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## **Australian Slavonic and East European Studies**

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KEVIN WINDLE

**HADES OR EDEN? HERMAN BYKOFF'S *RUSSIAN AUSTRALIA* (1919):  
TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY<sup>1</sup>**

Though occasionally cited in historical writing about the early days of the Russian community in Australia,<sup>2</sup> Herman Bykoff's article on the subject, translated below, has never before appeared in print. It was, he claims, accepted by the Brisbane fortnightly newspaper *Knowledge and Unity* in late 1918 or early 1919, but for reasons unknown—he blamed 'censorship' by the editors—it was not published. As a result it is known only from a manuscript copy of the original Russian, confiscated by the security authorities, with other papers, and eventually released to the National Archives of Australia.<sup>3</sup> It is of interest on two counts. Firstly, it offers an insider's view of the community and the life of Russian immigrants in the years before and during World War I and immediately following the Bolshevik revolution, when the Russian community in Queensland was deeply involved in political action, and the object of close attention from the security agencies. Secondly, it speaks eloquently about the relations between the leading figures in that company of revolutionaries, several of

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<sup>1</sup> The names of Russian residents of Australia appear below in the forms they themselves customarily used, thus Herman Bykoff, rather than German Bykov, and Klushin rather than Kliushin. This does not apply to bibliographical references, where Library of Congress transliteration is used.

<sup>2</sup> Govor, Elena, *Australia in the Russian Mirror: changing perceptions 1770-1919* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997); Kevin Windle, 'Nabat and its Editors: the 1919 Swansong of the Brisbane Russian Socialist Press', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 21 (2007), 143-163; idem, "'Unmajestic Bombast': The Brisbane Union of Russian Workers as Shown in a 1919 Play', *Australian Slavonic and East European Studies* 19 (2005), 29-51.

<sup>3</sup> NAA: BP4/1 BOX 4 66/4/2165.



whom were soon to be deported to Russia, and their political tendencies, loyalties and differences.

Bykoff was born in Saratov in 1891. He spent only three years in Australia, having arrived as a sailor in 1916. By his own account he had once been a Left Socialist Revolutionary, and his activism had led to seven years in prison in Russia. By the time of the October revolution he saw himself as a 'Bolshevik Maximalist'. He was deported in September 1919, but succeeded in making his mark in Russian radicalism when this was at its height in Australia—the years immediately following the October revolution in Russia. Concerning his later life, there is little information to hand, beyond the fact that he spent some time in Chita in the early 1920s, in a Communist Party post, later taught in Leningrad, and appears to have survived the purges of the 1930s.

Soon after his arrival Bykoff became an active member of the Brisbane Union of Russian Workers (URW), which came to be the focus of radical activism under the Bolshevik Theodore (Tom) Sergeeff (Fedor Sergeev; better known by his *nom de guerre*, Artem), and later when led by the forceful and dynamic Alexander Zuzenko (1884-1938). Bykoff more than once clashed with Zuzenko, who had been appointed secretary of the URW in August 1918. Zuzenko's career is better known than Bykoff's and has been described elsewhere, so no more than minimal biographical information is needed here. A sailor and seasoned revolutionary from Riga, he arrived in Australia in 1911 and soon came to the attention of the authorities as a determined agitator. He was deported in April 1919, but returned briefly as an agent of the Comintern in 1922, to be deported a second time. His last fourteen years were spent as

Soviet sea-captain, a career which was cut short by arrest in April 1938, and execution shortly thereafter as a 'British spy'.<sup>4</sup>

For a brief period in 1918 Bykoff was a leading member of a breakaway organization, the Group of Russian Workers (see below), which he soon left, as he recounts in the article, to rejoin the URW. Though rarely able to see eye to eye with Zuzenko, he did join him in leading the red flag procession on Sunday 23 March 1919, the fateful day which brought in its train a week-long frenzy of rioting in the streets of Brisbane and led to the arrest and deportation of some dozen members of the community, Bykoff and Zuzenko among them.<sup>5</sup> When brought before a Brisbane court on 1 April 1919 for his part in the demonstration, he was defiant in informing a hostile bench and public gallery of his revolutionary views, which an editorial in *The Argus* dismissed as 'impudent Bolshevick balderdash'.<sup>6</sup>

Bykoff was a prolific writer of essays, articles, and political feuilletons. Some of these were published in the Brisbane Russian-language press, others in English in *The Daily Standard* and *Knowledge and Unity* in 1919, but many other pieces remained unpublished, and plans for some publications remained unrealized. He often wrote under the pseudonym A. Rezanoff [Rezanov], the name with which he signed 'Russian Australia'. The illegal newspaper *Nabat* [The Tocsin], largely his work as editor, with much material written by him, reached few readers when the first issue was prepared in August 1919, and the second and last issue did not go beyond the

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<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Windle, 'Round the World for the Revolution: A Bolshevik agent's mission to Australia 1920-22 and his interrogation by Scotland Yard', *Revolutionary Russia*, Vol. 17, No. 2, December 2004, 90-118.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed account of the riots see Raymond Evans, *The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1988); idem, 'Agitation, Ceaseless Agitation', in *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian Australian Relations*, eds. John McNair and Thomas Poole (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1992), 125-71.

<sup>6</sup> *The Argus*, 2.4.1919.

preparatory stage. Thus his detailed account of the red flag procession and its consequences, written for *Nabat*, remained virtually unknown.<sup>7</sup> The manuscript of ‘Russian Australia’ was seized, with numerous other papers, during a search at the end of March. The copy found in his possession, on which the translation below is based, is probably a rough draft, the final copy having been passed to Zuzenko for publication. Some time after submission, however, he saw fit to update it with a postscript.

The document bears no date, but internal evidence combined with known historical facts permits approximate dating (within a matter of weeks) of the postscript: it post-dates a reorganization of the structure of the URW which abolished the key post of Secretary, held by Zuzenko, and placed the running of its affairs in the hands of a ‘Soviet’ of nine people. From other evidence, including Bykoff’s own writings, this is known to have taken place in early February. It is also clear from the contents of the document that the ‘Red Flag demonstration’ of 23 March has not yet occurred. This means that its date of origin is close to that of another revealing manuscript by the same author, the play *How We are Learning Self-Management and Control*, a farce which treats some of the same themes and characters, and which bears the date 13-14 February 1919.<sup>8</sup>

The postscript states that the body of the article was written for the newspaper *Knowledge and Unity* ‘long ago’, and accepted well before the closing date for No. 25. The editors, Bykoff asserts, censored his article, and did not after all print it. No doubt he expected to see it published in the language in which he wrote it, Russian, but in December 1918 the Russian-language *Znanie i edinienie* was proscribed by the federal

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<sup>7</sup> See Windle, ‘*Nabat* and its Editors’; “‘A crude orgy of drunken violence’: A Russian Account of the Brisbane ‘Red Flag Riots’ of 1919”, *Labour History*, No. 99, November 2010, 165-78; idem, *Undesirable: Captain Zuzenko and the Workers of Australia and the World* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup> *O tom, kak my uchimsia samoupravleniiu i kontroliu* (hereafter ‘*Self-Management*’). NAA: BP4/1 BOX 4 66/4/2165. The play has never been published; for a description and analysis see Windle, “‘Unmajestic Bombast’”.

government. From No. 23 (31 December 1918), it appeared in English only, as *Knowledge and Unity*. Contributors may have had little warning of this radical change, which would have delayed the processing of submissions in Russian. Issue No. 25, the third to appear in English, appeared without Bykoff's essay on Monday 20 January 1919. It is likely, therefore, that the first part was written and submitted in the last week of December. Since he refers by name to *Deviaty val* [The Ninth Wave], another Russian-language newspaper edited by Zuzenko, of which the first issue appeared on 23 December,<sup>9</sup> any earlier date is precluded. The author's 'long ago' was therefore perhaps six weeks previously—not very remote in time, but, since events were moving rapidly, it may have seemed so to him.

The paragraph beginning 'In conclusion', immediately preceding the postscript, is itself a later addition, as may be seen by the deletion of the author's signature before it, but precise dating is not possible. The approving reference in this paragraph to a new newspaper, which 'covers political events in Russia from the standpoint of radical socialism', is not entirely clear. Nor is his earlier claim that the URW 'obtained the right to publish a newspaper'. The short-lived *Ninth Wave* was new in December, but Bykoff expresses deep distaste for that newspaper, which in any case was published without legal sanction. Zuzenko's *Knowledge and Unity* was new only in as much as it had changed its language of publication. Its editorial line remained the same as in the previous Russian-language version. Bykoff's form of words does not state clearly whether the new paper has already been launched, or whether its launch is expected soon. If the latter, the reference may be to the newspaper mentioned in the last paragraph of the postscript: 'the possible renewal of a legal newspaper in Russian'. That he was himself planning to launch a 'legal' paper is known from his intercepted

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<sup>9</sup> Report by Sgt A. M. Short, 27.12.1918. NAA: BP4/1 66/4/1817.

correspondence and seized papers.<sup>10</sup> In ‘Russian Australia’ he appears to be anticipating permission to publish a newspaper of his own, and his confiscated documents show that he was working on it in February and March. He did not, in the end, receive permission to publish any newspaper, so the only evidence of his intentions lies in letters and the manuscript drafts among those documents. These include the leading article for first issue of ‘the legal non-party workers’ newspaper *Fakel*’.<sup>11</sup>

There had been significant changes of personnel in the URW following the February revolution of 1917. Bykoff writes, ‘the “politicals” quickly terminated their ties with Australia and departed’. He provides no names, and in fact they did not all depart, but he must have had Artem Sergeeff prominently in mind. Sergeeff seized what proved to be a short-lived opportunity, when the new Provisional Government assisted political émigrés who wished to return home from Australia.<sup>12</sup> This was when radicals like Zuzenko, Nikolai Lagutin, Peter Simonoff and Bykoff himself moved to fill the vacuum. Only a few months later, the Australian government raised obstacles in the path of would-be returnees to Soviet Russia.

As ‘Russian Australia’ clearly shows, by late 1918 the Russian community was riven by personal antipathies as well as political dissensions. There were stark differences in temperament, sufficient to render some of the key figures incompatible at the level of personality. The differences had long been apparent, but had become

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<sup>10</sup> See e.g. NAA: MP95/1/0 167/85/91 (Censor’s Reports), 6.3.1919.

<sup>11</sup> NAA: BP4/1 BOX 4 66/4/2165, p. 251. ‘Peredovitsa’ (undated manuscript)

<sup>12</sup> Others who left included Pavel Grey, Ivan Grey, John Cook, and the poet Sergei Alymov. The latter broke his journey home with a decade in Harbin, then achieved fame in the USSR as the author of poems and songs such as ‘Beloved Stalin’, ‘Song of the People’s Commissar of Railways’ [about Lazar’ Kaganovich], ‘We will Smash the Fascists’, and ‘Song of a Pioneer Hero’ in praise of Pavlik Morozov. On the last-named song, see Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* (London: Granta, 2005), 46-47. Some of Alymov’s early work appeared in the Brisbane *Izvestiia Soiuza russkikh emigrantov*.

more pronounced after the October revolution, when the URW assumed a more visible role in the political affairs of Queensland. Peter Simonoff, the Bolshevik consul, unrecognized by the Australian or British governments, was the focus of much disharmony in the Russian community (see below), and Zuzenko's personal style in managing the URW served as an irritant to many. In Bykoff's play, Zuzenko, in earlier life a seaman and activist in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), was ironically dubbed 'His Anarchic Majesty' and 'Rip-the-Sails'. He stood for what Bykoff termed *odnovlastie* and the 'anarchic autocracy of the secretary', who 'sought to be a dictator'.<sup>13</sup> In 'Russian Australia' he calls him 'the most autocratic of anti-authoritarian non-statist dictators'. The same high-handed, non-consultative style characterized his editorship and his treatment of some who contributed to the URW's newspaper. Bykoff was in no doubt that Zuzenko was responsible for the 'strict censorship' which, he thought, had held up publication of his article. Like other readers, and indeed, like the Australian government, Bykoff viewed the transfer of editorship to Civa Rosenberg, Zuzenko's young fiancée (they were married on 8 February 1919), as camouflage, an unsubtle manoeuvre aimed at maintaining publication while Zuzenko himself was under a ban.

The original manuscript (that is, the part preceding the postscript) paints a picture of the life of Russian immigrants in their new surroundings, out of place, often ill at ease in an environment very different from their homeland, and briefly surveys the short history of the Russian community, noting the changes which came with the outbreak of war and the upheavals in Russia in 1917. With regard to the pre-war years, Bykoff is presumably relying on hearsay and allowing his socio-political convictions to colour his impressions. He arrived in Australia only mid-way through the war. He is contemptuous of the way of life he has found and the pastimes and entertainments

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<sup>13</sup> 'Pili-skripi' [Bykoff], speaking in *Self-Management*.

favoured by the working class in the Anglo-Australian community: drinking, ‘inane moving pictures’, racing and boxing (this was the age of the boxer and folk hero Les Darcy). In this, if in little else, the Russian accounts are virtually unanimous: Artem Sergeeff and Zuzenko wrote in very similar terms. Pavel Grey had written in 1913 of how Russian immigrants had been demoralized by their new mode of life, succumbing to drink, cards, and ‘*illuizioni*’ (the cinema), surrounded by the ‘deathly tedium’ of Australian life.<sup>14</sup> Bykoff too deplores the absence of communal life and the trend towards individualism and isolation, embraced, he says with regret, by some of the new immigrants from Russia. He opposes those among the Russian radicals who place a higher premium on the rights of the individual than on the emancipation of the working class.

Here Bykoff takes aim primarily at Konstantin Klushin [Kliushin], sometimes known as Orloff, whom he called the Bald Philosopher in his play. Klushin is described as one of a ‘handful of intellectuals’ motivated by a deep contempt for ‘the crowd’; he will not declare for the Bolsheviks, and is made to sound less than fully committed to their cause.<sup>15</sup> The following lines by Bykoff’s *alter ego*, speaking from a Bolshevik standpoint in *Self-Management*, are addressed to the Bald Philosopher:

We can forgive much: doubts as to our strength, uncertainty as to our speedy victory, wavering in choosing the methods of struggle, but we will not overlook black treachery, a coalition between the philanthropic intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie with its policy of sabotage against the

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<sup>14</sup> Pavel Grey, (Editorial), *Izvestiia Soiuza russkikh emigrantov* 29.11.1913.

<sup>15</sup> Klushin’s articles from this period, though written from a revolutionary perspective, do not clearly denounce rival strains of radical thought, e.g. Socialist Revolutionary; see esp. *Listok*, No. 5, 24.8.1918.

Soviet Socialist State.<sup>16</sup> ... You may spit on us, but know that the future belongs to us, not to you individualists and petty intellectuals and keepers of mummified hearts and crumbling mummies.

In attacking those who strayed from the Bolshevik line as he perceived it, Bykoff argued not only for ideological homogeneity, but also for unity and coordination among the disparate and far-flung immigrant (that is, Russian) groups in Australia. The Russian community at the time had its stronghold in Brisbane and Ipswich, but sizable groups could be found scattered across Queensland in the places where non-naturalized aliens were able to find work. During the Great War and for some time after it, when restrictions on their employment applied, this meant railway-building, mining in the north-west of the state, meatworks, and in season the cane-fields of the tropical coast. These areas are collectively referred to in Bykoff's writing as *kontri* (the country). Bringing together those groups was, he wrote in an unpublished editorial, one of the aims of his planned newspaper *Fakel*.<sup>17</sup> The idea of linking all the groups of Russians in Australia was not his exclusive property and was not new. It actually owed much to Zuzenko, who had published statements urging precisely this well before taking up the leadership of the URW.<sup>18</sup> As the records of the Ipswich branch make clear, he continued to do so as Secretary of the URW in 1918.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Philanthropic intelligentsia: a necessarily inexact translation of *narodoliubivaia* (people-loving) *intelligentsiia*, referring to those who would advance the cause of the *narod*, the peasantry and ordinary people.

<sup>17</sup> 'Peredovitsa', NAA: BP4/1 BOX 4 66/4/2165, p. 251.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. A. Matulichenko [Zuzenko], 'Federatsiia grupp russkikh rabochikh v Avstralii', *Rabochaia zhizn'*, No. 79, 5.9.1917.

<sup>19</sup> The records of the Ipswich branch may be found in the files of the Comintern. See especially the minute book (*Protokol'naia kniga*) for 1918. Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI), 495.95.4.



This desire for unity notwithstanding, personal differences among the membership, as well as external factors, exerted a powerful countervailing influence. Divisions arose over the question of Russian diplomatic representation in Australia. Alexander Abaza still clung to the office of consul-general in Australia under the Provisional Government and remained for a brief period after the October revolution. He was assisted by a local honorary consul, Thomas (sometimes referred to as Thomas-Abramovich). While Abaza was unpopular with the radical Russian community, owing to his opposition to the URW and everything it stood for, there had been some sympathy for Thomas. Hence the rift to which Bykoff refers. The sympathisers did not include Bykoff or Zuzenko. The latter, writing as 'Matulichenko', had published a 'resolution' one month after the Bolshevik seizure of power, in the last issue of *Rabochaia zhizn'* (Workers' life; 5.12.1917), signed by 42 Russians in Ingham and Halifax, demanding the recall of the 'parasites' Abaza and Thomas.

No sooner had the 'affair' of Abaza and Thomas died down than the 'Simonoff affair' produced new discord in the URW, leading to the rise of a separate body, the Group of Russian Workers (GRW), in April 1918. V. Pikunoff, its secretary, wrote in the *Daily Standard* under the headline 'Russian Affairs: Cause of New Group in Brisbane', that it had arisen out of opposition to Simonoff, who had secured the post of consul with the support of the new Soviet government.<sup>20</sup> This episode, mentioned by Bykoff in 'Russian Australia', was also described at length by Klushin, the other founder member of the Group. He claimed that Simonoff lacked the basic requirements for the position, and suffered from ignorance, 'chameleonism', delusions of grandeur, and a lack of principle and talent. In the GRW's news-sheet, which he edited, Klushin reported that he had written to Litvinov, the Bolshevik envoy in Lon-

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<sup>20</sup> *Daily Standard* 27.6.1918.

don, to protest against Simonoff's appointment.<sup>21</sup> An Ipswich branch of the RGW was soon formed, and on 4 May 'Comrade Rezanoff' was the invited speaker from the Brisbane RGW: he spoke of 'slander' by some URW leaders, and named Simonoff as the cause of the conflict.<sup>22</sup>

The alliance between Bykoff and Klushin did not endure. The two leading figures in the Group represented very different 'tendencies', as Bykoff's 'Postscript' makes clear, and soon parted company. Feeling that he had fallen in with a 'nationalist individualist' who 'lacked any definite political convictions', Bykoff hastened to make his exit. The Group began to fade almost as soon as it was born, and some months later Bykoff lampooned Klushin in his farce. In 'Russian Australia' and elsewhere he refers to him as a 'former revolutionary'. On 2 March 1919 a joint meeting of the Ipswich RGW and URW discussed unification, a move initiated by Zuzenko, who chaired the meeting, and the vote went in favour of amalgamation.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the people named in 'Russian Australia' were well known in the community. There is, however, mention in the article of others who enjoyed less renown. Bykoff's article names Modrak as an ally of Klushin. Piotr Modrak was a Pole by origin, and a man of some education: the records of the Ipswich branch show him being invited to give a lecture,<sup>24</sup> and he is mentioned as one who might check a translation of a work by Bukharin—few members of the community would have had

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<sup>21</sup> See *Listok*, No. 1, 23.6.1918; No. 5, 24.8.1918; No. 6, 15.9.1918. I am grateful to Nataliya Samokhina for locating and supplying copies of this rare publication, held in the Queensland State Library (John Oxley Library), in the *Beckingham Family and Lane Family Collection*.

<sup>22</sup> Ipswich minute book, RGASPI 495.95.4, p. 5. Simonoff hit back, stating that the members of the GRW were 'only parading themselves as Bolsheviks, but they are Kerensky's supporters.' Letter to *The Daily Standard*, 18.7.1918.

<sup>23</sup> Ipswich minute book, RGASPI 495.95.4, p. 87 ff.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 495.5.6, p. 98.

sufficient command of English to do this. He studied for a degree in science at the University of Queensland and took part in some of the activities of the Russian community, with his wife Evgeniia. He later returned to independent Poland and published a book about Australia.<sup>25</sup> ‘White’ appears to be the Russian Zhiliaev, born in 1888, who arrived in Australia on 6 March 1910 and took the name ‘Neil White’.<sup>26</sup> Dorf had been active in the community since its early days. His name occurs regularly in *Izvestiia SRE* in 1915, and in *Rabochaia zhizn’* in 1916. A. Gorsky was an ally of Zuzenko in the URW, with a similarly anarchic cast of mind. In the aftermath of the Brisbane riots the Department of Defence included him in a list of Russians recommended for deportation,<sup>27</sup> a fate which he escaped, however.

The ideological differences and personal animosities separating the leading figures in the community in 1918-19 stand out most clearly in Bykoff’s postscript to his article. The author, who had been an SR, declared himself a Bolshevik at an early date. (So did Simonoff, though many disbelieved him.) Zuzenko on the other hand was slow to make the transition. His long record had begun with the SRs, and in Queensland he had aligned himself with the IWW and embraced the anarchic leanings of that body. The Queensland Russian press shows the two at odds in 1916, in some of their earliest published statements.<sup>28</sup> The animosity was not easily overcome. It is notable that some of the barbs aimed at Zuzenko in ‘Russian Australia’ are identical with those in his flyer *For or against the Soviets*, a brief but swingeing attack on

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<sup>25</sup> Piotr Modrak, *W krainie kangura* (Lwów: Państwowe wydawnictwo książek szkolnych, 1936). My thanks to John McNair for providing information on Modrak’s studies at the University of Queensland.

<sup>26</sup> I am indebted to Elena Govor for this information.

<sup>27</sup> NAA: A3934 SC5/1. Bolshevism in Queensland. Defence Dept. to Acting PM, 5.4.1919.

<sup>28</sup> A. R-v [Rezanov, Bykoff], ‘Eshche o Sidnee’, *Rabochaia zhizn’*, No. 23, 18.7.16; A. M-ko [Matulichenko, Zuzenko], ‘Otvét na stat’iu “Eshche o Sidnee”’, *Rabochaia zhizn’*, No. 30, 5.9.16.

'home-grown anarchists', 'our Bakuninists' and 'anti-Sovietists',<sup>29</sup> and in Bykoff's play, including a quotation of some lines uttered by Zuzenko. On more than one occasion in Bykoff's writing Zuzenko is heard to use the expression here translated as 'Charge on regardless!' [*s mesta v kar'er!*] and to state that he does not recognize Soviet authority.

It is impossible to avoid some discussion of Bykoff's political terminology, which reflects the vocabulary then in use among Russians in Queensland and more widely. 'Soviet' is potentially ambiguous: it may refer to the organization of power in revolutionary Russia, not yet named the USSR; it may also denote the new management of the URW in Brisbane, known to the police as 'the Soviet of the Souse [*Soiuz*]'. For a short period, Bykoff himself signed statements and declarations as 'the Soviet'.<sup>30</sup> 'Soviet power/authority' [*sovetskaia vlast*], which in common use later meant only the regime in the USSR, may likewise here refer to both.

