue this thought: “Isn’t there in me some part of Chichikov?”⁶⁴; this might be compared with his remark in *The Fire of Things*: “Gogol says that there is a bit of Chichikov in everyone.”⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 45.

⁶¹ Ibid., 58.

⁶² Ibid., 64.

⁶³ *Al’bum*, 18; Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei*, 47.

⁶⁴ *Al’bum*, 21.

⁶⁵ Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei*, 52.

New intonations appear in the 1951 album with an extended title: "Russia is a very extensive nation, the Kherson province. The resettlement of dead souls with the convoy." The book contains a brief passage about the resettlement of the dead souls: "Through the morning drama before Chichikov eyes stretched the quiet crowds, the dead transients, accompanied by the armed guard."⁶⁶ As one can see from the album's ironic text arranged in free verse, this appears to be a commentary on Stalinist politics, conveying the rumor that the Russian man, who can get used to anything, goes to Kamchatka, and the peaceable peasants volunteer for resettlement.

Conclusion:

Both Bely's and Remizov's critical writings about Gogol belong to the Russian modernist tradition. Their work contains a wealth of material for contemporary Gogol scholars as well as for the historian of twentieth-century Russian literature. Both writers convey the complexity of their experience of modernity and history, raising innovative questions concerning individual creativity in the new context of literary life in the Soviet Union and in Russia Abroad. Anxiety about the future of literature, reflected in their critical work as demonstrated above, conveys the cultural atmosphere of the period, along with the acute consciousness of this being the last moment in which they could register their literary position and cultural memory of Gogol's art.

The connection with prerevolutionary literature, disrupted by the Revolution and years of Soviet rule, was renewed in the 1980s during the perestroika period. Among many memoirs published at this time, of special interest are the recollections of the Soviet writer, Aleksandr Gladkov, of a speech of Bely's heard about half-a-century earlier. Gladkov recalls the strong impression made by "the last Mohican" of the Silver Age. The speech, devoted to the Moscow Art Theater's production of *Dead Souls*, had been delivered in late January of 1933 at the Herzen House and "it was brilliant in the true sense of the word." Indeed, Gladkov remembered the occasion for the rest of his life: "For me that evening was memorable, because I sensed the style and 'air' of the sym-

⁶⁶ "Rossiia....." (album).

bolist salons, as if transferred a quarter of a century back to Viacheslav Ivanov's Tower." That evening taught the young Gladkov that there was "nothing accidental or neutral in the image system of real art" and that "the hyperbolism of the analysis was to the point, specific and had an affinity with Gogol's genius, hence justified." This memory is all the more significant since Bely and his culture had been absent from history for several decades.

The importance of cultural memory for the recreation of the forgotten memory of Russian modernism is underscored in a collection of memoirs, *The Silver Age in Russia*, published in Moscow in 1993: "Between these two points, the eighteen nineties and the end of the nineteen twenties, the whole history of the Silver Age is contained, the history which to a great extent had turned for us into legend, impossible to understand to the same extent, if not to a greater degree, than the eighteenth century or the Pushkin era."⁶⁷ The continuity of Gogol's myth, with the active participation of Bely and Remizov, represents an important page in the history of the Silver Age in revolutionary Russia. In Osip Mandelstam's words, Soviet society was divided into "friends and enemies of the word" at the time when the last battle for Gogol and his legacy was staged on both sides of the revolutionary divide.

⁶⁷ *Serebrianyi vek v Rossii: izbrannye stranitsy*, ed. V. V. Ivanov, V. T. Toporov, T. V. Tsivian (Moscow: Radiks, 1993), 146.

Chapter II B

Sirin/Dostoevsky and the Question of Russian Modernism in Emigration¹

Vladimir Nabokov's literary career as the Russian writer V. Sirin got off to a brilliant start in the years of the first European emigration (1919-1940). His second emigration—to the United States in 1940—was marked by his turning to the English language and the subsequent international fame of this unique bilingual writer. In a 1962 interview Nabokov maintains, "I do feel Russian and I think that my Russian works... are a kind of tribute to Russia.... Recently I have paid tribute to her in an English work on Pushkin."²

Meanwhile, contemporary scholars in both the West and in Russia have noted on more than one occasion, with a certain bewilderment, Nabokov's negative attitude to another classic of Russian literature, Fedor Dostoevsky. This critical attitude to Dostoevsky manifested itself even more strongly in the writer's English prose, in particular his *Lectures on Russian Literature*. In her essay "The Quarrelsome Nabokov," the Russian Dostoevsky specialist Lyudmila Saraskina is at a loss to explain the contemptuousness of Nabokov's remarks, the "insoluble enigma of his loathing for Dostoevsky."³ How should we go about solving the "riddle" of his loathing for Dostoevsky? How can we come to an understanding of why Nabokov chose precisely this figure of Russian prose to be the target of parody and hostile criticism?

In order to answer this question, it is essential to reconsider the myth of Dostoevsky as a central fact of Silver Age culture, to sketch this myth's further development in Russian émigré literature, and its parodic trans-

¹ Translated from Greta N. Slobin's original Russian by Ronald Meyer.

² Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 13.

³ L. Saraskina, "Nabokov, kotoryi branitsia..." in *Vladimir Nabokov. Pro et Contra* (St. Petersburg, 1997), 570.

formation in Sirin's experimental novel *Despair (Otchaianie)* (1932).⁴ The Russian Silver Age and its innovations play an important role in Sirin's early work, which bears the markings of its complex relationship with prerevolutionary Soviet and émigré literature in the context of late European modernism of the 1920s and 30s. As we shall see, Nabokov's attitude toward Dostoevsky points to an entire complex of problems and questions facing writers and cultural figures of the Russian emigration.

In their search for the reasons behind Nabokov's critical stance vis-à-vis Dostoevsky, scholars have pointed to his hidden debt to the writer (Simon Karlinsky), as well as his "repulsion" during the course of searching for his own style (Julian Connolly).⁵ Alexander Dolinin views the West's perception of Dostoevsky as the great figure of Russian literature to be the source of Nabokov's reaction.⁶ This is supported by Nabokov's 1963 interview with Alvin Toffler, in which he explains his position: "Non-Russian readers do not realize two things: that not all Russians love Dostoevski as much as Americans do, and that most of those Russians who do, venerate him as a mystic and not as an artist."⁷

Nabokov's division of Dostoevsky into mystic and artist is vitally important in understanding his reaction to the Dostoevsky myth in both the Russian and the European context. In this chapter, I am interested less in the influence the great predecessor had on the young Sirin than in the cultural function of the myth of the writer and literary parody as an essential stage in the process of literary evolution. It's worth recalling that dialogue and polemics with Russian classics of the nineteenth century also played an integral role in the prose of Russian modernism at the turn of the century in the novels of Andrei Bely and Aleksei Remizov.

⁴ The novel was serialized in *Sovremennye zapiski*, books 54-56, 1924, and appeared in book form in 1936 in Berlin.

⁵ See Simon Karlinsky, Introduction to *Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya: The Nabokov-Wilson Letters, 1940-1971*, revised and expanded edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Julian W. Connolly, *Nabokov's Early Fiction: Patterns of Self and Other* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 101, 103, 154.

⁶ Alexander Dolinin, "Nabokov: Dostoevskii i dostoevshchina," *Literaturnoe obozrenie* 2 (1999): 39.

⁷ Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 42.

Simon Karlinsky sees in Sirin's work a continuation of the traditions of "verbalism" and the same formal orientation in regard to syntax and the expressiveness of the sentence.⁸

The Silver Age and the Emigration

The deliberate continuation of the aesthetics of the Silver Age by émigré writers was attended by an ambivalence regarding its legacy and innovations. As we know, the emigration's relationship to Russian culture of the nineteenth century and the prerevolutionary period is tied to its struggle for the independent national survival of the diaspora, particularly in the period after 1925, when it was cut off from the mother country. A conservative trend could be seen in the emigration's self-appointed task of serving the sacred "mission" of preserving Russian culture and securing the continuation of the Russian classical tradition of Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy, and Dostoevsky. Moreover, after the Revolution some exiles censured the poets and prose writers of the Silver Age for their apocalyptic predictions of the fall of tsarist Russia. In his *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939*, Marc Raeff writes about the ambivalence of the emigration to Russian modernism and shows that the émigré consciousness regarded it with a certain confusion of politics, morals and history: "The Silver Age had gone astray, namely in its excessive liberalism, its apocalyptic expectation of doom, and its rejection of traditional aesthetic norms and proven social values."⁹ Meanwhile, the perception of the Dostoevsky myth and the "Russian soul" in the West also influenced the shaping of this consciousness.

Nabokov was familiar with these issues from the first days of his life abroad. As he writes in the English version of his reminiscences, *Speak, Memory*, the three years he spent at Cambridge University (1919-1921), where he lived in relative isolation from his English fellow students, were really the story of his becoming a Russian writer.¹⁰ Nabokov goes on to

⁸ S. Karlinsky, "Vladimir Nabokov," *Histoire de la Littérature Russe. Le XXe siècle. La Révolution et les années vingt* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 155.

⁹ Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 103. See chapter 5, "To Keep and to Cherish: What Is Russian Culture?" See also his article "La culture Russe et l'émigration," in *Histoire de la Littérature Russe. Le XXe siècle. La Révolution et les années vingt*, 61-95.

¹⁰ Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 261. An earlier version of his English autobiography was published as *Conclusive Evidence* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951).

describe the typical position of the emigrant, whose thoughts are not on his newly acquired country, but rather on the one that was recently lost. Nabokov digests the role of the Revolution in his own life as well as the lives of those close to him. This story was incomprehensible to the young Englishmen, whose imaginations had been carried away by the revolutionary events in Russia. Nabokov with some trepidation had “tried to explain that the connection between advanced politics and advanced art was purely a verbal one.”¹¹ Later he writes: “Very soon I turned away from politics and concentrated on literature.”¹² As Nabokov’s biography shows, he will remain true to his early convictions, preferring “advanced” poetics. We will see how this position in particular is tied to his interpretation of Dostoevsky.

Nabokov’s early essay “Cambridge,” published in the Berlin newspaper *Rul’* (28 October 1921) perfectly captures the feeling of alienation that the emigrant experiences amidst the English young men: “Between us Russians and them there is some sort of glass wall.”¹³ In the evenings, as he walks along the streets of this picturesque medieval university city, Nabokov is thinking about the history of another country, “about the whims of fate, about my homeland.”¹⁴ In words surprisingly reminiscent of Blok, Remizov, and Tsvetaeva, he writes about nostalgia for his homeland. The elemental nature of Dostoevsky’s Russia, which as Nabokov writes was incomprehensible to the English, was alive in the works of these authors: “One does not find in their souls that inspired whirlwind, throbbing, radiance, dancing frenzy, that spite and tenderness which leads us into God knows what heavens and abysses.”¹⁵

In Russian Berlin, where Nabokov’s life as a writer begins in earnest, a metamorphosis will take place in this nostalgia for these “heavens and abysses.” Life in Berlin introduces Nabokov to the radical, postrevolutionary historical changes that have taken place in Russia, which have found a keen response in the various political circles of the emigration and in Europe as a whole, particularly in Germany. The Dostoevsky myth and the writer’s apotheosis as the elemental Russian soul, particularly in

¹¹ Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*, 263.

¹² *Ibid.*, 265.

¹³ V. Nabokov, “Kembridzh,” *Romany. Rasskazy. Esse* (St. Petersburg: Entar, 1993), 212.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

his final novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, will help shape the Western notion of a dangerous and enigmatic Russia. It is precisely from this image of his homeland that the young Sirin takes pains to distance himself in his early novels about the Russian emigration.

The Dostoevsky Myth

The myth of Dostoevsky as the prophet of revolution and the bearer of an elemental Russian subconscious and mystical nationalism influenced the interpretation of his legacy in the emigration and in contemporary Europe after the October Revolution. Aleksandr Blok's revolutionary narrative poem *The Twelve* and the subsequent polemics surrounding its image of the demonic and elemental nature of Russian history played a significant role, which according to David Bethea, Nabokov found unacceptable.¹⁶ At the same time, the German translation of Dmitrii Merezhkovsky's prerevolutionary book *Tolstoy and Dostoevsky* (1903) was enjoying exceptional popularity in Germany, particularly its theory of the "two titans" of Russian literature and the mystical and religious appreciation of Dostoevsky as a prophet. In his book *Prophet of the Russian Revolution* (1906), published after the revolutionary events of 1905 and dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the writer's death, Merezhkovsky outlines myriad attitudes toward Dostoevsky, who "bore within himself the origins of this storm."¹⁷ Here he outlines the writer's mystical ties to Russian history, identifying him with the nation: "It is not we who judge Dostoevsky, history itself ... will deliver its own Last Judgment"; he goes on to emphasize that "the judgment of him is the judgment of us all."¹⁸

A similar concept is elaborated in Nikolai Berdyaev's book *Dostoevsky's Worldview* (Paris, 1968), which collects the lectures he delivered at the Moscow Free Academy of Spiritual Culture in 1921. In the open-

¹⁶ David Bethea, "Nabokov and Blok," *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, ed. Vladimir E. Alexandrov (New York, London: Garland, 1995), 380; see also A. Dolinin, "Nabokov i Blok," in *Tezisy dokladov nauchnoi konferentsii "A. Blok i russkii postsimvolizm"* (Tartu: Tartuskii universitet, Kafedra russkoi literatury, 1991), 36-44.

¹⁷ D. Merezhkovskii, *Prorok russkoi revoliutsii: k iublileiu Dostoevskago* (St. Petersburg: M. V. Pirozhkov, 1906), 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

ing lines of his Introduction, Berdyaev voices the feelings of his contemporaries: “Dostoevsky played a particularly significant role in my life.”¹⁹ In the chapter “Dostoevsky’s Spiritual Image” Berdyaev formulates a response to the modernists: “And despite the modernist vogue for denying the independent significance of ideas and suspecting their importance value in every writer, one cannot approach Dostoevsky, one cannot understand him without first delving deeply into his rich and original world of ideas.”²⁰ Berdyaev speaks of the necessity “to understand Dostoevsky completely, that is, to understand something very essential in the make-up of the Russian soul, that is, to draw nearer to solving the enigma of Russia.”²¹ Here Berdyaev draws the conclusion that in the “revolt against culture and history” the Russian man or “apocalyptic” or “nihilist” is rushing “towards the religious end of history that will decide everything.”²² Precisely this “leap to the end distinguishes Russians from the historical and cultural labor of Europeans. Hence, an enmity toward form.”²³

In Cambridge, where he learned everything he could about Russia, Nabokov understood the particularity of Russian history and, appreciating the “development of an amazing freedom-loving culture,” he tried to explain this to the English.²⁴ He could not agree with the conclusions drawn by Berdyaev about Russia and about the “Russian enmity towards form,” just as he did not agree that “the Russian individual has insignificant formal native talents.”²⁵ We should note in passing that this mythologem “enmity towards form” is directly tied to the image of Dostoevsky, mystic of the “Russian soul,” who had indicated the elemental nature of contemporary Russian history. Berdyaev’s confident assertions that “the fate of Russian history has substantiated Dostoevsky’s foresightedness, as the Russian Revolution to a significant extent played out according to Dostoevsky” were radically opposed to the young Nabokov’s understanding of history.

¹⁹ N. Berdyaev, *Mirosozertsanie Dostoevskogo* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1923), 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 13.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴ V. Nabokov, *Drugie berega* (New York: Izdatel'stvo im. Chekhova, 1954), 129.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

The Russian myth of Dostoevsky had a direct influence on the cult of the writer in the European consciousness of this period. Among the émigrés, Raëff notes a protest against the enigmatic image of the “Russian soul,” which permitted the Europeans to conclude that “Bolshevism is something natural for [the Russians] and their own fault.”²⁶ One sees this quite clearly in a book by one of Germany’s most popular authors, Hermann Hesse. In his bestseller *A Glimpse into Chaos* (*Blick ins Chaos*, 1922), in the chapter “The Downfall of Europe,” Hesse writes:

It appears to me that what I call the Downfall of Europe is foretold and explained with extreme clearness in Dostoevsky’s works and in the most concentrate form in *The Brothers Karamazov*. It seems to me that European and especially German youth are destined to find their greatest writer in Dostoevsky—not in Goethe, not even in Nietzsche. In the most modern poetry, there is everywhere an approach to Dostoevsky, even though it is sometimes callow and imitative. The ideal of the Karamazov, primeval, Asiatic, and occult, is already beginning to consume the European soul.²⁷

Hesse considers Dostoevsky to be a prophet and makes the claim that “already half Europe, at all events half Eastern Europe, is on the road to Chaos. In a state of drunken illusion she is reeling into the abyss and, as she reels, she sings a drunken hymn such as Dmitri Karamazov sang.”²⁸

It’s not difficult to imagine Nabokov’s reaction to Dostoevsky’s role in this interpretation of *karamazovshchina* in Russian history. Doubtless here is one of the keys to the “mystery” of Sirin’s hostility toward Dostoevsky as prophet of revolution and the Russian idol of German and European young people in the 1920s. In his deft analysis of Nabokov’s understanding of history, as described in his 1927 unpublished speech “On Generalities,” Alexander Dolinin shows that Nabokov did not share

²⁶ Raëff, *Russia Abroad*, 98. See chapter 5, “To Keep and to Cherish: What Is Russian Culture?” See also his article, “La culture Russe et l’émigration,” in *Histoire de la littérature russe*, 61-95.

²⁷ H. Hesse, *In Sight of Chaos*, translated by Steven Hudson (Zurich: Verlag Seldwyla, 1923), 14. Nabokov might have read this book, published in English translation. This book, an important source for understanding Russia, is one of the subtexts in T. S. Eliot’s poem about the crisis of Europe, *The Wasteland* (1922).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

the Spenglerian views of many emigrants regarding the “decline of Europe.” To the Marxist determinism of history’s regularity and Symbolist metaphysics, Nabokov juxtaposes an understanding of history as a game of chance, as roulette: “The roulette of history does not know any laws. Clio laughs at our clichés, at how we confidently and with impunity speak of influences, ideas, movements, periods, eras, and promulgate laws, and foretell the future.”²⁹ Nabokov thus “transcends the pain of exile and isolation inflicted by history.”³⁰ Like Stephen Daedalus, the hero of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Nabokov attempts to wake up “from the nightmare of history” in art.

The young Nabokov’s attitude to Dostoevsky as an artist cannot be understood outside the context of the culture of the Russian Silver Age. It’s quite possible that the main key to solving the riddle of Dostoevsky’s role in Nabokov’s works is to be found here, inextricably connected to the perception of this writer by Russian modernism. Nabokov’s Petersburg youth coincided with the flowering of Russian culture that was to have such an enormous influence on his writing. As Brian Boyd writes in his biography of the writer,³¹ the young Nabokov adored the Symbolists, in particular Aleksandr Blok, whom he considered a great poet.

Major figures of this period, including Dmitrii Merezhkovsky, Zinaida Gippius, Aleksei Remizov, and Marina Tsvetaeva found themselves in exile in Paris. Vladislav Khodasevich, a major poet and critic in the Paris émigré community, energetically pursued the innovations of Russian modernism, as did Mirsky, who settled in London. These literary figures, adversaries as far as their political views were concerned, differed as well as to their opinion of the present state of Russian literature and its future. In answer to the question “There or Here?”—posed by Khodasevich in 1925—he himself gives an answer worthy of King Solomon: “It is gravely

²⁹ From Nabokov’s paper “On Generalities” (Berlin, 1927). See A. Dolinin, “Istinnaiia zhizn’ pisatel’ia Sirina: Ot ‘Sogliadataia’—k ‘Otchaianiiu,’” in V. Nabokov, *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000), 16-17.

³⁰ A. Dolinin, “Clio Laughs Last: Nabokov’s Answer to Historicism,” in *Nabokov and His Fiction: New Perspectives*, ed. J. W. Connolly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 201.

³¹ Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 93.

ill both there and here.”³² A year later Mirsky proclaims that “Russian literature has more joie de vivre ...” there.³³ Despite these differences of opinion, the two critics were united in their disapproval of the émigré conservatism in literature.

In the second issue of *Blagonamerennyi* (1926), whose editors insisted on the separation of literature from politics, Mirsky published his essay “On Conservatism: A Dialogue,” in which he demonstrates that “restoration” is not possible in literature, or politics, or history. Here one clearly sees not only an understanding of the dynamics of the cultural process, but also knowledge of the contemporary culture of the Silver Age, which Mirsky first describes in his remarkable *History of Russian Literature*, published in English in 1925.³⁴ Insisting on the principle that “art is the creation of new values,” Mirsky demonstrates that the desire on the part of these writers “to build a little cultural house on an enormous cultural ocean (Tolstoy and Dostoevsky) will end just as fruitlessly as the attempt by Krylov’s tit-bird.”³⁵ Mirsky understood all too well that in their search for new literary forms in the early 1920s writers needed to free themselves from the classic tradition of the nineteenth century. The young prose writers Bely, Remizov, and Sologub were firmly connected to this tradition, which manifests itself in their parodies of the classics, particularly Gogol and Dostoevsky, as well as an intensive literary polemic with them in the process of this literary evolution. Both in their own writings and critical works these figures of Russian modernism take an active part in assimilating and reinterpreting the classic canon. The debate about who is “more important”—Pushkin or Gogol?—dates from the beginning of the century. Innokentii Annenskii resolves this question in his famous 1906 declaration: “Pushkin and Gogol. Our two-headed Janus.”³⁶

Discussions from this time show that the attitude to Dostoevsky was a good deal more complex and ambivalent. His enormous influence on the work of the modernists is not open to dispute—writers at the turn of

³² V. Khodasevich, *Dni*, 25 September 1925.

³³ D. Mirsky, “O sovremennoi russkoi literature,” *Blagonamerennyi* 1 (1926): 97.

³⁴ D. Mirsky, *History of Russian Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1925).

³⁵ D. Mirsky, *Blagonamerennyi* 2 (1926): 88.

³⁶ Annenskii, “Estetika ‘Mertyvkh dush’ i ee nasledie,” 228.

the century gave a lot of thought to the Dostoevsky question.³⁷ Merezhkovsky's two-volume work *Tolstoy and Dostoevsky*, with its well-known antithesis of the two writers, the "prophet of the flesh" and "prophet of the soul, greatly influenced this debate.³⁸ Merezhkovsky will return to Dostoevsky in 1906, in *Vesy* and in his book *Prophet of the Russian Revolution*, in which he voices his philosophy: "He is the dearest and closest of all the writers of Russian and world literature—and not to me alone. He gave all his disciples the greatest blessing ... he discovered the path to the Coming Christ..."³⁹

In contrast to Merezhkovsky, Andrei Bely's understanding of Dostoevsky's "closeness" crosses over into the complex, ambivalent treatment of the "double" and, at the same time, *dostoevshchina* as a literary and cultural complex, which is viewed as a danger for the future of literature. In his 1906 article, "Dostoevsky. On the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of his Death," published in the journal *Zolotoe runo*, Bely reacts to Merezhkovsky's *Prophet of the Russian Revolution* in a sharply polemical tone: "He is our double; that explains the close relationship that many people feel. He knows how to reveal and to show—that is his great strength. But he does not know how to overcome."⁴⁰ As Alexander Lavrov writes, in the early 1900s "Bely was stirred by Dostoevsky the prophet first, and Dostoevsky the artist only second."⁴¹ Bely's difference of opinion with Merezhkovsky almost led to a falling out in 1905, because "Bely repudiated Merezhkovsky's primary, cherished principle, worshipping Dostoevsky as a seer of the soul, a prophet of the coming church ..."⁴² Andrei Bely recalls these years in his memoirs, *Between Two Revolutions*, citing his article "Dostoevsky and Ibsen," which was published in *Vesy* in late

³⁷ See A. Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 379.

³⁸ First edition: *Khristos i Antikhris v russkoi literature: Lev Tolstoi i Dostoevskii* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie zhurnala "Mir iskusstva," 1901, Izdanie M. V. Pirozhkova, 1902); *Tolstoi i Dostoevskii* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie N. N. Klobukova, 1903).

³⁹ D. Merezhkovskii, "Prorok russkoi revoliutsii," *Vesy* 3-4 (1906): 19-47; *Prorok russkoi revoliutsii* (St. Petersburg, 1906), 4.

⁴⁰ *Zolotoe runo* 2 (1906): 90.

⁴¹ "Dostoevskii v tvorchestvom soznanii Andreia Belogo (1900-e gody)," *Andrei Belyi. Problemy tvorchestva. Stat'i. Vospominaniia. Publikatsii*, ed. St. Lesnevskii, Al. Mikhailov (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1988), 135.

⁴² A. Lavrov, *Andrei Belyi v 1900-e gody* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1995), 192.

1905 and reprinted in his collection *Arabesques*: “Tactics forced me to belittle Dostoevsky in the struggle with *dostoevshchina* and I wrote: ‘We must return to Gogol and Pushkin—our fountainhead—in order to save literature from the seeds of decay and death spread there by Dostoevsky’s inquisitorial hand.’”⁴³

The metaphysics of the Symbolist life-creation (*zhiznetvorchestvo*) was alien to Nabokov, but Bely’s ambivalence, like the concept of *dostoevshchina* itself and its danger for literature undoubtedly influenced the young Sirin. Nabokov certainly knew these essays, as he did all of Bely’s work, which had a special significance for him. Nabokov will become an admirer of his critical works on poetry, his novels, and later his book about Gogol. In America, Nabokov will write about Bely’s *Petersburg* as one of the major achievements of contemporary modernism, placing it alongside the novels of Joyce, Kafka, and Proust.⁴⁴ Contemporary critics have acknowledged Bely’s influence on Nabokov’s work, for example, Vladimir Alexandrov, who writes about the “structural parallel” in their novels, which “derives from their comparable reliance on Romantic irony.”⁴⁵ In his analysis of Nabokov’s memoir *Speak, Memory*, Georges Nivat also emphasizes Bely’s influence, in particular his “verbalism” and “synaesthesia.”⁴⁶ In his “repulsion” of Dostoevsky and *dostoevshchina* Nabokov seems to be heeding Bely’s warning, keeping Merezhkovsky at bay. An important role in this process of succession is played by the publication of Mikhail Bakhtin’s ground-breaking book, *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Art* (1929), in which the Russian scholar also comes out against *dostoevshchina*.

The late 1920s witnessed preparations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Dostoevsky’s death, which led to a reevaluation of Dostoevsky’s legacy on the part of the Russian emigration. Bakhtin’s book was known in the emigration, as we can see from the short article by P. Bitsilli, who lived in Sofia. The émigré center of Dostoevsky studies was the Prague seminar, under the direction of A. Bem, who edited a volume of essays

⁴³ A. Belyi, *Mezhdru dvukh revoliutsii* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), 185; first published in *Vesy* 12 (1905).

⁴⁴ Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 57.

⁴⁵ See V. Alexandrov, “Nabokov and Belyi,” *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, 365.

⁴⁶ G. Nivat, “Speak, Memory,” *The Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, 683.

written by the seminar members.⁴⁷ In the second issue of *Chisla* in 1930, Bitsilli published a review of this collection, like Bakhtin's book also published in the previous year. Bitsilli concludes that the "two books complement each other."⁴⁸ In his introduction to the 1929 edition of his book, Bakhtin describes his method, which Bitsilli appreciated as a scientific "experiment." Bitsilli writes about the significance of Bakhtin's "valuable" book and its theory of the writer's polyphonic novel, stressing in particular the common tasks set by the Russian scholar and the participants of the Prague seminar. In Bitsilli's words, Bakhtin considered the writer's main theme to be that of the "double," which he tied to the diglossia in Dostoevsky. This theme had also been accorded attention by the participants of Bem's seminar, in particular Dmitrii Chizhevskii. This coincidence of interests, which Bitsilli termed the "corroboration" of each other's book, has a special significance. In his words, it "shows that scholarly study of Dostoevsky has already achieved lasting and conclusive results..."⁴⁹ It is worth noting that this acknowledgment of a "coincidence of interests" is a rarity in this period of the USSR's isolation from the West.

In the émigré reevaluation of Dostoevsky's legacy, W. Weidle's "Dostoevsky's European Fates" (1930) is of particular interest.⁵⁰ Weidle sums up the myth of Dostoevsky as a European writer, by noting that "the more that people became engrossed in reading Dostoevsky, the worse they began to read him." In his words, this was particularly the case in Germany, where under the influence of "hackneyed formulations of Russian criticism," Dostoevsky had "practically become the national writer." It's entirely possible that Weidle has in mind Hermann Hesse as one of the authors who had warned against the "Russian danger," the source of which was the interpretation of Dostoevsky as a "prophet" of revolution. Weidle writes of his hope that the "European Dostoevsky will continue the Russian Dostoevsky ... without reducing his work to an ideology, his form to a formula and his art to a schema."

