ADELE MARIE BARKER, EDITOR

CONSUMING RUSSIA

POPULAR CULTURE, SEX, AND SOCIETY SINCE GORBACHEV

CONSUMING RUSSIA

CONSUMING

POPULAR CULTURE, SEX, AND SOCIETY SINCE GORBACHEV

RUSSIA

EDITED BY ADELE MARIE BARKER

DURHAM + LONDON 1999

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

© 1999 Duke University Press

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by Deborah Wong

Typeset in Times Roman by Keystone Typesetting, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

appear on the last printed page of this book.

To the memory of my Father

Jack Porter Barker

(1911–1998)

and

Charles Isenberg

(1944–1997)

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations ix
Acknowledgments xi

Part I INTRODUCTION

1 Rereading Russia
Adele Marie Barker 3

2 The Culture Factory: Theorizing the Popular in the Old and New Russia
Adele Marie Barker 12

Part II POPULAR CULTURE

3 Public Offerings: MMM and the Marketing of Melodrama
Eliot Borenstein 49

4 Gagarin and the Rave Kids: Transforming Power, Identity, and Aesthetics in Post-Soviet Nightlife
Alexei Yurchak 76

5 Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Holy Rus' and Its Alternatives in Russian Rock Music
Julia P. Friedman and Adam Weiner 110

6 Popular Children's Culture in Post-Perestroika Russia: Songs of Innocence and Experience Revisited
Elizabeth Kristofovich Zelensky 138

7 Markets, Mirrors, and Mayhem: Aleksandra Marinina and the Rise of the New Russian *Detektiv*
Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy 161

8 In Search of an Audience: The New Russian Cinema of Reconciliation
Susan Larsen 192

9 There Are no Rules on Planet Russia: Post-Soviet Spectator Sport
Robert Edelman 217
10 Saying "Lenin" and Meaning "Party": Subversion and Laughter in Soviet and Post-Soviet Society
Anna Krylova 243
11 Going to the Dogs: Pet Life in the New Russia
Adele Marie Barker 266

Part III SEXUALITIES

12 Publicly Queer: Representations of Queer Subjects and Subjectivities in the Absence of Identity
Laurie Essig 281
13 Queer Performance: "Male" Ballet
Tim Scholl 303
14 Pornography in Russia
Paul W. Goldschmidt 318

Part IV SOCIETY AND SOCIAL ARTIFACTS

15 Body Graphics: Tattooing the Fall of Communism
Nancy Condee 339
16 Communism as Kitsch: Soviet Symbols in Post-Soviet Society
Theresa Sabonis-Chafee 362
17 From the Toilet to the Museum: Memory and Metamorphosis of Soviet Trash
Svetlana Boym 383
18 Paranoid Graffiti at Execution Wall: Nationalist Interpretations of Russia's Travail
John Bushnell 397
19 "Christianity, Antisemitism, Nationalism": Russian Orthodoxy in a Reborn Orthodox Russia
Judith Deutsch Kornblatt 414
20 Suspending Disbelief: "Cults" and Postmodernism in Post-Soviet Russia
Eliot Borenstein 437

Contributors 463
Index 467

ILLUSTRATIONS

4.1 DJ Alexei Haas in his home with his equipment and records 86
4.2 Flyer for the first Gagarin Party, Moscow, 1991 93
4.3 Poster advertising a rave party in St. Petersburg's Spartak Cinema on August 10, 1996 104
6.1 Masha Pochukaeva and Serezha Kolomets 150
12.1 Laurie Essig cruising the *pleshka* 286
12.2 Theater poster advertising the Russian production of Jean Genet's play *Les Bonnes* (*Sluzhanki*) 295
13.1 The *grand pas* from the Male Ballet's production of *Paquita* 304
13.2 *Pas de trois* from the Male Ballet's production of *Paquita* 305
15.1 Scythian tattoos 340
15.2 Seventeenth-century Russian prisoner with forehead brand 342
15.3 A Soviet shaver and pen converted into a tattoo machine 342
15.4 Men's ruin tattoos 344
15.5 Devotional tattoos 345
15.6 "Four towers and a prisoner" and "Greetings, thieves!" tattoos 345
15.7 Russian Orthodox church tattoo worn only by high-ranking criminals 346
15.8 Virgin Mother and Child tattoo worn only by a "multigenerational" criminal 346
15.9 Epaulets and faceted stars tattoos worn by criminal "lieutenants" 346
15.10 "Fatherless" 347
15.11 "Breaking and entering" 347
15.12 "Razor expert" 347
15.13 Active lesbian and punitive gay tattoos 348