The terms *bezgosudarstvennik* (roughly, non-statist, anti-statist) and *bezvlastnik* (again roughly, anti-authoritarian) enjoyed some currency during this period. A founding meeting of an organization of *bezgosudarstvenniki* had been held in Brisbane as early as 1915 (but the founders did not include Zuzenko).<sup>31</sup> It is clear that the members were in effect anarchists, and Bykoff can be seen using these three terms with minimal semantic differentiation. To him as a Bolshevik, all were primitive strains of revolutionary thought, to be firmly resisted. Zuzenko, who had long proclaimed himself an anarchist, and continued to do so for some time after the October revolution, often hewed to an orthodox anarchist line: 'Authority, whether appointed

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<sup>29</sup> 'Za sovety ili protiv sovetrov', March 1919. NAA: BP4/1 BOX 4 66/4/2165.

<sup>30</sup> 'Za sovety ...' is an example.

<sup>31</sup> Pervaia obshche-kvinslandskaia konferentsiia bezgosudarstvennikov, (25.12.1915), NAA: BP4/1 BOX 4 66/4/2165.

by somebody, or even elected by the people, is equally harmful to the working class,' he wrote in December 1917.<sup>32</sup> However, at later dates, his views were less clear cut, allowing some blending of anarchism and Bolshevism, and by 1921 he had fully embraced the latter.<sup>33</sup> In 1919 he is said by Bykoff to have defined Bolshevism as 'anarchic communism' [*anarkhicheskii kommunizm*], an unorthodox view, but one which is not improbable at a time when Zuzenko's allegiances were in a state of flux. Bykoff used *anarkhist* and *bezvlastnik* synonymously when he claimed that 'anarchists like our Mamins do not recognize Soviet power',<sup>34</sup> but Bykoff's view of anarchism is also unorthodox: 'Anarchy is a form of governance'.

At some risk of compromising coherence, this translation preserves the more significant deleted passages as well as the lengthy postscript. In several cases the deletions, here set in italics, include the names of individual activists in the Russian community. Bykoff evidently had second thoughts concerning the need to name names and calculated that his local Russian readership in 1919 would know whom he meant without being told. Since this knowledge cannot be expected of readers of the English in the twenty-first century, the deleted material is restored. Only deletions which clearly result from scribal errors are suppressed.

Flaws in Russian spelling and grammar are not reflected in the translation.

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<sup>32</sup> Matulichenko, 'Rezoliutsiia', *Raboचाia zhizn'*, No. 92, 5.12.1917, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> A. Matulichenko, 'Kak ia, anarkhist, stal lenintsem: neskol'ko slov o teorii i praktike revoliutsii', *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 16-18.2.21.

<sup>34</sup> 'Za sovety ...?'. 'Mamin' was one of Zuzenko's pen-names.

**RUSSIAN AUSTRALIA**  
**FROM A SWAGMAN'S NOTEBOOK**

I wish to describe Russian Australia as it was before the war, during the war, and at the moment of the revolution.

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We Russian folk are a strange breed. Idealists perhaps, perhaps not, but we are fond of picturing everything that is foreign and not ours in a rosy light. The attraction of the opposite, no doubt.

In our homeland things could hardly have been worse, and foreign parts meant freedom, culture, civilization, in a word 'progress'. On top of that, those who wrote accounts of foreign ways—revolutionaries, progressives and liberals—did not spare the rosy hues. Everything over there was better. And we, going against our Slavophile feelings, strove to be 'Westerners'! Such was our contrary way of thinking. Letters to Russia brimmed with good cheer, pride and the boastfulness of people who have broken out of their cramped smoky huts into the broad open expanses and surging life of the 'democracies' beyond the oceans. And in those letters there is often an unintended and barely perceptible note of scorn for their past, for their sad, long-suffering homeland. But once the emigrants have settled down,<sup>35</sup> found their feet and looked about them, a slow, gradual reaction change of mood sets in.

A feeling of perplexity and partial disappointment unexpectedly takes hold. So this is freedom! – comes the cry from the breast of a man who has inhabited a heaven

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<sup>35</sup> Since Bykoff mis-spells the Russian word as *emmigranty*, it is impossible to be sure whether he means immigrants or emigrants. At a later point, however, he spells *emigranty* correctly.

of idealization of everything foreign, and crashed to the hard ground of practical concerns. And as much as we previously admired them, we now rush to condemn and criticize the ‘democratic’ countries, which have not lived up to our bookish ideas of them, or rather, have dispelled the illusions we absorbed from those dissenters who hymned the praises of the ‘Eldorado’ beyond our borders. In some cases Eden turned out to be Hades.<sup>36</sup> Having set aside our peasant shirts, bast sandals and creaking boots, and adopted stiff cardboard shirt-cuffs, we somehow lose all self-possession and sense of proportion, without noticing it. The illiterate representative of our ‘great nation’ sums it up by saying ‘Russia? It’s nothing but squalor and total ignorance.’ The rationalizations of these philosophers who have turned their backs on Russia apply only to the outwardly cultured life of the foreign ‘democracies’. Their truly Russian coarseness, however, cannot slip from the face of those Anglicized shirt-cuffs. The urge to reject everything Russian and the desire to plunge into the thick of English [*sic*] life leads to psychological acclimatization and naturalization. People of this category suppose that ‘citizenship papers’ turn them into ‘gentlemen’.

Horse-racing, inane moving pictures, bars, penny dreadfuls with garish covers, and boxing—these are the psychological results of acclimatization, and they lead inevitably to the individualization of life, to a shift away from social life as a community, from stormy Russian communal life with its sharp disputes over vital matters of substance.

The absence of any stable ‘way of life’ among Australian Russians is very striking. One of the reasons for its absence, it must be admitted, is the fact that most of them are either bachelors or have come here without their wives to make some money. They have no firmly established traditions and no serious interest in any

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<sup>36</sup> Or: Heaven turned out to be Hell. Bykoff plays on the phonetic similarity between Russ. *Edem* and *adom*, the instrumental case of *ad* (Hades).

communal life. Not all feel any sense of community. Before the war, indifferentism was the general rule. Our minds may be Russian but our thinking is English. The result was a noisy mob, a herd of wandering nomads without any firm convictions, with no more than a Platonic attachment to socialism, and a shallow attachment at that. 'Agitation' was difficult. The itinerant mode of life, the seasonal work—all of this had its effect on the Russian psyche, distorting everything we experienced and tinging our feelings with an off-hand, casual sense of impermanence, of things being unsettled, like the life we had been leading under the fiercely blazing sun of the Southern Cross [*sic*].

Our organizations led a miserable existence; the newspaper languished.<sup>37</sup> Everything was dull and colourless. There were no bright, shining, uplifting moments. There was nothing to excite anybody. A bloodless time. Anaemia of the soul.

Then suddenly out of nowhere came a storm to stir up the stagnating pond that was the life of the Russian colony. War broke out. The political emigrants awoke. They had no doubt: war would lead to revolution, and revolution would tear them out of this 'quiet backwater' of British Puritanism and narrow-minded ordinariness. There was much excitement. Differing views were heard. A real communal life was now taking shape in Russian Australia. Circulation of the newspaper went up. Many joined the army, for a variety of motives. But most waited expectantly. The victories and defeats were argued over, and sympathies were divided. But the war begun by tsarism enjoyed no support at all among the fugitives from despotic Russia. They took an ironic view of it, and clung to the unspoken, perverse hope that His Majesty would

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<sup>37</sup> Our organizations: this appears to refer to the only Russian organization known to have existed in the pre-war period, the Union of Russian Emigrants, which was renamed the Union of Russian Workers. Its newspaper was the weekly *Izvestiia Soiuza russkikh emigrantov*. It was launched by Artem Sergeeff on 29 November 1913 to replace the earlier *Ekho Avstralii*.



disgrace himself and that the will of the people would send him flying from the steps of the throne to which he had ascended ‘by the grace of God’. Hopes rose higher with the swiftly following defeat of the Tsar’s armies, with the collapse of the ‘united front’, and the failure of allied diplomacy concerning Bulgaria.

And then it came, great, terrible, and long awaited. The first chimes of the Russian Revolution rang out like the peal of Easter bells. What a joy it was to read the bundles of newspapers about Russia! Here too community life began seething. The ‘politicals’ quickly terminated their ties with Australia and departed without regret, leaving the masses without the appropriate moral leadership, without the agitators and propagandists they so badly needed at that moment. And the masses rushed instinctively, blindly to the cross-roads, in search of the true path, the correct way to understand the great watershed which had come to pass. Even many of the Anglicized shirt-cuffs returned to the company of Russians. And the revolution in Russia developed in depth and breadth. Guchkov’s moderately progressive bourgeois government fell. So did the government of liberal-radical Cadets led by Miliukov and L’vov.<sup>38</sup> Kerensky’s bourgeois-socialist coalition was relatively stable, but it too was swept away by the Will of the People.<sup>39</sup> To us, cut off from primary sources of information, much seemed strange, and many of us could not make up our minds and fell into a particular kind of revolutionary pessimism. Many hesitated to choose between Kerensky and the new government of the Soviets.

At last they came to believe, and extended a joyful and boisterous welcome to the new power of the people, the Republic of Soviets. The case of Abaza and Thomas

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<sup>38</sup> Cadets = Constitutional Democratic Party. Alexander Guchkov, Pavel Miliukov and Prince Georgy L’vov held the key posts in the Provisional Government until Alexander Kerensky took office in July 1917.

<sup>39</sup> Bykoff’s capitals notwithstanding, this is not a reference to the earlier organization named the People’s Will [*Narodnaia volia*].

had an unhealthy effect on the organization. With the affair of the consuls came a rift *between the supporters and opponents of Thomas. Mutual slanging matches were not avoided. But Thomas fell, and the life of the Russian colony began to return to normal.*

But social solidarity was not shattered. The closure of the newspaper immediately broke the thread linking the North with the South.<sup>40</sup> A new darkness descended, and with it came whispered backstage rumours.

And then the Russian colony was shaken again on learning of the appointment by the Bolsheviks of a consul [*deleted word: Simonoff*], and a schism opened. *His incorrect tactics repelled those few who were prepared in principle to recognize him as the representative of Bolshevism while admitting that it would be better to have one sent directly from Russia. His supporters included all those who hoped to obtain a passport, naively supposing that the Australian government would recognize Simonoff. His opponents, who saw him as an unsuitable representative for Bolshevism, unfamiliar with either the principles or the theory of Social Democracy, included some dubious elements – supporters of Kerensky, defenders of Thomas, and a small group of political emigrants in Brisbane.*

The latter group, consisting of Klushin-Orloff, Modrak, and White-Zhiliaev, insisted that Simonoff was not a revolutionary but a political ignoramus and careerist who brought discredit to Bolshevik slogans by explaining them incorrectly. Both White and Dorf wrote to Thomas, asking him to send them Simonoff's letters to Abaza, so as to prove that Simonoff was a careerist. Thomas, however, confirmed Simonoff's conversation with Abaza, while refusing White's request and expressing

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<sup>40</sup> 'Closure of the newspaper': this refers to *Rabochaia zhizn'*, of which the last issue appeared on 5 December 1917. Abaza had urged the Australian government to suppress it.

surprise that he should have addressed such a request to him after all that had happened.

There arose an opposition, to which those who had personal scores to settle with the newly-appointed consul [*deleted word: Simonoff*] naturally adhered. The opposition turned out to be a badly organized, ill-assorted, motley bunch. It was easy to foretell that it would founder. *In spite of this, there would have been no formal split had it not been for a mistake by Simonoff, who demanded the expulsion of five people from the Union [i.e. URW], on the pretext that they had been disrupting the Union, while in fact he was settling scores.*

A disgraceful scene was acted out. The rift was the work of the opposition. In this way the Russian Group of Workers, with 75 members, came into being. But in it two tendencies emerged: one, *upheld by Klushin*, in which a group is simply a group of good people, bereft of any political convictions ‘with complete personal autonomy and free will’, that is, individualism shared by socialists and monarchists alike. The other tendency, which I upheld, attempted to lend the group some revolutionary political significance, to make it an organization of workers with revolutionary awareness, who openly proclaimed that they supported the Bolshevik government and recognized the authority of the Soviets. *Klushin and Co. refused.* Unfortunately, many members of the group who supported my position dispersed, and a handful of intellectuals exploited this to assume leadership of the other workers, and some of them turned out to be Kerenskyites. *Realizing that if I remained in such a group I would risk compromising my political reputation as a socialist, I deemed it necessary to leave this group of nationalist individualists, who, moreover, lacked any definite political convictions.* However, the schism had its positive sides: lectures and agitation

began. From the very first days I said that we could publish a newspaper in Russian, and the Union verified my statement and obtained the right to publish a paper.

Thus the link with the country is being restored. The Brisbanites [i.e. Russians in Brisbane - *trans.*] have begun to lead the active life which has emerged since the rift, but the country is unhappy with our skirmishings in the capital, being unaccustomed to stormy 'alarums and excursions'.

Any Brisbanite, however, whether a member of the Union or—now—of the Group, will concede that the rift has still brought benefits: it has awoken public self-awareness and rattled our brains so violently that the thought processes which have awoken will hardly go back to sleep or cease to function.

One can sense that they will live on and develop. Russian Australia has embarked upon a new life, a life of true workers' organizations. The old inertia might never have been. The worker strives towards the light and the truth, and, lacking any reliable guidance, timidly and uncertainly, but lovingly, is beginning to feel his own way towards self-improvement and self-education.<sup>41</sup> The revolution has caught us up too, having reached us and found expression in 'a public test of civic maturity'.<sup>42</sup> It has demanded that we give a straight answer: who are we and whom do we stand for? The group of individualists is being evasive and hypocritically stating that it is guided by Bolshevik ideas, while the former revolutionary K. [*deleted: Klushin*] refuses to declare openly for the Bolsheviks.

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<sup>41</sup> 'Self-improvement and self-education': Bykoff would later express the same sentiment in very similar words in his article '*Razgrom Soiuzu rossiiskikh rabochikh*', in *Nabat*, 6.8.1919. See Windle, 'A Crude Orgy'.

<sup>42</sup> 'A public test ...': the quotation marks are Bykoff's but no source is named.

The workers have done what the intellectual refuses to do. The Brisbane Union has adopted a declaration stating that it supports the Bolsheviks.<sup>43</sup> The proletariat has proved more fearless.

In conclusion, it seems to me fitting to note the encouraging fact that the damage to our organizations has not gone far, and, with the appearance of a newspaper covering political events in Russia from the standpoint of radical socialism, the public life of the Russian colony has begun to prosper anew. The organizing principles deeply ingrained in the toiling masses are instinctively bursting forth and pushing them towards a new federation, towards mutual solidarity of the revolutionary-minded worker-socialists.

[Deleted: signature of A. Rezanoff].

**Postscript:** This article was written long ago but met with ill luck. The editors of *Knowledge and Unity* subjected it to strict censorship, and despite having accepted it long before the closing date for issue No. 25 did not print it. Since then many interesting things have happened, and I make so bold as to add to my article.

‘Simonovism’ has suffered a defeat, not from any protesting group but owing to the actions of the ‘one and only Bolshevik’ himself. His flirtation with the federal government, his endless lachrymose epistles about permission to leave for Russia, and his letter about ‘idiots and well-known mischief-makers who provoked him’ have utterly discredited him in the eyes of the masses. A resolution by the Union, stripping Simonoff of all consular duties and transferring them into the hands of the Union, is the best sentence that could be passed on his incompetence and blackmail: his having

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<sup>43</sup> Brisbane Union: i.e. the URW, as distinct from the Group, represented by Klushin.

three hundred passports printed and raising subscription lists on behalf of ‘the representative of a population of one hundred and fifty million’, a representative who had effectively refused to acknowledge the control of the Union. Along with the case of the consul, an angry argument arose concerning the nature of our organization. Ziuzenko [*sic*] upheld an anarchist model with no charter and no soviets, an organization in which the secretary managed everything and a general meeting merely endorsed his actions.<sup>44</sup> His opponents, who included me, tried to show that a declaration was already a charter, and a Bolshevik one at that, recognizing the State power of the Soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Ziuzenko and Gorsky tried without success to assure the comrades that Bolshevism was anarchic communism. I demonstrated that that was simply absurd. The Bolsheviks are statist socialists. The anarchists are non-statist and anti-authoritarian. According to Lenin, the Soviets are state power, and we can see that for communism to triumph the authority of the soviets is needed, that is, a statist manner of organization, by the proletariat, of management and control. Our opponents have tried to assure us that communism is the same as anarchy. Here too we demonstrated that communism is a form of communal life set forth by Marx and Engels in their ‘Communist Manifesto’. Anarchy is a form of governance. It is clear that the socialist Soviet state governs the new communist system by means of dictatorship, of authoritarian rule. Something which anarchy does not permit. And Ziuzenko’s expostulations, ‘I do not recognize Soviet authority; I recognize no authority at all’, plainly show that he has not grasped the meaning of the revolution which has taken place in Russia. Refusal to recognize Soviet state authority is tantamount to rejecting the fruits of revolution, to restoring the old system. That is why the evolutionist anarchists have joined the Soviets. But our Ziuzenko thinks otherwise.

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<sup>44</sup> Bykoff, like Simonoff and many others, consistently mis-spelled Zuzenko’s name, and presumably mispronounced it, as ‘Ziuzenko’.

After prolonged arguments at public meetings, the Sovietists [*sovetchiki*] prevailed, that is, the meetings recognized Soviet authority, and thereby demonstrated that the organization of the Union must henceforth be Soviet socialist in its nature rather than anarcho-nihilist. I criticized *The Ninth Wave* for failing to reflect the ideas of Soviet Russia, and the Union voted by an overwhelming majority to refuse material support for a newspaper which did not express the views of a majority in the Union. Ziuzenko's unauthorized actions, by-passing the Soviet, and completely bankrupting it financially, thanks to a policy of 'charging on regardless', an impractical, irrational and ill-considered policy, have all led to the downfall of yet another secretary and the transfer of management of all its affairs to the Soviet of the Union. After a year of determined struggle for these ideas, we, the former opposition who have now become the centre, may permit ourselves some satisfaction. The Union, the mass membership, is taking control of its own interests, and henceforth refusing to place its trust naively in individual personalities, preferring Soviet authority to unsupervised management by the most autocratic of anti-authoritarian non-statist dictators. Yes, we are now learning self-management,<sup>45</sup> and we urge the Union and its Soviet to hold fast to the position it has won from a handful of demagogues and unswervingly implement the principles of soviet co-operation and proletarian solidarity. With the possible renewal of a legal newspaper in Russian, the link with the country will be strengthened again, and without doubt the country will share our views on the tasks of the Soviet organization and understand that the anti-authoritarian, anti-Soviet and anti-statist agitation of a couple of Bakuninists is damaging and dangerous to the socialist revolution, because the idea of anarchy [*bezvlastie*] is destructive to another idea, the power of la-

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<sup>45</sup> 'We are now learning self-management': this phrase forms the greater part of the title of Bykoff's play *How We are Learning Self-Management and Control*.

bour, proletarian non-statism [*bezgosudarstvennost* ], and at present this is tantamount to counter-revolution.





IRENE SYWENKY

ROMANCING THE EMPIRE: CENTRAL EUROPEAN NOSTALGIA IN  
IURI ANDRUKHOVYCH

Identity politics and identity formation in the context of the post-totalitarian societies of the ex-Soviet bloc has to be situated within the broader context of the refiguration of the political and cultural body of Europe within the last couple of decades and in a longer historical perspective.<sup>1</sup> Continuous reconstruction and rewriting of borders, real or imaginary, has immediate bearing on the narratives of cultural identity. Jacques Derrida, reflecting on the idea of the ‘new’ Europe and the ongoing construction of European myth (‘a certain Europe [that] does not yet exist’) commented that ‘there is no self-relation, no relation to oneself, no identification with oneself, without culture, but a culture of oneself *as* a culture *of* the other, a culture of the double genitive and of the *difference to oneself*’ (1993, 90, emphasis in the original). The construct of Central Europe with its historically internalized otherness, both as a new, changing geopolitical body and as a nostalgic cultural space of *Mitteleuropa*, becomes an important ideological locus of new mythologies and a contested site of evolving identities:

the idea of a European cultural identity covers geopolitical, ideological, and symbolic dimensions that are not completely coincident, but instead overlap, converge, and diverge in confusing and sometimes even paradoxical ways. Eastern versus Western Europe, the European core

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to express my gratitude to the *ASEES* reviewers for their attentive and sensitive reading of this article and for the constructive comments, which helped me bring it to its present shape.

area versus its peripheral areas, *Mittel Europa*, *the Balkans*, the *European Occident* versus the *European Orient*. . . these are a few examples of competing, overlapping, and crisscrossing European delimitations that disguise various geopolitical, ideological, cultural, moral, economic, and aesthetic alternatives. (Spiridon 2007, 377)

Because the societies that were formerly part of the Soviet totalitarian empire are located at the crossroads of postcolonial histories, the problems of shifting borders and changing self-definition acquire particular relevance; in addition, the negotiation of the status of these cultures in relation to the Western ‘centre’ – although always prominent historically – gained more significance, political and other, in the last two decades or so:

Eastern Europe? Central Europe? East Central Europe? Southwestern Europe? Southeastern Europe? The Balkans? What name shall we use? The ‘groupings’ are illusive and changing – based on myth, tradition, dreams, treaties, geography, trade-offs, history, symbols, perceptions, prejudice, power politics, arrogance, ignorance.... (Feig 2008)

The constructs and mythologies of various parts of this region as reflected in geopolitical designations (which, at this point, are not universally accepted either in academic or in lay media discourse) are very significant: these re-imagined spaces become important ideological topoi, and serve as objects of mythological nostalgia. Recent processes of identity formation reflect different directions in geospatial politics: ‘The elaborations of national images, stereotypes and auto-stereotypes grew in all kind of discourses in Europe, especially those thematizing the new and old, and real

and imagined “borders of Europe” (Manz et al. 2004, 3; see also Mazierska and Ras-caroli 2006).

A growing interest in the Central European geopolitical space and cultural identity and a desire to create a coherent social discourse and community based on the Central European idea is strongly present in the countries of the ex-Soviet bloc. In more particular terms, we are witnessing a geopolitical game of marginalization/exclusion, or, on the other hand, belonging/inclusion, as part of the ongoing negotiation of narratives of identity within the broader context of European cultural space. In their *Empire Writes Back* (1989), Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out that the tension between place and displacement has a direct bearing on the ‘postcolonial crisis of identity’ (8-9) and manifests an impetus towards an ‘effective identifying relationship between self and place’ (ibid.). Here ‘displacement’ points to the inevitable multilayering and multi-directedness within any postcolonial geopolitical spatial construct, presenting an ontological co-existence of various ideologically significant symbolic and imaginary spaces. Such a displacement does not imply mere adjustments in terms of shifting geophysical borders or a sense of non-belonging coming from a forced radical re-orientation of collective identity. It is rather akin to the concept of Foucauldian heterotopia (1984, 1998); it is here and elsewhere, it is a plurality, an intersection of different historical planes, a polyphonic narrative. Places are similar to palimpsests layered with multiple histories, myths, memories, and narratives (Reynolds 2004, 2). In this sense, postcolonial places belong to and share many discourses and realities simultaneously. This essential spatial *instability*, multidimensionality, and fluidity is what characterizes the representation of space in the writing of the postcolonial societies of the ex-Soviet bloc.