⁴⁷ A. Bem (ed.), *O Dostoevskom. Sbornik statei* (Prague: Sklad izd. F. Svoboda, 1929).

⁴⁸ P. Bitsilli, [review of] "O Dostoevskom. Sbornik statei pod redaktsiei A. L. Bema. Praga, 1929," *Chisla*, no. 2 (1930): 241.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ "Evropeiskie sud'by Dostoevskogo," *Vozrozhdenie*, 20 March 1930, 3. I wish to thank Alexander Dolinin for directing my attention to this essay.

As is clear from Nabokov's 1931 Berlin speech, "Dostoevsky without *Dostoevshchina*," as well as his novel *Despair*, Weidle's views were close to his own. But Nabokov would not have agreed with Bitsilli's conclusion that "the time has come to designate the precise place of the greatest Russian philosopher in the world history of human thought."⁵¹ Nabokov's views on Dostoevsky had much more in common with Bakhtin's book.

In the Introduction to the first edition of his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art*, Bakhtin explains that his analysis pertains exclusively to Dostoevsky as artist: "The present book confines itself to theoretical problems of Dostoevsky's work. We have had to exclude all historical issues."⁵² The conditions of the Soviet era compelled Bakhtin to explain his scientific method with a theoretical reference to the "synchronic" approach to literature. Bakhtin's analytic approach, in particular his "experiment" of isolating the creative problems in the study of the writer, could not have failed to make an impression on both Nabokov and Bitsilli.

In the chapter "The Function of the Adventure Plot in Dostoevsky's Works," Bakhtin explains that Dostoevsky objectifies "authorial, creative subjectivity": "Therefore, he moves his own form (and the inherent authorial subjectivity) deeper and further... His hero is an ideologist. The consciousness of the ideologist, with all its seriousness, with all its loopholes ... enters so essentially the content of his novel that direct monologic ideologism can no longer determine its artistic form."⁵³ Moreover, Bakhtin concludes: "Monologic ideologism after Dostoevsky becomes *dostoevshchina*."⁵⁴

This term (and its various connotations of a negative appraisal of Dostoevsky) has passed from Bely to Bakhtin and later will pass on to Nabokov. In his 1931 Berlin lecture, "Dostoevsky without *Dostoevshchina*," the title of which alludes to his predecessors, Nabokov is guided by Bakhtin's "experiment" and affirms the necessity of separating Dos-

⁵¹ P. Bitsilli, [review of] "O *Dostoevskom*. Sbornik statei pod redaktsiei A. L. Bema. Praga, 1929," 241.

⁵² M. M. Bakhtin, "Predislovie," in his *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979), 181.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

toevsky “the writer” from “the thinker.” Nabokov remarks that there is “such a burial mound of scholastic commentary that Dostoevsky the artist, Dostoevsky the writer is crushed, buried.”⁵⁵ Only this separation will make it possible to study Dostoevsky’s art in *The Brothers Karamazov*. In his lecture, Nabokov cites those passages that engage his imagination as a writer, noting in particular the scene with Dmitri in the garden the night his father is killed. In his analysis of this lecture, Dolinin points out that Nabokov calls Dostoevsky a “sharp-sighted writer” (*zorkii pisatel’*)—one of the highest tributes in the Nabokov scale of esthetic values.⁵⁶ Nabokov comes out strongly against the “contemporary attitude toward him,” against his unoriginal followers and interpreters, who are guilty of “gloomy *dostoevshchina*,” including some contemporary Soviet writers of the 1920s.⁵⁷ As Brian Boyd writes, this lecture served as preparation for the next novel.

In the course of the following year, Nabokov would write the novel *Despair*. The problem of the Dostoevsky myth stands at the center of this novel, the most formally complex work from the writer’s Russian period. As Brian Boyd writes, *Despair* occupies a special place in Nabokov’s biography as an artist, since it is here that “a change of the rules of the game” takes place.⁵⁸ It is the first novel not connected to the émigré milieu, which Nabokov himself points out in his introduction to the 1966 English translation of the novel. This edition of the novel gives Nabokov the opportunity to return to his critique of Dostoevsky in an even harsher manner.⁵⁹ Nabokov also clarifies the main principles of his poetics: “*Despair*, in kinship with the rest of my books, has no social comment to make, no message to bring in its teeth. It does not uplift the spiritual organ of man, nor does it show humanity the right exit.”⁶⁰

⁵⁵ See Dolinin, “Nabokov: Dostoevskii i dostoevshchina,” 42.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 43. In his book about the novel, Robert Belknap devotes a separate chapter to the image of Dmitri. See “Sources of Mitia Karamazov,” in Belknap’s *Genesis of Brothers Karamazov: The Aesthetics, Ideology, and Psychology of Making a Text* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990).

⁵⁷ Dolinin, “Nabokov: Dostoevskii i dostoevshchina,” 44.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Also see Boyd’s comments about *Despair* in: Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 383–385.

⁵⁹ V. Nabokov, “Foreword,” *Despair* (New York: Vintage International, 1989). All further citations of the novel are taken from this edition.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

In these words one can hear an echo of Nabokov's 1931 Berlin lecture against *dostoevshchina* and its pernicious influence both in the Soviet Union and abroad. The novel represented Sirin's answer to the view of Dostoevsky as prophet and mystic. For this reason the novel *Despair* plays a particularly important role as the writer's metaliterary laboratory, in which the literary polemics between the modernist Nabokov and Dostoevsky continue. Vladislav Khodasevich writes about the novel's originality in his wonderful essay "On Sirin," first published in the newspaper *Vozrozhdenie* (13 February 1937):

...Sirin proves to be above all an artist of form, of a writer's devices.... Sirin not only does not mask and does not hide his devices as others do more often than not and with which Dostoevsky, for example, achieved amazing perfection; on the contrary, Sirin puts them forward in the open himself, like a magician.... Sirin does not hide them, because one of his main tasks is precisely to show how devices live and work."⁶¹

In the comparison of Sirin as an "artist of form" with Dostoevsky, who "achieved perfection" in precisely the opposite direction, that is, in "masking" his devices, one hears an allusion to Bakhtin's book and his analysis of devices in Dostoevsky's works. Recall Bakhtin's remark that Dostoevsky "moves" his authorial form "deeper and further," which he views as an important principle in the artistic innovations in the structure of the polyphonic novel. The overt formal complexity of Sirin's novel simultaneously engages in polemics with the Dostoevsky myth, Berdyaev's idea of the "Russian hostility to form," and the conservatism of the Russian emigration.

Despair

The novel *Despair* represents a variation on the theme of the double, above all Dostoevsky's *The Double*, which Nabokov, like Mirsky, considered to be the writer's greatest achievement. As Julian Connolly has shown, in the novels *The Eye* and *Despair* Nabokov reworks the "fundamental

⁶¹ V. Khodasevich, "O Sirine," *Literaturnye stat'i i vospominaniia* (New York: Izdatel'stvo im. Chekhova, 1954), 195.

ambiguity” of the text.⁶² Sirin transplants Dostoevsky’s theme and its mythologizations in the novels of Bely and Remizov from Petersburg to points abroad. The action of *Despair* takes place in Prague and in towns of provincial Germany, which were all too familiar to the Russian emigrant. Moreover, Hermann, the novel’s main character, is not a “Russified German” as in Pushkin’s “Petersburg tale,” but a German who is half-Russian and who lives in Germany. In this experimental novel, what is important for Sirin is not so much the psychology of the double as the search for narrative codes in telling a story from the first-person point of view at this new stage in Russian prose.

Nabokov parodies not only the classic models of Russian literature, but also the new Soviet literature and its popular narratives from the first-person point of view, which assure the reader of their authenticity of the narration with the insistence that the “diary is the lowest form of literature,”⁶³ which in the text refers to Hermann’s narrative. In his analysis of the novel, Davydov considers *Despair* an “early variant of this *matreshka* technique,” one that “mocks the notion of doubles and doubleness in general.”⁶⁴ As he explains, “for Nabokov similarities do not exist, only analogies.”⁶⁵ The author’s irony in the novel has to do with an entire complex of literary and critical doubleness in Russian and European literature, both Russian and European. In his essay “Nabokov and Dostoevsky,” Georges Nivat writes that *Despair* is “both a parody of gloomy Dostoevskomania and a game with Russian literature, as nearly all of Nabokov’s novels are.”⁶⁶

As he plays with the principle of “baring the device,” the author addresses the reader, inviting him to follow the twists and turns of the novel’s unusually complex narrative structure. Dostoevsky’s influence in the creation of the image of Hermann, both as a narrator and as a criminal who aspires to the role of author, is pointed out repeatedly during the course of the novel. One of the characters in *Despair*, the artist Ardalion,

⁶² Julian W. Connolly, “Nabokov’s (Re)Visions of Dostoevsky,” in his edited *Nabokov and His Fiction: New Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 146.

⁶³ Nabokov, *Despair*, 208.

⁶⁴ Sergei Davydov, “Despair,” *Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, 90.

⁶⁵ S. Davydov, “*Teksty-matreshki*” *Vladimira Nabokova* (Munich: O. Sagner, 1982), 85.

⁶⁶ G. Nivat, “Nabokov and Dostoevsky,” *Garland Companion to Vladimir Nabokov*, 400.

a positive figure in the novel, censures the “dark Dostoevskian stuff” (*mračnaia dostoevshchina*) of Hermann, as anti-hero, failed writer and murderer.⁶⁷ In Ardalion’s judgment the reader, confused by Hermann’s monologues, senses the manifest diglossia of Nabokov’s novel.

The novel’s rhetorical framework calls attention to itself from Hermann’s very first words, where he lauds his ambitious undertaking: “If I were not perfectly sure of my power to write and of my marvelous ability to express ideas with the utmost grace and vividness ... So, more or less, I had thought of beginning my tale.”⁶⁸ After this follows his paradoxical admission that “it may look as though I do not know how to start,”⁶⁹ which leaves no doubt as to the novel’s metaliterary code.

Thus, for example, when Hermann describes his reaction to Felix’s letter—“I was long in relishing that last letter, the Gothic charm of which my rather lame translation is hardly capable of rendering”⁷⁰—the reader hears several echoes all at once. Examples of translated letters, that locus classicus of the Russian tradition, are well known to the reader: translations from the German of the letters from Pushkin’s Hermann, Tatyana’s letters from French, the dogs’ absurd letters in Gogol’s “Notes of a Madman.” These canonical examples from his predecessors, as a literary subtext, continue to play a role in the search for style and expressivity in Sirin’s new prose.

The novel incorporates a number of parodic literary allusions to Dostoevsky. Hermann, the pitiful criminal, considers his work to be an answer to the “mystical garnish served up by our national Pinkerton.”⁷¹ *Crime and Punishment*, therefore, is given the humorous title “*Crime and Slime. Sorry Schuld und Sühne* (German edition),”⁷² which allows Nabokov to draw our attention to the inexact and distorting German translation of the novel’s title as *Sin and Redemption*. Hermann, the self-

⁶⁷ Nabokov, *Despair*, 205.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷¹ Translation from the Russian edition of the novel, *Otchaianie*, in *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000), 450. The phrase was changed in the English translation: “the mystical trimming dear to that famous writer of Russian thrillers” (88).

⁷² One of Nabokov’s earliest interlingual phonetic puns reads as follows in the original Russian: “Krov’ i Sliuni’. Pardon, ‘Shul’d und Ziune’ (505).

satisfied and limited philistine, makes a similar mistake when, without a hint of irony, he notes his “grotesque resemblance to Rascalnikov.”⁷³ Hermann’s lack of understanding of this Dostoevsky work is made clear by his words at the novel’s end: “Any remorse on my part is absolutely out of the question.”⁷⁴

Self-assured at the novel’s beginning, Hermann without warning confounds the reader with his usual disparaging remark about his own style. This auto-characterization registers the distance between the narrator and the author, which is so important to the theory of diglossia narrative: “Indeed, it is not really possible to set down my incoherent speech, that tumble and jumble of words, the forlornness of subordinated clauses, which have lost their masters and strayed away, and all the superfluous gibber that gives words a support or a creep hole.”⁷⁵

This quotation is polyphonic and polysemous. As an utterance, it relates both to Gogol’s “Overcoat” and its hero, Akakii Akakievich, whose speech was studied by Boris Eikhenbaum in his 1918 essay, “How Gogol’s Overcoat Is Made.” This landmark essay of Russian formalism sharply overturned the traditional critical appraisal of the story as a “humane” tale. In his detailed study of *skaz* in this story, Eikhenbaum pays special attention to Akakii Akakievich’s speech, which “is a part of the general system of Gogolian language and its mimetic, articulated sound: it is constructed in a special way and garnished with commentary.”⁷⁶ The following description of Akakii Akakievich’s speech in the story deserves to be quoted as a parallel to the speech of Nabokov’s protagonist: “You should know that Akakii Akakievich expressed himself, for the most part, by means of prepositions, adverbs and, finally, such particles which absolutely have no meaning whatsoever.”

Nabokov utilizes a similar strategy of auto-commentary on Hermann’s speech to introduce into the context of his narrative a most important example of the continuity of the traditions of classic Russian prose, from

⁷³ Nabokov, *Despair*, 189.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 177

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 89-90.

⁷⁶ B. Eichenbaum, “How ‘The Overcoat’ Is Made,” trans. Robert A. Maguire, from his *Gogol from the Twentieth Century: Eleven Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 283; original Russian text: B. Eikhenbaum, “Kak sdelana ‘Shinel’ Gogolia,” *Tekste der russischen Formalisten*, vol. 2 (Munich: Wlihelm Fink Verlag, 1969), 142.

Gogol to Dostoevsky in contemporary scholarly literature.⁷⁷ The citation also indirectly answers critical remarks about Dostoevsky's careless style made by such émigré writers as Bunin, Osorgin, and Aldanov. At the same time, the citation draws the reader's attention to the speech forms of Hermann's language in Sirin's novel, to the virtuosic diglossia of language in the novel, tuned by the author like a marvelous instrument with extraordinary sound and expressive possibilities.

In this example of the work's meta-descriptive aspect, where the style of expression itself is emphasized, particular attention should be paid to the phrase "incoherent speech," a favorite device of the modernists in their search for style, and here an example of Nabokov's "verbalism" about which Simon Karlinsky has written. "Creep hole" (*lazeika*), the very last words of that excerpt, as an example of Dostoevsky's *skaz*, refer the reader to Bakhtin's formulation. At the same time, in the course of the novel it becomes clear that Nabokov's aesthetic structure differs in principle from Dostoevsky's approach in Bakhtin's interpretation, which posits the independence of the hero from the author. On the contrary, Nabokov's hero is not autonomous, but rather he is dependent on the author, who harshly rejects his plan of connecting crime and artistic creation.⁷⁸ The diglossia of Nabokov's novel consists in the play with the distance between the author and his self-satisfied Narcissus of a hero, whose every illusion comes crashing down. Not without reason does Sergei Davydov call Hermann "a literary pretender," who is fighting for his authorhood.⁷⁹

The rich semantics of the term *dostoevshchina* in its various connotations passes from Bely to Bakhtin to Nabokov. Nabokov returns to Bely's idea, which saw a "double" in Dostoevsky. Mindful of the warning about its danger, Nabokov rejects the myth, offering a new "move" in the process of literary succession. In his work, doubleness is presented as a "mistake," as one illusion harbored by Hermann, who incorrectly understood Dostoevsky and vulgarized his novel *Crime and Punishment*. Hermann is neither a writer nor a "double." His delirium ends in failure and exposure. His delusions and false interpretations in themselves comprise a critique of *dostoevshchina* and its German reception. Hermann is a totem of *dosto-*

⁷⁷ Iu. Tynianov, "Dostoevskii i Gogol' (K teorii parodii)," *Tekste der russischen Formalisten*, vol. 2, 300-371.

⁷⁸ S. Davydov, "Despair," 91.

⁷⁹ S. Davydov, "Teksty-matreshki" *Nabokova*, 85.

evshchina and its imitators, the precise literary interpretation of whom is foreseen in the illusions of this “literary pretender,” where the boundary is erased between art and reality, ethics and esthetics.

As a modernist author in search of a genre, Nabokov’s list of possible titles includes the classic Russian models of “notes” (*zapiski*; “memoirs” in Nabokov’s English version) by Gogol and Dostoevsky, as well as contemporary Soviet and European models, including the inexact title of a work by the contemporary Irish modernist James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

Memoirs seemed dreadfully dull and commonplace. What should I call my book then? “The Double”? But Russian literature possessed one already. ... “The Mirror”? “Portrait of the Artist in a Mirror”? Too jejune, too à la mode... what about “The Likeness”? “The Unrecognized Likeness”? ... No—dryish, with a touch of the philosophical. ... Maybe: “An Answer to Critics”? or “The Poet and the Rabble”? Must think it over...⁸⁰

The title “An Answer to Critics” divulges one of the novel’s functions. It is not for nothing that in his foreword to the English translation of *Despair*, Nabokov writes of the inadequacy of the English title of the novel, which cannot convey the “far more sonorous howl” of the Russian. The title speaks of the polysemous meanings of this “howl” and its irony, which is directed at the dependence of the author on models of the classic tradition, as well as the special position of the Russian writer in emigration, from whom his contemporaries expect so much. Their bewilderment in regard to Sirin’s “verbalism” helps us understand the full complexity of his position as an innovative writer, who is conducting an artistic “experiment” on diglossia in the modernist novel.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the formal brilliance of Sirin’s prose stunned the émigré critics, who mistakenly viewed it as a rejection of the traditions of Russian prose. Gleb Struve’s compilation of pronouncements on “Sirin’s non-Russianness” are an eloquent testament: “He is so very far outside the context of Russian literature” (Tseitlin, 1930); “... outside the direct influence of classic Russian literature” (Osorgin, 1934); “all

⁸⁰ Nabokov, *Despair*, 201

our traditions come to an abrupt end in his work” (Adamovich, 1934).⁸¹ Zinaida Gippius indirectly points to Nabokov’s rejection of metaphysics and philosophy: “How wonderfully he can talk, in order to say ... nothing! Because he has nothing to say.”⁸² In his “distrust for form” critics of the emigration sensed an “emptiness” behind the brilliant game of Nabokov’s style. Georgii Adamovich was unable to separate the author from the narrator, and accused Sirin of “metaphysical blindness.”⁸³ Gleb Struve, who appreciated Sirin’s new methods, viewed the novel as treating the tragic “theme of creativity,” emphasizing the parallels between the hero and his creator.⁸⁴

The possibility of pursuing a creative career in emigration was to become the topic of Khodasevich’s well-known polemical article “Literature in Exile” (1933), written a year after Mirsky’s return to Russia, which was to have such tragic consequences for the critic. In this article Khodasevich decides the argument about literature in emigration in favor of its evolution. As if he were following Mirsky’s example in the dialogue “On Conservatism,” Khodasevich emphasizes that “it is impossible to learn from people who look only at the past ...”⁸⁵ He explains the necessity for supporting the literary process, because “the spirit of literature is the spirit of eternal upheaval and eternal renewal.”⁸⁶ But unlike Mirsky, he, together with Nabokov, separates not only the “vanguard” in literature from politics, but also literature from national territory: “History knows a number of instances, when works created in emigration were marvelous in their own right and served as the embryo for the further growth of national literatures.”⁸⁷ Nabokov also wrote about this in his meditation on the freedom of creativity in emigration in the sketch “Jubilee. On the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917”: “Our far-flung

⁸¹ Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 284.

⁸² Anton Krainii, “Sovremennost,” *Chisla* 9 (1933): 143.

⁸³ A. Dolinin, “Primechaniia k romanu V. Nabokova ‘Otchaianie,’” *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000), 755.

⁸⁴ Gleb Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 289. It should be noted that the theme of the “tragedy of creativity or Russian creativity” had been designated as a theme in Dostoevsky, Gogol, and Tolstoy in Andrei Bely’s book *Tragediia tvorchestva. Dostoevskii i Tolstoi* (Moscow: Musaget, 1911).

⁸⁵ V. Khodasevich, “Literatura v izgnanii,” 267.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 259.

nation, our nomadic state, is strong because of this freedom,” for which he expresses gratitude to “blind Clio.”⁸⁸

Sirin’s metaliterary novel is diffused not only with the Russian literary tradition, it is written in the light of mirrored reflections of Russian, Soviet, and European literature. Dolinin rightly concludes that “by creating the parodic image of Hermann the writer” in this key novel, Nabokov “creates a collective portrait of the principal schools and movements in contemporary prose.”⁸⁹ Sirin’s views on the literature of his homeland are spelled out in the 1930 sketch, “The Triumph of the Virtues,” in which he writes with irony about how “Soviet literature by comparison with world literature is imbued with high ideals, a deep sense of humanity, and firm morals.”⁹⁰ These traits of Soviet literature lead Nabokov to see a return to “long forgotten models, ... extolling virtue and castigating vice.”⁹¹

Nabokov declines such tasks and returns instead to the primacy of art in his work. Bradbury and McFarlane, two recent critics of modernism, show that a radical dissatisfaction with the past comprises an inherent feature of its aesthetic; as a result, “modernism isn’t so much a style ... as it is the search for an individual style.”⁹² In his “search for style” Nabokov goes against the grain or *à rebours*, against the canon of Russian realism.⁹³ Nabokov develops the quests of writers of prerevolutionary Russian modernism, which Karlinsky observes in such various linguistic phenomena as an “interest in paronomasia, in discovering the hitherto unperceived relationships between the semantic and phonetic aspects of speech, pursued not for the purpose of playing with words but for discovering and revealing hidden new meanings.”⁹⁴

In his book about Nabokov and European modernism, John Foster shows that not only Russian but contemporary European modernists,

⁸⁸ V. Nabokov, “Iubilei,” *Rul’*, 18 November 1927; reprinted in Nabokov, *Romany. Rasskazy. Esse* (St. Petersburg: Entar, 1993), 216.

⁸⁹ Dolinin, “Dostoevskii i dostoevshchina,” 44.

⁹⁰ V. Nabokov, “Torzhestvo dobrodeteli,” *Romany. Rasskazy. Esse*, 217.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 221.

⁹² M. Bradbury and J. McFarlane, “The Name and Nature of Russian Modernism,” in their *Modernism, 1890-1930* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1976), 29.

⁹³ Named for one of the important early novels of the new movement in prose, Joris-Carl Huysmann’s *A Rebours* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1884).

⁹⁴ Simon Karlinsky, “Introduction,” *Dear Bunny, Dear Volodya. The Nabokov-Wilson Letters*, 24.

including Joyce and Bergson, influenced the novel *Despair*.⁹⁵ As early as 1934, Weidle concludes a review with the statement that the theme of creativity connects Nabokov to contemporary European literature and that this has earned him “in Russian literature a place that nobody but he can occupy.”⁹⁶ It should be noted that this conclusion defines Nabokov’s role in the literary process not only apropos the emigration, but in Russian literature in the Soviet Union, “there,” where the possibility of pursuing the modernist experiment was ruled out by politics.

Despair, his first novel not to take up the theme of emigration, marks Nabokov’s entrance into European literature. No wonder that after the book’s publication in Berlin in 1936 Nabokov took particular pains to have it translated into English in 1937 and French in 1939. The novel serves as proof that creativity is possible in emigration, and as an illustration of the process of literary evolution, in which Dostoevsky plays the role assigned to the classic writer. By turning to the work of Russian writers of the nineteenth century, Nabokov found a way to continue the innovations of the Russian Silver Age in the context of European modernism.

⁹⁵ John Foster, *Nabokov’s Art of Memory* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 74.

⁹⁶ Weidle, *Krug* (Berlin) 1 (1936); cited in Dolinin, “Primechaniia k romanu V. Nabokova ‘Otchaianie,’” 755.

Chapter II C

Russia Abroad Champions Turgenev's Legacy¹

“Smoke gets in your eyes”²

—Kern and Harback

When, in the Spring of 2006, a committee of prominent American writers and critics were asked by the *New York Times* to determine “the single best work of American fiction published in the last 25 years,” the question appeared simple at first.³ It was decided that “the best works of fiction . . . are those that assume the burden of cultural importance. America is not only their setting, but also their subject.” The top choice was Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. This is admittedly an arbitrary exercise at best but, as we know, no one takes this sort of exercise more seriously than the Russians. The stakes have been high since the nineteenth century, when “the burden of cultural importance” was transformed into that of “national” significance as writers came to represent the nation. The “burden” also included a considerable social and civic component.

Contemporaries gave surprisingly disparate ratings to Ivan Turgenev, one of the most prominent nineteenth-century writers. The Russian subjectivity is revealing, especially if we consider his enthusiastic reception in Europe. While his place in the Russian classical canon remained unquestionable, it was often disputed, yielding primacy to Dostoevsky

¹ This chapter originally appeared under the title “Turgenev Finds a Home in Russia Abroad,” in *Turgenev: Art, Ideology and Legacy*, ed. Robert Reid and Joe Andrew (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2010), 189-216. I would like to thank Tyrus Miller, a fellow modernist, for good conversation and input.

² This is a refrain from a popular song of love lost from the 1933 musical *Roberta*. Music by Jerome Kern, Lyrics by Otto Harback. I would like to thank Maya Slobin for her sharp eyes in reading this chapter.

³ *The New York Times*, 21 May 2006, 17-18.

and Tolstoy. In a recent essay, titled “How Tolstoevskii Rewrote a Russian Myth,” Jeffrey Brooks confirmed the dominance of the “two giants” as he reviewed the role writers held in Russia: “The power with which they present the issues [after emancipation] transcends their views and explains how during this period Russian literature became synonymous with Russian identity among the educated elites, and soon thereafter among many semi-educated citizens.”⁴

Conscious of its mission of “continuity” and “preservation” of the classical canon, the émigré literary community endeavored to place the legacy of Turgenev, the Russian European, in a new light. This chapter examines the reappraisal of Turgenev’s status by the postrevolutionary Russian diaspora, focusing on specific criteria that emerged in its polemics with the received critical tradition. We consider how this process reflected the diaspora’s quest for national identity as it sought to define its cultural position to counter the ideological Soviet stance. The reevaluation of Turgenev in the split Russian nation had important implications for the literary process and transmission in *Russia Abroad*, and for the tradition as a whole.

Turgenev’s experience as a Russian European affected the older émigré writers, Aleksei Remizov and Ivan Bunin, as well as the young Vladimir Nabokov/Sirin. Turgenev’s life and work provided an invaluable resource that sustained the émigrés, bereft of nation but committed to its language and cultural tradition. While living in Europe, Turgenev had remained deeply engaged with Russia and did not cease to write about Russia in Russian. His evocation of his native land did not suffer from the separation and he left a body of work which represented the highest achievement in the language, contributing greatly to the reputation of Russian literature in Europe. As Richard Freeborn noted in his study, *Turgenev: The Novelist’s Novelist*: “Europeans can understand Russia much better through a reading of Turgenev than through a reading of any other writer.”⁵ A cultural ambassador of his country, Turgenev was also a prominent participant in the French literary scene, which included Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, George Sand, and Victor Hugo.

⁴ *Slavic Review* 64: 3 (Fall 2005): 558.

⁵ R. Freeborn, *Turgenev: The Novelist’s Novelist: A Study* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 181.

Received Critical Tradition

In order to understand the criteria of the diaspora's reappraisal, we will recall how Turgenev's aestheticism and liberal views in a radically political age of imperial nationalism and revolutionary movements affected his status. Turgenev's reputation as the Russian European arose from a series of important public occasions in Russia. In 1864 Turgenev was invited to Petersburg to deliver a speech celebrating 300 years of Shakespeare's birth. For him, it was Shakespeare who heralded a new age of Renaissance Humanism in Europe and its new ideal of freedom.⁶ However, Tsar Alexander II forbade the celebration of a "foreigner" in the Imperial theater, and the invitation was withdrawn. The situation provides insight into Russian cultural politics at a time when the intervention of the highest imperial authority upheld the "Russian/foreign" dichotomy.

Next was a foundational moment in Russian history, the Pushkin Monument Celebration of 1880. Considered by contemporaries as the heir to Pushkin, Turgenev traveled to Russia for the occasion and was received with great pomp and formality. The celebration, backed by both the Westernizers and Slavophiles, was marked by the absence of Tolstoy and the much-awaited speeches of Turgenev and Dostoevsky. Speaking in measured tones, Turgenev questioned whether the title of a "world" poet could be conferred on Pushkin, as it had been on Shakespeare or Goethe, stressing Pushkin's great achievement in creating a national language and its literature. As Marcus Levitt writes, the speech exposed "the vulnerability of Turgenev's liberal, 'Enlightenment' position."⁷ Dostoevsky's impassioned visionary speech, and an unprecedented public response the day after, cast a clear vote for the speaker as the greatest living Russian writer.