Iurii Andrukhovych is one of the many contemporary authors representing the region who appear to be very conscious of the in-between-ness of its cultural space,

i.e. of its simultaneous belonging and non-belonging within the historical and cultural constructs of the West and the East. The topoi of Europe and Ukraine, more specifically of Western Ukraine, as a real place, a fiction, a mythology, a narrative and a locus of desire, persist in most of his writing. Andrukhovych engages in almost paradoxical geopolitical games, situating Ukraine within Europe and vis-à-vis Europe, both as its inherent part and an impossible impostor. Western Ukraine, with its centuries-long colonial history (as part of the Kingdom of Poland, the Habsburg empire, the Second Polish Republic, and the Soviet empire) serves as a perfect 'dreamscape' where layers of different historical memory and imagination overlap and collapse into one another. Although this is true for most of his early fiction (e.g. *Recreations*, 1992, *The Moscoviad*, 1993, and *Perverzion*, 1996), it is his more recent essay writing that foregrounds his interest in space and the geopolitics of shifting borders: *Disorientation on Location* is one of the better examples of Andrukhovych's exercises in *geopolitics* (as he himself refers to it), as well as *My Europe* (co-authored with Andrzej Stasiuk from Poland), and the more recent collection *The Devil Is Hiding in the Cheese*.

Andrukhovych's preoccupation with the post-totalitarian transitional period in Ukraine and issues such as collective (Central European) selfhood and identity politics are also strongly reflected in the virtual literary and cultural journal *Potyah 76* (*Train 76*), which was created by the writer in June 2003 and described as 'a Central European journal' dedicated to the newest literature of the countries of 'Central Eastern Europe'; in addition, it claims to engage in the issues of 'political science, socio-cultural anthropology, journalism', as well as provide information on the topics of socio-political and cultural life.<sup>2</sup> The medium of the virtual reality itself is of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://potyah76.org/help/> Dec. 10, 2011. Although the journal goes through occasional periods of inactivity, it serves as an important document that showcases the cultural unity behind the idea of Central Europe. Offering a forum for a broad spectrum of cultures (from the Balkans to the Baltic states

significance: it questions the existing borders and creates alternative realities. The visual representation of the site – a virtual train in perpetual movement – becomes a comment on the border-crossing and border-negotiating nature of the project. The name of the journal is associated with the international express that existed in the 1960s and connected the Baltic and the Black sea regions, while covering a significant part of the route via Ukraine and serving as a sign of the symbolic unity of the region. Gradually, however, the train route was split into smaller, domestic destinations, thus becoming part of a tendency that is interpreted as worrisome in *Potyah 76*.<sup>3</sup> According to the editor, ‘we see in this obvious signs of the increasing isolation of Ukraine from its western neighbours, from the countries of Central Eastern Europe and, thus, from all of the European continent generally.’ Thus, the online journal undertook the cause of an active contribution to the cultural expansion and breaking-down of geopolitical walls and ‘iron curtains’. The editor acknowledges that, although the nature of the journal is international and collaborative, the intellectual impetus came from Ukrainian colleagues because it is in Ukraine that the need for the accommodation of Western models and overcoming of stagnation and established cultural stereotypes is

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along the South-North continuum and from the Czech Republic to Belarus and Ukraine along the West-East axis) and featuring a variety of discourses (fiction, political essays, cultural analyses, among others), the journal attempts to articulate a coherent cultural narrative. This broad range of publications and discourses serves as another way of mapping the new Central Europe. Even a cursory survey of the journal establishes a fairly clear idea of the scope: the Baltic States, the Balkans, the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Western Ukraine (with Russia, the USA, France, and Egypt also featured); some of the better known names include Czesław Miłosz and Bohumil Hrabal, among others.

<sup>3</sup> In his essay ‘A Central European Revision’, Andrukhoanych mentions the old Austro-Hungarian railway schedules again: ‘... I have obviously missed all of these trains, but it’s still important for me to know that there were two rail connections between L’viv and Venice: the first train ran via Vienna and Innsbruck, the second, via Budapest and Belgrade’ (2001, 77). The collapse of this railway network is seen by Andrukhoanych as a sign of the increasingly more pronounced separation of Ukraine from Europe.

the most urgent. It is important to note that in his editorial Andrukhovych conceptualizes *Potyah 76* first and foremost as a ‘Central European journal’; because of the historically contested nature of the very designation of Central Europe, this contention immediately posits a specific agenda and implicitly engages with issues of post-Iron-Curtain geopolitics. The movement of the virtual train on the project’s site is complemented by a visualized running itinerary connecting the main cities of the route, which is clearly imaginary and non-linear (the sequence of the stops makes no sense and subverts any semblance of the geographically arranged ‘order’). Thus, its cartographic discourse, drawing on the Austro-Hungarian (Vienna), Polish, and Soviet empires, becomes an important part of the commentary on the project itself as an act of rewriting of old (or writing of new) borders and maps and breaking down of linearity and the politically imposed order.

The first, programmatic issue of *Potyah 76* was particularly focused on the issues of shifting geopolitics and the fluid space of the new Europe. In one of the essays appearing in this issue, the Polish writer Andrzej Stasiuk talks about the territory to the right of the seventeenth degree of longitude (which is, presumably, Europe east of the Austrian border). The essay consciously imitates the discourse of early explorers, emphasizing the mystique of a strange land and romanticizing the unknown. The brief essay is dense with Borgesian allusions of a discursively, imaginatively fashioned reality:

It’s an invention, a legend, a myth. ... This Europe does not really exist.  
It’s only a dream, which is being dreamt. Moreover, it’s a dream that is  
being dreamt not by everyone, but by a few chosen people.

Her borders are unclear, confused and whimsical. They stretch in space,  
take shape in time, consciousnesses, hearts, memories, blood and bodies;  
they cut in half the wholes and unite the divided segments. Nobody

knows where there is the beginning and the end and if there ever has been one.<sup>4</sup>

Stasiuk's emphasis on the allure of the unknown and the mysterious, which often dominates discourses on the new Europe, is quite typical; on another level, his mythopoeic construction of Central Europe can be construed as a parodic commentary on a neo-Orientalist approach to the new Europe as the core Europe's 'other'. Stasiuk's passing remark that it 'still bears the memory of its own dark, violent beginnings' (ibid.) invokes its complex imperial history and the most recent collapse of the Soviet empire, but also alludes to the foundational myth of Europe. According to it, the Phoenician princess Europa, daughter of the King of Tyre, was abducted by Zeus, carried off to Crete and raped (this act having given rise – through Europa's sons – to three future empires). The evocation of the myth of Europa in this context becomes particularly apt if we interpret the story as an essentially off-centered, liminal discourse that takes us to the fringes of Europe (Pfister 2007, 24). The narrative of Europe originates outside the traditional space of Europe (in Asia Minor), thus reminding us that its binary opposition to the 'other' is rather muddled.

The myth of Europa provides, in the words of Manfred Pfister, 'an illuminating model for territorial identity politics which are still operative in our present: what is crucial for territorial or cultural unity and identity is less the projection of some core essence than the demarcation of boundaries, and it is through constructing differences between inside and outside ... that the cultural entities like Europe are created' (2007, 24-25). One of the more important messages that Andrukhovych's virtual project *Potyah 76* attempts to articulate is that European cultural identity is to be rewritten from the margins and the new Europe is to play an important role in this process. The

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<sup>4</sup> <http://potyah76.org/potyah/?t=42>, Nov. 27, 2011; all translation from the site is mine.



virtual space of the journal becomes a new ambivalent utopia where borders are shifted, maps redrawn, and cultural identifications become lucid and clear. It is worth noting the semantic duality of the Ukrainian word ‘potyah’ (which was discussed in an online review of *Potyah 76*, see Iwański 2008); the noun combines two seemingly incompatible denotations: ‘train’ versus ‘longing’, ‘desire’. Thus, while the metaphorical movement of the train promotes the unity (or re-unification) of the space of Central Europe, the site itself is posited as a locus of desire.<sup>5</sup> Andrukhovych’s project is part of a process of self-refiguration of the margins/peripheries of Europe; the representation of the visual space of the journal (with its elements of cartography and the trope of movement and border crossing), the ideology of its rhetoric, and the construction of virtual unity (through the inclusion of a broad range of writers and commentators from across Europe) are part of an ongoing negotiation of geopolitical belonging/inclusion within the broader context of European cultural space.

One of Andrukhovych’s more recent fictional works, the novel *Twelve Rings* (2003), can be situated within the discourse of *geopoetics* as it engages in a complex and, at times, controversial reading of the post-totalitarian and postcolonial Ukrainian cultural narrative and where the negotiation of spatiality becomes an important part of this hermeneutical act. Specifically, in my analysis I will focus on the ‘geographicity’

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<sup>5</sup> Virtual space offers endless opportunities for promotion and popularization of geocultural and geopolitical collective communities and identities. Another good example of a geopolitically conscious digital venture is the Polish online magazine *Panorama Kultur – Europa Mniej Znana* (*Panorama of Cultures – the Europe Less Known*), created around the same time as *Potyah 76*. The emphasis on the Europe ‘less known’ in the title emphasizes the organizers’ awareness of the peripheral and de-centered nature of the region they call ‘our part of Europe’. On its home page, the magazine claims to be devoted to the discussion of ‘the cultural and intellectual life’ of ‘Central Eastern Europe’; however, in the same introduction, the editorial group contends that they ‘consider as [their] duty building and promoting the Central European identity’ (*Panorama Kultur*). Just like in *Potyah 76*, an important part of *Panorama*’s engagement with its audience is cultivating a sense of collective identity. For another discussion of *Potyah 76* and *Panorama Kultur* see Sywenky 2010.

of Andrukhovych's novel (the feature that arguably characterizes most of his writing) and the representation of space as a fluid signifier and a cartographic game that reflects a desire for the elusive, mythological 'home'. In this narrative, identity is constituted by territory, both geophysical and symbolical, and articulation of identity becomes an inherently territorializing act; at the same time, the impossibility of finding fixed terms of territorial (as well as cultural and historical) reference translates this act into a trans-cultural and trans-historical liminal experience that remains outside the sphere of belonging. Andrukhovych's concern with the geopolitics of cultural space and the processes of identity formation that are intrinsically connected to articulations of space has been noted in some critical examinations of his fictional and essayistic work (cf. Blacker 2007, Kratochvil 2007, Pavlyshyn 2001; 2004; 2009, 5-6). Here I will limit my discussion to some of the main points of the novel related to the context of the former Austro-Hungarian empire and the representation of the geopolitical and geophysical topoi, which sets the conceptual framework for the entire narrative.

In a manner typical of Andrukhovych, the discourse of *Twelve Rings* is very engaging, playful and light-hearted; however, the simplicity merely masks the sophisticated self-reflexive, intertextual project with subtle historical and political innuendos, which immediately makes the reader a participant in a dialogue on the geocultural space of Ukraine (particularly, Western Ukraine). The very opening lines of the novel situate the narrative in the historical context of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The main character with a German name Karl-Josef Tsumbrunnen (a transliterated version of what would probably be Zumbrunnen in German) bears direct association with Karl Franz Joseph von Habsburg (Charles I, the emperor of Austria), which situates the narrative in the shadow of one of the last great empires of Europe. The story unfolds as recreated from the epistolary legacy of Zumbrunnen and mediated by a narrator who comments on the letters Zumbrunnen authored during his multiple stays in the

post-Soviet independent Ukraine and, particularly, during his last trip there. The story of an Austrian citizen ‘rediscovering’ Western Ukraine after its brief glimpse of independence at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the period of Polish rule, and four decades behind the Soviet ‘iron curtain’ in itself forms a temporal circle connecting it back to the historical and cultural context of Austria-Hungary. Zumbrunnen’s ‘quest’ for gaining an understanding of this country as well as (re)tracing his ancestral connections in Ukraine<sup>6</sup> can be interpreted as a neo-colonial perspective. The dual narrative point of view reflects conflicting geopolitical conceptualizations of this region: for Zumbrunnen, it always remains the ‘East’ and the former colonial territory, while the narrator (presumably a member of the Ukrainian intelligentsia) constructs his own vision of his homeland.

The narrator’s self-positioning in his commentary on the epistolary legacy of the Austrian is self-reflexive, academic, and ironic, as he negotiates both Zumbrunnen’s attempt to ‘read’ Ukraine and his own hermeneutic exercise. He engages in an elaborate scholarly analysis and categorization of the corpus of Zumbrunnen’s letters, slipping into a formulaic academic discussion of epistolary documents (e.g., referring to ‘his letters of the second half of the 90s’ as if these signified a qualitative shift, and thus attributing them more importance than they actually had). Creation of a critical distance between Zumbrunnen’s reflections and the reader forces us to adopt a more critical perception of his journey – both as a physical movement and a trope. In traditional scholarship, the value of epistolary documents may be determined by at least two factors: the established status of the documents’ author, in which case his letters

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<sup>6</sup> Zumbrunnen’s genealogy is very diverse geographically and ethnically (to the point of being slightly ridiculous) with many generations of Karl-Josephs running in the male line. According to a ‘family myth’, one of his ancestors was an imperial forester who worked in the Carpathians and made an important contribution to the development of Austrian (‘or maybe even world’) forestry (18). Here and further all translation from *Twelve Rings* is mine.

would be an important source providing additional information on his life; or, the importance (or perceived importance) of the actual information contained in the letters (cf. the early travellers' and explorers' accounts, ethnographic descriptions, historical records, etc.). We understand, however, that Zumbrunnen – the author of the letters and a minor, unsuccessful photographer – is of no interest in himself outside the context of the documentary first-hand testimony that he leaves after his visits to Ukraine. Thus, the Austrian's commentary acquires interest primarily as a first-hand account of his experiences in Ukraine, as the country becomes open to international tourism. Zumbrunnen's writing can be read parodically and intertextually, situating his epistolary notes in the tradition shared with early explorers and the legacy of their travel narratives.

The narrator in *Twelve Rings* explicitly and emphatically refers to Zumbrunnen's use of the literary genre of travelogue – '*notatky podorozhn'oho*' (16, emphasis in the original). The elements of the epistolary travelogue form become highly momentous here. These notes are first-hand accounts of a traveller's experiences in a slightly exotic, mysterious, unknown periphery of Europe. Both the academic narrator (perhaps consciously and ironically) and the actual writer of the letters employ a typical conceptual inventory of the Orientalist/colonial discourse of explorers: the 'discovery' of Eastern Europe (at the beginning of the 1990s); travelling East; romanticized perceptions of the 'other'; and continuous playing with the West/East dichotomy. Zumbrunnen's drive to try a different life outside of his familiar home environment appears to be at least partially motivated by his unsettled life in Austria. The protagonist is driven by the lack of satisfaction with himself and his mid-life failures – he cannot seem to maintain a stable relationship with a woman, his career as a photog-

rapher is far from well established, and he does not have financial security.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Zumbrunnen's curiosity toward the quirky reality of a different culture and willingness to risk the economic and political instability of the post-communist Ukraine has a distinct touch of the heroism of someone who is not afraid to brave the unpredictable 'locals' and the rugged conditions of everyday life. The ironic distance at which this 'heroism' is meant to be read is only one of the multiple parodic layers created in the novel. Foregrounding the East/West binary and the Orientalist discovery of the 'other', the narrator is continuously playing with the allure of the strange land, albeit in a slightly modernized version – the socio-political context of the newly independent Ukraine: 'at the time, the totally new state formation attracted a lot of travellers to the East' (16). In his early letters, Zumbrunnen unwittingly betrays his self-distancing (the use of the pronoun 'they' is especially telling here): '[i]f they survive this winter ... they will do well in the future. They are experiencing a lot of hardship now, there is a shortage of the most basic goods, including vodka and matches, while the temporary quasi-currency is being devalued every minute; one shouldn't forget, however, that this is the East, and, thus, material values will never acquire a decisive role here' (16). The addressees of Zumbrunnen's epistolary revelations considered his reflections banal and naïve, 'if not copied from the complete works of some Rolland or Rilke' (ibid.).<sup>8</sup> It is exactly the banality of Zumbrunnen's infatuation with the Ukrainian 'other' that underscores the unoriginality of his sentiment and his

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<sup>7</sup> Here we can trace some intertextual allusions to Joseph Conrad's *An Outpost of Progress*. Other similarities with Conrad, especially his *Heart of Darkness*, will be discussed below. It is also important to note that the novel itself contains references to Conrad, as well as Kipling, both of whom are connected to the tradition of imperial discourse (161).

<sup>8</sup> Both Romain Rolland and Rainer Maria Rilke were known for their travels in Russia and the Russian empire (both tsarist and Soviet) and their fondness for this country. Rolland was also known for his devotion to Eastern mysticism.

quest. Just like his epistolary commentary that could have easily belonged to one of his more illustrious predecessors, his enthusiasm for the mystique of this country is ‘borrowed’ and translates primarily into various modes of consumption of its culture, which he cannot fathom and whose knowledge remains as superficial and petty as the souvenirs he brings back to Vienna to share with his friends – a wooden lacquered eagle, a couple of traditional woollen rugs from the mountains (‘lizhnyky’), and a pack of cheap cigarettes (a Soviet/post-Soviet version of the Oriental exotic wonders of the past). Applying Saidian postcolonial theory to Eastern Europe in a historical perspective and in its post-Soviet stage is certainly not new; it will suffice to refer to Larry Wolff’s pioneering *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994), and some of Chioni Moore’s publications (e.g., 2001; both scholars talk about Eastern Europe in general terms – as a homogenous geopolitical space and Europe’s domestic ‘other’). If Wolff, however, concerned himself with the invention of Eastern Europe during and since the Renaissance, Andruk-hovych talks about the re-invention of the region, and Ukraine in particular, in the post-Soviet 1990s. In a characteristically postmodernist confluence of the academic and the literary discourses, he foregrounds an act of producing a discourse *about* Eastern Europe (following Wolff’s designation) and Ukraine, which becomes an object of a (discursive) gaze, in this case, Karl-Joseph’s epistolary and photographic gaze; the Austrian, however, is not particularly well-off financially, and, hence, for all his romantic perceptions of the country, Ukraine suits him perfectly as a venue for achieving a moderate success at the periphery and as an economic space where he is afforded a relatively carefree lifestyle. The entire narrative engages in the framing of the Orient/Ukraine as an enigmatic space that cannot be totally known and understood and where spirituality rules all matters material. The topoi of maps and cartography constitute an important part of Zumbrunnen’s imaginative construction of Ukraine: it

is ironic that in his 'reading' of the country the Austrian traveller is guided by old Habsburg maps of Galicia, thus retracing the steps of his imperial predecessors. The tourist guides he uses on his trips are of dubious quality; they warn naïve and inexperienced travellers against various traps and dangers awaiting them in Ukraine and seem to be a generous source of familiar stereotypes and assumptions about this region.

Zumbrunnen's desire to appropriate the land he struggles to understand is also metaphorically expressed through his photography. Not being a commercially successful artist, he tries to capitalize on the surge of interest in the new, post-communist Europe, but the most he can get out of his latest series on L'viv and the Carpathians is a few publications in marginal journals; the major exhibition under the name of 'Europe: A Shifted Centre' (a title that he gave some careful consideration) never materializes. The title, which clearly feeds into the rise of scholarly interest in European multi-centrism and Europe's geopolitical peripheries (and parodically reflects this recent academic trend), is also a commentary on Zumbrunnen's paradoxical naïveté and pragmatism: he is infatuated with Galicia and its everyday, lived experiences, but at the same time participates in the academic and artistic commodification of its culture, its fossilization. Zumbrunnen is a romantic, but a romantic whose obsession with the 'other' is not entirely innocent but rather informed by his historical connectedness to this region and his vague sense of entitlement to 'knowing' and understanding this land and its people. Zumbrunnen's keen awareness of his ancestral roots buried in the murky depths of the history of the Austrian empire reinforces his sense of belonging here, where, according to a myth, his great-grandfather was an Austrian imperial forester credited with the massive forestation of the extensive mountainous meadows with pyramidal spruces and beech trees (the irony, of course, being that he would have singlehandedly determined the entire natural landscape, for which the Carpathi-

ans are famous today). Zumbrunnen's imperial consciousness, however, is subverted through Andrukhovych's deconstruction of the purity of the Austrian's lineage, extending it to Bavaria, Tyrol, Tarnów, Kraków, Vorokhta (a small Ukrainian Carpathian town) and fittingly concluding it with Chortopil' (a mythical Western Ukrainian town that is featured in Andrukhovych's *Recreations*), thus blurring the demarcation line between the imperial centre and periphery, the real and the fictional, and laying bare the 'imagined community' of Zumbrunnen's mythical imperial world.

The topos of the Carpathians plays an important role in the novel as a space contested between the past and the present, between the Austrian empire and today's Ukraine, but also as an autonomous space that is positioned outside the realm of geopolitics.<sup>9</sup> It is simultaneously a part of Central Europe and a non-part of it, as it remains outside the sphere of the traditional (primarily urban) culture associated with Central European-ness. The space of the Carpathians in *Twelve Rings* forms an important element in Andrukhovych's construction of a model of what he adopts as Central Europe. The mountains both elude the traditional urban space of Central Europe and form its counter-narrative; the Carpathians (or at least the part of the mountain range that is on Ukrainian territory) are also a local topos, a space that appears unwelcoming and unaccepting of external/foreign presence. As the writer himself light-heartedly comments in the afterword to the novel, 'A Chronic Orpheus: An Attempt at an Auto-commentary', 'the mountains are the main hero of this novel' (326). They certainly are in the sense that they provide a mysterious and silent backdrop for the events in the novel and remain omnipresent; they are a mute but powerful agent and constitute the locus of darkness and desire that drives the characters in the novel and that ultimately becomes the demise of Zumbrunnen. The mountains are sublimely beautiful,

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<sup>9</sup> For another discussion of the topos of the Carpathians in Andrukhovych, both in *Twelve Rings* and in his essay writing, see Sywenky 2010, 283-286.



but at the same time treacherous and slightly threatening; they ‘swallow’ their visitors and serve as a catalyst for epiphanies and life-changing experiences. It is a liminal space, indeterminate and fluid, opaque and ambivalent, a transition, a mode rather than a state or a presence. Zumbrunnen’s irrational longing to pursue and capture otherness (‘there is nothing sweeter than the feeling of becoming one with the Other’, 27) is partially rooted in his own in-between-ness reflecting underlying imperial nostalgia. His subconscious desire ‘to disappear in the depths’ and ‘never to return’ (20) is articulated at the beginning of the novel; although he referred to the element of water, his yearning for ‘disappearing in the depths’ anticipates his future demise in the depths of the Carpathians. At the end of his journey, the mountains engulf and consume the Austrian visitor (Zumbrunnen drowns in the river after getting robbed and assaulted by two drunkards); the Carpathians transform into a powerful, elemental force that defies Zumbrunnen’s ‘taming’ and civilizing appropriation:

The forest is such a nightmarish labyrinth, a great green monster, especially this forest, a primordial thicket that was not planted by a human hand, it lets in light-headed Viennese tourists, who are used only to waltzing on palace parquets, and refuses to let them go. But it’s not Vienna here, and even not Viennese woods, where all the paths are asphalted. The forest is green, and *the green* swallows you. (212, emphasis in the original)

The description contains an intertextual allusion to Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. The use of the water/river as the medium that facilitates the journey to the depths of darkness is notable in both narratives (cf. Zumbrunnen’s fascination with water and his death in the river). The use of the natural element as a symbol of impenetrability and the impossibility of knowing the ‘other,’ and its opposition to the

‘civilization’ represented by a visitor from ‘outside,’ is uncannily similar to Conrad. Just as Kurtz’s ‘going native’ leads towards an unleashing of the ‘barbaric’ self and ensuing madness, Zumbrunnen’s implied abandonment of civilization and embracing of the darker natural instincts within himself leads him to (self-)destruction. Although it is tempting to discuss Zumbrunnen’s demise as a fall into the abyss of his own id (freed by the absolute, uncivilized power of nature in its primordial state), the writer’s open mocking of the Orientalist perception of Ukraine as a backward society and a peripheral culture, and parodying of the academic discourse connected to the tradition of Orientalism, also constitute a meta-commentary on both the literary and the academic postcolonial tradition. The ‘darkness’ of the Carpathians is not only something that remains foreign and ‘other’ to Zumbrunnen, but is also a space that is autonomous and unsubordinated, and constitutes a presence of its own. Although Zumbrunnen’s ancestor devoted his life to cultivating (and presumably civilizing) the Carpathian forests, several generations later his great-grandson is literally consumed by the mountains. The Austrian’s death is strongly trivialized, thus breaking the intertextual analogy with Conrad, where Kurtz’s demise serves as an important development in building a climactic narrative point. The absurdity and insignificance of Zumbrunnen’s demise is emphasized by the irony of his ‘return to nature’ in his death and the anticlimactic ending with a notable lack of pathos: a commercial video maker, who discovers his body, is fascinated with the aesthetic of the scene and the self-reflexive narrator meditates on ‘his hair [that] was flowing in the stream like the water grass in Tarkovsky’ (221).<sup>10</sup> Zumbrunnen’s tragedy is quickly forgotten as the rest of the characters move on with their lives.

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<sup>10</sup> I assume the reference is to Tarkovsky’s *Solaris*, where the repetitive and lingering close-ups of scenes of nature (including flowing water) evoke thoughts on the essence of humanity, the tragedy of human separation from nature, as well as the growing nostalgia of the modern man for the elusive ‘home’.

To arrive at an understanding of Andrukhovych's geopolitical narrative in *Twelve Rings*, it is necessary to see it in the broader context of his creative evolution. In his article under the telling title 'Choosing a Europe', Marko Pavlyshyn argues that the new generation of Ukrainian writers, to which Andrukhovych belongs, consciously orient themselves (and thus Ukrainian society and culture) toward the idea of Europe; it is, however, a Europe of their choosing and even a Europe of their making. Referring specifically to the second half of the 1990s, Pavlyshyn comments on Andrukhovych's European aesthetic of the time:

In his works Andrukhovych began to foreground the theme of constructing a self through identification with a cherished cultural community. This community, in some cases best called the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in others Central Europe, was only partly attested by Andrukhovych's experiences as a traveller and a turn-of-the-millennium intellectual. To a greater degree it was the product of historical imagination, myth and nostalgic yearning. (Pavlyshyn, 2001, 41)

Although Andrukhovych constructs a familiar landscape which includes the Carpathian foothills and the urban space of L'viv, it is a landscape which also forms 'part of a continuum that stretches to Venice and Munich' (ibid., 43). While there is no doubt that Andrukhovych's re-imagining of Europe is selective and nostalgic, his emphasis on a creation of a 'landscape' – not just a geophysical one, but, in the broadest sense, as a set of cultural characteristics – is significant. Although both the Habsburg aesthetic nostalgia and an alternative model of non-urban Central Europe play an important role in Andrukhovych's earlier conceptualization of this geopolitical space, it is possible to interpret it as representing more than just an aesthetic construct. Just as in the *Potyah 76* project, Andrukhovych is questioning here the legiti-

macy of the traditional ‘centre’ and engages in rewriting the narrative of Europe from its margins. Central Europe represents an important mediating space between West and East, and while it becomes a strategic tool for demarcating Ukraine (or at least the Western part of the country, which belonged to the Austro-Hungarian empire)<sup>11</sup> from the East, it is also a Central Europe that is different from its historical inception in the Habsburg era.

The fact that the geopolitical designation of Central Europe plays a crucial role in Andrukhovych’s choosing between the East and the West has been noted by literary critics. Thus, for example, Serhii Hrabovs’kyi commented that Andrukhovych’s ‘disorientation’ (in the title of his *Dezorientatsiia na mistsevoisti*) can in fact be read ‘dis-Orientation’ (20, quoted in Pavlyshyn 2001, 42). The writer’s – or, by extension, the nation’s – disorientation implies not only the postcolonial loss of established epistemic paradigms, but also a re-orientation of identity that to Andrukhovych means primarily a move towards Europe. In his congratulatory speech on the occasion of the 2005 award to the Ukrainian writer of an Erich-Maria-Remarque-Friedenspreis (the Remarque peace prize) in Osnabrück, Karl Schlegel notes that today ‘Europe is being re-measured, and the European map is being redrawn anew’, and Andrukhovych, ‘a literary cartographer’, has been part of the process from its very beginning (2005,

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<sup>11</sup> Andrukhovych’s Ukraine is mostly Western Ukraine. This aspect of his oeuvre has not been discussed extensively, although Pavlyshyn, for example, notes that ‘[t]he Soviet and post-Soviet East appears in Andrukhovych’s opus as a hostile continent which includes not only Moscow, rendered as grotesque and demonic in the novel *Moskoviiada* ... but also Kyiv, which Andrukhovych describes ... as lifeless for all its metropolitan business, inhuman for all its scurrying masses, and redeemed only by pockets of intellectual and cultural soul-mates’ (42). Similarly, the steppe landscape is alien to the writer, for whom ‘it is akin to the Asia that the Count Metternich claimed to spy through the eastern windows of his Vienna palace’ (ibid.).

33).<sup>12</sup> ‘Literary cartography’ – as a direction, an artist’s aesthetic, and a historical and political necessity – is an inherent part of Andrukhovych’s creative enterprise.

The political power play behind the shifting demarcation line between ‘western’, ‘central’ and ‘eastern’ within the geopolitical space of Europe is hard to ignore, and, thus, the idea of Central Europe cannot be discussed outside of its historical context. The original concept of *Mitteleuropa* was a creation of the eighteenth century and was associated with the rise of German economic and political power in its opposition to France and later – at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century – with Austrian/German interests in Europe. The designation of Central Europe started to undergo a major shift in the post-Cold War period. The formation of the Soviet bloc solidified the concept of Eastern Europe as embracing more than the purely geographical criterion, adding to it both political and ideological dimensions as well as the implications of economic backwardness. With the warming of the political atmosphere, and later with the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the countries of the (ex)-Soviet bloc turned to the West in an attempt to re-align themselves in the context of Western culture and civilization, with the nostalgic mythologizing of the Austria-centered Central Europe. Thus, while the early designation of *Mitteleuropa* up to the First World War was clearly associated with German and Austrian interests in Europe, the more recent concept of Central Europe (as differentiated from Eastern Europe) became a mediating designation implicated in the context of the post-World War II Russian hegemonic influences. This designation of Central Europe can be conceptualized as a political tool used to emancipate the countries of the ex-Soviet bloc from the eastern ‘other’. This dynamic is clearly present in Andrukhovych’s geopolitical construction of the region and search for collective identity.

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<sup>12</sup> Here and further, translation of Schlegel is mine.

Implicitly continuing in his earlier works the debate on Central Europe started by Milan Kundera, Andrukhovych at the same time addresses many more specific problems as he speaks of his country's political, economic, and cultural (in the broadest sense) allegiances and the refiguration of its future. Commenting on the construction of 'alternative' Europe in Andrukhovych, Schlegel, for example, cannot help asking if there is a little 'too much romanticism' and 'excessive attention to the periphery, the border' in it; if there is a 'coquettish play with the attraction of exotic locales' (2005, 34). He himself answers that it is Andrukhovych's acute sense of irony and scathing sarcasm – the sharpest of weapons – that will not allow him to slip into a simplistic and naïve vision of reality. It is this continuous parodic side-glance – both in the direction of the West and the self – that makes the reader's task in *Twelve Rings* particularly challenging.

Andrukhovych's negotiation of the two conceptions of Central Europe (the Habsburg and the post-communist one) takes on a more pronounced form in his post-2000 writing. As Pavlyshyn argues, Andrukhovych's departure from an idyllic and nostalgic vision of the Austro-Hungarian imperial past can be found already in the 2001 collection of essays *My Europe*, which he co-authored with Andrzej Stasiuk and which acknowledges the historical traumas of Central Europe (Pavlyshyn 2001, 43-44; 2004, 74-75). There, in the aptly entitled essay 'A Central European Revision', Andrukhovych starts with a familiar meditation on abstract, museum-like ruins of castles and bridges in the shadow of Vienna, but quickly indicates that his love for ruins is not limited to old urban quarters (2001, 73); the different kinds of ruins that interest him – 'the ruins of cemeteries, especially those that had to do with genocides, cleanings, deportations' (ibid., 76) – also belong to a different historical narrative. The writer reminisces on his family's history and his grandfather's and father's experiences in, respectively, the First and Second World Wars, on the concept of the Central

European journey ('an escape') and Central European death, which is always a collective death, a death in prison or a camp (ibid., 101). Andrukhovych's sober autobiographical reflections reveal a Central Europe that is radically different from the imaginative space of the Habsburg empire. The process of revision of the Central European idea becomes more specific in the essay '... No strannoiu liubov'iu',<sup>13</sup> written in 2003, the same year that saw the publication of *Twelve Rings*. Andrukhovych acknowledges that in his 'geo-(cultural? political? poetic?) constructions' he most often draws on several 'ephemeral' notions, one of them being Central Europe (2006, 87):

I have recently arrived at the conclusion that for me [Central Europe] is not, by any means, the ruins of the Habsburg-Danube idyll (which could have been easily derived from my earlier writing), and, thus, not the territory of old Austro-Hungary, not the coffee places with the aroma of cinnamon, not the Viennese postcards, not the old Galician anecdotes, not Sacher, not Masoch, not Kafka, not Musil, not Schulz, not Roth, not all the others. (ibid.)

Although Andrukhovych admits that the above inventory of all things Austro-Hungarian is still present in his conception of the region, what becomes much more relevant is the historico-temporal proximity of the Soviet totalitarian empire. The space of this empire is understood in the broadest context of both the Soviet Union and the satellite states, and on this territory, 'Austria is practically absent (thus the

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<sup>13</sup> The title refers to the first line of the 1841 poem 'Родина' by Mikhail Lermontov: 'Люблю отчизну я, но странною любовью!..'. Andrukhovych rereads these words ironically in the context of his discussion of post-Soviet Ukrainian-Russian relations.

*Habsburg* understanding of Central Eastern Europe becomes ruled out)' (ibid., 88, emphasis in the original). It is also interesting to note his transition from the designation of Central Europe he uses in *My Europe* to 'Central Eastern Europe', which includes a reference to the East and thus implies the part of Central Europe that was formed as a result of the geopolitical reorganization of Europe after the Second World War.

In the light of the above, the space of the Habsburg Central Europe in *Twelve Rings* has to be read at a critical distance. In his analysis of *Twelve Rings*, Pavlyshyn contends that the novel is a continuation of Andrukhovych's Central European revision in that it offers a different perspective on Central European nostalgia, which necessarily contains "an element of self-colonization" and unresolved colonial relations (2004, 75). In *Twelve Rings*, while negotiating the geopolitical and geocultural spaces of Western Ukraine and Central Europe, Andrukhovych constructs several mythologies and engages in 'romancing' the empire at least in a twofold way. Zumbrunnen's imperial nostalgic gaze from the 'centre' is certainly one of them, whereas the self-reflexive and often ironic perspective of the narrator is the other. While indulging in the romantic mysticism of the Carpathians and constructing an 'alternative' Central Europe, the writer is also aware of the Austrian Central Europe. However, Andrukhovych's mythologizing of Austria (and its quintessential 'European-ness') through its gothic architecture, cobble-stoned streets, wine shops, morning fluttering of pigeons on windowsills, old aristocratic estates, clock towers and idyllic water mills in the picture-perfect countryside (20) is not the same as that which appears in his earlier works, where the representation of an idyllic space of the Habsburg empire is a 'withdrawal into an aesthetic, artificial realm that offers the reader no socio-political challenges or exhortations' (Pavlyshyn 2001, 43). Here the space of Austria belongs to Zumbrunnen, is seen through his perspective, and is part of the opposition formed by



the historical space of the Austro-Hungarian empire and its former colony; its representations acquire a slightly ironic tone, as also does everything related to the character of Zumbrunnen. More importantly, in *Twelve Rings* the sanitized and sterile Austrian landscape is juxtaposed to the unattractive, chaotic, and unkempt, but much more real space of the post-Soviet, postcolonial Ukraine. Andrukhovych is critical of many aspects of the post-Soviet reality (like, for example, the rise of a corrupt and powerful economic elite, presence of crime and violence, commercialization of culture); nonetheless, the Ukrainian characters of the novel belong in this space and these problems are *theirs* to solve.

The historically and culturally conditioned in-between-ness of Andrukhovych's Western Ukraine, encoded by a succession of historical empires, is part of the geopolitical dialogue in the novel; the Habsburg legacy becomes an inevitable part of Western Ukraine's historical baggage, but not an object of nostalgic longing. The insider's/narrator's perspective, the auto-identification and self-alignment is, however, more complicated than Zumbrunnen's neo-imperial gaze. The continuous negotiation of different perspectives becomes part of the narrator's subtle, or sometimes not so subtle, irony: representing Austria through Zumbrunnen's perspective, but also his own; telling a Ukrainian narrative through the Austrian's eyes by both critiquing this narrative and adopting it as his own voice; observing himself in the process of doing this (a sort of a narrative voyeurism) and commenting on his own act of reading while engaging in academic analysis. Thus, for example, while we recognize that the description of travel guides to Ukraine is clearly aimed at parodying the condescending stereotyping of post-Soviet Europe, the critique is unmistakably double-edged and forces the reader to acknowledge the many truths behind the parodically exaggerated comments. This movement along the outsider/insider continuum and seeing oneself simultaneously as self and other is part of the negotiation of the process of self-

definition, which necessarily constructs the way one chooses to be seen, read, and interpreted.

Narrating identity and selfhood in the context of this region is an inherently political project as it inevitably involves a negotiation of the centre/periphery dynamic. Notwithstanding some obvious parody of the neo-orientalist attitudes to Ukraine in *Twelve Rings*, Andrukhovych's novel can also be interpreted outside the specific context of Ukraine's post-coloniality. His continuous engagement with and interest in the issues of space, territory, landscape, physical and cultural geography are connected primarily to the examination of historical distribution of power in Europe and its effect on the national narratives of selfhood. Although the idea of periphery is more diffuse than specific historical (post-)colonial situations, it remains intricately involved in the workings of power. The older structures of Europe, as contested by the post-totalitarian societies of the former Soviet bloc and juxtaposed to the new, evolving and increasingly more integrated Europe, represent just such a sphere of dynamic negotiation of centrality and peripherality. Andrukhovych's involvement in the project of *Potyah 76*, his novel *Twelve Rings*, and the larger corpus of his writing form part of a continuous intellectual discourse that engages in a dialogue on the geopolitical orientation and the processes of collective self-definition in Ukraine as part of the new, post-Iron-Curtain Europe. These processes have several manifestations: resistance to being appropriated through the act of 'reading' and active hermeneutic exploration, and the simultaneous desire to be (re)discovered and 'read'; continuous oscillation between the epistemic spaces of centre and periphery, with Ukraine (and its various topoi) being simultaneously the centre and the fringe; dynamics of the centrifugal vs. centripetal impetus (i.e. a centrifugal acknowledgment of the West, which is also represented by the topos of the Habsburg Central Europe, and a centripetal drive towards the exploration and articulation of the national selfhood). Revisiting *Potyah 76* and

Stasiuk's essay, it is still relevant to see this new Europe as 'an endless narrative, a praise of ... disjointed plots and eternal prologue and, at the same time, a disdain for the final word, for the epilogue'; '[t]his world right of the 17th degree is still in the process of completion and hence so mesmerizing... Life here is manifested in unstructured, anarchic forms; it still bears the memory of its own dark, violent beginnings'.<sup>14</sup> Andrukhovych's reflections on this world in the making, which constitute an important part of his fictional and non-fictional *oeuvre*, posit many provoking questions on the status of Ukrainian society in today's evolving Europe and in a global context. Andrukhovych's revision of the Central European idea showcases the progression of his views on the historical colonial legacy of Ukraine at the intersection of aesthetic, cultural, historical and political concerns; as the writer distances himself from the utopian dreamscape of Europe, he moves toward an exploration of the post-Soviet Ukrainian reality of the twenty-first century as an autonomous and self-sufficient space that becomes part of a narrative of the postcolonial national selfhood.

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IVAN S. EUBANKS

THE IRONY OF ABSENCE IN ALEXANDER SOKUROV'S *RUSSIAN ARK*

The first wave of reverberating irony in Alexander Sokurov's *Russian Ark* [*Русский ковчег*] (2002) manifests as the title.<sup>1</sup> In this case the 'ark', a sanctified vessel, presumably conveys all the definitive and essential artefacts of Russian culture, much as Noah's ark conveyed the means of renewing life after the deluge. Indeed, that is precisely how most critics read the film. At first glance, *Russian Ark* therefore appears to fulfill expectations, because the 90-minute, continuous shot that comprises it depicts re-enactments of events from three centuries of national history as we follow the camera's uninterrupted gaze through Russia's most famous museum, the State Hermitage. During this perambulation through the Winter Palace, which constitutes the largest part of the museum and in which almost all of *Russian Ark* takes place, the camera adopts the perspective of an invisible narrator who engages in a dialogue about culture with a 'European' (based on Astolphe Marquis de Custine). Rather than celebrating Russian culture, however, this dialogue allows the European to reiterate stereotypes that construct a narrative of Russian inferiority to the West. As the interlocutors move from room to room they visit different moments from Russia's past, but this journey through history neither disproves nor overtly contradicts the stereotypes. In fact, a closer analysis reveals that Sokurov omits so many definitive aspects of Russian culture from *Russian Ark* that the irony generated by their absence be-

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<sup>1</sup> *Russian Ark*, dir. Alexander Sokurov (2002; Wellspring: 2003) DVD.



comes the film's central rhetorical device and the dominant structural feature of the narrative. This irony, in turn, implicitly evokes the cultural archetypes that are elided from the film, thus ironizing the stereotypes that the European iterates, which Sokurov packages in their new form in his *Russian Ark* and exports to the West, back to their place of origin.

Many have overlooked or underestimated the importance of irony in Sokurov's treatment of Russian culture and history, and consequentially the critical reception of *Russian Ark* has been controversial. Critics accused it of nationalism upon its release in the festival circuit,<sup>2</sup> and such accusations only increased when Sokurov objected to the European Film Academy's nomination of Tillman Büttner, *Russian Ark*'s German steadicam operator, for an award.<sup>3</sup> In his exchange with the EFA, Sokurov argued that the film constitutes his own cinematic vision and no individual member of his crew should be singled out for praise. It appears as if he worried that honouring a German for the primary formalistic achievement of *Russian Ark* would undermine the film's status as a Russian work of art, especially since it was produced by the Hermitage and the Russian Federation's Ministry of Culture in association with a number of German organizations. Such a concern is not unreasonable, because it would be misleading, if not devastating to the work's meaning, to interpret *Russian Ark* as a German or European perspective on Russian culture. Doing so would most likely result in overlooking the irony in which the Marquis de Custine's acerbic commentary on Russian culture is cast. Furthermore, the problem of identifying a film's national origins is

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<sup>2</sup> See Birgit Beumers, 'From Sochi to Moscow: DEBUTS, DEBUTS, DEBUTS...', *Art Margins Online* (15 August 2002). Web. Accessed 7 April 2012. <<http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/6-film-a-video/328-from-sochi-to-moscow-debuts-debuts-debuts>>.

<sup>3</sup> For a good summary of the scandal see José Alaniz, 'Crowd Control: Anxiety of Effluence in Sokurov's *Russian Ark*', in: *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov*, eds. Birgit Beumers and Nancy Condee (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2011), 155-175, esp. 165-169.

especially important in the context of post-Soviet Russian cinema, because even as filmmakers worked in the 1990s to establish a new national identity, they sought funding and the wide distribution channels offered by foreign producers.<sup>4</sup> Accessing international distribution channels, of course, meant catering to international, and in many cases Western, audiences. Consequentially, the post-Soviet cinematic quest to construct a new national identity became an exercise in defining Russia for foreigners who, more often than not, misunderstood it. In response to this trend, Sokurov makes a film that is just as much about Western perspectives on Russia as it is about Russia herself.

It therefore comes as no surprise that critics have conflated charges of nationalism with complaints about Sokurov's sins of omission, the most egregious of which they cite as his scant treatment of Soviet history in the film, or worse still his denial of it as a part of Russia's national history.<sup>5</sup> Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli eloquently expresses

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<sup>4</sup> A number of factors contributed to this phenomenon, perhaps the most significant of which was how the steady decline of box-office sales throughout the mid- to late 1980s became a free fall in the early 1990s, until ticket sales reached fewer than one per capita per year in 1995. Meanwhile, rampant piracy of DVDs in Russia all but eliminated an entire revenue stream that, in the West, would complement and then outstrip box-office earnings for most films. This scenario, along with the near total collapse of the old state apparatus for funding, producing, and distributing films, attracted organized crime, and film studios became ideal means of laundering money. For a superb and informative analysis of the post-Soviet Russian film industry, see Birgit Beumers, "Cinemarket, or the Russian Film Industry in 'Mission Impossible,'" *Europe-Asia Studies* 51.5 (July, 1999): 871–896. For data on theatre attendance per film and per year in the USSR and the Russian Federation, see Sergei Zemlyanukhin and Miroslava Segida, *Domashniaia sinematika: otechestvennoe kino, 1918-1996* (Moscow: Dubl'-D, 1996); Sergei Kudriavtsev, *Svoe kino* (Moscow: Dubl'-D, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Mikhail Brashinskii, Rev. of Alexander Sokurov, dir., *Russkii kovcheg* [*Russian Ark*]. *Afisha* (15 April 2003). < <http://www.afisha.ru/movie/171260/review/147590/> >. Accessed 24 March 2012. William Johnson, Rev. of Alexander Sokurov, dir., *Russian Ark*. *Film Quarterly* 57.2 (Winter, 2003-04): 48–51. Oleg Kovalov, "'Russkii kovcheg': Russkii kontekst." *Iskusstvo-Kino* 7 (July, 2003). Web. Accessed 28 March 2012. < <http://kinoart.ru/2003/n7-article3.html> >. Dragan Kujundzic, "After 'After': The 'Arkive Fever' of Alexander

this common sentiment, describing Sokurov's film as a nostalgic celebration of the Romanov dynasty that 'treats history not as fact but as a poetic construction that has drifted in and out of Europe via metaphor, allusion, and myth.'<sup>6</sup> She further claims that in *Russian Ark* the 'entire Soviet period is presented as an ellipsis in Russian history that is left unnamed and unrepresented in the film.'<sup>7</sup> Contrary to what Ravetto-Biagioli suggests, Sokurov does include important scenes that depict the Soviet period, even if *Russian Ark* does concentrate on the period between the reigns of Peter I (r. 1682 – 1725) and Nicholas II (r. 1894 – 1917).