The lasting perception of vulnerability and indecision that lowered Turgenev's status in the tradition led Robert Jackson to summarize it as a "treasury of clichés": "Turgenev's novels are period pieces; he is a conduit only for studying his class and culture; he was indecisive and weak in character; he is a writer with poetic sensibility and style, but nothing

⁶ I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 15 vols. Vol. 15 (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 48.

⁷ Marcus C. Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 90.

to say.”⁸ The clichés persisted even as the Symbolists set out to revise the nineteenth-century canon at the turn of the century, with emphasis on aesthetic criteria, free from civic and utilitarian concerns. Pushkin and Gogol were regarded as foundational figures, and debates concerning the legacy of the long nineteenth century centered around Tolstoy and Dostoevsky.

In the *Symbolists' Reception of Turgenev* (1999), Lea Pild analyzes their “internal” discourse, which revealed a complex and contradictory situation. At the turn of the century the Symbolists recognized Turgenev’s cultural role as that of a “middleman” (*posrednik*) between Russian and European literatures.⁹ Although Valery Briusov and the younger Symbolists, Blok and Bely, admired Turgenev’s late mystical tales, they defined their public views in conscious opposition to the Positivist critics who stressed the “progressive” social aspects of Turgenev’s work. Thus, an implicit connection with the aesthetics of Turgenev’s later work to their writing was counterbalanced by their explicit critical rejection of his legacy in the quest for “new art.”¹⁰ In his seminal 1893 essay “On the Causes of Decline and on New Trends in Contemporary Russian Literature,” Dmitrii Merezhkovsky highly valued Turgenev’s late fantastic, mystical tales as remarkably “original.”¹¹ In his speech on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Turgenev’s death in 1908, Merezhkovsky proclaimed him to be “the sole genius of measure” after Pushkin and predicted a return to him.¹² Subsequently, Merezhkovsky’s view became submerged in the championing of the “two giants” approach to the tradition. Writing about “new art” in the 1890s, Vasily Rozanov opined that “in our time it would be an anachronism to analyze characters drawn by Turgenev ... We love them as living images, but there is nothing for us to divine in them ... The opposite is true for Dostoevsky: anxiety and doubt in his works are our anxiety and doubt.”¹³

According to Pild, only in the late 1970s did Russian scholars begin to revise the significance of Turgenev’s late work for individual writers of the

⁸ R. L. Jackson, “The Turgenev Question,” *Sewanee Review* 18: 2 (Spring 1985): 306.

⁹ Lea Pild, *Turgenev v vospriiatii russkikh simvolistov. 1890-1900-e gody* (Tartu: Tartu State University, 1999), 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹¹ S. S. Grechishkin and A. V. Lavrov, *Simvolisty vblizi. Ocherki i publikatsii* (St. Petersburg: Skifia, 2004), 152.

¹² D. Merezhkovskii, “Turgenev,” *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 28 vols., vol. 18 (Moscow: Tip. I. D. Sytina, 1914), 58.

¹³ Quoted in Pild, *Turgenev v vospriiatii russkikh simvolistov*, 10.

Symbolist period.¹⁴ Pild briefly remarks on the “apologetic conception” of Turgenev created in emigration by Balmont and Remizov, who considered him as a forerunner of Russian Symbolism, an opinion neither of them had expressed earlier.¹⁵ However, we find that the diaspora’s critical reappraisal of Turgenev can hardly be seen as “apologetic.” As it was carried out in the historical context of exile, it revealed problems in the received tradition and offered a way out of the Symbolist contradiction.

In addition, we must note the work of two prominent Russian literary critics of the Symbolist period, Iu. Aikhnevald and M. O. Gershenzon, whose studies of Turgenev have direct bearing on the later émigré response. Aikhnevald’s controversial *Silhouettes of Russian Writers* was a popular book of impressionist criticism in the vein of “literary appreciation.” First published in 1906 and subsequently reprinted several times, it was intended to counteract the positivist critics who championed Turgenev. Disparaged by literary contemporaries as “not serious” and as “subjective” criticism intended for an “average” reader, the book was dismissive of Turgenev, whom Aikhnevald considered an indelible part of everyone’s youth and their past, or as a sign of their aging. However, we will see later how the 1929 Berlin edition of Aikhnevald’s book engaged in the émigré reappraisal of the writer.

A study titled *Turgenev’s Dream and Thought* by M. O. Gershenzon appeared in 1919, the same year as his seminal work, *Pushkin’s Wisdom*, suggesting that the two works were written in implicit association with each other. In his introduction to the American edition of the book, Thomas Winner comments on the fact that “the titanic figures of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky deflected scholarship from Turgenev, whose lyrical but philosophically less ambitious works seemed, to some, in contrast, pallid and even shallow.”¹⁶ Gershenzon countered this situation, explaining

¹⁴ Among the more recent studies of Turgenev’s reception, see: A. V. Lavrov and S. S. Grechishkin, “Briusov o Turgeneve” in *Simvolisty vblizi. Stat’i i publikatsii*, 148-154; M. V. Bezrodnyi, “Kommentarii k drame Bloka ‘Neznakomka’” in V.I. Bezzubov, ed., *Biografiia i tvorchestvo v russkoi kul’ture nachala XX veka. Blokovskii sbornik no. 9* (Tartu: Tartu State University, 1989), 66. See also: Marina Ledkovsky, *The Other Turgenev: From Romantic ‘Idea.’ Iz goroda Enn* (St. Petersburg: Zvezda, 2005), 31-40.

¹⁵ Pild, *Turgenev v vospriiatii russkikh simvolistov*, 12.

¹⁶ M. O. Gershenzon, *Mechta i mysl’ Turgeneva* (Moscow: T-vo “Knigoizdat pisatelei,” 1919). Reprinted with an introduction by T. Winner (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1970), vii.

instead how Turgenev's characters behaved when caught in the ethical choice between responsibility (*dolg*) and passion: "As in religion, so in service to the 'good,' justice, and freedom, as in love, Turgenev saw and championed one thing: not the result of sacrifice, but the sacrificial nature of the spirit itself—its selflessness."¹⁷ In arguing with the cliché of the writer's "passivity," Gershenzon emphasized the fact that "Turgenev's work was elevating despite its tragic sense of life, precisely because it was pervaded by ethical values: religion, the good, love and beauty—these four values."¹⁸ These indeed were the values that Russians abroad could embrace as they struggled to retain their identity in trying conditions.

Gershenzon's approach continued the dissenting opinion of the philosopher Lev Shestov, a contemporary of the Symbolists. Shestov intended to work on a book on Turgenev and Chekhov in 1903, but instead wrote his philosophical work, *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness*. In the original fragment that was left out, Shestov understood how Turgenev's anomalous status as a Russian European confounded his countrymen. Focusing on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, who admired the art of their illustrious elder compatriot but distrusted him, Shestov offered an important insight: "There is really nothing surprising in the fact that Tolstoy and Dostoevskii considered Turgenev a complete European and were not able to hear the dearly familiar native sounds in his works" (*ne umeli uslyshat' ... blizkikh i rodnykh im zvukov*).¹⁹ The fact that the three great classics shared "the cultural burden" of the land rendered this lack of discernment all the more puzzling.

Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in the Diaspora

Taking Shestov's insight as a point of departure, I will argue that the key to this almost willful attitude of the "two giants" and their contemporaries lies in Turgenev's being "at home" in European lands and languages, which automatically put his Russianness in doubt. Indeed, Turgenev was a singular Russian cosmopolitan. The paradoxical term itself, from the Greek

¹⁷ Ibid., 92.

¹⁸ Ibid., 93.

¹⁹ L. Shestov, *Turgenev* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1982), 124.

kosmos (world) and *polis* (city), was compounded by the Athenian Stoic, Zeno. He and Diogenes, who “used the idea of cosmopolitanism in the sense of someone who has no anchorage in any contemporary city-state ...,” produced “the first intimations of a universal humanism ...”²⁰ Are these qualities, i.e. cosmopolitanism, or love of the world, and nationalism, love of nation or *polis*, mutually exclusive? Or can they, somehow, be negotiated in the case of a humanist writer, such as Turgenev, whose works carried “the burden of cultural importance”?

Turgenev himself was aware of this problem and addressed it in his controversial novel *Smoke* (*Dym*, 1867), about a cross-section of Russians living in Europe. When a prominent character, Potugin, representing the Westernizer position, was asked this very question, he compared himself to the Roman poet, Catullus, in feeling love and hate, “*odi et amor*” for his homeland.²¹ This was an irreconcilable duality for his contemporaries. We will see how cosmopolitanism and nationalism become key words in the diaspora’s reappraisal of Turgenev. As Richard Freeborn reminds us, some of the fire in the *Smoke* had not been extinguished and lay smoldering to be reignited. Indeed, it was reignited in Russia Abroad some fifty years later.

When many Russians found themselves in exile after the October Revolution, they faced confusion and uncertainty. As a deterritorialized entity, the émigrés sought anchor in the national literary tradition and language while functioning in their host countries. Hence, the diaspora’s reappraisal of Turgenev can be seen as a symbolic gesture of national self-assertion. However, unlike their great Russian European countryman, the exiles experienced a loss of the homeland, as well as keen privation and insecurity as stateless refugees in interwar Europe, whose natives were indifferent to their plight. National identity is a critical issue in diaspora, whose conditions of displacement and transplantation are “inseparable from specific, often violent histories of economic, political, and cultural interaction—histories that generate what might be called ‘discrepant cosmopolitanisms.’”²² It is for this reason as well that Turgenev would

²⁰ R. Fine, and R. Cohen, “Four Cosmopolitan Moments,” in *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 138.

²¹ Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 15 vols, vol. 9 (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), 174.

²² James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, 36.

become a key figure for Russians in Europe. No doubt, they also felt great anxiety remembering Potugin's extreme and now seemingly prophetic statement in Turgenev's *Smoke*, announcing that if Russia were to disappear, no one would notice.

Thus, it is not surprising that the émigrés turned to Turgenev's writing and his biography to counteract this possibility. As a Russian writer abroad, Turgenev fulfilled the criterion of "linguistic nationalism" and that of the "national soul, a spiritual principle," posited as components of nationalism by Ernest Renan, who spoke at his funeral.²³ These ideas would be reiterated by Vladislav Khodasevich in the Paris emigration some fifty years later, in his key essay of 1933, "Literature in Exile." Written in the third stage of the history of the first-wave diaspora, the essay asserted that creativity in a national language was not bound by a specific dwelling place, nor by the everyday life (*byt*) of the land: "Literature's nationality is created by its language and the spirit it reflects."²⁴ Although Turgenev was not cited among the historic examples of exile writing, which included Dante, the Polish Romantics, and the poets of the Hebrew poetic renaissance in the Russian Empire, he became a native model by the time Khodasevich's essay was published.

Critical Reappraisal in the Diaspora

The diaspora's reconsideration of Turgenev's legacy continued the work begun by Shestov and Gershenzon. A need for a departure from the "two giants" complex, propagated by Merezhkovsky's books on Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, translated into German in 1922, was recognized at the outset.²⁵ Furthermore, the publication of Berdyaev's *Dostoevsky's*

²³ For Renan's ideas on nationalism, see: "Que-est'ce qu'une nation?" a lecture delivered in the Sorbonne, 11 March 1882. For English translation, see: "What is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), 19. See also his "Adieu à Tourguèneff." *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1947), 869. Reprinted in Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 15 vols., vol. 9, 163.

²⁴ V. Khodasevich, *Literaturnye stat'i i vospominaniia*, 258.

²⁵ By this time, the "two giants" complex became a subject of parody as the "Tolstoevsky" complex, a phrase coined by Ilf and Petrov in the 1920s (see Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985], 588). It would be parodied by Vladimir Nabokov in *Prin*.

Worldview in 1922, reiterated the idea of Dostoevsky as a “prophet of the revolution” also put forth the notion of the Russian “dislike of form.” The diaspora’s counter-response to both of these ideas was instrumental in the effort to restore Turgenev to an appropriate place in the canon.

The reconsideration of Turgenev’s legacy began as early as 1921 and was the subject of one of Balmont’s three extensive essays, “Thoughts on Creativity” in *Contemporary Annals*. Balmont championed the old idea of Turgenev’s place in literary transmission as the heir of Pushkin, affirming that “Pushkin was the first poet of Russian verse and Turgenev, the first poet of Russian prose.”²⁶ Balmont reasserted the commonplaces attributed to both figures, who plumbed the depth of the national language and character, insisting that Turgenev was the most Russian of all the prose writers, the one who conveyed the flow of native tongue, the one who best understood the folk and capricious Russian history.²⁷ He portrayed Turgenev as someone who was “tossed out abroad” (*otbroshennyi na chuzhbinu*) by his country’s crudeness and misunderstanding of the writer “torn” by his exile. Turgenev’s bitter words about his native land in *Smoke*, which so upset Dostoevsky, are cited here as a fruit of painful meditation on his beloved Russia. Balmont also quoted a letter to Mme. Viardot, in which Turgenev grants a possibility of a social revolution. His words, as Balmont noted, should undo his reputation as a “gradualist” (*postepenovets*), even though they make for difficult reading in these “stormy days” of Russian history.²⁸

Balmont’s view of literary transmission was seconded by D. S. Mirsky in his *History of Russian Literature*, first published in English in 1925. In the chapter on “The Age of Realism,” Mirsky noted that Turgenev, more old-fashioned than Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov, was a “highly intelligent and creative pupil of Pushkin’s.” His explanation recalls Rozanov’s opinion, cited earlier: “Like Pushkin in *Evgeny Onegin*, Turgenev does not analyze and dissect his heroes, as Tolstoy and Dostoevsky would have done; he does not uncover their souls; he only conveys their atmosphere ... —a method that at once betrays its origin in a poetic

²⁶ *Sovremennye zapiski* 2:4 (1921): 285.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 286.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 293.

novel..."²⁹ This suggests a connection with the lyrical novel, an important genre in modernist prose.

Balmont's essay coincided with the publication of Iu. Nikolskii's *Turgenev and Dostoevskii*, subtitled *A History of an Enmity*. Nikolskii cast aside persistent doubts about Turgenev's *amor patriae*, citing Turgenev's Shakespeare speech of 1864, where he made a connection between King Lear and the English people (*narod*), who do not fear to know and reveal their deepest weaknesses: "Just as Shakespeare, he is not afraid to bring out the dark aspects ...". Nikolskii's main concern was to reconsider the writers' rivalry, largely misunderstood by scholars who approached the problem subjectively. The famous falling out between the two writers occurred after their 1867 meeting in Baden-Baden, when Dostoevsky accused Turgenev of "atheism, russophobia, and germanophilia."³⁰ Dostoevsky despised Turgenev's novel *Smoke*, with its idea that Russia should follow European civilization.³¹ Nikolskii argued that to understand Turgenev, one needed to recall his words to Tolstoy about the power of the subconscious in the art of this otherwise rational man. Dostoevsky did not understand this, missing his deeply prophetic wisdom.³²

The deep rift between the two writers was also documented in André Mazon's commentary on their correspondence, published in the first issue of the *Revue des Études Slaves* of 1921.³³ S. Kartsevskii mentioned this important publication in his review of Nikolskii's book in *Contemporary Annals*, stating that it wisely removed the problem from the usual petty rivalry situation, seeing it instead as that of an essential incompatibility of "two contradictory and psychologically distant natures."³⁴ Kartsevskii suggested that their lack of understanding was akin to a tragic situation where there is no guilty party.

²⁹ D. S. Mirsky, *History of Russian Literature from its Beginnings to 1900* (New York: Vintage, 1926), 192. The Russian Formalists, who, in their focus on "esthetics" and their preoccupation with the "new," were dismissive of Turgenev as an epigone of Russian Romanticism, who had nothing new to contribute to Russian letters. See Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 282.

³⁰ Iu. Nikolskii, *Turgenev i Dostoevskii* (Sofia: Rossiisko-Bolgarskoe Knigoizdatel'stvo, 1920; Reprint, Letchworth: Prudeax Press, 1972), 30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

³² *Ibid.*, 35.

³³ "Quelques lettres de Dostoevskij à Turgenev," *Revue des Études Slaves* 1 (1921): 117-137.

³⁴ *Sovremennye zapiski* 2:5 (1921): 381.

The incompatibility of the two writers was explored at the end of the twentieth century in Robert Jackson's in-depth essay, "The Root and the Flower: Dostoevsky and Turgenev, a Comparative Aesthetic." Jackson concludes that "the Turgenev-Dostoevsky antinomy resolves itself finally into a cultural metaphor for the twentieth century ... With Turgenev, we are certainly in the presence of an archetypal vision of an epic unity ... one in which 'beauty' (in the classical sense of 'harmony', 'clarity', and 'serenity') is in the foreground; with Dostoevsky, a tragic vision of turbulence and fragmentation."³⁵ Turgenev's vision "of an epic unity" as well as his "poetics of reconciliation, limitation, and moderation" as posited by E. Cheresch Allen in her study of Turgenev,³⁶ had clearly appealed to the émigrés in the aftermath of the October Revolution. This was understood by E. Sémenoff in his 1933 book, *La vie douloureuse de Ivan Tourgenieff*.³⁷ Citing the contemporary writer, Boris Zaitsev, as well as the French scholars and critics, A. Mazon, A. Maurois, and M. Haumann, who understood that Turgenev was neither old, nor old-fashioned, Sémenoff emphasized the value of Turgenev's writing for his countrymen in exile as that of "a classic who could sustain the spirit and to whom one always returns, especially after tempests and tragedies, when one needs to breathe purified air ..."³⁸ Throughout the stormy history of his country, Turgenev remained a humanist and a liberal, who believed in the abolition of serfdom but, like his predecessor, Pushkin, he feared rebellion. Who could better appreciate his values than the homeless Russian intelligentsia, having witnessed a realization of his worst fears in 1917?

Proclaiming their mission abroad as that of continuity and preservation of national literary tradition, which they perceived threatened in the Bolshevik USSR, the émigrés placed books in the sphere of the sacred. This is a classic diaspora move, much like the one that sustained the Jews dispersed after the destruction of the temple for two thousand years. Pushkin became the great national symbol in the diaspora and in

³⁵ R. L. Jackson, *Dialogues with Dostoevsky: The Overwhelming Questions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 164.

³⁶ Cheresch E. Allen, *Beyond Realism: Turgenev's Poetics of Secular Salvation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 40.

³⁷ E. Sémenoff, *La vie douloureuse de Ivan Tourgénieff. Avec des lettres inédites de Tourgénieff à sa fille*. Troisième édition (Paris: Mercure de France, 1933).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

1926 the poet's birthday was declared a national holiday of the Russian diaspora everywhere. Pushkin remained "the golden mean" and "our all" for the émigré writers.³⁹ And here, the competition between the diaspora and Soviet literary politics comes to the fore. The irony of the Pushkin standard-bearing is that this was played out in the USSR as well, where Gorky was the contender as the heir to Pushkin. In her study of the mythmaking process, Irene Masing-Delic demonstrates its strange logic, as Gorky translated Pushkin's foundational role into the Soviet literary context: "Gorky wanted to emulate Pushkin's courageous life," but more than that, he also wanted "to reincarnate" him.⁴⁰ This is quite different from the émigré reconsideration of literary genealogy, with Turgenev as the heir to Pushkin, or with homage to Pushkin in the work of Bunin and Nabokov that will be noted later.

Along with the affirmation of Pushkin's incomparable stature as the national poet in *Russia Abroad*, with Gogol as a close follow-up, the nineteenth-century classical tradition would be sustained in the diaspora. Indeed, history intervened in how the vote for the best Russian writer would now be cast. Tolstoy's stature was beyond doubt, but his rejection of aesthetics was problematic. Dostoevsky's legacy as a prophet of the revolution was a source of distress for the émigrés. As a rational humanist and a supreme craftsman of the Russian language, Turgenev held definite advantages over his great rival and contemporary, Dostoevsky, whose literary style many thought was careless.

Moreover, Turgenev became an important part of cultural capital for Russian exiles, bereft of their homeland and history. For them, classical literary works served as the *lieux de memoire*, replacing, in Pierre Nora's words, the *milieux de memoire*.⁴¹ Important in this context was Turgenev's care for Russians in Europe (travelers and political exiles) that led him to create an important *milieu de memoire*, the Russian Library in Paris,

³⁹ See Greta Slobin. "Appropriating the Irreverent Pushkin," in *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*, ed. Boris Gasparov et al. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 214-230. See also A. Smith, *Montaging Pushkin. Pushkin and Visions of Modernity Russian Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

⁴⁰ Irene Masing-Delic, "Full of Mirth on the Edge of an Abyss: Puškin in Gor'kij's Life Creation," *Die Welt der Slaven* 42 (1997): 113.

⁴¹ Pierre Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire," in *Les lieux de mémoire*, part 1, ed. P. Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), xvii .

an island of cultural memory for estranged exiles. The Paris émigré community celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the library, established in 1875, in the amphitheater of the Sorbonne. The library was a place of great value for the exiles: “For Russians living abroad, the Russian book is a constant necessity. It provides a spiritual tie to the homeland.”⁴² The Library continues to be a place of work, of social and literary gatherings of the Paris émigré community to this day.

A reconsideration of the Turgenev legacy intensified in 1929-1930 as the fiftieth anniversary of the writer’s death in 1883 was approaching. This third stage in the history of the first-wave diaspora, ending at the outbreak of World War II, was marked by a stronger sense of national identity and self-realization. This was a period of extreme isolation from the Soviet Union. It was also a time of generational change, when younger writers not steeped in the Russian tradition were more open to European modernism and the atmosphere of interwar Europe, engendering debates about possible continuity of Russian literature abroad.

Immediately relevant to the ongoing discussion of Turgenev’s cosmopolitanism and nationalism was the posthumous 1929 Berlin edition of Aikhenvald’s book, *Silhouettes of Russian Writers*. In his introductory essay, the critic and philosopher Fedor Stepun singled out the binary opposition of “the problem of native and foreign land” (*problema rodiny i chuzhbiny*), citing Kantian terms of “longing for the homeland and longing for foreign lands” as key in Russian literature, noting its connection with the greater theme of “culture and nature.”⁴³ Stepun thought the opposition worked in the case of Pushkin, a world writer in whom “the synthesis of enlightened and wise spirit erases the boundary between native and foreign land.”⁴⁴ In his opinion, Turgenev “who contained much that was both Russian and European, did not achieve this.”⁴⁵ After some back and forth between these seemingly incompatible binaries, Stepun suggested that a lack of synthesis between the two resulted in Turgenev’s

⁴² Iu. Delevskii, “Turgenevskaiia Biblioteka v Parizhe,” *Vremennik Obshchestva Druzei Russkoi Knigi* (Paris: s.n., 1925), 78-80. Reprinted in *Russkaia Obshchestvennaia biblioteka imeni I. S. Turgeneva. Sotrudniki, druz’ia, pochitateli* (Paris: Institut d’Etudes Slaves, 1987), 33.

⁴³ Iu. Aikhenvald, *Silhouettes of Russian Writers*, reprinted with V. Kreyd, “About Iulii Aikhenvald,” with an Introduction by F. Stepun (Moscow: Respublika, 1994), 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

“tragic flaw” (*nadlom*). For him, the “key to Turgenev” can be found in this irreconcilable split. Stepun concluded that “culture” remained “second nature” for Turgenev, arguing that “he is not a European, precisely because his europeanism is so obvious.”⁴⁶ This opinion may be seen as a projection of a self-conscious Russian émigré who does not feel at home in twentieth-century Europe. If it sounded more maudlin than convincing, it was because Stepun, like his fellow exiles, the “Russian Europeans” who knew and loved Europe in their youth, now experienced Europe as strangers, thus feeling doubly exiled.⁴⁷ This contributed to their sense of national identity and wariness of cosmopolitanism.

In contrast, Boris Zaitsev’s biographical work *The Life of Turgenev* (1929-31) provided a very affectionate account of the writer’s dual existence.⁴⁸ Zaitsev did not share Stepun’s point of view, but reiterated instead Turgenev’s deep immersion in the life and language of the Russian countryside and his love for everything Russian which broke through his “westernism” (*zapadnichestvo*). He acknowledged that Turgenev was a “westernizer,” who distanced himself from Russia and argued with the Slavophiles. He was a liberal by the virtue of his reason, but a Russian to the depth of his soul, which is what assured him his reputation.⁴⁹ In discussing the difference between Turgenev and Tolstoy, Zaitsev concluded that the former knew he was “neither a reformer, nor a prophet,” but what he valued most was “the air of freedom and undisturbed artistry.”⁵⁰ Séménoff’s French book of 1933, cited earlier, including published letters from Turgenev to his daughter, undertook to clear the writer’s reputation from the misunderstanding of compatriots who did not know about his devotion to and care for his daughter, and never forgave his love for Pauline Viardot as a love “not worthy of the great writer and responsible for his expatriation.”⁵¹ Séménoff acknowledged a debt to the Paris lecture of Professor Zavatsky in 1931, significantly titled “Défense de Tourguéneff,” as part of the trend to clarify the writer’s legacy.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of this phenomenon, see A. Dolinin, *Istinniaia zhizn’ pisatel’ia Sirina*, 178-179.

⁴⁸ Boris Zaitsev, *Zhizn’ Turgeneva* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1932).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 127.

⁵¹ E. Séménoff, *La vie douloureuse de Ivan Tourguéneff*, 43.

Diaspora writers Turn to Turgenev

Remizov

Among major writers who turned to Turgenev in the thirties, both in criticism and in fiction, were the senior émigrés, Remizov and Bunin, and the young Nabokov/Sirin. In a major collection of critical essays, many written in the thirties, *The Fire of Things* (*Ogon' veshchei*), Remizov included Turgenev in the pleiade of his chosen writers—Gogol, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Dostoevsky. In her introductory essay to a magnificent recent reprint of the book, the editor Elena Obatnina describes Remizov's idiosyncratic approach as a departure from critical commonplaces. As we will see, despite the ostensibly esoteric theme, Remizov's approach was quite methodical. There are three essays devoted to Turgenev in the collection. The essay originally written for the writer's jubilee, "Turgenev, the Dreamer" (*Turgenev-snovidets*), appeared in *Chisla* (n. 9) in 1933, written for the fiftieth anniversary of the writer's death. As Obatnina notes, the Czech translation of the essay, published the same year, bore the significant subtitle "About the Forgotten and Unread, but still living and contemporary TURGENEV."⁵²

Remizov set out to clear Turgenev's image from its critical clichés. Remizov heeds Shestov's insight that Turgenev's contemporaries, the "two giants," remained deaf to his true voice, describing it in words that echo his old friend, the philosopher, as "familiar native sounds" (*blizkikh i rodnykh im zvukov*): "No, Turgenev was not the snobby Moscow dandy with the Parisian 'tiens' and 'merci' as he may have seemed to Dostoevsky ... and Tolstoy."⁵³ In the effort "to hear the voice" in the "din" of the age, Remizov poses a relevant question in another essay, "Thirty Dreams": "Perhaps after such thunderous lightning conductors as Gogol, Tolstoy, Leskov, and Dostoevsky, a normal human voice appeared no louder than a mouse squeak?"⁵⁴ This ironic question asserted Turgenev's centrality in the tradition, applying Remizov's two most important criteria of verbal

⁵² *Ogon' veshchei; sny i predsonè: Gogol', Pushkin, Lermontov, Turgenev, Dostoevskii* (Paris: Oplshnik, 1954). Reprinted with an introduction and commentary by E. Obatnina (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Ivana Limbakha, 2005), 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 226.

art: "Turgenev's eye and ear ... were assimilated by all of subsequent Russian literature, whenever nature descriptions were given ..."⁵⁵

Siding with both Gershenson and Balmont in his understanding of the essential values in Turgenev, Remizov also "rehabilitated" the writer from the "cliché" bias of class, upheld by the Symbolists. Following Gershenson, Remizov asserted the writer's "deeper" knowledge and insight into the mysteries of human existence. Furthermore, Remizov disputed Turgenev's reputation as a "calm" and "old-fashioned" writer, insisting that his stories about "human nature" in *Huntsman's Sketches* (*Zapiski okhotnika*) were not only passionate, but also "contemporary," as was their author.⁵⁶ Remizov disputed the narrow criterion of "contemporariness" as currently applied to writers and their politically correct apprehension of the present, especially in the Soviet Union.⁵⁷

A tribute to Turgenev's model for struggling émigré writers appeared in Remizov's literary memoir of pre-war Paris, *The Music Teacher* (*Uchitel' muzyki*). Written in the thirties and published in 1949, it addressed the difficulties facing writers as they sought to overcome their isolation and find a way into the French literary establishment through translation and participation in conversations with their French counterparts.⁵⁸ The narrator's recognition of nineteenth-century Russian antecedents of the contemporary diaspora provided a frame of reference for his capsule biographies of Gogol, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky, who all spent time in Europe. The connection with past masters is most striking in the narrator's realization that Turgenev would be surprised to see that the "Russian Paris in the 13th year after the revolution would recognize itself in 'The Quiet' (*Zatish'e*) of 1845" which appears prophetic in retrospect.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 221.