To interpret *Russian Ark* as an expression of nostalgia for Romanov imperialism, however, one must assume that Sokurov's principles of inclusion and exclusion are governed by simplistic valuations of what is 'good' or 'bad' in Russian history. Furthermore, one must also assume that in Sokurov's mind the Romanov dynasty exemplifies the 'good' while the Soviet period embodies the 'bad.' Dragan Kujundzic offers just such an over-simplified interpretation when he suggests that:

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Sokurov." *Art Margins Online* (Monday, 05 May 2003). Web. Accessed 24 March 2012. < <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/6-film-a-video/272-after-qafterq-the-qarkiveq-fever-of-alexander-sokurov> >. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, "Floating on the Borders of Europe: Sokurov's *Russian Ark*," *Film Quarterly*, 59.1 (2005): 18–26. Pamela Kachurin and Ernest A. Zitser, "After the Deluge: *Russian Ark* and the Ab(uses) of History," *NewsNet: News of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* 43.4 (2003): 17–22. Although they are fewer, there are analyses that react favorably to Sokurov's treatment of time and history in *Russian Ark*. See, for example: Tim Harte, "A Visit to the Museum: Aleksandr Sokurov's 'Russian Ark' and the Framing of the Eternal," *Slavic Review* 64.1 (Spring, 2005): 43–58. Raoul Eshelman, "Sokurov's *Russian Ark* and the End of Postmodernism." *Art Margins Online* (Wednesday, 30 July 2003). Web. Accessed 26 July 2012. < <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/6-film-a-video/268-sokurovs-russian-ark-and-the-end-of-postmodernism> >.

<sup>6</sup> Ravetto-Biagiolo, "Floating on the Borders of Europe," 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

It is precisely in the absence of [the Soviet] period that the effects of the terror of history may be most strongly felt. (It is in the nature of any historical catastrophe that its most insistent effects may be felt only in the repressed traces of its archivization)... The Soviet period represents an absent cause of *The Russian Ark*, its catastrophic effects on the [Winter Palace] generate the repressed or invisible origin that makes this movie possible.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, according to Kujundzic the underlying, perhaps subconscious, purpose of the film is to repress the traumatic memory of the Soviet period, and this repressive impulse is so strong that Sokurov's omission of that unpleasant chapter in history becomes inadvertently palpable.

At first glance, Kujundzic's reading is convincing, because upon watching *Russian Ark* one cannot help but meditate on post-Romanov history, particularly after the film concludes on the eve of World War I. But repression and deliberate omission are not equivalent means of generating discernible absence, and Sokurov's omissions are too numerous, many of them too obvious, to be subconscious or disingenuous. Moreover, the aspects of Russian culture and history that Sokurov includes in *Russian Ark* versus those he excludes do not fit neatly into categories such as 'Soviet' vs. 'non-Soviet' or 'terrifying' vs. 'comforting'.

For example, many of the Romanovs are excluded from the film. *Russian Ark* features one scene with Peter I and Catherine I, and it refers to the latter part of Peter's reign, after he moved the capital of Russia from Moscow to St. Petersburg. With the exception of Catherine II, the rest of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century emperors and empresses are omitted, including Peter II, who moved the capital back to Moscow in 1728, where it

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<sup>8</sup> Dragan Kujundzic, "After the 'After': The 'Arkive' Fever of Alexander Sokurov."

stayed until 1732. The film concludes with the final royal ball, held by Nicholas II in 1913. In 1918 the Bolsheviks once more governed from Moscow, which has remained the centre of political power in Russia until this day. Therefore, Sokurov's minimal treatment of the Soviet period in *Russian Ark* fits into a larger trend of depicting mainly those periods from Russian history during which St. Petersburg was the locus of political power. By the same token, one can just as accurately describe this trend as a curtailing or omission of historical periods in which Moscow was the locus of Russian political power (the scenes of contemporary museum goers shall not be considered historical re-enactments).

The Moscow-Petersburg binary organizes not only the political history of Russia but also carries over into cultural terms. To put it simply, Moscow signifies a culture that evolved, independently of Western Europe, into something uniquely and incontrovertibly Russian. St. Petersburg signifies 'Westernized' Russian culture, which participates in and contributes to European culture without losing or retaining all of its Russianness. Sokurov's decision to portray only certain aspects of the Europeanized, 'Petersburg' side of Russian culture thus results in the notable exclusion of its pre-Petrine and post-Romanov 'Moscow' traits, not to mention the Slavophile movement. While concentrating on the two centuries when Russia's appetite for importing, adapting, and appropriating Western cultural archetypes was most voracious, Sokurov omits any indication of resistance to Westernization or the intense debate that raged throughout those very centuries over how and whether to adapt Western culture.

In this respect, the setting of *Russian Ark*, once a royal palace and now a state museum, neatly occupies the intersection of the political and cultural institutions that align with the opposing poles of the Moscow-Petersburg dichotomy. The State Hermitage Museum, for example, contains the world's largest collection of paintings, but only a small portion of them are Russian. None of the Russian art collection appears

in the film, although the characters frequently discuss European art. Meanwhile, the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg, located within walking distance of the Hermitage, houses a superb collection of Russian Art in the Mikhailovsky Palace. Of course, the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow also holds a magnificent collection of exclusively Russian art, and it was founded by a Russian collector (Pavel Tretyakov) and designed by Russian architects (A. S. Kaminsky, V. N. Bashkirov), according to the plan of a Russian painter (V. M. Vasnetsov).<sup>9</sup> The architectural history of the Winter Palace is complex, but it is an Italianate building originally designed by Bartolomeo Rastrelli the younger (the Mikhailovsky Palace is similarly Italianate). The only references to Russian architects in Sokurov's film occur in the European's commentary about Stasov's repairs of the Winter Palace after the fire of 1837. But in his admiration for Stasov's reconstruction of the parquet floors, the European recognizes the Russian architect only as a craftsman capable of reproducing great work and not as an artist capable of conceiving it. Yet the Tretyakov Gallery, St. Basil's Cathedral, and any number of other structures testify to the rich tradition of Russian architecture, while references to them are absent from the film.

Indeed, were Sokurov's intention to utilize a museum as the vehicle in a metaphor for Russian culture, or as a vessel in which to convey sacred artefacts of purely Russian culture, then the Tretyakov Gallery might seem most appropriate. Were he interested in celebrating the glory of St. Petersburg at the same time, then the Russian Museum might seem most apt. Neither the Tretyakov Gallery nor the Russian Museum, however, would have permitted Sokurov to depict the royal personae and their courts in the way that *Russian Ark* does.

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<sup>9</sup> See Ia. V. Bruk, "'Sobrat' russkuiu shkolu, kak ona est'..." *Tret'iakovskaia galereia: stranitsy istorii.*" *Gosudarstvennaia Tret'iakovskaia galereia: iubileinyi al'bom k 850-letiiu Moskvu* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Krasnaia ploshchad'," 1997), 7–38.

Hence the film evokes the Moscow-Petersburg dichotomy, while at the same time juxtaposing the Hermitage's current status as a cultural institution (Russia's most famous museum) to its former status as a political institution (a monarchical palace). If one interprets the Hermitage Museum-Winter Palace juxtaposition as a conflation rather than a tense contrast, then one might also claim that Sokurov conflates Romanov hegemony with Russian culture more generally. That, in turn, would lend itself to the argument that the film is nostalgic. Yet, even within the context of the Romanov dynasty, Sokurov omits the most salient moments of Russian imperial power and cultural achievement. These notable ellipses should pique our curiosity just as much as his minimizing of the Soviet period does.

Sokurov features only a select few monarchs in *Russian Ark*, and those who do appear in the film make something of an unflattering impression, as if decadence and décor characterize the royal family. Catherine II, for example, is depicted as somewhat crude, as she promptly leaves a theatrical rehearsal after announcing that she has to piss. Peter I is depicted shoving his wife and abusing a nobleman, after which the European remarks that 'Tyrants are adored in Asia. The more terrible the tyrant, the more they love him, honour his memory. Alexander the Great, Tamerlane, and your Peter the Great' ['В Азии обожают тиранов. Чем грознее тиран, тем больше любят, чтят его память. Искандер двурогий, Тамерлан, и ваш Петр Великий']. In one of his only objections to the European, the invisible narrator tells him: 'You can't say that about Peter I. After all, he was the one who taught people in Russia to enjoy themselves' ['О Петре I—вы зря. В конце концов, именно он разрешил людям веселиться в России']. The narrator doesn't say one word about Peter the Great's achievements, such as his victory over Charles XII in the Great Northern War, his fortification of the Russian Empire, etc. The narrator doesn't even mention that Peter I founded St. Petersburg. It is the European who points out that fact in his response to

the narrator's objection: 'A person who executed his own son also taught people to enjoy themselves. Very amusing... He built a European city in a swamp, and the order he established there was of the most primitive sort' ['Человек, казнивший собственного сына, он ещё выучил людей веселиться. Очень забавно... Построил европейский город на болоте, а порядки завёл в нём самые, самые первобытные'].

A truly nostalgic or nationalistic narrative about Russian history should include, at the very least, not only the achievements of Peter I but also those of Alexander I, who defeated Napoleon in 1812. Were *Russian Ark* an apologia for the empire, then it would make little sense to exclude Alexander II, who ended serfdom in 1861 (hence the moniker 'Alexander the Liberator') and died by an assassin's bomb in 1881. But neither Alexander I nor Alexander II appear in the film, nor is there a single overt reference to their defining achievements. The European mentions Alexander I only once, when discussing the provenance of a sculpture, and the narrator does not remind him of the tsar's military victories or his fostering of education. The very presence of Nicholas I, perhaps the most despotic tsar of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Nicholas II, one of the more ineffectual of the Romanov monarchs, coupled with the exclusions of Alexander I and II, indicates that Sokurov could have painted the Romanovs in a more flattering light, had that been his intention.

If we continue to trace the pattern of Sokurov's ellipses, the vision of Russian identity he embeds in *Russian Ark* begins to emerge. In the abstract, this pattern consists of Western stereotypes of Russian culture on the one hand, and on the other the tangible absence of examples that would challenge those stereotypes. In other words, the film offers no representatives from Russian folk culture and pre-Petrine Muscovy, very little Soviet history, and even less explicit attention to Russia's rich traditions in the literary, theatrical, cinematic, architectural and plastic arts. The one art form that



gets significant recognition is Russian orchestral music, but even then there are notable omissions.

One can observe this motif of exclusion most easily in the European's generalizations, such as when he calls Russians Asiatic worshipers of despotism who only imitate Western culture, having produced nothing important or original. 'Ah, Russians are so good at copying,' the European remarks as he walks through a hall in the Hermitage. 'Why?' he continues, 'Because they have no ideas of their own. Your authorities don't want you to have your own ideas. In reality, your authorities and all of you are just lazy' ['Ах, как русские умеют всё хорошо копировать А почему? Потому, что собственных идей нет. Ваше начальство не хочет, чтобы у вас были собственные идеи. В сущности ваше начальство и все вы, ну, ленивы...']. While moments such as these may polemicize with the opinions the real Marquis de Custine expresses in his travelogue (*Russia in 1839*),<sup>10</sup> the European in *Russian Ark* primarily voices old stereotypes that still exist. In response to the European, the invisible narrator usually refrains from mounting a substantial counterargument, as if his interlocutor's erroneousness and obvious prejudice are so self-evident that it is hardly worth the effort to contest them ardently.

Some of the European's dismissals, in fact, are self-evidently incorrect. In one scene, for example, Alexander Pushkin makes a cameo appearance, and the European remarks that he 'read him in French. Nothing special' ['читал его по-французски — ничего особенного']. The invisible narrator does not debate the point, responding

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Birgit Beumers, "'And the Ark Sails On...'" *The Cinema of Alexander Sokurov*, eds. Birgit Beumers and Nancy Condee (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 2011), 176–187. Iampolskii, Mikhail. "Lovets istorii sredi ee eksponatov." *Sokurov: chasti rechi*, ed. Liubov' Arkus (St. Petersburg: Seans, 2006), 277–281. Ulrich Schmid, "The Empire Strikes Back—Sokurov Takes Revenge on de Custine." *Art Margins Online* (Wednesday, 30 July 2003). Web. Accessed 03 May 2012. <<http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/6-film-a-video/270-the-empire-strikes-back-sokurov-takes-revenge-on-de-custine>>.

only by exclaiming ‘Sir!’ [‘Сударь!’] in an offended tone, as if expressing both disagreement and an understanding of the European’s incurable ignorance of Russian literature. For a student of Russian culture it is impossible to see Pushkin in the film and hear the main characters’ brief exchange about him without thinking of at least some of the poet’s notable accomplishments: his impact on the Russian language, his masterpiece novels, poems, and plays, the often repeated sentiment among Russians that he ‘is [their] everything,’ etc. Nor can one overlook how important it was for Dostoevsky to invoke Pushkin in his famous speech of 1880,<sup>11</sup> how the Soviets re-interpreted and re-canonized Pushkin for their own ideological purposes,<sup>12</sup> and how Pushkin served as an icon for Russian identity in the 1990s (particularly during the bicentennial of his birth in 1999).

Instead of constructing his own argument in the discourse around Pushkin’s role in Russian cultural development, Sokurov inspires knowledgeable members of his audience to do so themselves, as he creates an opportunity for a programmatic statement that never comes about in the film. Sokurov employs this narrative device throughout *Russian Ark*. For example, the first scene featuring Catherine II—which takes place shortly before the European says that ‘Russians are so good at copying... Because [they] have no ideas of their own’ [‘русские умеют всё хорошо копировать... Потому что [у них] собственных идей нет’] and in which the empress watches a dress rehearsal—subtly references the condition of Russian theatre in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Catherine II, especially during the more liberal portion of her reign (i.e., prior to the French revolution), loved theatre and even wrote some plays herself.

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<sup>11</sup> See Fyodor Dostoevsky, “Pushkin (ocherk): Proizneseno 8 iunia v zasedanii Obshchestva liubiteli rossiiskoi slovesnosti.” *Sobranie sochinenii v piatnadtsati tomakh*, vol. 14 (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1995), 425–440.

<sup>12</sup> See Olga Voronina, “‘The Sun of World Poetry’: Pushkin as a Cold War Writer.” *Pushkin Review* 14 (2011): 63–95.

At that time, however, secular Russian drama was in its infancy. In the dearth of a domestic national tradition of theatre, Russians adopted Western models for drama, especially tragedy, from the French (e.g. Corneille, Racine, Moliere, and Voltaire) and, to a lesser extent, the Germans and English (Shakespeare). Of course, 18<sup>th</sup> century Russian adaptations of Western dramatic and literary forms would pave the way for the world-class Russian writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Pushkin, Chekhov and others, but the experimentation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is also arguably the source of the Western stereotype of Russian culture as derivative, imitative, and incapable of producing anything original.

We never learn which play was being rehearsed before Catherine the Great, nor does Sokurov provide us with any clue as to how the empress' court cultivated the development of Russian theatre.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian theatre had developed into a formidable cultural institution, and one of the most notable playwrights of that period, Alexander Griboedov, is shockingly absent, at least in his capacity as a dramaturge, from *Russian Ark*, despite the fact that Sokurov sets up the perfect opportunity to honour him. The opportunity in question is the scene depicting the Persian envoy's official apology to Nicholas I for the violent deaths of Russian ambassadors to their nation. Griboedov was one of the murdered diplomats, and his death may have been Russia's greatest loss in that incident precisely because he was such a great playwright. Yet in *Russian Ark*, Griboedov is remembered only as a diplomat, not as a dramaturge. The only mention of his name comes when the European

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<sup>13</sup> Katja Petrovskaja suggests that the play being rehearsed is one of Catherine's own. If that is the case, then the scene in question serves as a reference point to that which is left out of the film, much as Pushkin's appearance does, while at the same time foreshadowing the European's comments about Russian culture being derivative (as Catherine's plays were). See: Katja Petrovskaja, "'And He Saw: It Was Good'." *Art Margins Online* (Wednesday, 30 July 2003). Web. Accessed 03 May 2012. <<http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/6-film-a-video/267-qand-he-saw-it-was-goodq>>.

says that he thinks Griboedov may have been one of the diplomats who died in the attack. Furthermore, the entire scene portrays the ceremonial apology as a protracted and dreadfully boring political ritual (the European even makes a comment to this effect, after which he is asked to leave by one of the attendees who sees and recognizes him as the Marquis de Custine).

As with Pushkin's cameo appearance, the scene with the Persian envoy alludes to an important intellectual's contributions to Russian culture while at the same time avoiding the opportunity to discuss them. Were *Russian Ark* a nationalist manifesto, one would think that the narrator would counter the European's disparaging comments with his own commentary on figures such as Pushkin and Griboedov, not to mention, in regards to theatre, other figures that have considerably influenced Western culture, such as Chekhov, Stanislavsky and Meyerhold. Yet Sokurov makes no mention of these latter theatrical giants in *Russian Ark*, despite the fact that all three lived and worked prior to 1913 and despite the fact that he elsewhere names Chekhov one of his favourite writers.<sup>14</sup>

The one Russian cultural tradition that gets the most recognition in *Russian Ark* is orchestral music. Even so, Sokurov eschews thorough discourse on this topic and instead provides yet another ellipsis. For example, in an early scene the European hears some music being performed and exclaims, 'What a talented, great orchestra! Surely they're Europeans!' [Какой хороший и большой оркестр. Наверняка европейцы!] The narrator tells him that the musicians are Russian, but the European insists that they are Italians. Later, in another discussion of music, the European states that he likes a piece he has just heard and asks who the composer was. The narrator tells him it was Mikhail Glinka, a Russian, but the European insists that Glinka must

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<sup>14</sup> See Alexander Sokurov interviewed by Paul Schrader, "The History of an Artist's Soul is Very Sad History." *Film Comment* 33.6 (November, 1997): 20–25. *ProQuest*. Web. Accessed 10 March 2012.

be German, because ‘all composers are German’ [все композиторы немцы]. The narrator, once more, does not persevere in correcting his interlocutor—he never tells the European the title of the piece (and the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, conducted by Vasily Gergiev, actually performed live on camera in the film, although mentioning that would have been anachronistic), nor does he explain that Glinka was one of Russia’s first notable composers and a contemporary of Pushkin who set several of the poet’s verses to music. Furthermore, the narrator does not identify a single orchestra or mention other composers’ names, when he could have expounded upon the virtues of Mussorgsky (whose *Pictures at an Exhibition* might have made for an appropriate, if too obvious, reference in a film about a museum), Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, or others.

As the examples I have pointed out suggest, Sokurov focuses so acutely on a single aspect of Russian culture—its tense relationship with the part of itself that is imported from or otherwise resembles the West—that the informed viewer cannot resist the impulse to think about what does not appear on the screen and to wonder why it is not there. Soviet history represents only one palpable absence among many in *Russian Ark*, such as all that defines the Muscovite pole of Russian culture, not to mention the greatest achievements of the Petersburg side of Russian culture.

Such a reaction is precisely what *Russian Ark* demands, and this becomes clear in the penultimate scene, in which the final royal ball of 1913 is re-enacted. Critics who censure Sokurov understandably interpret this final ballroom scene as a manifestation of nostalgia for the monarchy. This interpretation, however, relies precisely upon the irony of absence, the central rhetorical device in *Russian Ark*, which prompts its audience to recognize that something crucial to an understanding of Russia has been elided and to fill that gap with their own historical knowledge.

As I mentioned above, several reviews of *Russian Ark* remark on its minimal treatment of the Soviet period. In a 2003 review for *Afisha*, for example, Mikhail Brashinskii censures Sokurov for making a film about the Winter Palace, and in the Winter Palace, without paying homage to the most famous cinematic image of that structure in film history—the storming of the Palace in Eisenstein’s *October* (1927).<sup>15</sup> Brashinskii’s complaint has unfortunately been echoed throughout the critical history of *Russian Ark*. And one should take note of such a lacuna—Eisenstein’s *October* is a cornerstone of world cinema, just as Chekhov is a cornerstone of world drama and Pushkin is a titanic figure in world poetry.

In a 2003 review for *Iskusstvo-Kino*, however, Oleg Kovalov claims that Sokurov does construct references to Eisenstein, but he characterizes them as ‘unclear and, most likely, subconscious’ [неявны и, скорее всего, подсознательные].<sup>16</sup> Kovalov goes further to describe Sokurov as subtly polemicizing with Eisenstein: ‘Sokurov’s outright rejection of montage in his film about the Hermitage has not so much of an aesthetic as an ideological flavour. It constitutes a polemical repudiation of the principles of the revolutionary avant-garde and speaks of the sharp break with this influential tradition of his fatherland’s culture’ [Сам отказ Сокурова от монтажа в фильме об Эрмитаже носит не столько эстетический, сколько идеологический характер. Он является полемичным отторжением принципов революционного авангарда и говорит о резком разрыве с этой влиятельной традицией отечественной культуры].<sup>17</sup>

Reading *Russian Ark* as a ‘polemical repudiation’ of the avant-garde and the ideology embedded in their formal innovations is quite intelligent, and it further com-

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<sup>15</sup> Mikhail Brashinskii, Rev. of Alexander Sokurov, dir., *Russkiy kovcheg* [*Russian Ark*].

<sup>16</sup> Oleg Kovalov, “‘Russkii kovcheg’: Russkii kontekst.”

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

plicates the relationship of Sokurov's film with Soviet culture. Obviously, the avant-garde movements in all the arts—theatre, painting, cinema, poetry—are elided from *Russian Ark*, despite the fact that many of them were underway or on the brink of occurring as of 1913. More interestingly, however, is that after 1934 the avant-garde movements were largely abandoned by Soviet artists in favour of Socialist Realism, which hearkened back, at least formally, to the cultural monuments produced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century—cultural monuments that are likewise not mentioned explicitly in *Russian Ark*.

Regardless of the shift toward Socialist Realism in the Soviet Union, however, the montage techniques pioneered in the 1920s by avant-garde filmmakers such as Kuleshov, Pudovkin, Vertov and Eisenstein, have become commonplace in Western cinema. Mainstream American cinema in particular utilizes brief shots and multitudes of cuts, avoiding the task of composing images that must sustain prolonged contemplation. Therefore, one thing we can say with certainty about *Russian Ark* is that it contains a formalist dimension, with its 90-minute single shot, that departs from contemporary cinematic norms. In this sense one might say that it is a neo-avant-garde film. In fact, almost all of the praise it has received among critics is for its unprecedented formal virtuosity.

Moreover, by eliminating the procedure of the 'cut' from his film, and thereby departing from the definitive technique of montage, Sokurov does, as Kovalov suggests, subtly invoke the avant-garde, and in particular Eisenstein, precisely through the sort of elision by which he invokes Pushkin, Griboedov and Glinka. Thus we should consider the sum total of Sokurov's omissions and seek to comprehend their meaning.

In effect, *Russian Ark* is a deeply ironic portrait of Russian culture, and as such it acquires some aspects of traditional portraiture. A successful, traditional por-

trait must accomplish the incredible diplomatic feat of coinciding with multiple subjective perceptions of the subject—those of the artist, the intended contemporary audience, and the subject. Of course, the perceptions of all parties involved differ from one another. Consequentially, the portrait lacks a singular, determinable ontological basis while at the same time perpetuating the illusion of an indisputable ontological basis. Thus a portrait, if it develops in the course of the artist's navigation through several subjective viewpoints, accumulates multiple dimensions that lend it the features of objectivity. Just as objectivity is beyond the faculties of human perception—objective perception is in effect non-existent, except in theory—the classical portrait portrays a personage who does not actually exist in the form portrayed. This non-existent personage, the conglomeration of numerous dimensions of a real person's identity (identity as perceived by the self and by various others), is immortalized in an image remarkable both for its accuracy (or so the artist hopes his contemporary audience will believe) and for its lack of an ontological basis in the subject portrayed (a form of inaccuracy that can manifest as flattery, criticism, or polyvalent irony).

This ontological paradox applies to Sokurov's depiction of Russian culture in *Russian Ark*. The director himself has confessed on numerous occasions that he strives to make film more like painting, and his means of doing so in *Russian Ark* is to lodge his (the artist's) subjective vision of Russian culture in a series of notable ellipses, only a few of which have been discussed here. At the same time, he accomplishes the task of presenting Russian culture in a form that his initial Western audience will recognize (hence his inclusion of so many scenes that echo Western stereotypes of Russian culture). Finally, he appeals to the equivalent of the person who commissions his portrait, the State Hermitage Museum, by celebrating the immense (foreign) art collection it holds and the opulence of the Winter Palace.



In light of this reading, the key scene in *Russian Ark*, the scene most important to a comprehension of the film's meaning, occurs during the Soviet period. In this scene the European approaches a door, which the narrator begs him not to open. The European does open the door, however, and he and the narrator find that they have travelled to a moment during the siege of Leningrad in World War II. The room they enter is frigid and filled with empty picture frames, because the Soviets removed the paintings from the frames and evacuated them in anticipation of the siege. Our two protagonists encounter a man there among the empty frames. He is one of the few people in the film who can see the protagonists, and he urges them to leave. In response to their questions about what he is doing, he confesses that he is using the wood he has gathered to make a coffin—for himself.

Just as an 'ark' is a vessel for the conveyance of an object of sanctity, so a frame is a vessel for the fruits of an artist's intellectual and, Sokurov might argue, sacred spiritual labour. A coffin is also a vessel, this time for the conveyance of that by which we define identity in the material world—the body, the temple of the individual soul, which, once interred, becomes sacred among those who respect the dead. Indeed, the Russian word for 'ark' [ковчег] derives from an old Uzbek word for 'vessel', 'box' or 'coffin'.<sup>18</sup> Thus, if we think of an 'ark', that is, a 'vessel', as a box instead of a ship, it could very well signify, at least metaphorically, a coffin. Or perhaps the title of Sokurov's film, contrary to critics' almost universal assumption, refers not so much to Noah's ark (a ship) as to the Ark of the Covenant (a box).

Thus two final questions remain, and as one might expect Sokurov refrains from providing any means of answering them other than our sense of irony: Is the film an 'ark', such as the Ark of the Covenant, in this context a box or a coffin in which

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<sup>18</sup> See Maks Fasmer, *Etimologicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka*, trans. O. N. Trubachev (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Progress," 1964), II.272–273.

Russia's nostalgia for Romanov Imperialism is interred so as to be sanctified and remembered by the future, post-Soviet generations who never actually knew it? Or is it a different type of box or enclosure—a frame, in this case an empty frame that contains a portrait of Russian culture, a portrait that is invisible to all who cannot see it without noticing what is missing?



JUSTIN WILMES

IN BETWEEN AND BEYOND: HYBRID GENRE AND MULTICULTURAL PERSPECTIVE IN  
SERGEI DVORTSEVOI'S *TULPAN*

Sergei Dvortsevoi's film *Tulpan* (2007), which tells the story of a family of nomadic sheep farmers on Kazakhstan's Betpak-Dala, or 'Hunger Steppe,' met with critical acclaim and won several awards at international film festivals, including the Un Certain Regard prize at Cannes for unique directorial vision. The film's unexpected success is variously attributed to its effect of authenticity, exotic locale, heartfelt narrative, well-observed characters, and universal themes.<sup>1</sup> Still relatively unexplored, but no less central to the film's resonance, is the way it moves beyond traditional genres and cultural perspectives. Its genre of 'docufiction' and more, the multicultural (national and cultural) background of the filmmakers and the film's narrative, which all challenge fixed perceptions of familial, cultural, and national identities, invite an analysis of the way the film, its production, and its reception create a discourse of hybridity and fluidity of structures and meanings.

**Hybridity of Genre**

After receiving accolades for his four documentary films—*Paradise* (1996), *Bread Day* (1998), *Highway* (1999) and *In the Dark* (2004)—Dvortsevoi swore off the documentary, turning for the first time to feature film with *Tulpan*. He attributes this change of heart to a combination of ethical and aesthetic factors. His feeling of personal involvement with the real-life subjects of his documentaries led to a moral dilemma. Meeting the protagonist of his first film, *Paradise*, several years after its re-

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<sup>1</sup> See reviews of the film by Solntseva (2009), Maliukova (2009), Gusiatsinskii (2009), Gracheva (2009) and Ebert ('Tulpan').

lease, he learned that the man's participation in the film nearly led to his imprisonment by the Kazakh government (Shavloskii). The subject of his last documentary, *In the Dark*, was a blind elderly man living in poverty in suburban Moscow, who spent his time making string bags and giving them away to passersby. During the filming process Dvortsevoi felt that his role as documentarian prevented him from helping the man. These and other experiences led him to conclude, 'Documentary film is a strange genre. In many respects it is amoral....The law is... the worse things are for the subject, the better for the film... The farther you go, the more you think, do I need to be doing this? In any case, I concluded that I don't, and I no longer shoot documentary pictures.' (Shavloskii)

Dvortsevoi's generic shift was also motivated by aesthetic concerns. In his view, documentary films guarantee authenticity no more than fiction films because documentary directors, in his words, 'can make 10 different films about one person...you can show [the subject] however you want' (Reichert 2008). The debate about cinematic authenticity and objectivity has always been central to realist fiction film and documentary filmmaking. Dziga Vertov's *Kino-pravda* works, for example, were an early attempt to capture authentic reality through newsreel footage, but to edit and arrange it in a way that revealed deeper, more profound truths. This project informed later debates in the 1950-60s between proponents and opponents of the *cinéma vérité* and Direct Cinema documentary movements about the possibility of achieving objective truth. These movements strove for a higher degree of truthfulness, but in different ways. While directors espousing Direct Cinema argued that documentarians should be invisible bystanders, unobtrusively capturing reality as it unfolds, representatives of *cinéma vérité* were active participants and provocateurs, who believed that through artificial stimulation one could get at a more 'revealing truth'

(Barsam 1992, 304). These and other, similar debates in film history have revealed the complexities and subjectivity involved in documentary and realist filmmaking.<sup>2</sup>

Several critics and film historians have emphasized that this quest for objectivity and truthfulness in film is an inherently contradictory endeavour, as succinctly stated by film theorist Claire Johnston (1974, 28-29): 'If we accept that cinema involves the production of signs, the idea of non-intervention is pure mystification. The sign is always a product. What the camera in fact grasps is the 'natural' world of the dominant ideology.' Dvortsevoi recognized this inherent contradiction in his documentary films and concluded that feature films could be no less truthful. The latter half of this paper attempts to understand better the 'dominant ideology' present in Dvortsevoi's natural world.

In *Tulpan* Dvortsevoi endeavoured to achieve an effect of heightened realism, less through genre than through a dedication to naturalistic film techniques and an organic, quasi-documentary filming process that incorporates real and unexpected events. In this way he achieved a rare degree of naturalism and perceived authenticity that is often praised by viewers and critics. The film was shot and produced over the unusually long period of four years. Dvortsevoi co-wrote the script with Gennadii Ostrovskii, who, ironically, is considered one of the most mainstream screenwriters in Russian cinema. The narrative features, on the one hand, a conventional plot, with common romantic and comedic devices. On the other hand, quotidian details from the everyday lives of the nomadic farmers and extensive shots of landscapes and animals run throughout the film and exist on an equal footing with the narrative, occupying approximately the same amount of screen time. Dvortsevoi retained only twenty percent of the film's original script, constantly modifying it to incorporate unexpected developments and new ideas. Weather conditions, animals, and the organically chang-

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<sup>2</sup> For an interesting discussion of a related phenomenon in contemporary Russian literature see Kaspe 2010.

ing relationships of the film's characters over three years provided a wealth of material for finding what Dvortsevoi calls 'the poetry of everyday life' (Nafus 2008). Perhaps the best illustration of this approach is the ten-minute extended shot of the lamb's birth, which serves as the film's climax. This improvised scene was one of the first filmed, and Dvortsevoi, recognizing its poignancy, changed the entire script to build the narrative around it (*Video Interview*, 6:20). He has frequently commented on his distaste for 'mathematical' and predictable scripts, as well as heavy-handed ideology that dominate the mainstream and in *Tulpan* he largely eschews such a narrative in favor of idiosyncrasy and unpredictability, a method he describes simply as 'observing life' (Buckmaster 2009).<sup>3</sup>

Several other production decisions contribute to the film's attempt at authenticity. The production team took great pains in its casting process, traveling throughout Kazakhstan and interviewing hundreds of potential actors. Ultimately, Asa's sister, Samal (Samal Esliamova), was the only professional actor chosen for the film.<sup>4</sup> In a rehearsal process reminiscent of methods developed by Stanislavskii and elaborated by Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler, the family of Ondas, Samal, and the children were asked to live together in a yurt for a month before filming began in order to achieve more natural relationships on screen. Samal, who is from the more urban and modern region of northern Kazakhstan, had never lived in such conditions and learned to cook and tend to domestic duties in this new environment. Dvortsevoi attributes the natural

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<sup>3</sup> 'I don't like watching anything that makes me feel the mathematics of the film. As soon I feel that a filmmaker is pressing me to believe his story or his philosophy of life then I lose interest...The advantage and nature of film is that it allows you to present physical reality and for people to feel this. I don't want to destroy this physical reality or to replace or change it with stupid ideas or film tricks and that's how we made *Tulpan*' (Phillips, 'Film').

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Askhat Kuchencherekov (Asa) is a film school student and aspiring director and Ondas Besikbasov (Ondas) is a well-known Kazakh opera singer.

performances of the children to this method of extended cohabitation before and during filming.

The formal qualities of *Tulpan* also reflect this aesthetic of heightened realism. The film uses no extra-diegetic music, instead preferring the sounds of the everyday—silence, howling wind, and the braying of livestock. Dvortsevoi used minimal editing and cuts in favor of long takes, which allow the viewer, in the director's words, 'to breathe with [the characters] and feel like you live with them in real time... to feel the dust, to feel the wind and all the physical reality' (Buckmaster 2009). The film's cinematography features long shots and extended takes, but also frequent use of hand-held and shoulder cameras, resulting in a greater documentary feel. Moreover, a number of common documentary themes are present in the film, including problems with stillborn sheep (possibly the result of earlier Soviet nuclear testing in the region), the disappearance of farmers on the Hunger Steppe and ever-present poverty,<sup>5</sup> but these themes remain secondary and serve merely as background for the individual lives of the characters.

Nonetheless, alongside its quasi-documentary detail, the film features common romantic and comedic devices, a conventional narrative about 'fitting in' and the pursuit of love and rural tranquillity. As critics have noted, the story reflects in large part the role of its mainstream Russian scriptwriter, Genadii Ostrovskii. A few critics have found fault with the script, viewing it as incongruously melodramatic and derivative of 'cliches from Soviet romantic comedies' (Gusiatinskii 2009). Similarly, Larisa Maliukova (2009), a leading Russian film critic, remarks: 'The seams [of the story]

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<sup>5</sup> One reviewer remarks that the film raises awareness of rural poverty in underdeveloped countries: 'According to recent figures, there are over 30 million people involved in nomadic agricultural production in the world today, the overwhelming majority of whom live on less than \$1 a day. *Tulpan* gives these statistics dramatic flesh and blood' (Phillips, 'Tulpan'). A postcolonial reading might further explore the legacy of Russian imperialism and the detrimental relationship between centre and periphery that led to the region's stunted economic development.



are almost invisible. Well, except occasional moments when the simple Kazakh boys utter Gennadii Ostrovskii's text.' One needn't look further than Asa's frustrated attempts at courting Tulpan or the comic-relief figure of Boni to recognize such filmic conventions.

In short, Dvortsevoi's patient method of 'observing life,' his casting decisions, naturalistic editing, and the combination of quotidian, ethnographic detail with a somewhat conventional narrative that explores universal themes, constitute a hybrid genre, what Russian film critic Elena Gracheva (2009) succinctly describes as 'not mere ethno-fusion...but an organic symbiosis of *faktura* and the laws of narrative, of document and invention, of random nature and deliberate art.' While, judging by viewer response, Dvortsevoi achieved his aim of a perceived authenticity among viewers and critics, the film's hybrid genre of docufiction at the same time reminds the critical viewer of the impossibility, and perhaps the undesirability, of achieving unadulterated reality in cinema.

### **Fluid Identities**

The hybridity of the film's genre, its blurring of boundaries, is complemented by the multicultural background of its film-makers. Typically Russian literature and films, whether of the Tsarist, Soviet or post-Soviet period, have perpetuated myths about the cultures of peripheral regions, the Caucasus and Central Asia in particular, alternating between essentializing portrayals of the Noble Savage and a backwards Other. Several scholarly works have been devoted to the topic of Orientalism in Russian cultural production.<sup>6</sup> The majority of these works analyse Russian literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and deal primarily with the Caucasus region, but their findings are no less applicable to the depiction of Central Asian cultures.

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<sup>6</sup> See studies by Schimmelpenninck van der Oye (2010), Grant (2005), Ram (1999) and Layton (1997).

Scholars Susan Layton and Harsha Ram have traced the depiction of the 'Eastern cultures' on Russia's imperial periphery in Russian literature of the nineteenth century. Alexander Pushkin, drawing upon earlier works of Gavriila Derzhavin, Vasiliï Zhukovsky, and Lord Byron, inaugurated Russian Caucasus literature with his *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*) in 1822. This and other early Romantic works did not stereotype the Caucasian mountain dwellers as sly savages, as would later become one of the dominant trends. These works reveal an ambivalent admiration for these peoples, underscoring their martial heroism and free but relatively lawless way of life. Notably, the Russian Romantic writer's admiration of and identification with the Noble Savage was not primarily motivated by anti-colonial protest. Rather, as 'a symptom or symbol of Russian and European anxieties, the Noble Savage was in fact a variant of the romantic hero, an allegorical screen upon which the Russian writer could project, and deflect, his own political alienation' (Ram 1999, 8). The Russian incarnation of the Noble Savage myth sprang from this sense of personal and political alienation, as well as a search for liberty outside of the bureaucratic state and a 'nostalgia for a more organic form' (3). Thus, like Lermontov's Pechorin later, the hero of Pushkin's *Prisoner* is weary of false and artificial society life, the 'untrue hearts of friends...enmity...slander' (104), but ultimately is unable to find permanent refuge among the Circassians.

Mikhail Lermontov continued this trend in a number of works, including his own version of *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*, 1828) and *A Hero of Our Time* (*Geroi nashego vremeni*, 1840) and a number of poems, perhaps most notably 'Cossack's Lullaby' (*'Kazach'ia kolybel'naia pesnia,*' 1840), in which a mother warns her baby of 'an evil Chechen who creeps along the shore, sharpening his dagger' (47). His works were essential to the popularization of a Caucasian literary my-

thology that alternately reinforced myths of the Noble Savage and a primitive, threatening Other.

In addition to the Noble Savage myth inherited from European traditions, several other dominant tropes developed in the nineteenth-century literary canon of the Caucasus, which have informed contemporary discourse. Bruce Grant (2005) identifies the myth of the ‘good Russian prisoner’ in the literary tradition, tracing its beginnings to the Promethean myth. Prometheus, having stolen fire and given it to man, was condemned to eternal exile on Mount Caucasus, where highlanders watched over and wept for him. Grant argues that the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tolstoy, are tools of colonial mythology, which develop a myth of the benevolent and suffering Russian captive, i.e., ‘the Good Russian Prisoner.’ Such works subtly practice the ‘art of emplacement,’ in which the Russian Captive appears not as an aggressor in the region, but as a passive and benevolent victim, who sometimes even identifies with the local culture.

Conversely Layton and Ram define the trope of the Russian Captive as one of alienation from the imperial project: ‘The figure of the Captive might be seen as the Russian counterpart to the Noble Savage... socially ostracized and psychically alienated, he periodically revisits the Caucasus over the course of more than a century to update the contradictions of Russian imperial nationhood’ (Ram 1999, 10). Grant, however, analyzes these works from a Western postcolonial perspective, emphasizing that the benevolent relationship between Russian captive and Caucasian captor is a deceptive inversion of the imperial relationship, which served to legitimize Russia’s colonial presence there ( Grant 2005, 43).<sup>7</sup> Grant’s work is in large part an examina-

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<sup>7</sup> Particularly telling are Layton (1997) and Grant’s (2005) very different treatments of Pushkin’s nationalistic epilogue to *Kavkazskii plennik*. Layton asserts that this epilogue did little to taint the work’s

tion of the formative influence of literature upon Russian conceptions of these periphery regions and their own colonial presence there, while Susan Layton's work addresses issues of Russian identity vis-à-vis its Eastern neighbours.

Margaret Ziolkowski (2005) reads the nineteenth-century Caucasus literary canon primarily as a tradition of characterizing these cultures as *ignoble savages*. Her analysis privileges works such as Lermontov's 'Cossack's Lullaby.'<sup>8</sup> She traces the development of the trope of the Caucasian as Evil Brigand to post-Soviet Russian poetry and pulp literature. Russians, often themselves orientalized by Western Europe, employed stereotypes to their Caucasian subjects in an effort to be counted among civilizing nations. Caucasian peoples in these works are 'always spoken for, but quite literally, rarely speaking' (Grant 2005, 51).

The relative silence of Caucasian and Central Asian characters continues in the cultural production of recent years. Dvortsevoi's *Tulpan* arguably departs from this trend by providing a more nuanced and heterogenous portrait of Kazakh culture, replete with its own contradictions and ambivalent identifications. The Orientalist tendency in Russian literature revealed itself also in its unwillingness to differentiate among Caucasian cultures, glossing them as Circassians (Pushkin), Tatars (Tolstoy) and, today, frequently as Chechens. A similar inability or unwillingness to differentiate among the cultures of Central Asia dominates in current Russian discourse, as evidenced by the plethora of undescriptive and undifferentiating racial terms in wide conversational circulation, such as 'chernyi', 'churki' and 'khachi'. By exploring nuances of Kazakh identity—identification with both colonizing and colonized cultures,

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otherwise romantic depiction of the Circassians, while Grant points to the epilogue as a clear articulation of the author's imperialist views.

<sup>8</sup> Layton (1997) suggests that, considering Lermontov's frequent sympathetic depiction of Caucasian cultures, the 'evil Chechen sharpening his dagger' in 'Cossack's Lullaby' is more likely a parody than an expression of the author's viewpoint, although Ziolkowski (2005) points out, such authorial intent is often lost on audiences.

city and steppe, etc.—Dvortsevoi's film seems to break with the tradition of cultural reductivism and devoicing, but nonetheless does so from the perspective of its ethnically Russian director.

Nancy Condee's *The Imperial Trace*, a recent contribution to the study of Russian cultural production from the point of view of empire and identity, is one of the first works to consider cinematic instead of literary texts. The study focuses largely on the Russian empire's longstanding and complex identity discourse, especially vis-à-vis the West. However, it also considers the way imperial hierarchies and relationships persist in post-Soviet society and cinema. In this regard, Condee characterizes the modern Russian relationship to its new surrounding nation-states as differing little from the former centre-to-periphery relationship of the Russian empire, only in new forms of regional leadership and cultural influence (Condee 2009, 21 & 29). The notion of Russia's 'imperial trace' in a more diffused cultural and discursive form is a fruitful paradigm in analyzing post-Soviet literature and cinema and is helpful in considering questions of identity in *Tulpan*.

The trend of Othering the eastern cultures of the Russian imperial periphery persists in new and various ways in post-Soviet literature and films. Postcolonial theorists have debated the problem of a hegemonic culture characterizing a 'subaltern' culture, a process that arguably inheres essentializing and is incapable of preserving the complexities and heterogeneity of the subject. Often cited as a potential alternative to such discourse, spaces of mixing and hybridization, which blur national identifications, pose a profound challenge to colonial notions of difference because 'the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation' (Bhabha 1994, 113).

Dvortsevoi himself is an example of just such hybridization and fluid identity, as an ethnically Russian citizen of Kazakhstan, who has spent most of his life in Ka-

zakhstan, but now lives in European Russia. Julia Kristeva describes this emerging category of identification that is 'in between and beyond' clear-cut national identification as follows: 'Those men and women of the borderlands, those unclassifiable ones, those cosmopolitans among whom I include myself, represent on the one hand the pulsation of the modern world surviving its famous lost values, thanks to or despite the flood of immigration and hybridization, and on the other hand, as a result, embody that new possibility that is forming contrary to national conformisms and international nihilisms' (Kristeva 2000,168).

Kristeva, a Bulgarian now living in Paris, has explored issues of Bulgarian identity in its postcolonial/post-Soviet context.<sup>9</sup> While dealing with different cultures and media, both Kristeva and Dvortsevoi occupy positions as intellectuals revisiting, from a position of distance and immigration, their home cultures, both formerly on the periphery of the Soviet empire. Both risk representing the home culture from the arguably privileged position of foreign immigration. Kristeva points out that such migrant artists 'risk what we know neither here nor there; and why should we do so? Well, so as to generate new beings of language and blood rooted in no language or blood, diplomats of the dictionary, genetic negotiators...who challenge authentic and hence military citizens of all kinds' (ibid., 168-169).