⁵⁷ On semantics of "contemporaneity" see G. N. Slobin, "Modernism/Modernity in the Postrevolutionary Diaspora," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 37:1-2 (Spring-Summer 2003): 57-70. (See chapter with the same name in this volume.)

⁵⁸ On the efforts of diaspora writers to participate in the French literary scene, see Greta N. Slobin, "Remizov's Exilic Journey in 'Uchitel' Muzyki,'" in *A Century's Perspective; Essays on Russian Literature in Honor of Olga Raevsky Hughes and Robert P. Hughes*, ed. Lazar Fleishman and Hugh McLean (Stanford, CA: Stanford Slavic Studies vol. 32, 2006), 399-415.

⁵⁹ A. Remizov, *Uchitel' muzyki* in *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 10 vols., vol. 9 (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 2002), 78.

Remizov considered Turgenev as the first Russian writer who was also an *homme de lettres* who learned verbal craft from the French masters in Paris.⁶⁰ This enabled him to draw current implications for young writers in the diaspora: “I consider the appearance of young writers with the western ‘starter’ the most significant phenomenon of the last five years of Russian literature.”⁶¹ Unlike many of his contemporaries, who saw them as the tragic “lost generation,” Remizov turned the exile condition to the writers’ advantage and saw its potential for contributing to Russian literature: “Such a phenomenon cannot be transmitted second-hand, but directly through literary texts in the original.” He was able to foresee that “this will have great importance for Russian literature, but only if the young writers will remain Russian, and will not start writing in French one fine day and disappear among the thousands in French literature.”⁶² The possibilities of combining native and European elements for a Russian writer were controversial in the diaspora, where many thought them as incompatible, would have met with Turgenev’s approval.

Nabokov/Sirin

Nabokov/Sirin was among the young writers whose fiction continued the classical Russian literary tradition in the context of contemporary European modernism. When he read his early novel *Mary* to a literary gathering in Berlin on 23 January 1926, Aikhenvald exclaimed that “a new Turgenev has appeared,” insisting that Sirin send it to Bunin for publication in *Contemporary Notes* (*Sovremennye zapiski*).⁶³ The poignant evocations of Russian countryside and first love in *Mary* may account for Aikhenvald’s reaction. Ironically, however, later émigré critical responses to Sirin were controversial, with accusations flying that his work was un-Russian and that he was perhaps the least Russian of all contemporary writers.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ “Tsarskoe imia. Razgovor po povodu vykhoda vo frantsuzskom perevode rasskazov Turgeneva,” *Ogon’ veshchei*, 262.

⁶¹ Quoted in Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 235.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Bryan Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 257. Boyd comments on a self-conscious echo of Nekrasov’s response to a reading of Dostoevsky’s *Poor Folk* here as a way to signal an important moment in modern literary transmission and evolution.

⁶⁴ Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 285.

Russian literature is the subject of Sirin's last and major Russian novel, *The Gift (Dar)*, written in 1935-1937, but published in book form only fifteen years later.⁶⁵ The novel masterfully bears the "cultural burden" and fulfills Remizov's prescription for the "younger writers" with a European "starter." Brian Boyd points out that in *The Gift*, which includes references to Russian as well as West European literature, Nabokov "looks directly to the work of Proust and Joyce, in the spirit of homage and challenge."⁶⁶ The novel also fulfills Tynianov's conception of literary evolution and innovation through parody and "overcoming" of the preceding tradition.⁶⁷

Appropriation and renewal of the tradition, both past and present, are key in the novel, whose heroine in the author's words in the preface to the English translation "is not Zina, but Russian literature."⁶⁸ This novel about a writer, Fedor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, is set in the Russian Berlin of 1926-1929. Its portrayal of the émigré literary community parodies recognizable personalities and recalls Turgenev's satire of the Russians in Baden-Baden in *Smoke*. References to Turgenev are both implicit and explicit in the novel, imbued with the spirit of the Russian literary tradition and its turbulent cultural history, past and present. *The Gift* includes a satire of émigré writers and critics, especially G. Adamovich, and of contemporary Soviet writers.⁶⁹ Central in the novel is Nabokov's literary parody of the "civic" and "utilitarian" strain in the tradition of the 1860s, which informs the narrative of the "writer's becoming" in this complex and brilliant work.

In an extraordinary meta-literary first chapter tinged with light affectionate irony, the young writer conducts "a fictitious dialogue with myself," regarding the tradition not for its own sake, but rather using it as "a self-teaching handbook of literary inspiration."⁷⁰ Pushkin, untouchable as the "gold reserve of Russian literature" (*zolotoi fond russkoi literatury*), was his late father's favorite poet and the author's primary aesthetic model. As for Gogol, he is accepted in his entirety. Dostoevsky is ridi-

⁶⁵ Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov*, 442-443.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 466.

⁶⁷ Iu. Tynianov, "Dostoevskii i Gogol' (k teorii parodii)," 300-371.

⁶⁸ V. Nabokov, Foreword to the English translation of *The Gift* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1970). Further citations from the novel refer to this edition.

⁶⁹ A. Dolinin, *Istinnnaia zhizn' pisatel'ia Sirina*, 130.

⁷⁰ *The Gift*, 88.

culed in one swift phrase “Bedlam turned into Bethlehem,” but a striking example of his artistry in *The Brothers Karamazov* is cited.⁷¹ Turgenev figures in the classical pantheon, but to the question “don’t tell me all is well with Turgenev?” (*Tak neuzheli zh u Turgeneva vse blagopoluchno?*),⁷² the response is sly. As in the case of Dostoevsky, Nabokov cites a memorable example of great craft and felicitous phrase, describing the folds of Odintsova’s “black silks” in *Fathers and Sons*. However, as a trained naturalist, Nabokov makes his alter-ego skeptical about Bazarov and his “highly unconvincing fussing with those frogs (*neubeditel’naia voznia s liagushkami*).⁷³ In an ironic aside, a further proclamation of the young writer’s independence, the narrator mentions that his father, a famous naturalist, found “all kinds of howlers” in the hunting scenes and nature descriptions of both Turgenev and Tolstoy. This manifests at once Sirin’s critical attention to the canon, a rejection of the “commonplaces” in the tradition and a moving on.

Turgenev references in *The Gift* suggest that Nabokov had *Smoke* in mind in his major Russian novel, where the young writer’s evolution champions love and the freedom of creative imagination. The two are inseparable and both reference Turgenev. In chapter three, devoted to Fedor’s creative life in Berlin when he would “begin a day with a poem,” there is an extended recollection of his first attempts at poetry writing at sixteen, which coincided with an affair with an older married woman. This is a poignant memory of his adolescent passion for the lover’s irresistible feminine charm, recalled in exile: “In her bedroom there was a little picture of the Tsar’s family and a Turgenevian odor of heliotrope.”⁷⁴ The nostalgic recollection presents a powerful association of historical and personal time, irrevocably lost but brought back by memory. The bouquet of heliotrope recurs in Turgenev’s *Smoke* like a musical motif—at the beginning in Russia, when Litvinov’s young love for Irina seemed possible and at the end of the novel, in Baden-Baden, where it signifies love lost, unrequited, and betrayed. The heliotrope becomes a double recollection in *The Gift*, where a personal sensory evocation is

⁷¹ Ibid., 84.

⁷² Ibid., 85.

⁷³ V. Nabokov (V. Sirin), *Dar*, in *Sobranie sochinenii russkogo perioda v piati tomakh*, vol. 4 (St. Petersburg: Simpozium, 2000).

⁷⁴ *The Gift*, 162.

heightened by a literary one. The feelings it evokes are emphatically self-conscious as Fedor intends them to be filed for future reference in his own fiction: "I used to see her home. These walks will come in handy sometime."⁷⁵

The same chapter contains a detailed description of a specific street corner of Russian Berlin where several literary personalities converge, with a parenthetical aside, "like the confluence of people in a dream or in the last chapter of Turgenev's *Smoke*."⁷⁶ A similar convergence of several characters takes place at the end of Turgenev's novel, which opens with the scene of the daily gathering of Russians, ironically described as the "*fine fleurs* of our society at *l'Arbre Russe*" in Baden-Baden. The novel unfolds in a splendid example of social satire of highly-placed aristocrats and 1860s radicals.⁷⁷ The Turgenev reference in *The Gift* registers both the connection with this self-enclosed world of Russian Berlin, as well as the marked change from this postrevolutionary community of stateless compatriots. The two worlds are brought into association by literary satire and parody in both novels.

The Gift provides a gloss on émigré cosmopolitanism, or the lack of it, through an ironic interplay of the native/foreign dichotomy in a remarkable scene in chapter two. With dramatic economy, the episode reveals the displacement and estrangement of a Russian exile's life. While riding a tram on his way to a lesson, Fedor observes a man in a seat in front of him. This personage becomes the focus of his accumulated rage, "pure fury" against his host country, typical of Russian exiles: "he instantly concentrated on him all his sinful hatred (for this pitiful expiring nation) ..."⁷⁸ What follows is a barrage of accusations and disgust with Germans and their habits of everyday life, their "visibility of cleanliness" and filthy toilets. After half-a page of this stream of consciousness attack of germanophobia reminiscent of Dostoevsky, something funny happens. When the narrator suddenly realizes that his "German" is reading a Russian paper, his emotions take a sharp turn as he regards the stranger with affection. A self-ironic comment dismisses the incident with a quick phrase of relief: "That's wonderful ... How clever, how gracefully sly and

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 179.

⁷⁷ Turgenev, *Smoke*, 144.

⁷⁸ *The Gift*, 93-94.

how essentially good life is!”⁷⁹ As a result of this quick turnaround, a self-conscious change of mood follows: “His thoughts were cheered by this unexpected respite and had already taken a different turn.”⁸⁰

With a sleight of hand, this passage comments on Fedor’s story as a typical émigré experience, while offering a way out of the existential predicament. Fedor’s handling of the process suggests Turgenev’s which, as Allen had noted, “expands the receptivity of his audiences” and “increases their willingness to learn new modes of response to the arduous demands of actuality.”⁸¹ But the episode accomplishes even more by implication, dismissing one of the stock tales of the Turgenev/Dostoevsky encounter in Baden-Baden, the latter’s angry response to his compatriot’s “germanophilia,” and his own disgust with that country. An extended account of this encounter was featured in Nikolskii’s book, where he cited Dostoevsky’s letters to Maikov describing the incident, in which he blamed Turgenev for his preference of superior western “civilization.”⁸² The young Sirin, whose “humanism” and cosmopolitanism are akin to Turgenev’s, signals that it is time to break with the old mythologies and stock ideas of the past. Sirin’s young writer appreciates Berlin as a modern European metropolis and closely observes its constantly changing urban landscape, to great aesthetic effect.

Nabokov’s understanding of history as “chance,” along with his belief in the independence of artistic vision, informs one of the novel’s two set pieces in chapter four, devoted to the radical writer and philosopher, Nikolai Chernyshevsky. Sirin continues Turgenev’s parody of the radical intelligentsia in *Smoke*, which had no doubt served as his inspiration. This metaliterary chapter has a historic cultural significance for the young émigré writer, who takes up an extended argument with Chernyshevsky’s materialist idea, delineated in his “disingenuous” dissertation on *The Aesthetic Relations of Art and Reality*. The parody of the radical, utilitarian critical tradition, now continued in the contemporary Soviet state, is central in this novel of the young writer’s “becoming.” Fedor’s aesthetic stance is opposed to Chernyshevsky’s, whose position was in turn antithetical to Turgenev’s. Nikolskii devotes considerable attention

⁷⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁸¹ Allen, *Beyond Realism*, 48.

⁸² Nikolskii, *Turgenev i Dostoevskii*, 41.

to this history in his book, which Nabokov probably read, stating that Turgenev's troubles with *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*) started with Chernyshevsky's letter of 1861, which highlighted their philosophical differences: "It seems to us that Mr. Turgenev's last works do not correspond to our views as closely as before, so when his direction was not so clear to us, nor are our views to him, we parted ways ..."⁸³ This historic rift is taken up by Sirin and brought into his twentieth-century present.

Like Turgenev before him, Sirin finds Chernyshevsky's awkward diction and obsession with general ideas untenable: "Such methods of knowledge as dialectical materialism curiously resemble the unscrupulous advertisements for patent medicines, which cure all illnesses at once."⁸⁴ In book four, Sirin painstakingly interrogates the legacy of the radical critics who distorted the literary tradition with utilitarian aesthetics and managed to disparage Pushkin. He cites passages of ridiculous infelicities from Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?* (*Chto delat'?*), which, nevertheless, acquired immediate status as a classic upon its publication in 1863. His commentary on the adulation of the contemporaries is scathing: "Instead of the expected sneers, an atmosphere of general pious worship was created around *What To Do?* It was read the way liturgical books are read—not a single work by Turgenev or Tolstoy produced such a mighty impression." But more than that, "no one laughed, not even the Russian writers. Not even Herzen."⁸⁵ Turgenev did, and had he been able to read Sirin, he would have certainly felt avenged! Turgenev had a good laugh in his delicious satirical gloss on the novel in *Smoke*, where he created a memorable scene in which Mme. Sukhanchikova announces to the radical gathering that "she no longer reads novels." To the question "Why not?" she answers in utmost seriousness with a ridiculous reference from *What Is To Be Done?* that "she has one thing on her mind now, sewing machines ..." (*u menia teper' odno v golove: shveinye mashiny*).⁸⁶ Sirin's portrayal of Chernyshevsky is very much in tune with Turgenev's depiction of the radical Gubarev in Baden-Baden, treated by all around him

⁸³ Ibid., 25.

⁸⁴ *The Gift*, 261.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 289.

⁸⁶ I. S. Turgenev, *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, vol. 8 (Moscow: Gos. izd-vo khudozhennoi literatury, 1962), 159.

with astounding awe and adulation. Turgenev had to wait for over sixty years for someone to share this laugh.

In *The Gift*, as elsewhere in his Russian period, Nabokov argues with the past tradition as well as the present diasporic and Soviet cultural politics, asserting his own view, where aesthetics rather than politics plays the primary role. Nabokov's focus on the relationship of art and politics in the nineteenth century is written from the perspective of his present position, an émigré writer who pays close attention to the continuity of 1860s radicalism in the Soviet Union, hence his citation of a diary entry of the young Chernyshevsky asserting that "political literature is the highest literature."⁸⁷ In his aesthetics Sirin sides with the émigré poet Koncheev (Khodasevich) and parodies Mortus (Adamovich), who preferred the confessional "human document" whose authenticity he valued more than artistic craft.⁸⁸

Bunin

Conscious of the problems of literary transmission and genealogy, the literary diaspora acknowledged the leading senior émigré writer, Ivan Bunin, as the heir of Turgenev. Born in an ancient family of impoverished Russian gentry, Bunin grew up in the Russian countryside. His lyrical prose is steeped in poetic evocations of its nature and atmosphere. According to Mirsky, Bunin's prose had "that 'classical' appearance which distinguishes him from his contemporaries."⁸⁹ Bunin received the Academy Pushkin Prize in 1903 and continued writing in the classical Russian prose tradition, with a modern inflection. Bunin's work abroad was highly regarded by émigré critics. Although his style and the typology of his plots were reminiscent of Turgenev, Bunin accomplished something remarkable with his acknowledgment of the classics—he expanded literature's "cultural burden" at the same time as he freed it from social constraints. Philosophical contemplation of life and death were the primary preoccupations of his work. As T. Marchenko observes, "he was able to replace the 'accursed questions' ('what is to be done' and 'who is guilty?')

⁸⁷ *The Gift*, 265.

⁸⁸ For an extended discussion of Nabokov's position in the literary polemic between Khodasevich and Adamovich, see Dolinin, *Istinnaia zhizn' pisatel'ia Sirina*, 299-300.

⁸⁹ Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature*, 390.

with philosophical meditation on life, death, immortality, the spirit and existence”⁹⁰

The Life of Arseniev, written in 1927-1929, shares important features with Nabokov's *The Gift*. It was also acknowledged as a masterpiece of Russian émigré literature. Difficult to define in terms of genre, it was a book of Proustian recollection, a literary autobiography of “a writer as a young man,” steeped in literary references. Exquisitely written, it is an evocation of life and nature, but above all it is a tribute to Russia and its past greatness, to its literature and writers. Its intricate dynamic of the “old” and the “new” and its detailed evocations of childhood as part of creative authorial consciousness led W. Weidle to compare it to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.⁹¹ Gleb Struve remarked on its masterful treatment of “the theme of eros,” unique in Russian literature.⁹² The book is one of the most innovative work of émigré Russian fiction—an autobiography, but about a fictional hero, though with verifiable detail of Bunin's own creative biography, here compressed and intensified. As Anna Saakiants notes, it is a poetics that “melds truth and poetry, recreation and transformation.”⁹³

Like Nabokov's novel, Bunin's book is a poem in prose commemorating Russian literature and its writers. Pushkin's place is central in Bunin's homage to the great poet, who forms an indelible presence in Arseniev's life since early childhood. Bunin's literary constellation leads from Pushkin and Lermontov to other writers and poets, extensively cited throughout the work. Turgenev dominates book five, written later and published in 1932-1933, in which the young Arseniev finds his writer's calling in Orel and starts on a path of becoming a writer. The references to Turgenev become explicit here when Avilova, the head of the publishing house that employs him as an editor, asks him whether he loves Turgenev and proposes an outing to the estate described in *A Nest of Gentlefolk* (178). As the young Arseniev looks at the now uninhabited dilapidated house,

⁹⁰ Tatiana Marchenko, “Traditsii russkoi klassicheskoi literatury v proze I. A. Bunina” in *Bunin revisité. Cahiers de l'émigration Russe* 4, ed. Claire Hauchard (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 2004), 23.

⁹¹ Quoted in Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 249.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 251.

⁹³ Commentary to *Zhizn' Arsen'eva*, I. A. Bunin, *Sochineniia v trekh tomakh*, 3 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1982), 496. Citations in the text refer to this volume.

he remembers the characters of the novel and experiences “a passionate desire for love” (179). Indeed, passion and discovery of his literary vocation form the center of this book, where Goethe and Tolstoy are also a part of the young writer’s literary constellation. In conversation with the local doctor, who questions his plans for the future, Arseniev remembers Goethe’s words that “politics can never be the business of poetry” and affirms that “civic duty is not a poet’s concern” (189). Bunin and Nabokov are in agreement on this issue, as was Turgenev.

It is notable that writing in the late twenties and thirties, both Bunin and Sirin chose budding writers as their heroes, one in prerevolutionary Russia, one in exile, both steeped in the literary tradition as its self-conscious heirs and innovators. Both connect the nascent power of artistic imagination in their young heroes with their sexual awakening and first love. The freedom of the imagination is shown to possess infinite capacity of recollection and transformation in the creation of an alternative reality, of the “*lieux de memoire*” in the absence of the “*milieux*.” Fedor understands this while he works on his novel: “Ought one not to reject any longing for one’s homeland, for any homeland besides that which is within me ...?” (187). These two acknowledged masterpieces of Russia Abroad draw on Turgenev as well as contemporary masters of European modernism, Proust and Joyce. They provide a brilliant confirmation of Khodasevich’s argument in the essay on “Literature in Exile,” cited above.

Conclusion

Serious critical reconsiderations of Turgenev’s legacy take place in the third stage of the diaspora’s history, when an affirmation of its identity and cultural life brings a new sense of achievement. There are two historical dates that contribute to this in the year 1933—the jubilee of Turgenev’s death and the Nobel Prize awarded to Bunin.

The Commemoration of the approaching fiftieth anniversary of Turgenev’s death began when *Vozrozhdenie* (13 January 1930) printed a brief article “At Turgenev’s Coffin,” citing the memoirs of D. Obolensky describing the memorial, attended by the cream of the French literary and cultural establishment (Renan was one of the speakers), before the return of his body to be buried in Russia. The political tensions of that last “journey” home are well known. It cites Vyrubov’s speech at the me-

morial, commenting on the difference between the deceased Herzen and Turgenev, who both contributed to Russian civilization: “Turgenev had something greater than an idea. He had form, the perfection of artistic form, whose mystery is known only by great writers.”⁹⁴

On the anniversary of the writer's death three years later, the Parisian paper, *Poslednie Novosti* of 3 September 1933, devoted two full pages to a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Turgenev's death. Pavel Miliukov opens his essay titled “A Russian European” with an ironic statement: “To call a Russian writer a European in these days of disillusionment and growing affirmations of the impending destruction of Europe—is hardly complementary.”⁹⁵ Miliukov explains the less than adulatory attitude toward the writer who, unlike Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, remained “on the margin of the historic flood” because “unlike the ‘two giants’ he was not a maximalist.” Neither a believer in the messianic role of his people, nor a denier of art and culture, Turgenev did not suit his country's temperament and was “out of step with his times.” Miliukov echoed Balmont's idea that, as a European, Turgenev was an heir to Pushkin, concluding that Turgenev's voice of reason is just what Russia needs to heed now.

The other article in this issue, written by Georgii Adamovich, was less adulatory and rather caustic. The begrudging tone of his opening remark that “if Turgenev were to rise from the dead, he would probably be pleased with his posthumous fate” points to the writer's present popularity among the “average” citizen (his use of the pejorative *obyvatel'* is more in line with Soviet rhetoric). Adamovich, who went against the grain of émigré cultural politics in his rejection of Pushkin as the greatest national poet, now reiterates the old “clichés” regarding Turgenev as “old-fashioned” and “out of step with the times,” stubbornly refusing to discard them.

By the end of the year, a radical change in mood occurred when Bunin was awarded the Nobel Prize in December, making 1933 a remarkable year in the history of Russia Abroad, signifying a moment of recognition of the Russian literary diaspora by the Europeans. A whole issue of *Contemporary Notes* (54, 1934) was devoted to the double celebration

⁹⁴ *Vozrozhdenie* 1686 (13 January 1930).

⁹⁵ *Poslednie Novosti* 4547 (3 September 1933): 2-3.

of Turgenev and Bunin. It opened with a statement from the editorial board, expressing surprise at the Swedish Academy's choice of Bunin as the consummate artist, worthy of representing Russian literature. A detailed essay on Bunin by F. Stepun was followed by Miliukov's extended essay on Turgenev, quite different from the earlier one cited above. Miliukov now considered Turgenev not only a great artist, but also an "original thinker," a champion of "the golden mean." Turgenev also deserved the Russian prize as "the teacher of life" for his generation. In conclusion, Miliukov asserted that Turgenev's example could serve as an antidote to Russian maximalism, suggesting that, more than any other Russian writer, he could now help the Russian intelligentsia "to renew contact with European culture, to render the torn ends and lead the Russian intelligentsia onward"⁹⁶

This message is strikingly different from Miliukov's depressing image of Europe just a few months earlier. Turgenev's national mission, revealed by association with Bunin's triumph as an émigré Russian writer, had finally received its due recognition. Miliukov expressed the hope that cosmopolitanism, combined with nationalism, in renewed contact with European culture would heal the Russian intelligentsia and point a path to the future. Miliukov offered a fitting tribute to Turgenev's views on the importance of European culture for Russia, resolving the age-old misapprehension of Turgenev by his compatriots. Moreover, the European connection now had the potential to be a distinguishing feature of Russia Abroad that would eventually contribute to the national culture.

⁹⁶ *Sovremennye zapiski* 54 (1934): 280.

Part III

*Modernism
and the Diaspora's Quest
for Literary Identity*

Chapter IIIA

Modernism/Modernity in the Postrevolutionary Diaspora

“*Nikogda nichei ia ne byl sovremennik.*”

(I have never ever been anyone’s contemporary.)

— Osip Mandelstam

In its last decades, the twentieth century occasioned passionate debates in the West about its beginning—about modernism, its definition, aesthetics, and politics. The importance of a stocktaking of the modernist legacy acquired new urgency in the swiftly approaching turn of the twenty first century. As Marshall Berman noted in his seminal book on modernism, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (1983), “we don’t know how to use modernism.”¹ Berman’s explicit purpose was to restore the memory of modernism and its promise: “This act of remembering can help us bring modernism back to its roots, so it can nourish and renew itself, to confront the adventures and dangers that lie ahead.”² This work, concerned with the relation between modernity and revolution, was one of the first that included an extended discussion of the Russian contribution and its distinct history in the context of European modernisms.

Modernism for Berman is revolutionary in its break with the past artistic traditions. His main concern is to reveal “the dialectics of modernization and modernism” in the interwar period.³ In a subsequent discussion of Berman’s book, Perry Anderson provides a useful clarification of terms: “Between the two lies the key middle term of ‘modernity’—neither economic process nor cultural vision but the *historical experience* mediat-

¹ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 24.

² *Ibid.*, 36.

³ *Ibid.*, 18.

ing one to the other.”⁴ The question Anderson asks is one that has great relevance for the Russian experience: “What constitutes the nature of the linkage between them?”⁵ He then singles out *development* as “the central concept of the book and the source of most of its paradoxes.” In the context of the postmodern critique, Andreas Huyssen questions the belief in “the relationship of modernism to the matrix of modernization which gave birth to it and nurtured it through its various stages.”⁶

The terms modernism, modernity, and development, debated in Russia since the early twentieth century, became crucial after the October Revolution in the passionate polemics concerning the shape and role of Russian literature in the young Soviet Union. A direct relation of art to social transformation, tied to development, was vital for the Soviet avant-garde, for whom this was an opportunity for a fusion of revolutionary politics and aesthetics. However, as Sheila Fitzpatrick points out, “within the creative intelligentsia ... there were profound splits between avant-gardists, traditionalists, preservationists, realists, symbolists, Marxists, and those who either were or were not prepared to be ‘Fellow Travelers’ of Soviet power.”⁷ Those writers and intellectuals who were part of the prerevolutionary modernism and found themselves in exile, outside the USSR and “outside of history,” faced a different set of challenges in the conditions of life abroad. For them, the connection between the aesthetic experiment of modernism, its social implications, and the matrix of modernity and modernization was particularly complex.

This chapter examines how the diaspora considered its role in the culture debates, where modernism and modernity were the disputed terms, understood as distinct by some and as conjoined by others in the years following the revolution. The Russian example represents a special case history in the study of cultural politics of a divided nation. Understanding the use of key terms and the attitudes they engendered holds further implications for understanding Russian modernism as it continued well

⁴ Perry Anderson, “Modernity and Revolution,” *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited with an introduction by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL./Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 318.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 55-56.

⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 4.

beyond the revolution at home and in the diaspora.⁸ The diaspora stance on these issues was inevitably ambivalent, since, as Paul Gilroy affirms, “consciousness of diaspora affiliation stands opposed to the distinctively modern structures and modes of power orchestrated by the institutional complexities of nation-states.”⁹

At the same time, the situation in the homeland provided a context for critical positions in the diaspora, where people from different sides of the political spectrum debated the events in Soviet Russia, set on an evolving platform of progress that would create a modern nation out of a backward tsarist empire. One of the polemical issues in the history of Russia Abroad was a concern with the role of literature in sustaining a sense of national identity. As the Soviet political situation began to change in the mid-twenties, the challenge of cultural continuity and artistic creativity became more acute. The questions concerned such issues as “here or there?”; “one or two literatures?”; cultural preservation vs. literary craft and innovation; the “how” vs. “what” argument; the problem of “center” and “periphery”; and the problem of readership.¹⁰ These were part of the process that, according to Gilroy, constitutes the diaspora’s “social ecology of identification,” created in a “relational network, characteristically produced by forced dispersal and reluctant scattering.”¹¹

The result of the social ecology of dispersion was the overriding concern with the preservation of the great Russian literary tradition, seen as threatened in the homeland. This contributed to the predominantly conservative stance among the writers and critics in the diaspora. Émigré conservatism was noted in an early seminal collective study by Frank Boldt, Lazar Fleishman, and Dmitry Segal.¹² In a later history of the Russian diaspora, Marc Raeff registered the general “ambivalence” of modernism among the émigrés as they questioned its dual nature, its aesthetics and politics in the aftermath of the revolution: “... Were

⁸ For the notion of the continuity of Russian modernism beyond the Revolution, see Mark Lipovetsky, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialogue with Chaos*, ed. Eliot Bornstein (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1999), 7.

⁹ Paul Gilroy, *Against Race. Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 124.

¹⁰ See, for example, V. Khodasevich: “Tam ili zdes’?” *Dni* 804 (25 September 1925).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹² Bol'dt, Fleishman, Segal, “Problemy izucheniia literatury russkoi emigratsii pervoi treti XX veka,” 75-88.

not the anarchism and nihilism of extreme modernism legitimate heirs to symbolist experimentation?”¹³ The social implications of modernism thus became associated with “the political and moral destructiveness of the Silver Age, and this stood in the way of a full appreciation of, for example, the poetry of Marina Tsvetaeva (or of Boris Pasternak, while he lived abroad)....”¹⁴ Indeed, Tsvetaeva and Remizov, who continued as innovators, often had to defend themselves against their critics in emigration.¹⁵

Indeed, the dizzying richness of the artistic revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century in Russia brought a sense of infinite possibilities, which also entailed individual and social emancipation in the land, where the need for change was fueled by an attenuated sense of an impending cataclysm. In *Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday*, Stephen Hutchings offers striking readings of Bely, Rozanov, and Remizov, whose autobiographical fictions represent an apotheosis in the transfiguration of the everyday, where *byt* emerges as a significant cultural category. By blurring the boundaries between the aesthetic and the counter-aesthetic, the modernists sought to overcome the division between self and other, while retaining the primacy of “the word” in Russian culture. According to Hutchings, this distinguished Russian modernism from European.¹⁶

The social implications of modernism are discussed in a foundational essay, “Modernity—an Incomplete Project,” where Jürgen Habermas reviews the long history of the term “modern” in the West, “which appeared and reappeared exactly during those periods in Europe when the consciousness of a new epoch formed itself through a renewed relationship to the ancients.”¹⁷ Since the Enlightenment, the idea of being “modern” was tied to the belief “inspired by modern science, in the infinite prog-

¹³ Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 103.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Marina Tsvetaeva complains about the attitude of contemporary critics to her and Remizov’s work and sees this as a problem for future historians of emigration: “Poet o kritike,” *Izbrannaia proza v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 1, 236-237.

¹⁶ Stephen C. Hutchings, *Russian Modernism: The Transfiguration of the Everyday* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15.

¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity—An Incomplete Project,” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. with an introduction by Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), 4.

ress of knowledge and in the infinite advance towards social and moral betterment.”¹⁸ For Habermas, as for Berman, “modernity revolts against the normalizing function of tradition; modernity lives on the experience of rebelling against all that is normative.”¹⁹ Habermas proclaims the modernist belief in the power of art to transform reality as a “failed” or “incomplete” part of its project in Western Europe. Once again, the Russian situation differs from the West. A part of the modernist “emancipatory project” of the utopian left avant-garde, in which art was to transform or affect life, was indeed fulfilled. However, as David Bethea points out in *The Shape of Apocalypse*, the “emancipatory project” tied to the Symbolist attempt to combine apocalyptic spiritual revelation of the end of Old Russia with the revolutionary anticipation of the birth of a new Russia failed.²⁰

Writing on the modernism/modernity matrix in the chapter “The Hidden Dialectic: Avantgarde—Technology—Mass Culture,” Andreas Huyssen reiterates “the historical avantgarde’s insistence on the cultural transformation of everyday life.”²¹ He notes that, while in Dada, “technology mainly functioned to ridicule and dismantle bourgeois high culture and its ideology,” it took on “an entirely different meaning in post-1917 Russian avant-garde.”²² Huyssen states that “the Russian avantgarde had already completed its break with tradition when it turned openly political after the revolution.”²³ It thus accomplished the emancipatory project that remained “incomplete” elsewhere in Europe: “the avantgarde’s goal to forge a new unity of art and life by creating a new life seemed about to be realized in revolutionary Russia.”²⁴ Many years later, this utopian moment in art would lead Boris Groys to conclude that the avant-garde had prepared the path for Stalinist Socialist Realism.²⁵

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ David Bethea, “Introduction: Myth, History, Plot, Steed,” in *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 7.

²¹ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 11.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁵ Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

The importance of chronology for writers on both shores is of critical significance. The aftermath of the October Revolution and the Civil War was a brief time of relative openness regarding the directions of literature, as writers both in the homeland and in emigration struggled with historical change and a scarcity of resources. The situation remained in flux in the early twenties while the borders and joint publishing venues remained open. At the same time, Soviet cultural leaders paid attention to the intellectual and literary life of Russians abroad. Mark von Hagen points out that the émigré culture provided an important “countermodel and context for the development of Soviet culture.”²⁶ Sometimes the response was quick. For example, Robert Maguire shows that the revival of the venerable tradition of the “thick journal” that first occurred when *Contemporary Notes* (*Sovremennye zapiski*) began publication in Paris in 1920, presented a challenge to the Soviets. It was met by Aleksandr Voronskii’s efforts to create *Red Virgin Soil* (*Krasnaia nov’*), in 1921, with the support of Lenin, Krupskaja, and Gorky.²⁷ Among its tasks was to provide a serious venue for established and young writers, as well as to deny “the émigré taunts that the Bolsheviks ruled a cultural desert.”²⁸ Most significantly, the notion of “contemporariness” as the journal’s stated requirement sent a clear message abroad that the choice to leave Russia was “a choice against history, and therefore against art, and would be punished by artistic sterility and death.”²⁹ Despite the differences, there was continuity in the debates on both sides of the border up to 1925, in the years immediately preceding the Cultural Revolution.³⁰

An acute consciousness of this transitional moment in Russian culture was signaled by Ivanov-Razumnik, an important prerevolutionary critic of Russian modernism who remained in the country, in his collection of essays *Sovremennaia literatura* (1925), published with delay and without his name.³¹ In the editor’s introduction, Ivanov-Razumnik expressed a need for stocktaking: “a critical appraisal of the immediate past is alone

²⁶ See Mark von Hagen, “Toward a Cultural and Intellectual History of Soviet Russia in the 1920s,” *Révue des études slaves* 68 (1996): 299.

²⁷ Robert A. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s*, 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

³⁰ See S. Fitzpatrick, “The Soft Line on Culture and Its Enemies,” in *The Cultural Front*.

³¹ A. V. Lavrov and John Malmstad, “Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik: Preduvedomlenie k perepiske,” in *Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik: perepiska*, 22.

capable of explaining the phenomena of today and map out the plausible path of tomorrow.”³² In his essay in the volume titled “A Look and Something” (*Vzgliad i nechto*), signed by the pseudonym Ippolit Udush'ev, he drew a line between the art of prerevolutionary modernism and the work of younger authors, declaring that “it is not unlikely that, following a great surge of the creative wave in Russian literature of the first quarter of the century, we would not be (and already are) facing its fall, which can extend over some decades.”³³ In this essay, Ivanov-Razumnik differentiates two stages of modernist literature, considering the first quarter of the century as its Golden Age.

Thus, it is not surprising that 1926 was a decisive year for polemical discussions of modernism and modernity as it registered the sense of change and a realization of a divide between the diaspora and the homeland, where cultural groupings were coming to grips with the increasing Party control.³⁴ Two new journals made their appearance and positioned themselves clearly on the stage of cultural politics of Russia Abroad: the Paris-based Eurasian journal, *Mileposts* (*Versty*, 1926-1928), edited by D. S. Mirsky, published in three issues; and *The Well-Intentioned* (*Blagonamerennyi*, 1926), edited by Dmitrii Shakhovskoi, with two issues published in Belgium. Their polemical stance shows how cultural politics in the homeland affected the diaspora stance towards the modernism/modernization matrix.

Mirsky was one of the most eloquent advocates of artistic experimentation and appeared unambiguously impatient with the dominant conservative attitude. For him, artistic modernism is inseparable from modernity, where the notion of development is key. His introduction to the first issue of *Versty* was a concise statement that called for a closer scrutiny in this context. At the outset, Mirsky states that the journal does

³² Ivanov-Razumnik, *Sovremennaia literatura. Sbornik statei* (Leningrad: Mysl', 1925), 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 161.

³⁴ The year 1925 marked the end of the journal *Colloquy* (*Beseda*), a collaborative venture, organized by Maxim Gorky along with Vladislav Khodasevich, and published in Berlin. 1926 marked the end of LEF (the Left Front in Art) as a representative of the avant-garde wing of revolutionary art, as well as the end of *Sovremennyyi Zapad*, edited by K. Chukovskii and E. Zamyatin, a short-lived journal that supported modernism and modernity in its cosmopolitan perspective and featured translations of contemporary European modernists, as well as reviews of publications by Russia Abroad.

not pretend to “unite all of the best and the most alive (*vsego, chto est’ luchshego i samogo zhivogo*) in contemporary Russian literature.”³⁵ While suggesting that a journal published abroad can only point the reader’s attention to the best, he also claims that would be easier to realize from “the outside” or “the periphery” (*so storony*) [could be understood as either], than in Russia. Paradoxically, while setting definite limits for such a journal, Mirsky nevertheless points to its advantages, even as he disdains émigré writers, with the exception of Tsvetaeva and Remizov.³⁶

The “supranational” argument for this task of understanding “the whole” leads Mirsky to his main point that “Russian is greater than Russia itself” (*russskoe bol’she samoi Rossii*). Moreover, Mirsky equates “Russianness” with “modernity” (*sovremennost’*) as its “particular and most acute expression” (*osoboe i naibolee ostroe vyrazhenie*). “Modernity” is also to be understood in cosmopolitan terms, since the journal would be concerned with foreign literature as well. His bibliographical survey in the first issue shows how *Versty* positions itself amidst existing émigré journals. Mirsky’s review of the Parisian *Contemporary Notes* sees the journal as stuck in a time warp, its conservatism tied to “the inertia of prerevolutionary Russia.”³⁷

Particularly important for our discussion is the implicit semantic opposition of the terms “contemporary” and “contemporaneity” (*sovremennyi/sovremennost’*), which reveals the author’s underlying message that “contemporaneity” is superior to and displaces the retrograde aesthetic literary criteria. In this Mirsky appears close to the editorial position of the *Red Virgin Soil*, cited above. He is disparaging in consigning *Contemporary Notes* to the category of “a museum and often a panopticum.”³⁸

However, Mirsky favors the left-wing Prague journal *Volia Rossii* (“Russia’s Will”), edited by Marc Slonim, calling it the most “alive” and “free” of émigré publications, since it includes the best in contemporary Soviet literature. He notes that there is no such journal in the USSR since the end of LEF. In conclusion, Mirsky states in no uncertain terms that

³⁵ *Versty*, ed. by Count D. P. Sviatopolk-Mirskii, P. Suvchinskii, S. Efron, with the close participation of Aleksei Remizov, Marina Tsvetaeva, and Lev Shestov, no. 26 (1926): 1.

³⁶ Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 74.

³⁷ D. S. Mirsky, “Bibliografiia,” *Versty* 1 (1926): 207.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 211.

it in this journal “Russia is alive not only within the borders of the Russian world, but in the kingdom of the Spirit, beyond all borders.” Like *Mileposts*, this is a supra-national and supra-temporal journal in Mirsky’s understanding of time that encompasses temporality, contemporaneity, and the future cultural legacy.

The other new émigré journal this year, *Blagonamerennyi*, was an important, though short-lived, literary publication. Mirsky finds a forum here, alongside such established writers as Tsvetaeva and Remizov. Mirsky’s programmatic and polemical essay “On the Current State of Russian Literature,” published in the first issue, continues his polemics with conservative critics and asserts that political criteria alone should not dominate literary choices, either at home or abroad. In his estimation, the greatest living poets living in the Soviet Union are Akhmatova, Pasternak, and Mandelstam, along with Tsvetaeva in Paris. He does not include Mayakovsky in this list, considering him stuck and repeating himself, thus curiously missing Mayakovsky’s importance at this time. In this particular case, as we shall see later, Tsvetaeva was much more astute and attuned to modernity. Mirsky’s provocative concluding statement that “Russian literature finds more *joie de vivre* after the revolution, than before it” is an open challenge to the émigrés.

Two brief remarks in the essay are relevant to the problem of contemporaneity. One, concerning the Formalist school and its “enlivening action, which coincided with the fall of creative powers on Russian soil” (*ozhivliaiushchee deistvie formalizma sovpalo s upadkom tvorcheskikh sil russkoi pochvy*)³⁹ This remark made in passing is striking, first of all because, according to G. Smith, “in all of Mirsky’s writing there is not a single item devoted to the exposition of a theoretical position.”⁴⁰ It acquires added weight in the ominous concluding paragraph, where Mirsky states that “for a quarter of a century our literature (and not just literature?) has been preparing us for death” (*Chetvert’ veka nasha literatura (odna-li literatura?)*)

³⁹ D. S. Mirsky, “O nyneshnem sostoianii russkoi literatury,” in his *Uncollected Writings on Russian Literature*, 228.

⁴⁰ G. S. Smith, *D. S. Mirsky: A Russian-English Life: 1890-1939* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120. Smith notes here that Mirsky published a single review of the Russian Formalists in *Sovremennye zapiski*, 24 (1925), written “with astonishing acuity,” where he acknowledged that they “laid the basis for a genuinely historical and also text-based approach to the literary work.”

gotovila nas k smerti).⁴¹ In a recent biography of Mirsky, Gerald Smith connects this statement with Mirsky's "notorious" lecture on "The Ambience of Death in Prerevolutionary Russian Literature," delivered in Paris in 1926 and published the next year in the second issue of *Versty*, with a footnote stating that his public lecture has occasioned the anger of the Paris émigré literary establishment.⁴² It is not hard to see why, since here Mirsky proclaimed that the literature of the last stage of the Russian empire was imbued with the sense of death and decomposition. He implied that such a sensibility was part of the collective unconscious, independent of historical process.⁴³ Not only does Mirsky contradict Ivanov-Razumnik's appraisal of the Golden Age of Russian modernism, but also his own rendering of its history in his excellent *History of Russian Literature*, published in England in 1926.

In a sharply polemical piece, "Dialogue on Conservatism" in the second issue of *Blagonamerennyi*, Mirsky admonishes the émigré conservationists, arguing that "there is nothing to conserve."⁴⁴ He comes out against the possibility of "restoration," no more possible in literature than it is in politics. He proclaims that art is revolutionary by definition, because it creates "new values" (*Iskusstvo — sozdanie novykh tsennostei*), and concludes with an ironic statement: "Pasternak and Marina Tsvetaeva may not be immediately appreciated, but I also have to make an effort to get to the British Museum from my house."⁴⁵ This clearly reiterates the necessity of change and the penchant toward the modern. As a literary critic, writing in English as well as in Russian, Mirsky had doubts about the ability of literature to thrive or sustain itself as an independent entity in exile. His early opinion, voiced in 1922, stated that "there is little or no first-class fiction in literature of the Russian Emigration," did not change while he remained abroad until 1932.⁴⁶ For him, émigré literature would remain on the periphery, with the center in Russia. This would become

⁴¹ Mirsky, "O nyneshnem sostoianii russkoi literatury," in his *Uncollected Writings on Russian Literature*, 229.

⁴² G. S. Smith, 135.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁴⁴ *Blagonamerennyi* 2 (1926): 87.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴⁶ D. S. Mirsky, "Five Russian Letters." Originally published in six parts: "The Literature of the Emigration," *The London Mercury* 27 (1922): 276-285; reprinted in D. S. Mirsky, *Uncollected Writings on Russian Literature*, 84.

one of the points of argument between Mirsky and Khodasevich, up to the time when Mirsky returns to the Soviet Union in 1932.

In contrast to Mirsky's provocative statements, Vladislav Khodasevich who, according to Smith, was Mirsky's worthiest opponent in emigration, presents a more balanced, if somewhat depressed, view of literary politics on both shores. In his article "There or Here?" he was critical of the émigré rejection of Soviet literature for political reasons and proclaimed both literatures as "ailing," hoping that "both will survive."⁴⁷ He was also critical of Mirsky's bias toward "the center" and, in his sharp response to *Versty*, he attacked the Eurasianists and their insistence on the presence of better conditions for fostering talent in the USSR, and Mirsky, specifically, for his readiness to ignore the suffering of writers and the intelligentsia in Soviet Russia.⁴⁸

Writing on behalf of Russian literature abroad, Khodasevich continues to argue with Mirsky after the latter's departure for the Soviet Union in 1932. His programmatic essay on "Literature in Exile," written in 1933, is an affirmation of the existence and productivity of émigré literature as a national literature, not only in Russian but in world history. Khodasevich appears closer to Mirsky on some points, as he reiterates his notion of a divided literature and rejects émigré conservatism, which for him equals "indifference to the literary process." And whereas in the past Khodasevich was critical of the Formalists, now his approach resembles theirs as he stresses the dynamics of literary evolution: "The spirit of literature is the spirit of eternal explosion and eternal renewal."⁴⁹ Arguing against "restoration," he continues to insist that one cannot learn from people who "look only to the past and who are not interested in the problems of literary theory," but asserts the possibility of great creativity in exile.⁵⁰

The argument for diaspora literature is made in the period between 1925-1939, which Gleb Struve considers as that of the "self-affirmation of diaspora." A year before Khodasevich, Marina Tsvetaeva takes up the dialogue concerning the relationship of modernism and modernity,

⁴⁷ V. Khodasevich, *Sobranie sochinenii v 5-ti tomakh*, vol. 2 (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1992), 368.

⁴⁸ V. Khodasevich, "O 'Verstakh,'" *Sovremennye zapiski* 29 (Paris, 1926): 433-441.

⁴⁹ V. Khodasevich, "Literatura v izgnanii," 267.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 258.

and its implication for the artist, Soviet or émigré, in her brilliant essay “The Poet and Time.” The essay opens with a quote that echoes Mirsky’s “Dialogue on Conservatism,” cited above. The two phrases—“I really love art, but only not contemporary” and the counter-statement “I love verse, but only contemporary”—set up the parameters of her argument, exemplified by two seemingly antithetical great Russian poets, Pushkin and Mayakovsky.⁵¹ Tsvetaeva declares that “there is no art . . . that is not contemporary” (*Ne sovremennogo... iskusstva net*). While agreeing with both Mirsky and Khodasevich that restoration is not art, she speaks of individuals who may be a hundred years ahead of their time, who are “outside time” (*vne-vremennye*).⁵² While assuming the poet’s relationship to history, “One cannot skip out of History” (*iz Istorii ne vyskochish*), Tsvetaeva insists, however, that “contemporaneity for a poet is not a declaration of the superiority of his time” (*sovremennost’ u poeta ne est’ provozglashenie svoego vremeni luchshim...*) and that the “contemporaneity” of verse is not in its contents, but often despite it, in its sound.⁵³

In terms of the modernism/modernity nexus that is central in the homeland, Tsvetaeva is clear that politics divide the poet and the people. If the theme of the revolution is the “social command” of the time, its glorification is the command of the Party.⁵⁴ She defines “contemporaneity” (*sovremennost’*) as “the sum total of what is best” (*sovokupnost’ luchshego*), but declares “the marriage of poet and time—a forced marriage.”⁵⁵ It is here that Tsvetaeva draws the striking distinction between “a revolutionary poet” and “the poet of the Revolution (*le chantre de la Revolution*).”⁵⁶ In this representative essay of aesthetic modernism, Tsvetaeva appears more attuned to modernity than Mirsky in recognizing Mayakovsky’s greatness. In her homage, written soon after the poet’s tragic death in 1930, she declared him to be a single example of the “poet

⁵¹ Marina Tsvetaeva, “Poet i vremia,” *Izbrannaia proza v dvukh tomakh: 1917-1937*, vol. 1, 367.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 369.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 370-371. Tsvetaeva follows the juxtaposition of the two poets made by Mirsky in his article “Dve smerti: 1837-1930,” in *Smert’ Vladimira Maiakovskogo* (Berlin: Petropolis, 1931), 47-66. However, she argues with Mirsky’s assertion that the poet’s suicide marked the end of an era of the artist as a supreme individualist.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 374.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 377-379.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 374.

of the Revolution.” With great acuity, speaking from the experience of writing in the homeland and in the diaspora, both before and after the Revolution, Tsvetaeva understood that modernism and modernity were almost never compatible.

The discussion of modernism and modernity was taken up by Tsve-taeva’s older contemporaries and senior modernists, Aleksei Remizov, a fellow émigré, and Andrei Bely, residing in the homeland. They began working on critical studies of Gogol independently on both shores in the early thirties, because for them Gogol was a “hypercontemporary writer” (*sovremenneishii pisatel*).⁵⁷ Remizov continued to work on Gogol in emigration, insisting that he “always read Gogol.”⁵⁸ The continuing dialogue between a twentieth-century modernist and the master from whom one can learn how to write by “following his verbal structure” remains uninterrupted.⁵⁹ Remizov’s approach to presenting the writer’s creative biography as “mythological” is inseparable from his conception of himself as a writer, whose biography is seen in terms of human history as a “struggle and succession of myths: the myth of the deity, the myth of freedom, the myth of love.”⁶⁰ As will Bely, Remizov takes this occasion to address the tension between writers and contemporary critics, both in Gogol’s time and in his own, in *Russia Abroad*. Thinking of difficulties with the émigré critics who do not understand his work, Remizov reminds his contemporaries that one has to learn to read Gogol.

The situation was different for Andrei Bely, who became actively involved in the reaction that accompanied Meyerhold’s staging of Gogol’s “Inspector General” in 1926. The ideological lines were sharply drawn in response to the event that turned into a great media scandal of the year. In his study of Meyerhold, Konstantin Rudnitskii confirms both the importance of the staging and the reactions to it: “There was nothing in the theater history like the discussion of the ‘Inspector General.’ Passionate disputes, numerous contradictory reviews, both positive and scorching, epigrams, feuilletons ...”⁶¹ The public speech Bely presented in 1926, “Gogol and Meyerhold,” gives a full flavor of the conflict: “It has

⁵⁷ A. Remizov, *Ogon’ veshchei*, 514.

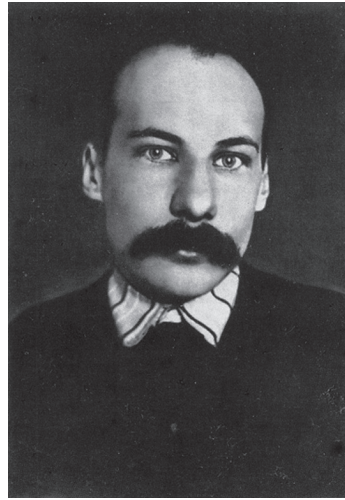
⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶¹ Konstantin Rudnitskii, *Meierkhold* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1981), 350.

been two month that the cry is heard in Moscow ‘Meyerhold insulted Gogol. Gogol laughed a healthy laugh: Meyerhold killed Gogol’s healthy laughter’⁶² Bely’s sharply polemical tone is underscored by an ironically straightforward advice to his confused contemporaries to reread Gogol, since his text has not yet been torn apart by Meyerhold. This was precisely the advice that, along with Remizov, Bely followed in his book on *Gogol’s Artistry* (begun in 1931 and published in 1934), a model of a close critical reading and analysis.



Andrei Bely,
1880-1934

Bely’s letters to Ivanov-Razumnik during the period of writing provide insight into the dramatic conditions of work on the subject during the early thirties. Bely’s uncertainty about the project is revealed in some passages in the Gogol study, where Marxist rhetoric—the rhetoric of modernity in the Soviet context—makes a rare but striking appearance. Ivanov-Razumnik attributed Bely’s use of such terms as “class struggle” or “the dynamics of the capitalist process” in an otherwise brilliant book to his belief that it would be impossible to get the book past the censors “without rendering it Marxist” (*ne omarksitiv ee*).⁶³

In his attempt to disengage modernism from modernity, Bely comments on the conflict of his own time as he formulates the tragedy of Gogol’s last years, stating that the struggle “between social command and demand is a disease.”⁶⁴ Bely’s position, as that of Khodasevich and Tsvetaeva, appears close to Russian Formalists. In his article of 1927, “The Literary Everyday” (*Literaturnyi byt*), Eikhbaum declares with considerable acuity that “social command does not always coincide with the

⁶² Andrei Belyi, “Gogol’ i Meierkhol’d” in *Gogol’ i Meierkhol’d: sbornik literaturno-issledovatel’skoi assotsiatsii Ts.D.R.P.*, ed. E. F. Nikitina (Moscow: Nikitinskie subbotniki, 1927), 9.

⁶³ Quoted in Aleksandr Lavrov and John Malmstad, “Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik: Preduvedomlenie k perepiske,” in *Andrei Belyi i Ivanov-Razumnik—perepiska*, 22.

⁶⁴ A. Belyi, *Masterstvo Gogolia* (Moscow: Gos. Izd. Khud. Lit., 1934), 113.

literary one, as does the class struggle with the literary struggles.”⁶⁵ It also seems that the Russian modernists would be in agreement with the post-war critics Clement Greenberg and Theodor W. Adorno, for whom the theory of modernism “appears as a theory of modernization displaced to the aesthetic realm; this is precisely its historical strength, and what makes it different from the mere academic formalism of which it is so often accused.”⁶⁶ And at the end of the twentieth century, Habermas will confirm this, along with Tsvetaeva’s views, that “all attempts to level art and life, fiction and praxis, appearance and reality ... have proved themselves to be sort of nonsense experiments.”⁶⁷

In her recent book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym reiterates how crucial it is to “distinguish ‘modernism’ as a critical project from ‘modernization’ as a social practice and state policy.”⁶⁸ The insistence on the separate realms is important in relation to Russian Formalism, a critical school that represented the modern in its approach. In the Formalist theory of literary history, evolution as a complex term replaced *development* and *influence*. Iurii Tynianov understood the nature of “literary evolution” as dynamic, but not necessarily linear in terms of genre: “not a level evolution, but a jump, not development, but shifts” (*ne planomernaia evolutsiia, a skachok, ne razvitie, a smeshchenie*).⁶⁹ His collection of essays, *Archaisms and Innovators*, appeared at the end of the first revolutionary decade in 1929, when modernism was under attack, with a striking title that combined the term pertaining to modernity with its paradoxical counterpart. Already in his 1924 essay on “The Literary Fact,” included in the volume, the key factors constitutive of literary evolution are those of “struggle and change” (*bor’ba i smena*), but the process is not linear. But most importantly for this discussion, Tynianov perceived *contemporaneity* (*sovremennost’*) as a complex phenomenon: “the contemporary is subject to the same historical struggle between different layers and formations as historical phenomena at various times.”⁷⁰ In his thinking,

⁶⁵ B. Eikhenbaum, *Moi vremennik* (Leningrad, 1928). Quoted in Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism*, 150.

⁶⁶ A. Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*, 57.

⁶⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Modernity—An Incomplete Project,” 11.

⁶⁸ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 45.

⁶⁹ Iu. Tynianov, “Literaturnyi fakt,” *Arkhaisty i novatory*. Reprint of Leningrad edition, 1929 (Munich: W. Fink, 1967), 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

Tynianov appears closer to the Russian modernist writers, Tsvetaeva, Bely, and Remizov, than he is to Mirsky's position.

In the statements surveyed here that belong to the continued tradition of prerevolutionary modernism in the diaspora, the complex experience of contemporaneity for critics and writers often appears contradictory, as it forces them to face problems of individual creativity in the newly formed context of Russian literature at home and abroad. There is a general agreement on the idea, put forth by Mirsky, that literary conservatism forestalls artistic development. However, as the writers cope with history at home and in the diaspora, their experience helps to articulate the notions of modernism, modernity and development that have been the subject of considerable discussion and critique in post-modern theory.

Chapter IIIB

Double Consciousness and Bilingualism in Aleksei Remizov's Story "The Industrial Horseshoe" and the Literary Journal *Chisla*

"A wheel on the door is an 'industrial horseshoe.'"