What does this arguably privileged perspective impart to the works of Kristeva and Dvortsevoi? On the one hand, it creates a perception of heightened authority that readers and viewers often equate with a transnational and therefore 'more objective' voice. This perceived objectivity in their works resides largely in the coexistence of

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<sup>9</sup> For an example of transnational perspective in a postcolonial context outside of the Soviet sphere, see the works of Tayeb Salih, a Sudanese who wrote about Arab identity from immigration in London. In his novels, Salih challenged both colonial and pan-Arab identity discourses, inviting "a reading of the postcolonial culture as a fluid, dialogic negotiation of historical legacies, social boundaries, and cultural encounters" in an attempt to 'liquidate Western racism and tired conceptions of identity that inform the spectrum of Arab ideology' (Hassan 2003, 128).

an unsparing depiction of cultural problems and stark realities with what is noted by critics as a ‘clear affection’ for the life of its people, an ability to capture the *byt* and *bytie* of this life, which includes idiosyncrasy and heterogeneity. At the same time, the works of Kristeva and Dvortsevoi, through hybridity and fluid identities—both their own and those of the people for whom they speak—counter and attempt to move beyond fixed perceptions of identity.

In *Tulpan* Dvortsevoi’s unique cultural position has led to a perceived authenticity as well as an absence of typical objections to Othering and misrepresentation in cases when a majority culture depicts a minority culture. A notable exception was a small number of Kazakh government officials, who disapproved of the film and claimed that *Tulpan* was ‘Worse than *Borat*’ and ‘Very bad for Kazakhstan.’<sup>10</sup> However, at a screening attended by several thousand ordinary Kazakh citizens, the audience ‘loved the film’ (*Video Interview*, 0:25). Western critics likewise praised Dvortsevoi’s sensitive and nuanced depiction of Kazakh culture. One critic writes, ‘Kazakh-born Dvortsevoi not only has a real affection for [his characters], but also deeply understands their nomadic traditions and how they...all harbour their own special hopes’ (Phillips, ‘*Tulpan*’). Roger Ebert also comments on the film’s complex portrayal: ‘There is humor, some of it involving the cucumber salesman, and tenderness, as when Samal sings a bedtime lullaby to her tired husband and children. There is stark reality in the difficult birth of a lamb that manages to survive... The film’s closing shot is epic in its meaning and astonishing in its difficulty.’ Dvortsevoi’s own comments in interviews attest to this complex viewpoint, his understanding of the difficulty of life on the Hunger Steppe, and also his love for the place and admiration for its beauty.

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<sup>10</sup> *Borat* (2006) is a mockumentary film about a Kazakh journalist who travels to America. The film includes scenes of an allegedly Kazakh village (in fact a Roma village in Romania), which are highly satirical, portraying Kazakh culture as primitive, misogynistic, and anti-Semitic.

Upon presenting the film at Cannes, he laconically stated, 'Thank you for coming. . . We hope you enjoy it and you share our love for Kazakhstan and for what you see on the screen' ('Un Certain Regard'). Dvortsevoi made a conscious effort to avoid overt ideology in the film, stating, 'I'm not trying to prove something but to show this world—its relationships and physical reality—to people' (Phillips, 'Film').

Despite the painstaking quasi-documentary filming method, the director's self-proclaimed distaste for ideological cinema and his cultural perspective, which is arguably 'in between and beyond' national identifications, the film nonetheless is a product of signs, mediated foremost by Dvortsevoi, who is neither from the Betpak-Dala nor ethnically Kazakh. When a member of a majority or privileged group portrays a minority or subaltern culture, it is always difficult and problematic to determine the authenticity of that voice and its position vis-à-vis the subaltern culture. According to theorist Wendy Hesford (2004, 107-108), critical debates about such representations reveal two equally flawed attitudes: '[The first is] the problem of the privileged speaking *for* rather than *with* the oppressed, thereby situating oneself as an authenticating presence, and [the second is] the assumption that the subject can speak only for herself, a stance that ignores how rhetorical conventions and discursive systems shape the construction of subjectivity and agency.' The lack of economic and cinematic integration by members of Kazakhstan's Hunger-Steppe culture presents significant obstacles to self-representation by this group. As Hesford points out, moreover, the complex interaction of discursive systems undermines the very notion that any individual has a purely authentic voice of her or his own. Hesford's suggestion that a majority member of society can speak *with* rather than *for* the subaltern is arguably borne out by Dvortsevoi's nuanced representation of Kazakh culture.

In addition to Dvortsevoi himself, the multicultural background of the film's production team contributed to this unique vision of Kazakhstan. The film provides a



veritable case study in international collaboration and co-production. The Kazakh-Russian director Dvortsevoi and mainstream Russian scriptwriter Ostrovskii were joined by a Polish camera team, led by cinematographer Jolanta Dylewska, a French sound designer, William Schmitt, and funding and producers from Germany, Kazakhstan, and Switzerland.<sup>11</sup> The international interest in the film, evident in its production team and accolades at film festivals, reflects not just an ethnographic curiosity about this relatively unknown place and culture, but an exploration of universal questions of identity in the postcolonial world—questions raised explicitly within the narrative itself.

### **Crossing Boundaries: Characters, Spaces, and Cultures**

When the film begins, Asa has just returned to Kazakhstan after serving in the Russian navy off the coast of Sakhalin. He dreams of settling down on the Betpak-Dala with a wife and livestock, but is unable to obtain a flock without first marrying, as it is believed that one cannot survive on the steppe without a wife. Tulpan is the only marriageable girl in the region, and we see the desperate attempts of Asa and his family to arrange the match. Asa (like Dvortsevoi himself) has moved back and forth between his native Kazakhstan and relatively modern Russia. He tries to impress Tulpan and her family with his travels and tales of the exotic aquatic life that he encountered at sea. Significantly, he wears his Russian naval uniform only in the scenes at Tulpan's house, as a sign of his refinement and cosmopolitanism. Somewhat surprisingly, Tulpan is indifferent to his stories of exotic lands, and she rejects him because of his 'big ears.'

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<sup>11</sup> The film's financing was as follows: 22% Swiss, 10% Polish, 15% Kazakh, 19% Russian, and 34% German ('Blooming Desert').

The viewer discovers, however, that Asa and Tulpan's failure to connect is more likely due to their very different identifications and hopes for the future. Like all of the young characters in the film, with the exception of Asa, Tulpan hopes to move away to the city, and therefore is entirely unimpressed by Asa's modest dream of family and farming the steppe, which he has charmingly captured in a drawing on the collar of his naval uniform. Asa is rejected not only by Tulpan, but in fact by all aspects of steppe life: the farm boss refuses to give him a flock without a wife; his brother-in-law is reluctant to accept him as one of his own; and the steppe itself seems to reject him when he fails to deliver the first lamb's birth. As Russian critic Alena Solntseva (2009) writes, 'Overcoming his own estrangement, his own foreignness, the natural initiation of a man who has renounced superficial stereotypes in search of authenticity – that is the real subject of the film.' Tulpan, a local girl, wants to flee the difficult and humble life on the steppe that she knows all too well for the promise of an unknown, better life in the city. In contrast, Asa, who is originally from the city and has even lived in relatively modern Russia, comes to the steppe somewhat ignorant of its realities to pursue his pastoral dreams. Asa's failed courtship, in other words, problematizes and explores questions of cultural identification—between traditional steppe culture and city life, between insiders and outsiders.

Not only Tulpan and Asa, but the majority of the film's characters are confronted with a crisis of identification that is both linguistic and cultural. The children of Samal and Ondas all have a fascination with modern, urban culture. The oldest son is characterized primarily by his habit of listening to the Russian broadcast of *BBC* radio, which he summarizes each day for his father before bed. The youngest son, still a toddler, wanders in and out of scenes, playing with a pet turtle and repeatedly asking, 'When will we go to Almaty?' The children, surrounded by dust and boredom, seem to live vicariously through their dreams of the outside world. This theme uncannily

resembles the central theme of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* (*Tri sestry*, 1900), in which for the entirety of the play the eponymous sisters dream of moving to Moscow. Despite the obvious differences between these works, if we consider Alexander Et-kind's (2001, 65) notion of the Russian provinces and *narod* as subjects of the empire's 'internal colonization,' then we can observe a continuity between these colonial subjects in the imperial, Soviet and post-imperial periods.<sup>12</sup> This continuity consists of the desire of the subjects in both works to join with and assimilate into the colonizing culture. In this sense the characters in the film personify the 'imperial trace' in post-Soviet Russian cinema, while at the same time the film itself combats persistent imperial hierarchies through its hybridity and blurring of cultural borders (Condee 2009, 5).

The generational split implied by the film, moreover, is clearly reflected in its language. All of the young characters, including the children, Asa, his sister, Samal, and Boni, speak Russian, while the older characters, who identify unequivocally with steppe culture, speak only Kazakh. Asa converses in Russian for most of the film, but breaks into Kazakh at times when interacting with Ondas and the farm boss, reflecting both his desire for acceptance and his complex and wavering identifications. All the characters reflect the ambiguity of identification, linguistic and cultural, in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

Asa's friend Boni, the tractor driver, also dreams of leaving the steppe. He often speaks to Asa of moving to Almaty, or better yet, to Russia, even America, implying a perceived hierarchy of development and the 'good life.' With his gold teeth, photos of bare-chested women, and outmoded cassette single of Boney M's 'Babylon' (apparently the only song he listens to), he is a parodic figure whose out-of-touch and overly romantic notions of city life further complicate the film's identity discourse by

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<sup>12</sup> The periphery-to-centre drive is evident in Russian film throughout the Soviet period (not least in *Moskva slezam ne verit*, 1980), and it is similarly challenged at the end of Room's *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia* (1927).

poking fun at one of the dominant viewpoints among Kazakh youth. Similarly, Samal tries to rid Asa of his illusions about moving to the city. When, frustrated by his difficulties in the steppe, he prepares to leave for the city, Samal says, 'Do you understand that no one is waiting for you there? Do you understand that no one needs you there? Everything will be ok for you here. You will find a girl.'

At the close of the film it seems that Asa has decided, for now at least, to stay in the steppe and pursue his dreams there, though he is no closer to finding a wife or establishing a farm and livestock of his own. This ending hints at the identity hesitations that the younger generation of Kazakh people faces in a post-empire space and time. The film's final scene of the family, including the small children, straining to pull down their yurt and move to a different part of the steppe amid clouds of dust and howling winds, reinforces the image of steppe life as both unrelentingly difficult and beautiful.

By problematizing and complicating simplistic conceptions of both city and steppe life, the film's narrative suggests that there are no easy answers for its young characters, and Asa must struggle to make a life, whether here or there. His experiences in the steppe dispel his illusions, and he tentatively decides to remain there, now with a more sober understanding of its hardships. Others, such as Boni, will likely leave for the city and will presumably meet with their own series of disillusionments and new understandings of themselves, the city, and their rural homeland.

It is telling that the only characters who have experienced both city and steppe life, Asa and Samal, choose to remain in the steppe. Asa's decision at the end of the film to stay is hesitant, influenced by the harsh circumstances of life there. His hard-won choice might suggest yet another Romantic, idealized treatment of rural life and the director's invocation of the Noble Savage myth. More likely, however, it reveals Dvortsevoi's attempt to level the perceived hierarchy among Russia, urban Kazakh-

stan, and the Hunger Steppe, and in doing so, to challenge the paradoxical but pervasive desire of the former periphery subject to join and assimilate into the hegemonic culture.

This dialectic between city and steppe and the torn identification of the protagonists are reinforced by the film's visual structure. Shots of the horizon, split evenly between earth and sky, are interspersed throughout the film. These shots appear rhythmically throughout and serve as a visual leitmotif that echoes the dichotomy between the characters' quotidian earthly life in the steppe and their dreams of a better life, whether urban or pastoral.

To conclude, this paper has attempted to better understand *Tulpan's* hybrid genre; the role of its multicultural filmmakers; the story's exploration of post-Soviet Kazakh identity; and the way these elements shaped the film's reception. While Dvortsevoi's blend of documentary and narrative film techniques has led to the perception of authenticity, at the same time it reminds critical viewers of the mediation inherent in any approach to filmmaking. *Tulpan's* multicultural film-makers impart a transnational perspective to the film that avoids a stereotypical depiction of Kazakh identity and life in the city and steppe. The film's narrative explicitly raises questions about linguistic and cultural identifications in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, undermining through Asa, Boni, and others, romantic and simplistic notions of both the steppe and the city, and presenting a much more complex picture of cultural realities. The film's hybridity and fluidity impart a heightened sense of cultural authority and authenticity that challenges and arguably breaks free of the vicious cycle of Othering and stereotyping that inheres in such cultural products.

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VARIATION IN RUSSIAN WORD STRESS: A SURVEY OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

1. INTRODUCTION

This article gives an overview and discussion of the main scholarly research connected with the area of stress variation in Russian. Though an important and complex area of Russian, nevertheless, variation in word stress has received insufficient attention, or, at least, attention incommensurate with these levels of importance and complexity, and, certainly, as a result, many questions remain unanswered and much work remains to be done in the field.

Variants, in general, are defined by Gorbačevič (1978b, 17) as ‘регулярно воспроизводимые видоизменения одного и того же слова, сохраняющие тождество морфолого-словообразовательной структуры, лексического и грамматического значения и различающиеся либо с фонетической стороны (произношением звуков, составом фонем, местом ударения или комбинацией этих признаков), либо формообразовательными аффиксами (суффиксами, флексиями).’<sup>1</sup> More precisely, words with variation in stress, or, to paraphrase Gorbačevič, ‘слова, различающиеся местом ударения’, allow the possibility of two, or occasionally more, syllables on which the stress may fall in a given word form without any difference in meaning (though stylistic differentiation may, of course, be possible). Thus, for example, the plural short form of the adjective *вѣрный* ‘true,

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<sup>1</sup> ‘[...] regularly reproduced variants of one and the same word which preserve the identity of the morphological and word-formational structure as well as the lexical and grammatical meaning, and which differ either phonetically (in the pronunciation of sounds, phonemic structure, position of stress or a combination of these features), or in their form-building affixes (suffixes, inflections).’ [All translations are my own - RL].

faithful' is given in standard lexicographical sources (e.g. Zal. 1977 and ORD)<sup>2</sup> as either *вѣрны* or *верны́*.

However, in essence, one is generally dealing with two distinct areas of stress variation in Russian. Firstly, variation may occur in one or more inflected forms of a word, as in the latter example (cf. the other short forms of *вѣрный* with non-variable stress, viz *вѣрен*, *вѣрно*, *верна́*), or, for example, in the case of the word *водá* 'water' the oblique plural cases are given (e.g. Zal. 1977) as either *водáм*, *водáми*, *водáх* or *вóдам*, *вóдами*, *вóдах* (the latter forms, however, marked as *устар.* in the said source), but only *водá* for the nom. sg., *вóду* for the acc. sg. etc. Secondly, in contrast, a word might be characterised by stress variation in all its forms: essentially this results from variation occurring in the base form (i.e. nom. sg. of nouns, nom. sg. masc. of adjectives, the infinitive of verbs). Thus, if one takes the noun *творог* 'curd cheese', which in most contemporary sources (e.g. ORD) is given as either *твóрог* or *творóг*, one finds that one is dealing with two different accentual paradigms: in the case of *твóрог* it is paradigm *a* (fixed stem stress) and in the case of *творóг* it is paradigm *b* (fixed ending stress) to use the commonly applied system.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the former

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<sup>2</sup> For all abbreviations see References.

<sup>3</sup> Henceforth the generally adopted alphabetical system of Russian stress patterns found, for example, in Zal. 1977, is used. There follows a list of some of the main stress patterns used in our further discussion (mobile stress types are marked in bold):

a: fixed stem stress;

b: fixed desinential stress;

**d**: desinential stress in the singular, stem stress in the plural;

**f**: desinential stress throughout, except for the nominative plural which has stem stress on the initial stem syllable;

**d'**: as pattern **d** above, but with stress retracted on to the initial stem syllable in the accusative singular (e.g. *спинá*);

**f'**: as pattern **f** above, but with stress retracted on to the initial stem syllable in the accusative singular (e.g. *рукá*, *головá*).

base form results in all inflected forms having fixed stem stress on the initial syllable (e.g. gen. sg. *твóрога*), and the latter in all forms having ending stress (e.g. gen. sg. *творога́*).

A subtype of the latter type of stress variation occurs when stress falls on different syllables of the stem (but not the ending), in which case one is dealing with one stress paradigm (*a* or fixed stem stress), but with the stress falling on a different stem syllable in all forms of the paradigm, e.g. *мы́шление/мышлéние* ‘thinking’, gen. sg. *мы́шления/мышлéния*. This type of stress variation plays a prominent role in word-formation where words are derived by certain suffixes: typically, words containing the same suffix may either form uniform categories in terms of stress (so called ‘dominant’ suffixes such as *-ист* with stress always (i.e. without any exception) on the same, in this case, final stem syllable, e.g. *коммуни́ст* ‘communist’, *шахматист* ‘chess player’ etc.), or a more complex ‘pattern’ may occur with stress occurring in two or more different syllabic positions in different words. An example of this is provided by the verbal suffix *-ировать* which can be stressed on the final or pre-penultimate syllable in different verbs: thus *маскиро́вать* ‘to mask’ vs. *телефони́ровать* ‘to telephone’, and there are even individual verbs with both stress positions permitted in standard sources (without any distinction in meaning, but with possible different stylistic evaluation), e.g. *татуиро́вать/татуи́ровать* ‘to tattoo’ (Zal. 1977). Such, therefore, are the main types of stress variation encountered in standard Russian.<sup>4</sup> In this article I shall examine the most important work done in this area and demonstrate that notwithstanding a significant amount of new scholarship,

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<sup>4</sup> Stress variation, to a greater or lesser extent, exists in all the Slavic languages in which stress is not determined solely on a purely syllabic basis (such as, for example, Czech, Slovak and Polish); thus, for example, Ukrainian displays extensive stress variation in the infinitives of verbs (see Clarke, 2004, 32).

variation in Russian stress still contains many important problems which have yet to be satisfactorily analysed and solved.

## 2. GENERAL STUDIES AND THE PROBLEM OF ESTABLISHING NORMS

Some thirty-five years ago Gorbačevič wrote the following passage, lamenting the lack of interest in normative studies of Russian stress, and, in particular, the importance of understanding the causes of variant stress (1978b, 53), ‘Кодификация русского ударения долгое время являлась запущенным участком нормализаторской работы. И хотя в последние десятилетия появилось немало ценных практических пособий и серьезных теоретических исследований, многие проблемы акцентологии еще далеки от их разрешения, а оценка спорных фактов современной речи нередко осуществляется кустарным способом без учета основных тенденций в развитии ударения. [...] Чрезвычайно существенным представляется выяснение конкретных причин актуальных акцентологических изменений, установление зон сильного варьирования и перспективных акцентных вариантов, определение их функциональной значимости в современном языке.’<sup>5</sup> As will be shown here, during those thirty or so years this situation has, to some degree, been rectified, though stress variation remains anything but a subject which has received exhaustive treatment.

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<sup>5</sup> ‘The codification of Russian stress was for a long time a neglected area of normative work. And, although in the last decades there have appeared quite a few practical manuals and serious theoretical studies, many problems of accentuation are still far from being solved, while evaluation concerning any controversial facts of modern speech is often implemented in a primitive way without taking into account the basic tendencies in the development of stress. [...] Of paramount importance is the elucidation of the concrete causes of current accentual changes, the establishment of zones of high variation and potential stress variants, and the definition of their functional significance in the modern language.’

In classic stress manuals such as Fedjanina (1982) and Red'kin (1971), variation in stress is not a strong feature. Though, of course, it is mentioned in relation to certain words and paradigms, little attention is given to the reasons for its presence, stylistic variations, levels of acceptability of variants, or the directions in which it might be proceeding both in individual words or in more general terms. In works such as these, variation in stress appears simply as the listing of variant forms, occasionally with a stylistic evaluation or semantic distinction (e.g. Fedjanina (1982, 99) lists *стенá* 'wall' as being paradigm *CA*, but allows also pattern *CC* with the proviso 'устар.'), but more often as a simple statement of variance (e.g. Fedjanina (ibid.) lists *река́* 'river' as being paradigm *CA*, but gives the variant paradigm *BA* without any further information). In such cases as the latter (*viz река́*) one is simply left to conclude that the pattern given in brackets represents a no less valid variant, and this is confirmed by the word's entry in the *BA* paradigm also (in this case with *CA* given as the variant without, of course, any further comment). Within suffixal stress, in particular, even less mention has been made of stress variants, partially because, it would seem, stress variance in, for example, suffixed nouns generally takes the form of alternative stress positions in the nominative singular, and, thereby, simply produces two 'regular' stress patterns for the remaining paradigm. Zaliznjak's study of 1985 (Zaliznjak 1985) was certainly far more aware of the possibility of variation in affixed forms, in particular his inclusion of the pragmatic factor and professional stress, and more recently the present author (e.g. Lagerberg 1999, 2005), notwithstanding the justifiable criticism of Gorbačevič (1978b, 54) regarding the excessive use of the morphological factor in stress assignment ('Полное подчинение акцентологии грамматике, абсолютизация тезиса Е. Куриловича о рассмотрении ударения только в связи с определенной морфемой ... грешат, по-видимому, некоторой

односторонностью’),<sup>6</sup> has identified some of the extent and processes involved in derivational stress variation, including a general historical movement towards uniform suffixal stress. Important in both these latter scholars’ work (Zaliznjak and Lagerberg) is the emphasis on the stress properties of the morpheme and the tendency towards uniform stress based on certain ‘dominant’ suffixes, as well as the possible role of frequency. Variant stress in many suffixed forms is the result of a continuing shift from one system to the other, from a system where the accentual properties of a word’s morphemes dictate the stress to a system where a given suffix in isolation dictates the position of the word’s stress, with frequency possibly operating as a filter through which words must pass to determine their tendency either towards conservative or analogous stress.

Gorbačevič himself (1978b, 53-122) gives one of the earliest, and most lucid and detailed accounts of variation in Russian stress. To begin with, he emphasises the importance of distinguishing stress variance in written Russian from stress variance in spontaneous speech (*ibid.*, 53): ‘Ударение - факт устной, звучащей речи. Варьирование же на этом уровне не только свободнее и шире, но и менее доступно для регламентирующего воздействия, чем, скажем, вариантность графически выраженных морфологических форм.’<sup>7</sup> He justly demands that the study of stress variation incorporate more sophisticated levels than, say, simply examining the stress properties of a given word’s morphemes (*ibid.*, 55): ‘Нормативная оценка акцентологического факта при наличии варианности нуждается в динамическом и многоаспектном анализе (что предполагает рассмотрение

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<sup>6</sup> ‘The full subordination of accentology to grammar, the wholesale acceptance of Kuryłowicz’s thesis of considering stress only in connection with a certain morpheme [...] evidently err through a certain one-sidedness.’

<sup>7</sup> ‘Stress is a fact of spoken, sounding speech. However, varying at this level is not only freer and wider, but also less accessible for any regulating influence than, say, variation of graphically expressed morphological forms.’

фонетических особенностей и источника происхождения слова, литературной традиции и социально–стилистической маркированности варианта, типичных позиционных условий и фразеологической обусловленности).<sup>8</sup> He (ibid.) estimates the current (at least for the time his work was published) number of lexemes with stress variation in any of their forms as around 3500, but goes on to say that this does not include some other areas simply left uncovered, e.g. historical and archaic variants no longer used, and words derived directly from other words with stress variance in turn giving new stress variants, e.g. *вáхтер/вахтѐр* ‘door keeper’ > *вáхтерша/вахтѐрша* ‘door keeper (fem.)’, *вáхтерский/вахтѐрский* (adjective ‘(relating to the/of the) door keeper’), making the entire area, in his view, a very widespread phenomenon in modern Russian (ibid., 56). Certainly, a desirable goal for the entire area of stress variation is the provision of a dictionary of all stress variants occurring in contemporary Russian.