—Aleksei Remizov, "The Industrial Horseshoe"

The nineteen thirties mark the second stage in the history of the Russia emigration, when writers of the older generation, such as Ivan Bunin, Boris Zaitsev, Zinaida Gippius, Marina Tsvetaeva, Aleksei Remizov, and Vladislav Khodasevich, were still taking an active part in literary life. The conditions of émigré life in this second stage present special difficulties for beginning writers, for example, Gaito Gazdanov, Iurii Fel'zen, and Vladimir Nabokov, all of whom became adults in Europe. As discussed above, émigré critics were troubled by the weakened ties with the Russian language and the Russian literary tradition that came about in the absence of any dialogue with Russia since the late 1920s. It was during this period that the Russian diaspora forged valuable contacts with contemporary European literature and culture, French in particular—contacts that would reanimate the literary discourse within the Russian emigration. As Gleb Struve writes, "The flourishing of émigré literature coincided, as strange as it may seem, with the time of the most embittered arguments about its very existence and purpose."¹

The journal *Chisla* (*Numbers*), the organ of the younger generation of writers that promised to change the emigration's conservative attitude toward contemporary literature, began taking an active part in these debates in 1930. The journal's artistic design and format recalled the prerevolutionary journal *Apollon*, which obliged the new publication to strive

¹ G. P. Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 199.

for the high quality of its predecessor. The continuation of the modernist traditions of the Silver Age, now impossible in the Soviet Union, was projected here as one facet of the emigration's mission.² The editorial note in the first issue of *Chisla* emphasizes the journal's apolitical stance, its literary aesthetic, and its cultural ties with the West. There is no concrete platform, but the note points to the "new world-view or something that is still elusive but is already felt ..."; and further on, that there are "hopes ... for something completely new and important." The treatment of contemporary Western culture in the journal, in particular the "ratification" of Proust's genius, clearly brings Russian writers into the context of European modernism and represents the emigration's conscious position and its ties with Europe at this point in history. At the same time the role of Russian culture in the West is noted here as well: "We are witnessing Europe's continuous absorption of certain Russian influences ..., which suggests a change in attitude of the West to Soviet Russia in the late 1920s and its rapprochement with the emigration."

Accounts of the journal's literary evenings give a more detailed description of its role, which above all focused on efforts to fill in the gaps left by literature in Russia: "the obligation to revisit such forgotten subjects in Russia as death, God, fate"³ This mission on the part of the emigration is confirmed by the discussion "Politics and Art" (12 December 1930), in which the editor Nikolai Otsup cautiously asks the question: "But shouldn't we, for Russia's sake, take a closer look at the West?"⁴ This appeal to the Western cultural context is given with a nod to the older generation and the mission, which remained unchanged, despite the new literary currents.

Chisla was founded at a time when the answer to the question about whether Paris was the "capital or the backwater of Russian literature" was particularly acute. At the same time the position of the Russian émigré writer remains far from easy, which is confirmed by the questionnaire "Do you believe that Russian literature is experiencing a decline at the present time?"⁵ In this regard, Marc Slonim's answer is particularly

² N. Otsup, "Serebrianyi vek," *Chisla* 7-8 (1933): 174-178.

³ "Politika i iskusstvo. Večer 'Chisel,'" *Chisla* 4 (1931): 260.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁵ Questionnaire, *Chisla* 3 (1930): 318.

important, because his opinion had changed since 1926, when to Khodasevich's question "There or Here?" he answered that there was "more *joie de vivre*—there."⁶ His answer in 1930 reflected the changes in the political circumstances in the Soviet Union: "Art in Russia is constantly subjected to forced coercion"; he concludes by saying that despite "the lowered spirits of many émigré writers ..., nevertheless, by comparison spirits are higher here than over there."⁷ Therefore, the questionnaires about Proust, authorship, contemporaneity, and contemporary literature represent a turning point in the emigration. Of course, the journal also featured the familiar arguments about language, literariness, the state of literature in the Russian abroad, and its future.

As a member of the older generation of modernists, Aleksei Remizov played a minimal part in the journal, but he does enter the literary fray in his story "The Industrial Horseshoe" (*Industrial'naia podkova*), which appeared in *Chisla* in 1931. In this polemical context the story reads as a meta-text, directed at a whole range of issues that had been discussed in the journal. Later, the story would become part of his literary reminiscences of the prewar Parisian period (1924-1939), *Uchitel' muzyki* (*The Music Teacher*), which Remizov compiled during the course of the 1930s, but which would not be published until 1949.⁸ Bilingualism as a characteristic phenomenon of the diaspora and an expression of its dual Russian and European cultural consciousness plays a special role in the story.

Jeux bilingues (bilingual games) that play on the language of another country, that is, France, play a dominant role in the narrative, along with a deep connection with the Russian language that permits its literary evolution in the emigration. One of the variants of bilingualism in Remizov is the interlingual pun, which forms the basis of the story "The Industrial Horseshoe." We should note that a similar linguistic game appears in Remizov's work in the first year of his Berlin emigration, in the

⁶ M. Slonim, "Literaturnyi dnevnik," *Volia Rossii* 7 (1928); quoted from Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 69.

⁷ Questionnaire, *Chisla* 3 (1930): 320.

⁸ A. M. Remizov, "Uchitel' muzyki. Katorzhnaia idillia," in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 9, ed. A. d'Ameliiia (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 2002). Page numbers given in the text refer to the journal publication: A. M. Remizov, "Industrial'naia podkova," *Chisla* 5 (1931): 103-143.

story “*Kriuk*” (“*Hook*,” 1921), where the Russian word is linked with the German *Krücke* (crutch).⁹

Bilingualism as a characteristic phenomenon of the diaspora is currently receiving a good deal of attention from scholars.¹⁰ Various forms of bilingualism, particularly playing with the language of another country as a source of irony, allows the foreigner to maintain his personal identity and at the same time opens up new possibilities for his native language, thereby enriching it, all of which Remizov demonstrates in his story intended for the Russian reader, writer, and critic in the Russian Abroad. In addition to the incomprehensible word *zut* and a number of everyday words, the story contains two texts in French, one from everyday language and the other a literary quotation, namely, a letter from a neighbor in his building and an extract from Proust. Bilingualism in the story is not only a fact of the main character’s surroundings, but it is also a literary fact, which recalls Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, one of the literary subtexts in the story. This device allows Remizov to take part in the émigré debates about authorship, and to do so in his own way.

The realia of émigré life in Paris serve as an opening for Remizov to take part in the conversations about language, literature, and the very concept of literariness, which have engrossed both writers and critics. The story reflects the topics of the critical discussions that took place at the evenings sponsored by *Chisla* and which appeared on its pages. For example, the conflict between tradition and innovation is already visible in the very first issue, where the discourse “about the new” is represented by the “Questionnaire about Proust.” The writers’ various reactions to the question about Proust and his significance in contemporary literature, and in Russian literature in particular, reveals the emigration’s ambivalent

⁹ I want to thank Lena Obatnina for her valuable communication regarding the story “*Kriuk*,” which was first published in *Novaia Russkaia Kniga*, no. 1, pages 6-10, with the subtitle “Pamiat’ peterburgskaia”; later under the title “Skriplik” in *Posolon: volshebnaia Rossiia* (Paris: Izd-vo Tair, 1930), 192. It’s curious that the anonymous reviewer of the story did not understand the bilingual pun (*Rul’* 390, [26 February]: 6). While he shows that in German *Krücke* is a crutch, and not the same as the Russian word *kriuk* (hook), he does not consider the form of this object as a visual component of the pun.

¹⁰ See “Introduction,” *Bilingual Games*, 1-20.

attitude towards modernism.¹¹ While the majority of writers recognize Proust's genius, they are skeptical about the possibility of his influence. An exception is Mikhail Tsetlin, who believes that Proust's influence might be "beneficial" for Russian literature, which "lives only on Russian traditions."¹² Ivan Shmelyov expresses a radically nationalistic opinion: "Where will Proust take us? Our path is the high road, there's no need for us to wander off into little alleyways for a stroll."¹³

While the "Questionnaire about Proust" would seem to establish the journal's leaning towards the "new" in literature, Georgii Adamovich's "Kommentarii" ("Commentary"), published in the same issue, reveal precisely the opposite preference in literature; for Adamovich what is important is the "human document," which finds "invention absolutely unnecessary."¹⁴ In this understanding of the creative process, the writer's "sincerity" is considered a condition of the new art.¹⁵ This position represents a continuation of one of the old debates from 1927-1928 between Adamovich and his opponent Khodasevich, who insisted on the necessity of artistic craft.¹⁶ A brief survey of *Chisla* will show that the debate on this issue is continued in subsequent issues.

In the journal's third issue, an editorial note invites a "lively and unbuttoned exchange of opinions on all issues of Russian culture." The fourth issue (1931) publishes a report on Iurii Sofiev's speech at the Union of Young Poets. In keeping with the opinion of Otsup, the journal's editor, and Adamovich's "Commentary," Sofiev welcomes the journal's new direction, in particular the "return from the Parnassan heights" in the name of the mass reader. This position is seen as a challenge to the older modernists, as well as the "young Proustians"—for example, Gazdanov and Fel'zen, who published their works in the journal, and Sirin, who did not.¹⁷ This report confirms that a schism had taken place, which sepa-

¹¹ M. Raev, *Rossiiia za rubezhom. Istoriia kul'tury russkoi emigratsii* (Moscow: Progress-Akademiia, 1994), 131-133.

¹² *Chisla* 1 (1930): 276.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹⁴ Adamovich, "Kommentarii," *Chisla* 1 (1930): 140.

¹⁵ On Georgii Adamovich's literary views, see L. Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, 139, 154 *passim*.

¹⁶ Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 206.

¹⁷ See Livak, "The Prodigal Children of Marcel Proust," in *How It Was Done in Paris*.

rated the young writers into two camps—the first one particularly valued “craft,” and the second “some ultimate truth.”¹⁸

The continuation of this discussion in the fifth issue, in which Remizov’s story also appeared, paid particular attention to the problem of the “return from the Parnassan heights” with its address to the older generation. In answer to the question “What do you think about your work?”¹⁹ Remizov answers: “Why should I speak of my work, when the readers of *Chisla* haven’t even heard of my books?”²⁰ In the name of discussion, the editor cites the question “For whom do you write?” and includes in the fifth issue (1931) Mikhail Osorgin’s comments from *Novaya Gazeta*. Like Adamovich and Sofiev, Osorgin expresses the opinion that “respect for the reader ... requires that the writer be as comprehensible and ... readable” as possible.²¹ He criticizes Remizov for writing “for himself” and for the “difficulty” of his style which the reader finds a burden. Remizov’s brusque reply to this opinion of the average reader clearly outlines his position: “When he is writing, a writer has in mind neither reader nor calculation, but only that which he is writing and which cannot not be written.”²²

This discussion reveals the coexistence of contradictory desires: to attract the average reader and preserve Russian culture; but also to afford an opportunity for the development of the young émigré literature. In the debates on Russian literature in the context of European modernism, these juxtapositions were inevitable. For this reason, one hears a note of rivalry in Boris Poplavsky’s 1930 essay “On Joyce”, which appeared in the fourth issue: “... as far as literature is concerned, we believe that Joyce burned through absolutely everything, even Proust seems schematic and artificial by comparison, although of course *Notes from Underground*, *Demons*, and “The Death of Ivan Ilyich” and several other books are untouched by this devastation.” It’s interesting that the rivals to contemporary modernism are not examples from Russian modernism, but the Russian classics, which only serves to confirm the conservatism of the

¹⁸ *Chisla* 4 (1931): 258.

¹⁹ “Literaturnaia anketa,” *Chisla* 5 (1931): 286-289.

²⁰ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 287.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 283.

²² *Ibid.*, 285.

emigration's cultural values. The ambivalent approach to the European context, which was so important for the young writers, is expressed in Otsup's article on the novel *Vecher u Kler* (*Evening with Claire*): "the most talented of the young prose writers in the emigration are influenced by the major French contemporary writers, mainly Proust, and each one of them tries to overcome this influence in his own way."²³ Otsup voices a negative opinion about the prose of Sirin, who did not publish in *Chisla*, emphasizing that Fel'zen and Gazdanov's ties with French literature were "more organic" than those of Sirin.

The Story "The Industrial Horseshoe"

Remizov's story "The Industrial Horseshoe" serves as a reply to this opinion about the "organic nature" of ties with Proust. Remizov appears here as a modernist of the older generation and gives an object lesson to the young writers about the history of the literary language, the theory of literature, literary evolution, and *international* literary ties. The story is permeated with irony, directed at the position of such critics as Adamovich, Sofiev, and Osorgin. The story first poses the question of literary and cultural values, which I will briefly outline.

As we know, linguistic mastery plays a major role in Remizov's innovative works and it therefore is particularly interesting to trace how this manifests itself in the conditions of the emigration. "The Industrial Horseshoe" above all is a philological and poetic conversation about the word and its polysemous nature, its semantic and expressive potential, which does not correspond to the literal, dictionary meaning. The very title of the story contains a paradox through the seeming absurd connection of the contemporary and the ancient, but in reality it had a direct relation to the writer's poetics, which are based on the refutation of binary oppositions in the literary tradition of the nineteenth century: oral/written, old/new, literary/non-literary, one's own (*svoi*)/alien (*chuzhoi*).

The story's code about the Russian émigré writer is announced in its first sentence: "A Russian learns a foreign language not with a dictionary

²³ Petr Otsup, "Vecher u Kler," *Chisla* 1 (1930): 232.

but with the sweat of his brow.”²⁴ The narrator’s *skaz*-like familiar address to the reader sounds simultaneously like an ironic statement of well-known fact, an invitation to agree with the narrator, and at the same time a challenge. The sentence brings the reader into the context of “somebody else’s speech” and the narrator’s ill-natured disposition to it acts not only as a value judgment but also as an explicit gesture of “estrangement” (*ostranenie*) in the broad sense of the term, regarding the dislocation of exile.²⁵ With his characteristic stenographic speed, Remizov portrays the “homelessness” of the Russian in emigration in Paris, in the milieu of the French language. The story is built on a linguistic misunderstanding and its consequences, all of which involves a venerable institution of Parisian everyday life—the concierge.

The story’s orientation on bilingualism depends on an interlingual pun, for which Remizov chose one of the most expressive short words of French conversational speech—*zut*. This enigmatic word is accorded extraordinary power, before which the story’s protagonist, the writer A. A. Kornetov, is defenseless. Despite the fact that he does not understand the word, the implacable concierge, who thinks that she has heard *zut* from Kornetov’s lips, takes it as insult. The story’s upheavals, the protagonist’s unlucky adventures, begin with the moment of his linguistic misunderstanding, after which the concierge does everything possible to drive Kornetov out of the apartment: “A. A. endured a month’s siege on the part of the concierge and, after losing his last bit of patience, he was forced to abandon the homey apartment and left for God knows where.”²⁶ In the sphere of everyday life, this exclamation and its bearing on the hero’s fate is directly connected with the theme of authorial homelessness and the “bleakness of history”: “In the course of these ten years of free émigré life this damned life on the run grew wearisome.”²⁷

Like a hero in a fairytale, Kornetov with the help of fellow émigrés spares no efforts in trying to find the key to the mystery and thus elude

²⁴ Remizov, “Industrial’naia podkova,” 108.

²⁵ S. Boym, “Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt,” 586.

²⁶ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 112.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

punishment—the loss of his apartment.²⁸ He tries to explain to the concierge that she didn't hear him correctly, that he was merely saying with a Russian accent the phrase *onze heures du soir* (eleven o'clock in the evening).²⁹ Another possible source of the linguistic misunderstanding is his Russian pronunciation of a station on the Paris metro: *Nord-sud*, which the French woman did not understand.³⁰ During the course of the story, the reader follows Kornetov as he tries to discover the meaning of this word on which his fate depends. The riddle of the word *zut/ziut* is an ingenious sign, *un significant vide* (an empty sign), which Remizov utilizes to put into play an entire complex of linguistic games as he demonstrates the amazing semantic potential of this minimal lexical unit, both in colloquial and literary contexts.

The lesson about the semiotics of behavior in an alien setting continues. The impossibility of direct acculturation is demonstrated here not only through vocabulary and semantics, but also in the semiotics of gestures. When Kornetov is advised to smile politely to the concierge when he speaks he cannot for the life of him coordinate the word *bonjour* with a smile: “He didn't know how to smile like *that*: in Russia, thank God, they didn't teach this art, and thank God, they never will.”³¹ An explanation follows: “And not without the language—in this short time he had learned and uttered mechanically all the little flattering expressions which nobody takes seriously.”³² Then follows a cultural evaluation of these empty gestures, dripping with irony, which censures the European “invention of this most profound recognition and scorn for a person with whom one comes into close contact, the only defense against which is ‘civility.’”³³

²⁸ In the broadcast “On Remizov” on Radio Liberty (Munich, 1970-1971), Gaito Gazdanov spoke about Remizov's complaints to acquaintances about moving from apartment to apartment, all occasioned by the “absolutely fantastic and implacable hostility of the concierge.” Gaito Gazdanov, “Iz Dnevnika pisatel'ia,” *Druzhba narodov* 10 (1966): 173. I wish to thank Maria Rubins for informing me of this remarkable instance in which the boundary between fact and fiction is erased. Remizov's homelessness during his Berlin period is taken up by Viktor Shklovsky in chapter 5 of his book *Zoo, ili pis'ma ne o liubvi*.

²⁹ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 116.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

³² *Ibid.*, 130.

³³ *Ibid.*

When it becomes clear that all the efforts of Kornetov and his friends to understand the ill-fated word have come to naught, he turns to a neighbor for help, the Frenchman Dora. Following the example of the well-known device of bilingualism in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Remizov introduces a French text into his story—the letter written by his neighbor, with a literal translation into Russian. The neighbor tries to sort out the situation, but comes to the conclusion that there's nothing to be done, that the concierge is in a “state of latent madness.”³⁴ At the same time, the necessity of living in the French environment, and particularly in his own apartment, is presented as the only possibility in making a normal life for the poor emigrant: “the apartment that had been bound up with his proud sense of independence and inviolability had turned into a trap.”³⁵ The sense of incomprehension intensifies his existential uncertainty, which finds expression in the lexical coupling of antonymous concepts: “freedom/trap/liberty/prissonnier/reclus.”

Despite all his efforts, Kornetov's removal becomes inevitable. The address of his new place of residence is not known and the narrator sets out in search of his friend. The narrator at last finds his friend in the remote region of Boulogne. In this episode of searching for Kornetov's apartment it is important to understand the concepts of “locus” and “non-locus” in émigré thinking, about which the Italian scholars Karla Solivetti and Mariangela Paolini have written.³⁶ The story portrays the semiotization of personal space in “Russian Paris,” which is lost after the misunderstanding with the concierge. This situation reminds Kornetov of the uncertainty of the homeless man “doomed to emigration.”³⁷ Boulogne, the region to which he moves, is a remote, *unknown* part of the city, which is located outside the boundaries of “Russian Paris,” that is, it is a “non-locus.” As we will see, in the story this concept also has relevance for the dynamics of the Russian émigré reader's relation to languages and literature, and his concept of “one's own vs. alien” (*svoi/chuzhoi*).

³⁴ Ibid., 134.

³⁵ Ibid., 130.

³⁶ Karla Solivetti, Mariangela Paolini, “Paradigmy ‘izgnaniia’ i ‘poslannichestva’: evropeiskii opyt russkoi emigratsii v 20-e gody,” *Europa Orientalis* 22:2 (2003): 157-158.

³⁷ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 130.

A Language Lesson

The question of forgetting Russian, and learning French, is posed at the very beginning of the story: “In ten years’ time, barring something extraordinary, all of us living in Paris will be hopelessly crippled.”³⁸ Remizov’s serious regard for the mission of the Russian writer abroad is clear when he gives Kornetov two reference books seen as indispensable for the Russian émigré writer: Shakhmatov’s authoritative *Sintaksis* (*Syntax*) stands right next to the French *Larousse*, which the hero consults in his search for the word that has had such an ill effect on the concierge.

The narrative becomes a lesson in the history of the development of the Russian language, which incorporates lexical elements from foreign languages. If we take into account the story’s rich vocabulary, it becomes clear that it seems to transport the reader to the eighteenth century, the period when the literary language as we know it came into being. Aleksei Shakhmatov writes about this in his textbook *Ocherk sovremennogo russkogo iazyka* (*A Study of the Contemporary Russian Language*): “In the course of the eighteenth century the flood of French and German words did not abate.”³⁹ As Remizov shows, an analogous situation is taking place among the Russian diaspora in Paris. “The Industrial Horseshoe” contains a whole assortment of new words from colloquial French—macaronic language, calques, equivalents—which have become part of the Russian émigré’s everyday vocabulary. Moreover, several words are written in French and sometimes in Russian; the alphabet forces the reader to be reminded of the inherent bilingualism of the Parisian context. Just a few examples: *Zut/Зют, консьержка, ажан, onze heures du soir, bistro, Vous êtes menteur, жеран, escalier de service, allez vous en, локатер, cinquième à droite, prisonnier, стило, Crème glacée Ch. Gervais.*” Even the main character’s surname, Kornetov, comprises an interlingual aural pun with its two possible variant spellings: *cornet*—вафля мороженого (ice cream cone); *carnet*—тетрадь (notebook).⁴⁰

The dominant in the narrative is the use of *skaz*, which represents a form of “bilingualism” in and of itself. By using colloquial language in a

³⁸ Ibid., 108

³⁹ A. Shakhmatov, *Ocherk sovremennogo russkogo literaturnogo iazyka* (Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1925), 49.

⁴⁰ I wish to thank Francoise Caffin, a specialist in Paris on the French language and literature, for this information.

literary context, *skaz* also opens up the possibility of diglossia and dual consciousness in the narration, in which the author and the narrator are not identical.⁴¹ In Remizov's story this linguistic resource acquires additional potential in the context of the foreign language that plays a central role in the narrative, not only as a fact of everyday life for both character and reader, but also as a fact of the history of Russian literature.

Now, let's return to the first ironic phrase in the story that serves to prepare the reader for the hero's travails: "A Russian learns a foreign language not with a dictionary but with the sweat of his brow."⁴² Kornetov finds the following synonyms for *zut* in his dictionary: *le mépris* (contempt); *le dépit* (scorn), and *l'indifférence* (indifference).⁴³ But another possible meaning is missing, which can be found in the dictionary *Petit Robert*: "onomat<opée>. Fam<ilier>. Exclamation exprimant le dépit, la colère (euphémisme pour merde)." As d'Amelia's commentary to the text in *Uchitel' muzyki* explains, the word *zut* is an "exclamation that expresses negative emotions, a euphemism for the word *merde* (shit), which is often translated as 'damn!'"⁴⁴

After studying his *Larousse*, Kornetov decides that *zut* "is something like the Russian *tsyts!*"⁴⁵ It's a brilliant equivalence—both words comprised of just three letters—of the colloquial exclamations that produce the sound play of an interlingual pun. The explanation given with its Russian equivalent provides the basis of the pun that provides the structure for this story about an everyday misunderstanding between a simple, poor Frenchwoman and a poor Russian intellectual. Dahl's *Dictionary*, which as we know was Remizov's constant reference, gives the following explanation of the word *tsyts*: "quiet, don't you dare, not a word, silence! Example: "*Tsyts, sobaka, ne s'es'h' soldata!*" (Tsyts, dog, you don't eat up a soldier!)"⁴⁶ As we see in the course of the story, that's exactly how the protagonist behaves, after he decides that it's useless to argue with the con-

⁴¹ On *skaz*, see the seminal works by Boris Eikhenbaum, "Illuziia skaza" (1918), Viktor Vinogradov, "Problema skaza v stilistike" (1925), and Mikhail Bakhtin, "Slovo v romane," in *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (1929).

⁴² *Chisla* 5 (1931): 108.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴⁴ A. M. Remizov, "Uchitel' muzyki. Katorzhnaia idilliia," 482.

⁴⁵ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 122.

⁴⁶ *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka Vladimira Dalia*, 3d ed. (St. Petersburg: Vol'f, 1911).

cierge and that he might as well move. But finding an equivalent is only one stage in the search for a word. Kornetov continues to be disturbed by the semantics of *zut* in the broader cultural context.

The Book: Proust

This story, which has its basis in bilingualism and a play on words, raises the issue of the inadequacy not only of a literal understanding of language, but also of the complexity of cultural and literary translation. The story's literary underpinnings arise from its major theme: "A. A.'s world is a book."⁴⁷ The hero's life in Paris, "this cruel, lively life with its calculation, resourcefulness and style laid bare, both caresses and slaps in the face," is compared with the independent internal life of Kornetov, the Russian writer, where Cervantes and Gogol reign, where Dostoevsky and Tolstoy are recalled, and where we also encounter allusions to Remizov's own works of the Petersburg period, as well as his favorite apocryphal tale, "The Holy Virgin's Descent into Hell."

The inadequacy of translation, as a synonym for incomprehension and misinterpretation in literature, is emphasized in an episode in the story in which the nephew of the neighbor Dora makes an appearance. He is a "young scholar, a graduate of the Ecole des langues orientales, now enrolled in the Ecole des chartes," who reads and speaks Russian,⁴⁸ and wishes to help Kornetov understand the cultural semantics of the word *zut*. With this goal in mind, he cites a quotation from the first volume of Proust's seven-volume *In Search of Lost Time*. This key French passage about the series of "reflections" represents an example of the rhetorical refinement of the French master of the contemporary novel and his aesthetic purpose: "*Et voyant sur l'eau à la face du mur un pâle sourire répondre au sourire du ciel, je m'écriai dans mon enthousiasme en brandissant mon parapluie refermé: 'Zut, zut, zut, zut...'*"⁴⁹

The explanation of this short, rhetorically charged sentence not only does not correspond to the text, but completely distorts its meaning: "I'm having difficulty translating it, but it's nothing special, something

⁴⁷ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 115.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

like ‘leave me in peace.’” The commentary to *The Music Teacher* contains an accurate literary translation of the quotation: “After seeing on the water and on the wall, how the pale smile answers the smile of the sky, I exclaimed in delight, shaking my closed umbrella: ‘Damn, damn, damn.’”⁵⁰ As this example makes clear, the colloquial exclamation “*zut*” acquires a particular meaning and intonation in this passage, but the scholarly nephew is unable to help Kornetov in his search for the meaning of this word.

What is the role of inadequate and arbitrary translation in this story? Selecting a quotation from Proust fulfills a metaliterary function in Remizov’s narrative and emphasizes the connection between Proust and Kornetov, both the autobiographical hero of the story and his “bookish” world.⁵¹ The quotation turns our attention to the key passage from the novel *Swann’s Way* (1913), the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time*. The passage appears in the second chapter of the novel, in a chain of the young narrator’s reflections on his walks around his beloved Combray. This chapter is important because memories from childhood are connected with young Marcel’s dream about a career as a writer. It contains important observations on the poetics of the new prose in comparison to realism. The passage with the exclamation “*zut*” that Remizov quotes appears during the walk around Montjouvain, which Marcel takes after becoming tired from a long stint of reading. He recalls the moment of his “modest discovery” of the “lack of correspondence between our sensations and their customary expression” at that moment when he is contemplating the sunny reflection of a hitherto unnoticed tiled rooftop on the water of the pond. As he recalls this impression, he cannot find adequate semantic and expressive means for its description and he gives voice to his dismay (one of the meanings of *zut*), as he repeats the exclamation four times for the amplification of his emotions, all of which is accentuated by his shaking the umbrella.

The slipshod interpretation of the passage’s meaning by Dora’s nephew seems to purposely misrepresent the refined poetry of the quotation, which presents an example of the rhetorical figure of the *mise en abyme* in which several rhetorical tropes are deployed: parallelism, repetition,

⁵⁰ A. M. Remizov, “Uchitel’ muzyki,” 482.

⁵¹ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 125.

solecism, *hyperbaton* (the expression of strong emotions).⁵² Selecting precisely this passage as an example of the writer's craft should be viewed as a metaliterary device on the part of Remizov. It not only reflects the misunderstanding of the passage in the story, and thus serves as an example of the difficulty of translating from one language into another, while also illustrating the concept of translation in its etymological sense: *translatio*—to carry over, i.e., the communication of Proust's new aesthetics to the Russian literary milieu. In the novel's famous second chapter, Marcel's poetic revelations take place amidst everyday life in Combray, with its remarkable descriptions of the dishes prepared by Françoise, the talented cook. Like Dora's nephew, the Russian critics were not capable of understanding and conveying the significance of Proust's new aesthetics.

Gervis Tassis writes about the reception of Proust by the emigration and by *Chisla* in particular, in his extensive article "Lectures de Marcel Proust dans l'emigration de l'entre-deux-guerres." As Tassis notes, the arrival of the Russian émigrés in Paris coincided with the general acknowledgment of Proust's talent, but the Russian émigré critics did not have anything original to say about Proust, and in all likelihood did not pay any attention to what had been written about him in the French press.⁵³ This corroborates Remizov's parody in the story of Proust's reception and the lack of understanding of his aesthetics. As Leonid Livak writes, the literary discussions about Proust's innovations were often based on a misinterpretation of his "mimetic" simplicity and literary "sincerity."⁵⁴ This is precisely what Boris Shletser tried to counter in his perceptive early essay from 1921: "The striking peculiarity of this epic style of this long, detailed tale is that the story is told from the first person and that the reader has the distinct impression that the entire series of Marcel Proust's novels ... have an autobiographical element."⁵⁵ The implicit satire in Remizov's ironic story is directed at this literalist interpretation of Proust's narrative as a "human document." The selection of this key passage from the novel underscores this aesthetic misunderstanding.