Gorbačevič lists the main reasons behind stress variance as follows, underlining that their relative effects should be understood and kept separate (ibid., 56): relics of an earlier, now dysfunctional, stress system; the effects of Church Slavonic; patterns of analogy obtaining between different stress paradigms of Old Russian; the influence of dialect and other linguistic environments. He (ibid., 58) also mentions factors which affect the stress of loan words in Russian, such as multiple language sources (e.g. the concurrence between Greek and Latin stress models), insufficient assimilation by native speakers of more exotic lexemes, and professional speech.

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<sup>8</sup> ‘The normative assessment of an accentual fact in the presence of variation requires a dynamic and multi-aspectual analysis (which presupposes the consideration of phonetic features and the source of the word’s origin, the literary tradition and the social and stylistic markedness of the variant, typical positional conditions and phraseological conditionality).’



For Gorbačevič (ibid., 58) social and professional differences are not so much the cause of certain stress variants, as a means of perpetuating them. In his view, during the 19th century stress variants could even arise on the basis of differing political ideologies (he quotes the example of the more aristocratic-sounding (with its French stress position) *принцип* ‘principle’ and the more ‘radical’ *принцип*). Nevertheless, according to Gorbačevič, Russian is currently not characterised by lexemes frequently used by certain sections of society with one stress and by another section with a different stress, that is to say, stress does not generally operate in Russian as a class shibboleth. The only thing close to this seems to be words of limited usage used in particular professions with a particular stress (what Zaliznjak refers to as ‘professional stress’, e.g. ending stress in the word *массаж* ‘massage’ amongst practitioners of massage, as opposed to normative fixed stem stress).

Above all, in Gorbačevič’s view (ibid., 59), it is analogy which plays the largest role in causing stress variation: ‘[Н]аиболее общей и действенной причиной акцентной вариантности в современном языке является воздействие аналогии, фактор внутрисистемного порядка.’<sup>9</sup> And further (ibid., 60): ‘[...] для современного русского языка становится все более характерным преобладание общих, категориальных аналогий над частными, словопроизводными.’<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the present author’s own research (see, for example, Lagerberg 1999) has empirically shown this to be true, a word’s suffix becoming the crucial factor in its stress over and above the stress of the base (deriving) word. Marklund Sharapova (2000, 35) sums this up accurately as a contrast between *association of contiguity*, according to which

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<sup>9</sup> ‘The most common and effective cause of accentual variation in the modern language is the influence of analogy, a factor relating to the language’s internal system.’

<sup>10</sup> ‘[...] for modern Russian the predominance of general, categorical analogies over particular, word-formational ones is becoming more typical.’

the derived word maintains the same syllabic stress as its base word (e.g. *вѳхрь* ‘whirlwind’ > *вѳхриться* ‘to whirl’), and *association of similarity*, according to which the stress type assimilates to a more general stress pattern of another word that structurally belongs to the same category of words ‘to spin’ (e.g. variant *вѳхриться* on the basis of *кружиться*). Certainly, it seems undisputed that the latter type of analogy is gaining ground at the expense of the former. As an example of analogy in operation Gorbačevič cites that of the short forms of the past passive participle of the verb *продать* ‘to sell’, among which the feminine now allows initial stress in imitation of the other three forms; thus *продана* ‘sold’ on the basis of *продан, продано, проданы*. This is, he believes, also connected with the increasingly grammatical role of stress alternation, so that, for example, it appears that stress in nouns is increasingly being used to demarcate the singular from the plural.

Gorbačevič (ibid., 60-69) also underlines the central position of the phonetic aspects of stress. Although Russian stress has traditionally been thought to be generally free from any constraints on the part of the word’s phonetic or syllabic structure, Gorbačevič supports the theory of rhythmicity in syntagmas with a typical two-three syllable spacing from one stress to the next, sometimes extending to four syllables – what he calls the ‘critical interval’ (ibid., 63). In this way, according to Gorbačevič, the freedom of Russian stress becomes something more relative, tending towards the middle/middle-right of any given word unit of three or more syllables, and even, in some cases, leading directly to a shift or variation of stress. It is this factor which, in his view, has led to a high degree of variation and shifts of stress in verbs with the suffix *-ировать* (with the number of verbs with final stress gradually being reduced in favour of the more ‘rhythmically balanced’ *-ировать* pattern (see also Lagerberg 2003, 2005)). Gorbačevič’s argument is made stronger by the stress of such compound words as *многозубчатый* ‘multicogged’ (cf. *зубчатый* ‘cogged’),

*разнохарактерный* ‘diverse’ (cf. *характерный* ‘characteristic’) which appear to show this tendency to place the stress on the middle-right position of the word. Notwithstanding the strength of these arguments, however, Gorbačevič’s law of rhythmic balancing cannot be applied scientifically or systematically to Russian, but must be used as an *ad hoc* explanatory tool as yet, i.e. its status is still largely undefined and dependent on additional factors.

Another scholar who, like Gorbačevič, devotes a chapter within a monograph to variant stress, is Werner Lehfeldt (Lehfeldt 2006, 107-128). Quoting Gorbačevič’s identification of 3500, or in another source (Gorbačevič 1978a), 5000, lexemes with variant stress in at least one of their forms, Lehfeldt underlines the importance of distinguishing this ‘systemic frequency’ from ‘pragmatic frequency’.<sup>11</sup> An example of the latter is provided by Tornow (1984, 21), who demonstrates that the most (3223, in fact) frequent lexemes with variance in Russian actually use these variants five times more than the remaining (i.e. lower frequency) lexical base of Russian. The fluid nature of variant stress immediately becomes evident here, since one is dealing with relative frequencies, which themselves are subject to diachronic variation. Their levels, in addition, can never be established with exact scientific accuracy, but always remain variable and subject to a whole variety of factors, e.g. geographical area, social and educational status of informants, style of text/speech. Quoting other scholars (Lehfeldt 2006, 110), Lehfeldt highlights the fact that correct knowledge of one stress position or the other is itself a litmus test of the speaker’s level of linguistic culture. The question is, of course, circular and subjective, for if, at some point, a stress position, previously regarded by linguists as incorrect or indicative of a lower level of linguistic culture, becomes used by the majority of speakers (or, at least, in a survey is clearly the

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<sup>11</sup> Marklund Sharapova’s (2000) orthoepic sources (see below) identify about 3000 cases of lexemes with variant stress.

preferred choice among the informants), surely it now becomes the norm. The question remains, however, at what point the normative situation changes vis-à-vis the word in question. As Lehfeldt points out (*ibid.*, 110 ff), certainly, the norms of standard Russian usage have been relaxed to some extent during the last twenty years or so, allowing for certain categories of stress usage to be mentioned without overt pejorative evaluation. In Es'kova's dictionary (Es'kova 1994), for example, five categories of variation are included on a scale ranging from, at the most tolerant level, a) absolutely equivalent variants (e.g. *úскристый* vs. *искрúстый* 'sparkling'), b) two normative forms of which one is basic and the other allowed or allowed/obsolescent, to the non-normative c) not recommended or not recommended/obsolescent, then d) incorrect, and, finally, e) the rather colourfully named 'грубо неправильно', e.g. *магáзин* vs. correct *магазин* 'shop'. Es'kova (1994) also includes what are generally considered dialect forms (e.g. by Gorbačevič (1978b)) under these latter two categories. However, more objective statistical evidence to 'blacklist', for example, *просторечие* and/or dialect stress variation, is lacking, so that the extent to which certain 'unapproved' forms are actually being used in normal social interaction is simply not clear. Without regular large-scale surveys carried out, the situation regarding variation in Russian stress essentially remains at the discretion of experts in the field stating their own particular points of view, which is, of course, anything but a scientific 'litmus test'.

Lehfeldt's analysis of stress variation stands out for its treatment of the issue of (the lack of) a single, codified norm (Lehfeldt 2006, 114 ff.), which is itself the key issue within variant stress in Russian: without such a norm established, variant stress forms are listed and discussed, but their explanation or codification remains subject to the judgements of the experts writing their 'normative' works. Instead of being viewed as valuable indicators of a possible directional shift of stress occurring in such

words, these substandard variants are often simply condemned as such or ignored altogether. Quoting primarily the work of Marklund Sharapova (2000), Lehfeldt identifies the serious nature of the problem. Marklund Sharapova (*ibid.*) compared about 3000 verbal forms with variation in two standard dictionaries specialising in this area (*Орфоэтический словарь русского языка* (1997) (OS 1997), and *Русское произношение и правописание* (1996) (RPP 1996)), and discovered that in only 48.9% of cases did their classifications coincide; in 46% of cases one dictionary cited a variant not present in the other, and in 5% of cases their treatments differed entirely. The question, therefore, arises of the criteria used by the compilers of each dictionary in reaching their respective decisions regarding variance. The rather pessimistic conclusion reached by Marklund Sharapova (*ibid.*, 93) is that, ‘compilers of stress handbooks do not have a defined norm concept, but see *norm* rather as an opportunity to have one’s subjective pick from predecessors’ recommendations’, which means that even those native Russian speakers who wish to follow the accepted norm cannot always do so, given such variation between the sources of normative stress themselves. Indeed, the lack of any codified norm increases in proportion to the amount of sources which one compares.

Since there is, therefore, no single existing explicit norm for Russian (variant) stress, the remaining question is the extent to which Russian speakers themselves have an implicit norm. In other words, do Russian speakers, when asked about variant stress positions resort to some inner knowledge, their ‘implicit’ norm, and does their ‘reported usage’ correspond to their actual usage, i.e. does it indeed happen that speakers, when asked to make a conscious decision between two stress positions, actually use their own recommendation in normal, spontaneous speech?<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ukiyah (2002b, 282) questions the sense of using the term ‘implicit norm’ in this unusual way, rather than using more traditional terms .

Marklund Sharapova (2000) investigates this problem statistically; using 106 informants she discovered that the speakers' implicit norm differs significantly from the explicit norm (i.e. *Орфоэтический словарь русского языка*, 1997, and *Русское произношение и правописание*, 1996), even when these two sources are in agreement with each other concerning a stress position. For example, according to both these dictionaries the stress unit *не дало* '(it) has not given' has stress on the proclitic, viz *не́ дало*. However, only 12.2% of informants agreed with this classification, and in practice none of them used it, preferring *не да́ло*. Overall, Marklund Sharapova found (ibid., 190) that in as many as 23.3% of surveyed cases 'reported' and actual usage differed among her informants, who often claimed that they would use a non-standard stress when in actual usage it turned out they would use the standard stress. As Ukiah (2002b, 285) points out, one of the most interesting and unexpected conclusions to come out of Marklund Sharapova's investigation is the following: 'It is generally assumed that speakers will claim to use the variants given as norms in dictionaries more often than they use these variants in reality. Sharapova's study finds the opposite.' As she herself puts it: '[I]t is [...] more common that the speakers under-report usage of explicit norms than of non-normative norms, and it is also more common that they over-report usage of non-normative forms than of explicit norms.' In this way, a picture emerges of native speakers whose own confidence in their ability to reproduce the norm appears to be somewhat compromised by unknown factors.

The final part of Lehfeldt's discussion of stress variance has to do with a discussion of Ukiah's work on stress variance in words which are historically assigned to various stress paradigms, but which, according to Ukiah, have developed varying degrees of variance. Lehfeldt's attention is fixed firmly on two aspects of the problem (Lehfeldt 2006, 117): '... сколько информантов нужно опросить, чтобы достичь достоверных результатов, и каким образом надо обработать полученные при

таком опросе данные.<sup>13</sup> Ukiah's survey of 1994 (see, for example, Ukiah 2001, Ukiah 2002a) carried out in Moscow was answered by 21 native speakers whose age ranged from 23 to 60, all of them people with tertiary education. After carrying out a thorough statistical analysis of the problem, Lehfeldt establishes that while Ukiah's establishment of 80% as the borderline between significant and insignificant variation (i.e. if less than 16 and more than 5 informants choose a given stress position, then this represents significant variation), acknowledged by the author himself to be arbitrary, is indeed a fair estimate, he goes on to demonstrate (Lehfeldt 2006, 120-128) that Ukiah's sample size of 21 informants is simply inadequate and, in individual cases, differs from a confidence interval of 95% by anything from 24+% to 41+%, which, he justly claims, is unacceptably high. To achieve a 95% confidence interval with a maximum difference of 5%, Lehfeldt estimates that 1537 informants would be required (ibid., 128). However, although Lehfeldt's analysis of the number of informants required is carried out impeccably in terms of the science of statistics, it is by no means certain or universally agreed that small sample sizes are not valid in linguistic surveys. As Marklund Sharapova (2000, 102) points out, 'In linguistic research sample size is usually defined by practical considerations rather than strict statistical ones. However, this does not necessarily imply a problem.' She quotes (ibid., 103) Milroy (1987, 27), who writes that '[...] relatively small samples (too small to be considered technically representative) appear to be sufficient for useful accounts of language variation in large cities.' It can also be said that, although from a purely statistical point of view, 21 informants is insufficient, common sense would suggest that any significant levels of stress variance among educated speakers (as Ukiah's informants indeed are) are certainly indicative of a more general lack of consistency and/or un-

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<sup>13</sup> '[...] how many informants have to be surveyed in order to achieve reliable results, and in what manner is it necessary to process the data received in such a survey.'

certainty regarding the correct stress among the majority of speakers: these are not, after all, say, more subtle phonetic variations whose nature is concealed from the informants, but clear and conscious choices that speakers are asked to make regarding one of (generally) only two possible stress positions. Thus, while Lehfeldt's criticism may be valid from a purist's point of view, it should also be said that there are simply very few surveys of this kind available at present, and essentially none devoted to specific areas of Russian stress, such as that provided by Ukiah (2002a) for the stress of *f*-pattern nouns. Though certainly not a justification of small sample sizes where avoidable, it should be said that surveys of the type conducted by Ukiah are extremely time-consuming and logistically complex, and while, therefore, surveys of under 100 informants are to be avoided where possible (see Graudina 1980, 89), and should generally strive to be 1000+, those under 100 can be useful if treated with caution. Surveys of Russian stress have had considerable variation in size, with only one (that of the *Русский язык и советское общество* research group of the Russian Language Institute reported in Krysin 1974) reaching a size of any significantly large proportions. The survey sizes to date known to the present author are: 3 (Agrell 1917), 150 (Voroncova 1959) (though not every question receives a total of 150 responses), 225 (reported in Kolesov 1967), 75 (reported in Pirogova 1967), approximately 250 (reported in Gorbačevič 1978b without an exact number of informants given), 5000 of which 4300 were processed in morphology/stress, the largest survey to date (reported in Krysin 1974), 4 (Strom 1988), 143 in Larsson (2006), 21 (reported in Ukiah 2001 and elsewhere), 15 (Lagerberg 2005), 20 (Lagerberg 2008a, 2008b). Since sociolinguistic surveys represent the most accurate and up-to-date method of establishing the current state of variance in the language (dictionaries tend to lag behind by several years, if not decades), the centrality of surveys in any discussion of stress variance is evident.



### 3. STRESS VARIATION IN INFLECTION

Nick Ukiah has produced a series of articles devoted to variation in inflectional stress in Russian. For the most part, they are the result of the survey mentioned above carried out in Moscow in 1994 with 21 educated (i.e. tertiary-level) informants. Essentially, he is interested in discovering whether there are discernible shifts of stress in progress at present, so that words which have traditionally been assigned to one stress paradigm, but currently display a given degree of variance (e.g. in one or more inflected forms), can, on the basis of his survey of native speakers (see Ukiah 2001 for an overview of his survey), be seen to be undergoing a shift to a different stress paradigm. In particular, Ukiah is interested in finding evidence for shifts of stress away from the more complex mobile stress types (e.g. those involving a single shift of stress in the accusative singular) to more simple types (e.g. types which differentiate singular from plural only). Thus, in his analysis of pattern *f* nouns (Ukiah 2002a), Ukiah finds some evidence for a shift away from this more complex type of stress (in the sense that it involves a change of stress within the plural subparadigm) to the more simple pattern *d* (more simple in the sense that it involves only a difference of stress between the singular and plural without any shifts of stress within the singular or plural subparadigms). In his analysis of pattern *f'* nouns (Ukiah 2004) Ukiah attempts to ascertain to what extent the 'anomalous' shift of stress on to the initial syllable in the accusative singular is being retained in modern Russian in such nouns, but is unable to find any particularly clear evidence of such change. Ukiah's method is to identify words with the stress pattern in question, to isolate words within that pattern with stress variance in any form as given in modern lexicographical sources, and to investigate the preferences of native speakers for various inflected forms of these words on the basis of recording their spoken responses, that is to say that this is classic empiri-

cal research. Larsson (2006) uses the same basic approach in her study of adjectival stress. While Ukiah's statistical findings do not generally point unambiguously in one or other direction of change, their identification of the high level of variation used by native speakers is instructive of the level of flux currently existing in the language. In many, particularly lower frequency, lexemes, it would appear that there is a high degree of uncertainty in the general linguistic consciousness of Russian speakers. Criticism of the low number of informants used by Ukiah has already been discussed above.

#### **4. STRESS VARIATION IN DERIVATION**

The present author's main focus has been on stress variation in suffixed words. His general conclusion is that stress in Russian has developed from a morphemic model (Proto-Slavonic, early Old Russian), whereby the stress properties of each word form 'competed' for the stress position, to a 'rhythmic' model, whereby words with particular suffixes (so called 'dominant' suffixes) have developed uniform stress, i.e. regular stress on a given syllable. That this process indeed took place, at least in certain suffixal derivations, can be clearly demonstrated on the basis of lexicographical sources of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries (see, for example, Lagerberg 1999). More interesting, however, from the point of view of stress variance, are words formed with certain suffixes which appear to fall between these two stress models, i.e. they appear to be still moving from a morphemic type of stress towards a uniform suffixal type, so that certain of them inherit the basic stress position of the word from which they are derived, while others have apparently shifted it on to the syllable dictated by the suffix (which is, however, not yet entirely dominant in view of the former). Within such groups of words formed with the same suffix, where variance oc-

curs, it is typical for there to be a conflict precisely between these two competing stress positions.

Lagerberg's methodology resembles that of Ukiah closely, insofar as it makes use of both lexicographical sources and sociolinguistic surveys in an attempt to uncover the level and direction of change in a given group of words formed with the same suffix. To demonstrate by way of an example, Lagerberg (2006) analyses the adjectival suffix *-чатый* which is characterized by variant stress in the modern language. Variant stress in this case is, in fact, of two differing types: firstly, adjectives formed with this suffix display stress on different syllabic positions. Although the characteristic position is on the pre-suffixal syllable (e.g. *желóбчатый* 'grooved', *игóльчатый* 'acerose'), certain adjectives can retain the stress of the base word (e.g. *вы́бойчатый* 'printed (textiles)' from *вы́бойка* 'print') or, alternately, have suffixal stress (e.g. *тройча́тый* 'ternate', *крупча́тый* 'grainy' etc). Secondly, variation of stress exists insofar as a certain number of these adjectives are given with two stress positions in lexicographical sources (and, indeed, in the sociolinguistic surveys carried out by Lagerberg), e.g. *сто́лбчатый* 'columnar', *зде́здчатый* 'stellate' are given in Zal. 1977. There is, therefore, both variation in terms of the general accentual behaviour of this suffix, as well as individual variation in certain adjectives.

Using lexicographical sources of the 18th-20th centuries, i.e. a diachronic approach, Lagerberg reaches the conclusion that variation in stress within adjectives with the suffix *-чатый* as a whole is the result of a continuing tendency in Russian to avoid suffixal stress in favour of pre-suffixal stress, evident in adjectives such as *ру́бчатый* 'corrugated' from an earlier (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century) *рубча́тый*. Synchronic variance in individual adjectives (e.g. *гла́зчатый* 'spotted') appears to be the result of a continuing shift from suffixal to pre-suffixal syllable, which may, however, be complicated by a difference in meaning, as in the case of *зубча́тый* 'cogged' or 'tooth-

shaped', which in certain dictionaries is given with different stress positions in accordance with the different meanings (e.g. D. 1880-1882 gives *зубчатый* for 'tooth-shaped' and *зубчатый* for 'cogged'). This type of variance is investigated by Lagerberg (e.g. in Lagerberg 2008a) on the basis of surveys carried out using native speaker informants, as done by Ukiah (see above). Perhaps the most striking aspect of the results received from this and other surveys conducted by the present author is the high level of variation which occurred in the responses, something found by Ukiah also in his own surveys. Indeed, occurrences of words given by all informants with a given, single stress position were something of a rarity. Evidently variation in stress in spontaneous, spoken Russian is of a significantly higher degree than is alluded to in even the most contemporary dictionaries and handbooks of stress. In addition to this, surveys such as the one reported in Lagerberg (2008a) are able to, albeit not conclusively, determine current directions in terms of the stress movement of affixes. In the survey of *-чатый*, for example, there was a clear move away from suffixal stress to the pre-suffixal syllable. Another key factor which emerged from this survey was the possible correlation between a word's frequency (and, thereby, the likelihood of its assimilation among native speakers) and its deviation from the recommended norm. To what extent does (relatively) high frequency correlate to conservative, 'anomalous' (from the point of view of the current pattern of words containing a given affix) stress, and to what extent does (relatively) low frequency correlate to regular, analogous (i.e. conforming to the current pattern) stress? The issue of frequency and its relationship to stress remains one of the key problems in any future research into the area of stress variation in Russian word stress. Evidence to suggest a certain degree of such correlation between word frequency and stress type/position has been found (see, for example, Lagerberg 2011, pp. 30-50, 125-127).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper has given an overview of the most important areas of variation in word stress in Russian, as well as discussing scholarly research thereof over the past 30-40 years. Although much ground has been made up during this period, stress variation in Russian remains a complex field with a whole range of unsolved problems, a situation which is made worse by the lack of a single, normative corpus on which to base any objective findings. Stress manuals have approached variation in a somewhat cursory manner, treating variant stress positions unsystematically and without any serious attempt to offer any kind of differentiation according to style, dialect etc., let alone its causes. While general studies have been able to delineate the main problems involved and to offer possible solutions (for example, that of the rhythmic law discussed above), for the most part their solutions remain untested in practice and, therefore, theoretical. Not least of the problems involved in dealing with variation in stress is that of the lack of a normative work listing such forms (of which, it is estimated, there may be 5000-6000). Indeed, it is not going too far to say that in many cases of variation the problem of norm is exacerbated by varying lexicographical accounts of the lexeme and stress positions in question. Surveys of native speakers are also a useful tool for establishing both trends and levels of variation, and have been used quite effectively to determine variation in both inflectional and derivational patterns of stress. Another key question is the extent to which a word's frequency is able to influence the stress type or position of any given lexeme. Once again, although some research has indicated a possible connection, much work remains to be done in the future to understand this phenomenon.

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