⁵² I want to thank Hayden White for his rhetorical analysis of the passage.

⁵³ Available on the website L'Institut Est-Ouest (December 2005): <http://russie-europe.ens-lsh.fr>.

⁵⁴ Livak, *How It Was Done in Paris*, 101.

⁵⁵ B. Shletser, "Zerka'noe tvorchestvo (Marsel' Prust)," *Sovremennye zapiski*, no. 6 (1921): 227-238. 228.

A Literature Lesson

This consciously metaliterary maneuver that emphasizes the deliberately offhand treatment of Proust, whose style had become the model for such young writers as Gazdanov and Fel'zen, also serves as an ironic warning against any "direct transfer" of the stylistic innovations of European modernism to the Russian context. A literal interpretation of the master distorts his poetics. Moreover, as far as both language and style are concerned, a writer should not imitate a model, but should seek and create equivalents in his own linguistic and literary tradition.

In this connection, let us recall the volume of Shakhmatov's *Sintaksis* on Kornetov's desk. The textbook will serve as a pretext for a lesson in Russian language when Kornetov explains to his guest, the narrator, that "an adverb modifies a verb," to which the narrator replies in his head: "I don't remember anything about adverbs."⁵⁶ But, as becomes clear, the textbook's real lesson is incorporated in the story's style. Like the Russian grammar, *Sintaksis* was published for the two-hundredth anniversary of the Academy of Sciences in 1925.⁵⁷ The brief introduction explains that Shakhmatov's work presents "valuable theoretical observations and methodological directions, but the chief feature is the compilation of examples, masterfully selected from various writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ...; these examples are given in connection with information on old Russian language and phenomena of contemporary folk speech." It's interesting to trace the description of the types of sentences, as a unit of communication, and in particular the role of "internal speech": "The usual intermediary between communication and the sentence, in which the communication finds its expression, is internal speech, i.e., a thought clothed in aural signs and in some measure in visual signs as well."⁵⁸ Shakhmatov further explains the capacity of a complex psychological act of communication to convey a series of elements, as a "representation of relationships and feelings" and so forth. Among the examples of various types of sentences we find the category

⁵⁶ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 114.

⁵⁷ *Sintaksis russkogo iazyka. Vyp. pervyi. Uchenie o predlozhenii i o slovosochetanii* (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1925).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

“Interjective Subject-less Sentences,” which gives the Russian equivalent of *zut* as *tsits*.⁵⁹

This lesson in literary syntax finds its realization in the text of “The Industrial Horseshoe” in the lengthy sentences à la Proust, in which Remizov utilizes the rich possibilities of Russian grammar in constructing sentences using subordinate clauses, parataxis, and various punctuation marks, including the dash.⁶⁰ Remizov consciously creates the Russian equivalent of Proust’s innovative structures in unusually long sentences that exploit the potential possibilities of Russian syntax about which Shakhmatov writes. It’s worth noting that this stylistic equivalent follows the description of Proust’s style in the above-mentioned essay by Boris Shletser, “The Creative Mirror (Marcel Proust)” (*Zerkal’noe tvorchestvo (Marsel’ Prust)*): the long sentences of almost a half-page, the extraordinarily difficult constructions with their numerous subordinate clauses, parenthetical words that contain still more, absolutely independent constructions in one and the same parenthesis.⁶¹ Moreover, Shletser notes, “these sentences are always impeccably constructed from the point of view of syntax, but there is no doubt that their enormous complexity is at variance with the way we do things, as well as the spirit of the contemporary French language...”⁶² In defiance of the critics, Remizov comes out on the side of “awkward readability,” by demonstrating that similar sentences are possible in Russian as well.

Conclusion

Remizov’s stylistic experiment can be read as a lesson to “the young Proustians” and as a foray on the part of the elder modernist into a literary competition with his recognized contemporary, Marcel Proust. The juxtaposition of literary and non-literary texts—a characteristic device for Remizov—takes on particular significance in the context of the émigré debates about “sincerity” in prose. Remizov’s story plays with the “frames” of narrative form, as well as with the reader’s expectations.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁶⁰ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 111.

⁶¹ B. Shletser, “Zerkal’noe tvorchestvo,” 228.

⁶² Ibid.

Special attention is paid to the literary function of the everyday and the “document of life,” introduced into the narrative along with such literary texts as the passage from *Don Quixote* in a remarkable new translation: “But as he sat drinking his coffee, A. A. was able to forget for a moment about the concierge and Baldakhala, he thought instead about the fate of Don Quixote with Amadis’s fiery sword and Mambrin’s golden helmet”⁶³ Here follows a short extract from the novel, which is remarkable both for its poetry and expressivity: “The course of the constellations brings on us misfortunes, which the heavens cast down on us with rage and fury, and then no earthly power can stop them and no tricks can throw them off!”⁶⁴ In this episode, the word becomes a talisman, capable of protecting Kornetov from danger, from “the fury and rage” of the concierge.

Let’s return to the paradox of the story’s title, “The Industrial Horseshoe,” in which the word “horseshoe” appears as a symbol of good luck. The function of the word as a talisman in Remizov’s story recalls the poetics of Osip Mandelstam, in particular his poem “The Horseshoe Finder,” which is an implicit subtext in the story and partly explains its title. As Omry Ronen writes, *podkova* (horseshoe) and *kon’* (horse, steed) are old poetic symbols in the European tradition, which perform an important function in the poet’s work.⁶⁵ But it is completely possible that another subtext is at work in the story, one that has connections with European modernism. I would like to draw your attention to Kornetov’s new apartment in unfamiliar Boulogne, in which the narrator notices a strange object, namely, a bicycle wheel on the door—the “industrial horseshoe,” which Kornetov found “on the road by the church.”⁶⁶ This *objet trouvé* recalls the first invention of “ready-made” by Marcel Duchamp in 1913, that is, his installation of a bicycle wheel in his apartment as a demonstration of the new in art, which called into question the very “object” of art in the era of mechanization.⁶⁷

⁶³ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 117.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Omry Ronen, *An Approach to Mandelstam* (Jerusalem: Biblioteka Slavica Hierosolymitana, 1983), 77-78.

⁶⁶ *Chisla* 5 (1931): 113.

⁶⁷ T. Laget, *Du côté de chez Swann’ de Marcel Proust* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 26. Laget emphasizes the international significance of 1913 in the history of modernism, when the Ballets Russe came to Paris with its production of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.

Nineteen thirteen is not only the year of the publication of Proust's novel, but it is also a significant year in the history of prerevolutionary Russian modernism. Remizov, one of its principal representatives, would continue his innovative work in exile, in the context of European modernism. Despite the problems of cultural translation and bilingualism, the story "The Industrial Horseshoe" once again shows that "a Russian is never at a loss for words," and as proof we have the marvelous Russian equivalent *zut—tsits!* Both words serve as an answer to Adamovich and critics like him. In "The Music Teacher," Remizov's hero and alter-ego, Kornetov, insists that three things are essential in art: "language, description, invention."⁶⁸ The story published in *Chisla* nicely illustrates these conditions in the context of the history of the development of the Russian literary language within the framework of the discussions in the Russian emigration in Paris.

⁶⁸ A. M. Remizov, "Uchitel' muzyki," 52.

Part IV

Epilogue:
The First-Wave Diaspora
in the Post-War Years

Chapter IVA

The Shift from the Old World to the New

In one of the last issues of *Sovremennye zapiski*, Iurii Rapoport, in an essay titled “The End of the [Community] Abroad” (*Konets zarubezh’ia*), reasserts the consensus account of Russia Abroad as representing all Russians and forming “a state without territory” (*gosudarstvo bez territorii*).¹ But he also points to the changes that, inevitably, have taken place over time both in the emigration and in Soviet Russia, commenting that these changes are making the old émigré longings for a return to a restored “homeland” less realistic:

Notions that somehow, underneath the outer layers of the Soviet people, [there is] a Russian people who continue to be as they used to be is becoming ever more a fantasy; more and more in Russia there is a numerical preponderance of those who have simply not seen, and do not know the past.²

The émigrés of the First Wave were soon to experience another momentous change, the Second World War, during which the cultural center of the emigration, Paris, was occupied (in 1940). Whether in anticipation, or as a result, many of them relocated to America, especially to New York. Then, in 1941, the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and the homeland became an ally of the new host country. These turns of events revived patriotic feelings among émigré Russians. Further, the fact that Russians in the Soviet Union and abroad shared the same cause was widely felt to make more possible once again their dreams of a “homecoming.”

In this new center of the emigration, New York, the war had no direct impact and conditions were more favorable for intellectual life. Conse-

¹ *Sovremennye zapiski* 69 (1939): 374.

² *Ibid.*, 380.

quently, the Russian recent arrivals were able to serve some needs of the imperiled Russian community in Europe. The appearance of *Novyi Zhurnal* (*The New Journal*) in New York, starting in 1942, was a major landmark in the cultural geography of the Russian diaspora. Its planning had begun in 1941, at the time when all of Europe was engaged in a terrible war with Hitler and the homeland was in grave danger. Russian émigrés turned towards it as they struggled to survive in Europe. The history of the creation of *Novyi Zhurnal*, intended to continue, with some modifications, the now defunct Paris-based *Sovremennyye zapiski* (1920-1940), revealed the radical changes in the diaspora during the wartime and the later postwar years. The new journal provided continuity for the émigré tradition, giving an active role to the first-wave diaspora, thus creating an important publication venue at the time when the European journals and publishers were disabled. The desperate situation for the Russians in Europe is brought out in a letter of Mark Aldanov (pseudonym of Mark Aleksandrovich Landau) to Mikhail Karpovich of January 1941, in which he endorses the idea of a journal to forge cultural links across the Atlantic.

It goes without saying that I am completely in agreement with you on the necessity of trying to create a new Russian journal. From the very beginning—that is to say, from the moment of the French catastrophe—it was clear to me that the only place where Russian work could be continued is America, and that our role is not to let that work die out completely. You are right that the question comes down to where we can find money.³

The journal began publication in 1942 and the struggle for funds continued throughout the war period. In a letter of 8 September 1943 to Professor Philip Mosely, who wrote of his efforts to secure funding for the Bakhmeteff Archive from the Rockefeller, ACLS, and other foundations, Karpovich acknowledges the importance of this moment in history: “The difficulties about which you write I too can well imagine. This irks me, since I think that a sober and critical approach to all problems concerning Russia is needed now more than ever.”⁴

³ Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University. Ms. Coll. M. A. Aldanov. Letter to M. M. Karpovich, 18/1/41.

⁴ Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University. Ms. Coll. M. M. Karpovich, Box 2.

Novyi Zhurnal's recognition of its importance is clear from the editorial statement in the first issue of 1942, which claims that this is the only Russian "thick journal" (*tolsty zhurnal*) in the world outside Russia." The journal would be open to writers of all ideological persuasions, the editorial continues, except for those expressing sympathies "with national socialism or Bolshevism."⁵ The journal in effect took over the role of *Sovremennye zapiski*, which posited émigré culture as the heir and guardian of the Russian national tradition, and it planned to continue that journal's main approach, although with significant changes. From the outset, the editors, M. Aldanov and M. Tseitlin, were attuned to the new historical circumstances. They insisted that it was their duty to say what Russians in the homeland could not express regarding Soviet politics, but at the same time they urged the old emigration to forget their differences and unite in order to aid the Soviet Union in her struggle with fascism, continuing: "Now it is possible and necessary to forget about the quarrels of 1917 and the ensuing epoch, that is now in the past."⁶

At the same time, the editors made it clear that the journal would differ from its French predecessor, because politics rather than culture would be its foremost concern: "*Sovremennye zapiski*, *Russkie zapiski* and those older journals, whose traditions we would like to follow, were published during peace time and were able, naturally, to devote greater space to larger cultural, philosophical, and scholarly questions."⁷ However, the editors expressed the hope that this weighting could be reversed later.

At the time, however, the journal felt freer to express political views than had been possible in war-time Europe. In a letter to Sergei Aleksandrovich Konovalov in Oxford of 8 December 1944, Mikhail Karpovich draws attention to this difference suggesting that "You probably have noticed that we here are able to afford ourselves a measure of freedom in our critical pronouncements that, it is my impression would hardly be possible for you," but added tactfully: "Perhaps I am mistaken."⁸

⁵ *Novyi Zhurnal* 1 (1942): 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Bakhmeteff Archive. Ms. Coll. M. Karpovich, Box 2.

Later, after the war, the numbers in the Russian community in New York swelled as immigrants arrived, from what became known as the Second Wave of emigration from Soviet Russia, most of them individuals displaced by the war. This admixture exacerbated the generational differences, challenging the notion that there could be a single culture for Russia Abroad and the Soviet Union and forcing writers to come up with a new definition of the collective diasporic identity. The disagreements over this could be seen as illustrating the general trend in diasporas identified by the expert on this, Khachig Tölölyan, what he calls “the traces of struggles and contradictions within ideas and practices of collective identity, of homeland and nation.”⁹ Whereas the continuity and preservation of the national tradition had been the foremost concern of the First Wave (1920-1939), as it defined itself vis-à-vis the homeland, now that charge underwent a qualitative change. The self-definition of the diaspora, of its relation to the host country and to the homeland, became more complex, especially when its historic position had been radically altered after the Yalta Agreement and the ensuing Cold War.

During the Cold War, in meeting the challenge of self-definition, a complex split-level rift developed that made the running of the journal a matter of inordinate diplomatic skill, vision and patience. For one thing, the generational differences remained profound: the older émigrés who were still in Europe or had come to the US from there felt superior both to the New World intellectuals and to the newcomers who began to flock to the United States when the war was over. As late as 1953, Vasilii Ianovskii wrote in a letter to Fedor Stepun:

We used to complain about the book trade in Paris, but now things have really gone downhill: there is nowhere to publish and no one is reading. I would like to try an American journal, but for a Russian it makes no sense: there are no intelligent readers. Once there was our émigré culture. It was possible to say anything—everyone would understand it. Where has that culture gone?¹⁰

⁹ Khachig Tölölyan, “The Nation State and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface,” *Diaspora* 1:1 (Spring 1991): 3.

¹⁰ The Beinecke Rare Book and Ms. Library. Fedor Stepun Papers, Box 15, Folder 496. Ianowsky, V. S. 1953, n.d.

The passage to the New World became a crossing of yet another threshold in the diasporic consciousness that reinforced a sense of nostalgia, though after the transatlantic shift the longing for Russia was combined with a nostalgia for Europe. Émigrés identified themselves as “European Russians” in the New World and felt alienated in a world that did not share their attachment for the continent, a sentiment expressed in a letter that Roman Grynberg, living in New York, wrote to Wladimir Weidle in Paris on 1 January 1947:

Here in America, only those newly-arrived people of our generation mourn for Europe. Americans think of it differently, and those who are a bit more cultured than the previous generation remember the famous words of Emerson, spoken exactly one hundred years ago: “The world is nothing; man is all ... we have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe.” [This sentence is in English in the original Russian]¹¹

At the same time, the émigrés in New York were confronted by a number of alternative options as they sought to work out their own identities and moral stances in postwar Europe, and one of them was in fact to reorient one’s thinking away from the accustomed Eurocentric path, and even away from identification with the West. In the immediate postwar years the rise of patriotic feelings for the victorious motherland and antipathy toward the US, that had participated in the Allied effort but was not ravaged by war, contributed to the quandaries about the right direction to take. A complicating factor in the contradictory postwar political situation of the émigrés was the new status of the recently victorious Soviet Union as it beckoned them home. This further deepened the rift between the Russians in America and the Russians in Europe, whose consciousness had been transformed by the war experience. These complexities are apparent in Konovalov’s report on the mood of Russian émigrés in Paris after the war, presented in an article in the 1945 issue of *Novyi Zhurnal* under the title “The Emigration and Soviet Power (A Questionnaire)” (*Emigratsiia i sovetskaia vlast’ (Anketa)*). Konovalov

¹¹ Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University. Ms. Coll. V. Weidle. Letter from Grynberg, Roman, Jan. 1947, n.d.

divides the émigrés in three groups: first, the pro-Soviet group; second, those who remain staunchly opposed; and third, those who take a “wait and see” attitude. In addition, he comments that one thing is now clear: the war and the Soviet victory proved that Soviet Russia was viable as a nation and brought on a wave of patriotism.¹²

The expected exchange of views as the follow-up to this first communication of the questionnaire did not occur. Instead, the Paris correspondent of *Novoe Russkoe Slovo* published a surprising report of his February visit to Paris, which commented on the “emotional atmosphere” in Paris, following the German occupation. The European émigrés had been moved by the Soviet victory and the show of national determination that achieved the liberation of the land and of Europe, but felt that their counterparts in America and their press did not understand this.

One letter to the editor stated, “Perhaps you in America did not believe in German victory, but we saw it in France. And as we thought that the only salvation could come from Soviet Russia, we forgave her everything.... We felt closer to Stalin than to those Russians that joined Hitler hoping to overthrow the Soviet leader.”¹³ There were others in the emigration, however, who did not share such sentiments. A decidedly anti-nostalgic stance is to be found in a poem of Vladimir Nabokov, a copy of which he sent to M. Karpovich. It introduces a much needed note of reason into this overheated situation:

*Kakim by polotnom batal'nym ne iavlialas'
Sovetskaia susal'neishaia Rus'!
Kakoi by zhalost'iu dusha ni zapolnialas',
Ne poklonius', ne primirius'
So vseiu merzost'iu, zhestokost'iu i skukoi
Nemogo rabstva. Net, o net!
Eshche ia dukhom zhiv, eshche ne syt razlukoi,
Uvol'te, ia eshche poet.*¹⁴

¹² *Novyi Zhurnal* 11 (1945): 351-353.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 352.

¹⁴ Bakhmeteff Archive. Columbia University. Ms. Coll. M. Karpovich. Nabokov, V. V. April or May, 1943.

(Nabokov's own published translation of his poem, Cambridge, MA, 1944):¹⁵

No matter how the Soviet tinsel glitters
Upon the canvas of a battle piece;
No matter how the soul dissolves in pity,
I will not bend, I will not cease

Loathing the filth, brutality and boredom
Of silent servitude. No, No, I shout,
My spirit is still quick, still exile-hungry,
I'm still a poet, count me out!

Novyi Zhurnal was central to the cultural survival and revival of the Russian emigration in the post-war period, marking a second major stage in its history since 1917. The two historians of the Russian emigration, Gleb Struve and Marc Raeff, both point to “a qualitative shift” that occurred in the émigré status in the host countries of the US and Canada, where the situation was decidedly different from that in pre-war Berlin or Paris. The sense of inclusion and economic security in post-war North America led to a new self-consciousness among the émigrés.

While the national culture continued to have enormous importance for them, the question of how to weight the relationship between culture and politics, a subject of extensive polemics within the First Wave, underwent a definite change as the Cold War intensified (this development was foreseen by the editors in the first issue, cited above). The polarization of East and West was no longer an exclusive concern of Russians abroad, but had become an issue of world importance. This development also prompted a change in the international status of the émigrés, and can be considered as a part of the “qualitative shift” after the 1930s. Gleb Struve comments on the changing character of the emigration in his 1959 essay on “Russian Writers in Exile: Problems of an Émigré Literature.”¹⁶ After a dramatic opening where he declares that “for nearly forty years Russian

¹⁵ Vladimir Vladimirovich Nabokov, *no title*, in *Modern Russian Poetry*, ed. Vladimir Markov and Merrill Sparks (Indianapolis/Kansas City/New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 479.

¹⁶ *Comparative Literature. Proceedings of the Second Congress at the Univ. of North Carolina, Sept. 8-12, 1958*. International Comparative Literature Association, ed. W. P. Frederich (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959).

literature has been leading a double life,” Struve describes the effect of World War II and its aftermath on the emigration and how the post-war influx had “introduced new factors into the situation: among the new émigrés there were no nationally known writers. They were on the whole more politically-minded, not necessarily more principled, sometimes more militant. And intransigent, and yet in a sense more indoctrinated. It is Socialist Realism in reverse.”¹⁷

In the article, Struve also addresses the change in the social status of the émigrés, signaled earlier, as they play a more active political role than their predecessors, who often felt themselves a part of what Varshavskii named the “unnoticed generation” (*nezamechennoe pokolenie*): “In the thirties, especially, the émigré writers were living in a vacuum and their anti-Communist warnings sounded like a voices in the wilderness. The situation changed radically after WWII, with the result that the material situation and the social status of the exiled Russians engaged in the writing professions improved greatly, particularly in the US and within the sphere of the American influence.”¹⁸ And he pronounces *Novyi Zhurnal* the best Russian periodical, adding that “the future historians of Russian literature will have to consult very closely.” Within some twenty years, the journal had fulfilled its intended role: in the Russian-speaking world it had become an indispensable alternative voice, social, political, and literary. The journal’s success is also stressed in a letter written in 1965 by one of its then editors, Roman Gul’, to Weidle in Paris: “In recent years *Novyi zhurnal* has been selling at an incredible rate. It all gets sold, right to the last copy.”¹⁹

Weidle himself provided a witty summary of the post-war period of both the émigré and Russian literature in his essay “The Traditional and the New in Russian Literature of the 20th Century” (*Traditsionnoe i novoe v russkoi literature XX veka*), which appeared in the stocktaking volume *Russian Literature in Emigration (Russkaia literatura v emigratsii)*: “It [the border] existed, and it did not exist. There were ‘Stalin-Lenin’ prizes, there was junk; and on our side too there was junk. But there were never two literatures; there was one literature of the twentieth century.”²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹ Bakhmeteff Archive, Coll. V. Weidle. Letter, Gul’ Roman Borisovich. 4 December 1965.

²⁰ *Russkaia literatura v emigratsii*, ed. N. Poltoratsky (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 1972), 13.

A younger critic, Nikolai Andreev, also writing in this volume, strikes a refreshing note of self-affirmation of the Second Wave as he offers recognition of the contribution of the new immigrants from the Soviet Union, who brought their knowledge of Stalin's Russia and a sense of Russian reality, which "imparted new life energy into the entire Russian literary community abroad (*pridalo zhiznennost' vsemu russkomu literaturnomu zarubezh'iu*):

The Second-Wave emigration, whose precise numbers are not known, very quickly integrated into the community abroad, which was in part "rejuvenated" by it ... although many of the new émigrés responded more readily and out of habit to political summons that had become particularly attractive since the "Cold War" began.²¹

The Paris-based poet Yuri Terapiano, writing in his introduction to a collection of émigré poetry, presents the shift in collective identity of the post-war Diaspora as seen from the perspective of a poet familiar with both waves. Here he comments on the differences between the "Paris Note" in interwar poetry and the postwar poets, concluding that, despite this, a unity of purpose had been achieved: "It has taken several years for the combined efforts of both 'those who had come before' and the 'new-comers' to win out the fight for creative freedom in post-war emigration." The sense of mission of the postwar Diaspora is reasserted here. They saw the creative freedom from the kind of "social command" imposed on Soviet writers as the decisive advantage of Russian writers abroad and a criterion for vindicating their emigration. As Terapiano put it: "And then it suddenly became clear to everyone that the mission of poetry abroad would constitute one of those achievements by which, in the future, it [the community] would be able to justify its existence."²²

The consensus has been that mission of *Novyi Zhurnal* in the post-war diaspora was achieved. In the conclusion to his history of the Russian diaspora, Marc Raeff wrote that "the intellectuals of Russia Abroad had perpetuated the tradition of the Russian intelligentsia; they offered a moral (political) critique of conditions at home, and served as chan-

²¹ Ibid., 29.

²² *Muza diaspori. Izbrannye stikhi zarubezhnykh poetov. 1920-1960* (Frankfurt am Main: Possev, 1960), 22.

nels for the importation and integration of Western knowledge and values.”²³

The “conversation” across the Soviet border that had largely ceased in 1925 picked up again and had an impact on émigré activity and their sense of mission. Soviet writers for their part also responded to the emigration, but most often negatively. However, as Roman Gul put it in another letter to Weidle about *Novyi Zhurnal*, this one of 2 January 1970:

Now the situation of the journal, in my view, has become more solid. It has helped considerably, of course, that Kochetov is “advertising” me in his novels, and Sergei Mikhalkov is declaring to the entire [Writers’] Union that *Novyi zhurnal* is “an émigré literary den [of thieves].”²⁴

The “homecoming,” then, during the Cold War, began to seem an ever more distant possibility; but the situation started to change. Beginning in the mid-1970s, large numbers of Soviet citizens were permitted to emigrate and many of them ended up in Europe or the US, forming the Third Wave. In theory, only Jews and Armenians “seeking to reunite” with family members could leave. In practice, many others emigrated, including dissidents, scientists, writers, artists, human-rights activists, and other “undesirables.” In other words, a sizeable proportion were intellectuals or highly educated. Once again the cultural life of Russia Abroad was “rejuvenated,” but the new influx also strengthened their cultural links with the homeland. And vice versa—émigré writings were now circulating in Soviet underground publications. However, it took Mikhail Gorbachev’s accession to power in 1985 to really break down the barriers between the two versions of Russian culture and combine them into one.

²³ Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 197.

²⁴ The references are, respectively, to Vsevolod Kochetov, generally labeled a Soviet “hard-liner,” whose most famous novel, *The Zhurbins* (Zhurbiny) of 1952, features a dynasty of inspired shipbuilding workers in Leningrad, and Sergei Mikhalkov, author of the text of the Soviet national anthem. Citation from the Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University. Ms. Coll. V. Weidle.

Chapter IVB

“Homecoming”

The revision of cultural history that began in Russia during the Gorbachev reforms, continuing into the 1990s, included the recovery of the legacy of the First Wave of émigrés (1917-1939), a subject that had been virtually taboo during the Soviet period. This belated “return” at a critical juncture of post-communist transformation gave the legacy of the diaspora a potential role in the quest for national identity that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Post-communism wrought unforeseen changes in the Russian national consciousness and in its fundamental principles that, as Benedict Anderson suggests, are determined by “what a person is being asked to forget/remember or to forget to remember.”¹ We see the complexity of this process in the contested versions of nationalism, tinged with a heady mix of imperial, orthodox, and post-communist nostalgia, that have been shaping both the memory and the history of the past.

The reception of the First-Wave diaspora in 1990s Russia presents a unique opportunity to observe an emerging, albeit one-sided, dialogue between two cultures with disparate yet intimately related histories of struggle in the name of a single national cause: to serve as keepers of memory and guardians of culture. The potential benefit of this historic encounter between the homeland and the diaspora was generally acknowledged, but the process reveals a tale of competing cultural monopolies, incongruous resemblances, and matching nostalgias. The appropriation of the diaspora’s legacy contributed to the ongoing revisions of Russian cultural history in several ways. The First Wave offered links to aspects of the past that had been largely ignored, if not outright suppressed, during the Soviet period, in particular to the prerevolution-

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London, 1983), 205.

ary renaissance of philosophy and the arts during the so-called Silver Age that was curtailed under Joseph Stalin yet continued abroad. The new field of study—on the First Wave—also served as a touchstone for critical debates concerning the future redefinition of the nation and its culture.

When in the summer of 1996 President Boris Yeltsin charged his top aides with the task of developing a Russian "national idea," the goal proved elusive.² Two years later, a *New York Times* article described the quest as an "exercise in conflict and confusion," in which Russia lacked the basic symbols of nation, such as words for the new Russian national anthem, "because nobody can agree on what it should say. Politicians are still squabbling over its tricolor flag."³ Considered in this context, the reclamation during the 1990s and beyond of the First Wave's legacy presents an interesting case of "partisan" appropriation of the past and of its repressed history and memory.

The "revolution by culture," which began during the perestroika period, represented a threat to the growing nationalist forces. As Yitzhak Brudny asserts in *Reinventing Russia*, "between 1989 and 1991 Russian nationalists chose largely to engage in cultural politics."⁴ Underlying the political debates between the liberals and the nationalist-conservatives was the recognition that art and literature are crucial for defining Russian national identity. The diaspora had the potential to contribute to the complex process of "rethinking" the nation following the disappearance of the cultural hegemony of the state.⁵ The importance of culture in national self-definition has also been underscored by Benedict Anderson:

² See Michael Urban, "Remythologizing the Russian State," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50:6 (1998): 969.

³ "Post-Communist Russia Plumbs Its Soul, in Vain, for New Vision," *New York Times*, 31 March 1998, A1. The competition for the national anthem continues under President Putin. See "Russia Considers a New Anthem, Hoping for One with Words," *New York Times*, 23 November 2000, A17; "Soviet Hymn Is Back, Creating Much Discord," *New York Times*, 6 December 2000, A9.

⁴ See the chapter "The Zenith of Politics by Culture" in Yitzhak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 221.

⁵ On the changing terms of discussion applicable to the transformation, see Greta N. Slobin, "Introduction to Postcommunism: Rethinking the Second World," a special issue of *New Formations*, no. 22 (Spring 1994): v-ix.

“What I am proposing is that Nationalism has to be understood, by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being.”⁶

In the absence of a coherent political ideology, Russia’s post-communist transformation has been haunted by three “large cultural systems”: the prerevolutionary, Soviet, and émigré. Ironically, the contested issues in the quest to define the new national identity, such as how to rethink the Russian cultural heritage, the relationship between “Russian” and “Soviet,” and alternative visions of Russia in relation to the West, appear as a distant echo of internal émigré polemics of the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, the (formerly Soviet) Russians confronting their loss of empire after 1991 experienced an existential anguish not unlike that felt by the émigrés in the postrevolutionary years.

As was established in the Introduction, in the years immediately following the October Revolution, Russian exiles acutely perceived the loss of their homeland and of the empire as an exclusion from history. The émigrés strove to compensate for their loss with a conscious dedication to the continuity of national culture, which they saw as “an essential aspect of their national identity, of their identity as educated Russian people, whatever their level.”⁷ Still they were plagued with questions about their legitimacy and viability as Russian writers totally cut off from the homeland. Khodasevich, in his famous article of 1933, had cited historical examples, such as Dante, where great literature had been produced in exile, and asserted that the diaspora’s being cut off from the homeland was no bar to its creating a fine heritage for a national literature because that “is created by its language and spirit, and not the territory where it dwells, nor by the life it reflects.”⁸

After the Second World War, and especially in the more liberal climate following Stalin’s death in 1953, there was a significant shift in the émigrés’ account of their role. The diasporic longing for “return” became a visionary projection of a “reunification in the memory of the descendants.”⁹

⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 19.

⁷ Raëff, *Russia Abroad*, 10.

⁸ V. Khodasevich, “Literatura v izgnanii,” 262.

⁹ Weidle, “Traditsionnoe i novoe v russkoi literature,” 9-10.

Writing in his introduction to the first edition of *Rusaskaia literatura v izgnanii*, published in New York in 1956, Gleb Struve formulated a mythical vision of "return" and a sense of the diaspora's potential contribution: "literature abroad is a flow temporarily diverted from Russia and, when the time comes, it will fall into the main riverbed ... Its waters ... may perhaps contribute more to the enrichment of the riverbed than the waterways in Russia proper."¹⁰ By the 1990s, although the active participants of the First Wave were no longer alive, their dedication to Russian national culture and their conscious role as the de-territorialized "other" had created a diaspora culture that represented a viable alternative to the Soviet cultural tradition and made possible a return to the homeland of the kind anticipated by Struve.¹¹

The function of literature, especially of the great classical tradition as a symbol of nation, remained a constant in the swiftly changing cultural landscape of postcommunism, and one of the factors facilitating the "return." A constancy on both sides was demonstrated in the grand celebration of the Bicentennial of Pushkin's birth, held in Russia in 1999, when the national poet was proclaimed the "gauge of Russia's legitimacy."¹² This public commemoration, which combined scholarly symposia with grand public festivities, marked the latest in a series of similar claims and commemorations made *both* in the diaspora and in the homeland.

In the 1990s, nostalgia for prerevolutionary Russia also found affinity with the exile's longing for home. In T. V. Marchenko's essay on Mikhail Osorgin and his novel *The Sivtsev Mews* (*Sivtsev vrazhek*), Marchenko notes that Osorgin's model for an apolitical revolutionary family was Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The White Guard* (*Belaia gvardiia*), a work that was "outside parties and programs" in the "dimension of human truth

¹⁰ Struve, *Rusaskaia literatura v izgnanii*, 9. A third edition of the book, with corrections and additions, was published in 1996 in St. Petersburg, edited by V. B. Kudriavtseva and K. Iu. Lappo-Danilevskii, with Struve's introduction and a short biographical dictionary of Russia Abroad.

¹¹ See also Mark von Hagen's statement on émigré politics as an alternative trajectory to imperial or Bolshevik thought in his response to the panel "Nations and Empire in Russia" at the Fifth Annual World Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities, Columbia University, 13-15 April 2000.

¹² Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, "Pushkin at 200," *The Harriman Review* 12:2-3 (Winter 1999-2000): 4.

and conscience.”¹³ Marchenko’s description of the appeal of Osorgin’s novel to the “homeless” émigrés provides a telling projection of post-communist nostalgia: “Moscow in the novel is dear, familiar, with a feeling of tenderness and pain ... it [the novel] was loved for its authenticity and soulfulness.”¹⁴ This nostalgia was now shared with the intelligentsia of the Soviet establishment, whose prominent position had been seriously undermined since 1991.

The exiles’ “homecoming” was marked by a boom in publication. Numerous reprint editions of émigré writing and a spate of scholarly publications proclaimed a serious intent to rediscover this patrimony. A. L. Manas’ev, in his introduction to a six-volume anthology of Russian literature abroad published in 1990, underscored the émigré contribution to both national and world cultures, noting that the internal arguments concerning its character and relationship to the homeland continue.¹⁵

Although Russian scholars had made significant efforts to fill the lacunae in prerevolutionary cultural history since the 1960s, the extent of the émigrés’ contribution could not be fully acknowledged until the late perestroika period and the early 1990s, when, for example, new books about the Silver Age began to point to it. In introducing a collection of Silver Age memoirs in 1990, N. Bogomolov made the striking observation that the relatively recent Silver Age is even less familiar to the average Russian reader than the eighteenth century or the time of Pushkin.¹⁶ The recognition of this lack of familiarity and of the émigré legacy informs the editors’ introduction to a 1993 collection of essays, *The Silver Age in Russia (Serebrianyi vek v Rossii)*: “The phenomenon of the Silver Age, first acknowledged in the Russian cultural diaspora ... came into our conceptual sphere as something integral fairly recently The rights

¹³ T. V. Marchenko, “Osorgin (1878-1942),” in *Literatura russkogo zarubezh’ia: 1920-1940*, 292. Quoted in a review of Mikhail Bulgakov’s play *The Days of the Turbins* in the Paris paper, *Poslednie novosti* 2941 (11 April 1929): 3.

¹⁴ Marchenko, “Osorgin,” 294.

¹⁵ A. L. Afanas’ev, “Neutolennaia liubov,” in *Literatura russkogo zarubezh’ia: Antologiia shesti tomakh*, vol. 1, bk. 1, 1920-1925, ed. Valentin Lavrov and A. L. Afanas’ev (Moscow: Kniga, 1990), 7.

¹⁶ N. Bogomolov, “Ob etoi knige i ee avtorakh,” in *Serebrianyi vek: Memuary*, Z. N. Gippius-Merezhkovskaia [et al.] (Moscow: Izvestiia, 1990), 8.

to its inheritance have now been declared."¹⁷ The intensified productivity of Russian and Western scholarship in this field benefited from the opening up around 1987 of certain Russian archives previously closed to scholars, as well as from the émigrés' materials and publications, and resulted in work that sought to overcome the gap and include previously taboo areas, such as revelations of homosexual circles, erotic literary gatherings, Alexandrian cosmopolitanism, and other transnational and transgressive phenomena characteristic of European and Russian modernism.¹⁸ The cumulative contribution of these discoveries to the project of rewriting twentieth-century Russian cultural history in its European context is enormous.¹⁹

In the introduction to one of the first collections of Russian émigré literature published in the homeland, A. N. Nikoliukin purports to consider the Russian nation as a whole, where "the tragedy of the individual, of the creative personality, became in time the tragedy of the people, of the whole nation."²⁰ He speaks of the "spiritual schism of Russia" created by the "necessity of having to make a moral choice.... This choice created the diaspora." The pathos of Nikoliukin's narrative mirrors the émigrés' own sense of national tragedy. Nikoliukin asserts the direct effect of the expulsion in 1922 of 160 prominent intellectuals on the history of the motherland and suggests that this proves the "integrity of Russian culture."²¹

¹⁷ "Vmesto predisloviia," in *Serebrianyi vek v Rossii: izbrannye stranitsy*, 3. For a detailed investigation of and arguments with the émigré provenance of the term Silver Age, see Omry Ronen, *The Fallacy of the Silver Age in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997).

¹⁸ See N. A. Bogomolov, *Mikhail Kuzmin: Stat'i i materialy* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1995). In the author's preface, Bogomolov states that it was not possible to write a dissertation on either Kuzmin or Khodasevich at Moscow State University in 1973.

¹⁹ This is acknowledged in N. E. Kanishcheva's introduction to *Russkoe zarubezh'e: Zolotaia kniga emigrantsii. Pervaia tret' XX veka. Entsiklopedicheskii biograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1997). The project, first conceived in Paris in the early 1930s, was published in Russia in the 1990s to stimulate the study of émigré culture in future generations.

²⁰ A. N. Nikoliukin, "Vvedenie: Russkoe zarubezh'e i literatura," in *Russkoe literaturnoe zarubezh'e: Sbornik obzorov i materialov*, in 2 vols., vol. 1, ed. O. N. Mikhailov et. al. (Moscow: Institut nauchnoi informatsii po obshchestvennym naukam, Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1991): 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Efforts to integrate the émigré legacy into the rewriting of Soviet literary history include a series initiated by the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow, which launched plans to publish such leading figures as Georgii Adamovich, Dmitry Mirsky, Konstantin Mochulskii, and Weidle. The series title, “From Another Shore: Critics of Russia Abroad on the Literature of the Soviet Period,” indicates its intent to provide diasporic perspectives on Soviet literature. Moreover, the statement of editorial policy for the series speaks of the “necessity” and scholarly value of such publications, and emphasizes their transnational value: “the dramatic dialogue in Russian literature of our century has universal implications for the general history and culture of our time.”²²

An earlier Western model that incorporates this dialogue and represents the first major effort at a synthesis of Russian literary history was undertaken in the mid-1980s in France. This seven-volume collaborative project, whose editors and contributors include western and émigré Russian scholars, began publication in 1987 with three volumes on the twentieth century, including the volume on the Silver Age. The introduction to the French edition, reprinted in the Russian translation, indicates the editors’ desire to approach twentieth-century literary history as an “open process,” rejecting the division in literature by political criteria that has been dominant on both sides of the border until recently. In a departure from previous monolithic approaches that focused on antinomies, this history preserves the distinction and complementarity of each component—prerevolutionary, émigré, and Soviet.²³

As Russian intellectuals absorbed this new material, they discovered “surprising resemblances” and continuities, and acknowledged the “high level of Russian culture in diaspora.” With this came a realization that the cultural monopoly of the Soviet homeland was actually not complete, and that the Soviet intelligentsia’s effort to preserve the national cultural heritage in the face of a mandated socialist realism had not been

²² Georgii Adamovich, *Kriticheskaia proza* (Moscow: Izd-vo Literaturnogo in-ta im. A. M. Gor’kogo, 1996), 3.

²³ See Efim Etkind, Georges Nivat, Ilya Serman, and Vittorio Strada, eds., *Histoire de la littérature russe: Le XX-e siècle*, in 3 vols., vol. 1 (*L’Age d’argent*) (Paris: Fayard, 1987). In Russian: Efim Etkind, Zhorzh Niva, Il’ia Serman, Vittorio Strada, eds., *Istoriia russkoi literatury XX veka: Serebrianyi vek* (Moscow: Progress, 1995).

a lonely mission, but one shared with the émigrés, who had been no less acutely conscious of this important task. A mirroring of respective suffering and shared nostalgia in the reception of this new material led to an inevitable temporal incongruity in the process of recovering the past. However, some key diasporic and metropolitan aims and desires meshed. Both parties had placed a premium on serious, or high culture and emphasized the universal value of "classical" Russian culture and its "humanism." Finally, taking stock of the émigré critique of Soviet culture became part of the striving for an "inclusive" approach to twentieth-century literature that assumes the eventual domestication of the émigré legacy.

An acceptance of this inclusive approach can be found in a 1998 Russian textbook intended for high school teachers and students.²⁴ Primarily devoted to writers of the First Wave, with a few brief essays on figures of subsequent emigrations, this textbook represents a significant step in the process of assimilating and domesticating the legacy of Russia Abroad. The editors' consistently matter-of-fact tone when presenting the diaspora's history reveals their intent to "de-exoticize" the émigré "other" and to establish the diaspora as part of the greater Russian literary tradition. The essays stress the continuities between the work of the better-known Russian poets, such as Aleksandr Blok, Nikolai Gumilev, and Boris Pasternak, and their younger counterparts in Russia Abroad. By emphasizing the "Russianness" of the First Wave, as well as their pain of exile and longing for the lost home, for the "immutable" Russia, the editors create the context of a recognizable literary tradition and make the émigrés appear both familiar and natural.²⁵

In the historical survey that opens the textbook, one can no longer find the ambivalence toward the West that in the past had affected the reception of diaspora. Rather, the authors account for the transnationalism in terms of the spiritual restlessness and pessimism among the émigrés of the interwar period, to be seen in a range of special interest groups, both political and religious, and write it off as part of the general sense of

²⁴ P. V. Basinskii and S. R. Fediakin, eds., *Sovremennoe russkoe zarubezh'e* (Moscow: Izdvo "Olimp," 1998).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10, 14, 15, 17.

instability in Europe.²⁶ In addition, this survey emphasizes how all Russians were united in their suffering and patriotism during World War II, when many émigrés fought in the French Resistance and celebrated the victory over Germany.²⁷

Another preoccupation of the textbook's commentary was the distinctive "intonation" and diction of the First Wave, a feature noted by Khodasevich already in the late 1930s. Although a similarity of intonation was to be found in the prewar transmission between the older and the younger generation of émigré poets, there is a significant contrast between a postwar poem of the émigré poet, Georgii Ivanov, and that of Ivan Elagin, a poet of the postwar second wave, whose diction, if not his poetry, was definitely Soviet.²⁸ The essay concludes that with the second wave "the inevitable occurred: the time of classics in the literature of the Russian emigration has passed."²⁹

The publication of this textbook and its informed and nonpartisan inclusion of the émigré legacy in the high school literature curriculum constitute an important landmark in the project of the 1990s for literary reunification. Addressed to the younger generation, for whom the political and ideological issues debated in the 1990s might no longer be relevant, this book exemplifies the "invention of tradition" aimed at a future Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin performed a symbolic, public act of "reunifying" the two traditions when he visited the Russian cemetery in Sainte-Geneviève-des-Bois on 1 November 2000. After placing red carnations on some of the graves, he announced that it was now time "to reunite. ... We must also remember, we must never forget, that we are children of the same mother whose name is Russia."³⁰

The paradoxical character of the Russian diaspora, and its steadfast insistence on preserving the cultural tradition of the homeland, along with the transnational connections formed while abroad, contributed to the complexity of its reception. Its return was predicated on a set of disjunctive temporalities: the émigré creation of memory of the past dwells in a

²⁶ Ibid., 15.

²⁷ Ibid., 10.

²⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁹ Ibid., 19.

³⁰ Report of Agence France Presse, cited in "Putin's Cemetery Visit Aims to Lay Soviet-Era Ghosts," in *Johnson's Russia List*, 1 November 2000.

continuous present, while the dream of return had existed in an indefinite future, postponed for some thirty years after the thaw. Moreover, Russia in the 1990s bore little resemblance either to the country the émigrés remembered or to the Soviet Union as they knew it.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the much-delayed encounter between the two Russias appears fraught, as the homeland contemplated its long lost "other" with passionate curiosity, anxiously examining each feature and discovering that resemblance and difference are frustratingly intertwined. Russia's acceptance of its patrimony demonstrates a genuine effort at reclamation, as well as partisan appropriation within the broad political spectrum of the new society, from the neonationalists to the liberals.³¹

Between the publication boom and the recently opened archives, it became possible to reevaluate the historic relationship between the homeland and the diaspora. These events also facilitated a renegotiation of the discourse of nation and nationalism. In the 1990s, Russia stood at the crossroads, confronted by conflicted versions of national self-fashioning at a time marked by a continued ambivalence toward the Soviet past, modernity, and the West. Also, Russian commentators had difficulty recognizing the diaspora as a transnational, hybrid formation, and understanding that "diasporic longings" are not "exclusively nationalist." This complexity in the diaspora's reception confirms, as it were, Clifford's suggestion that "the specific cosmopolitanisms articulated by diaspora discourses are in constitutive tension with nation-state/assimilationist ideologies."³²

As with the "homecoming" of the 1990s, Russian intellectuals of the former Soviet Union embraced this exile culture, its meaning was interpreted in a variety of ways as various factions appropriated it for their own purposes. One sees a process of revision and amplification of possibilities as these intellectuals sought to enable this literary heritage to represent their particular image of the nation. We can distinguish distinct

³¹ A useful "typology of the conservatives" can be found in B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 128-129.

³² J. Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 252.

stages and a range of approaches in the field of diaspora studies in Russia over the course of the 1990s.³³ In the initial stage of reception early in the decade, an apparent fulfillment of Struve's belief in the "enrichment potential" of Russia Abroad was tempered by the conservative, Soviet-style approach. One of the striking features in early diaspora studies was the preponderance of compounded nostalgia. The émigré sense of its "sacred" mission, now combined with post-communist nostalgia, appeared to inspire a longing for an impossible return to some version of a "misty" prerevolutionary Russia, with the "originary tradition" still intact.

Contemporary Western theories of diaspora provide insights that apply to this situation. Khachig Tölölyan points out, for example, that a diaspora, in its attempt to maintain identity in the hostland, "ignores the extent to which these institutions and collective identities have been transformed or even invented in diaspora and then retrojected into a misty past." Collectivities that look united to themselves do not do so because of continuity with an originary tradition, but because "they produce new collective identities and repress the memory of old ones even while they celebrate memory and roots."³⁴ Also, in his study of Iranian exiles, Hamid Naficy observes that while "they continue to keep aflame a burning desire for return . . . they construct an imaginary nation both of the homeland and of their own presence in exile."³⁵

Other critics writing in the 1990s, like E. P. Chelyshev, took a more hard-headed approach to the First Wave and ended up invoking a conservative nationalist agenda.³⁶ Chelyshev begins his account of the cultural heritage of the Russian emigration by citing more mundane,

³³ The academic importance of the field can be seen in the publication of bibliographical sources, for example: A. D. Alekseev, *Literatura russkogo zarubezh'ia: Knigi 1917-1940. Materialy k bibliografii* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1993); *Pisateli russkogo zarubezh'ia (1918-1940): Spravochnik*, ed. A. N. Nikoliukin, A. M. Gutkina, Part I (Moscow: INION RAN, 1993). Note also such collaborative ventures as *Russkoe zarubezh'e: Khronika nauchnoi, kul'turnoi i obshchestvennoi zhizni, 1920-1940, Frantsiia*, ed. L. A. Mnukhin, T. L. Gladkova, T. I. Dubrovina, V. K. Losskii, and N. A. Struve (Paris: YMCA-Press/Moscow: EKSMO, 1995).

³⁴ Khachig Tölölyan, "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power: Diaspora in the Transnational Moment," *Diaspora* 5:1 (Spring 1996): 28-29.

³⁵ Hamid Naficy, *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian television in Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 16.

³⁶ E. P. Chelyshev, "Kul'turnoe nasledie rossiiskoi emigratsii," in *Literatura russkogo zarubezh'ia, 1920-1940*, 6.

sociological reasons for the new interest in émigré literature, such as the changing marketplace in the post-Soviet period and readers' enormous interest in the culture from which they were forcibly separated. He appears surprised to discover that émigrés saw their mission as "guardians of the national tradition" and counters this view with a formulaic assertion that Soviet scholars saved Russian "humanist scholarship" and culture from destruction. He argues for Russia's exceptionalism, since its "standard differed from the world standard," then proceeds directly to the conclusion that "literature abroad can, to a degree, be called Orthodox literature."³⁷

Although Chelyshev appears to subscribe to Struve's visionary belief in the émigré contribution to the country's "resurrection and renewal," his final claim reveals a neoconservative nationalist agenda. In his approach to reunification, Chelyshev invokes traditional paradigms of nationalism that represent an amalgam of the autocratic and Soviet models—wholeness, spirituality, Orthodoxy, ethnic purity. He fails to consider the importance of the heterogeneity—the ethnic, religious, and political differences—that characterized the greater émigré community. This attitude is representative of a fierce ideological contestation of the 1990s, in which conservative nationalists, along with the communists, wanted to claim a monolithic version of imperial Russia.

Michael Urban, in his article "Remythologizing the Russian State," where he analyzes the "competing discourses" of the 1990s that were "seeking to define the nation in partial ways for partisan advantage," demonstrates how the nationalist debates of that time continued the historical Slavophile line by defining Russia as "spiritual," "all-humanist," or "collectivist" in opposition to the West.³⁸ This attitude was especially pronounced in the debates around the Russian Idea, which served as a projection screen for conflicting and often exclusive visions of national identity. Commentators found continuity of the Russian philosophical tradition in emigration particularly valuable. As James Scanlan points out, "no part of Russia's philosophical patrimony" was more important "than the thought of the country's vibrant 'Silver Age,'" since, in contrast to literary and artistic figures, "the philosophers suffered almost total

³⁷ Ibid., 55.

³⁸ Urban, "Remythologizing the Russian State," 969, 973.

repression.”³⁹ But the recovery of this legacy was also used as a source for reviving traditional Russian spirituality, which provided an antidote to Soviet culture. This and the neonationalist rejection of the revolution as an aberration, that brought about a distortion of Russia’s essential nature led to a static conception of the Russian Idea, as if frozen in time. Along with many Russian and Western scholars, M. A. Maslin argued with the neo-Slavophiles in favor of a complex understanding of the patrimony that would be able to accommodate all the variants of “Russia’s historical path,” where “alongside the religious Russian idea there also existed the revolutionary, socialist Russian intellectuals’ national idea.”⁴⁰

Another corollary to the partisan appropriation of the prerevolutionary legacy was the conflicting attitudes toward literary modernism and the Silver Age, which persist in Russia. Marc Raeff emphasized the continuity of prerevolutionary modernism in diaspora as one of its important contributions that is now acknowledged in the homeland. At the same time, Raeff notes the émigrés’ conservatism and ambivalence toward the Silver Age, with its anarchism and modernism.⁴¹

As discussed above, in the initial stage of reception in the early 1990s, a belief in the “enrichment potential” of Russia Abroad was tempered by the conservative, Soviet-style approach. Alternative approaches to the study of the legacy appeared in a 1996 collection of articles that address specific issues in Russian diaspora studies. In one of them, A. V. Kva-kin writes ironically about a what he refers to as a recent but “numerous tribe of scholars of the emigration” and provides a useful methodological corrective to the nationalist position. He detects a partisan ideological agenda in the use of the term “spirituality,” which often stands for the

³⁹ James Scanlan, “The Silver Age in Postcommunist Perspective,” in *Russian Thought after Communism: The Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage*, ed. James P. Scanlan (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 73. See also the essay by Stanislav Bemovich Dzhimbinov, 11-22. I would like to thank Nancy Condee for drawing my attention to this publication.

⁴⁰ See M. A. Maslin’s introduction, “Veliko neznanie Rossii . . .,” to *Ruskaia ideia*, compiled by M. A. Maslin (Moscow: Respublika, 1992), 12. For a later study that addresses the complexity of the concept, see B. Kolonitskii, “Ruskaia ideia i ideologiiia Fevral’skoi revoliutsii,” in *Kul’tura russkoi diaspori: Samorefleksiiia i samoidentifikatsiia: materialy mezhdunarodnogo seminara*, ed. A. Danilevskii and S. Dotsenko (Tartu: Ülikooli Kirjastus, 1997), 11-36.

⁴¹ On the émigrés’ ambivalence toward the Silver Age, see Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 102-103.

idea of "Russia's mission in opposition to antichrists from both the West and the East." He is also concerned that émigré literature is "transported to contemporary Russia, not as historical documents or texts, but as ideological landmarks for contemporary society."⁴²

A confirmed realist in his own work, Solzhenitsyn expresses doubts in this review about Bely's *Petersburg*, long considered a masterpiece of prerevolutionary Russian modernism. Solzhenitsyn does admit that it is "something exceptionally original, never seen in Russian prose," but he describes the novel as "a complete break from a detailed, calm, and objective narrative in the nineteenth-century style."⁴³ While conceding the novel's "literary interest" and its innovations, he pronounces the overall impression "pathological," with an occasional pleasurable moment experienced amid fatigue and revulsion.⁴⁴ This belated review, penned by one of Russia's most prominent writers some eighty years after the novel was first published, can be seen as a position paper in the partisan discourses on national identity.

An opposite view of the modernist experiment appeared in a response to a questionnaire published in *Literaturnaia gazeta* (*Literary Gazette*) in the first issue for 2000. Natal'ia Ivanova, a prominent literary critic and editor of an important literary journal, *Banner* (*Znamia*), calls the fact that Russian literature has been unable to "realize" the aesthetic possibilities of modernism the great "disappointment of this century."⁴⁵ This sense of cultural discontinuity takes into account the Russian postmodernist recognition of "the impossibility of 'restoring' modernism after decades of totalitarian aesthetics."⁴⁶ The competing perspectives on the narrative of past cultural practice rendered the task of restoring modernism to Russian cultural history all the more urgent.

⁴² A. V. Kvakin, "Nekotorye voprosy izuchenii istorii assimiliatsii rossiiskoi intelligentsii v emigratsii," in *Istoriia rossiiskogo zarubezh'ia: Problemy adaptatsii migrantov v XIX-XX vekakh*, ed. Lev Poliakov (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 1995), 75.

⁴³ Solzhenitsyn, "Peterburg' Andreia Belogo (1913, 1916)," *Novyi mir*, vol. LXIII, no. 7 (July 1997): 192.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁴⁵ See Natal'ia Ivanova's response to the questionnaire in *Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 2000, no. 1-2, regarding the main literary events of the past year and the century.

⁴⁶ Eliot Borenstein, "Introduction" in Mark Lipovetsky, *Russian Postmodernist Fiction: Dialog with Chaos*, 9.

Despite general agreement concerning the value of the First Wave's contribution to Russian culture, the process of its appropriation has remained a contested terrain. Responses to the diaspora's return differ. For some, the appropriation of the émigré legacy in the wake of a failed communist utopia holds the promise of an impossible return to some version of procommunist Russia. For others, the legacy contributes to an ongoing quest for a full recovery of the past that will lead to a revision of the nation's cultural history.

The encounter of the two Russias offers new opportunities for rewriting an unabridged version of twentieth-century Russian cultural history and for demonstrating the hoped-for survival of literature both "here" and "there," despite political or territorial divisions. Such a history would reveal both the continuities and alternatives of the literary process and illuminate its history on both sides of the border. The reception of the diaspora contributes to broadening the field of cultural exploration that, once again, represents a full spectrum of Russian society in transformation.

Greta Slobin: Bio-Bibliography

Greta Slobin, who also published as Greta Nachteiler Slobin, was born in 1943 in wartime Orenburg (then Chkalov), USSR, and moved back to her mother's native Kishinev in Moldavia (now Chisinau, Moldova) with her father, who was from Lublin, Poland. They emigrated to Poland during the brief open-border moment of 1957, and from there to the US in 1960, when her father discovered a sister who had survived Auschwitz.

Greta received her BA from Wayne State University with a major in French, and her MA in Russian literature at the University of Michigan. She came to Yale for her doctoral work from Middletown CT, where her husband Mark, an ethnomusicologist, had found a home at Wesleyan University. Greta's advisor was Victor Erlich, and she loved the challenging, diverse, and supportive Yale Slavic Department, where she met many lifelong friends. She received her PhD in 1978.

Greta taught briefly at Wesleyan and SUNY-Albany, and then at Amherst College (1981-1988) before taking a position at the University of California at Santa Cruz, from which she retired in 2001 as Professor Emerita. In her last years, she was Visiting Professor in the College of Letters at Wesleyan University. She was twice a Fellow at the Harriman Institute at Columbia and spent a year at Harvard's Center for Russian Studies under an NEH fellowship. She enjoyed discussing comparative literature with her daughter Maya.

Greta died in 2011. Her scholarship focuses on the literary and artistic work of Aleksei Remizov, Russian Modernism, and the literary and cultural politics of the Russian diaspora after the Revolution.

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