15.14 "King's crown" punitive tattoo for rapable men 349
15.15 "Blow job" punitive tattoo 349
15.16 Advertisement and invitation for the First Russian Tattoo Convention 355
15.17 Head tattoo in progress at the Tattoo Fan Club in Moscow 356
15.18 Three Whales artistic tattoo salon in Moscow 356
15.19 Iksha Educational-Labor Colony 358
15.20 Tattoo ring's "stone," showing a seven-year prison sentence or its economic value 358
16.1 *Trud* advertisement: "We are millions — Unite with us!" 371
16.2 Iava advertisement: "Always beloved, always with you" 372
16.3 Advertisement in Moscow bookstore for *Chronicle of History* 376
16.4 Broken statue of Stalin in the statue park in Moscow 377
17.1 Ilya Kabakov, *The Toilets* 388
17.2 Ilya Kabakov, Installation at *Dokumenta-IX* 388
17.3 Ilya Kabakov, *The Toilets* 389
18.1 Graffiti at execution wall 402
18.2 Graffiti at execution wall 405
19.1 *Nashe Otechestvo* 418
19.2 Cover of antisemitic publication put out by the Union of Orthodox Brotherhoods in St. Petersburg 420
19.3 Pamphlet *Christophagia* 420

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book, like most, is the product of many hands, conversations, conferences, books, and friendships. It is a pleasure to take this opportunity to extend my hand in thanks.

A fellowship at the Udall Center for the Study of Public Policy at the University of Arizona provided me with the kind of environment I needed — my first office with both porch and fireplace — to read and think my way through cultural life in the new Russia. Special thanks are due to Bob Varady for his help and generosity. A grant from the Office of the Vice-President for Research sustained me in my travels to Moscow; and the provost's Authors' Support Fund made it possible to include all the chapters we wanted to in this book. My thanks also to Dean Charles Tatum of the College of Humanities, who helped me through a difficult time and gave me the slack I needed in order to complete this project.

During the past four years I have had the privilege of being affiliated with the Program in Comparative Cultural and Literary Studies at the University of Arizona. It is my association with this program and with my colleagues from other disciplines that first led me to think seriously about many of the questions that are asked in this volume. In particular, I thank my colleague and friend Eileen Meehan, whose love of the media is matched only by her generosity in sharing her knowledge of it. My graduate students in cultural studies have invariably kept me on track. Smart and sophisticated in their thinking, they keep teaching me new ways to think about old problems.

As anyone doing work in the field of post-Soviet studies knows, it is increasingly difficult to keep up with the changes taking place in the new Russia. Scholarship often becomes a communal effort as we increasingly depend on each other for sources of information. Many of the contributors to this volume went way out of their way to provide me with materials and to help me when I needed to be at home more than I needed to be in Russia. Susan Larsen shared

Seans with me; Bob Edelman shipped conference papers to me; Cathy Nepomnyashchy sent Marinina to me; Eliot Borenstein managed to get hold of a particularly elusive issue of *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie;* Alexei Yurchak shipped articles from *Litsa;* and Anna Krylova, who was in Moscow on an IREX grant, found herself the recipient of some phenomenally silly questions from me and cheerfully thumbed through the Moscow phone directory in order to get the answers.

Friends and colleagues took time out from their own busy schedules to involve themselves in this book. I am particularly grateful to Thomas Lahusen, Jeffrey Brooks, Sibelan Forrester, and James von Geldern for their thoughtful comments and helpful suggestions.

Sustenance, ideas, and good cheer came from many quarters. Many of my deepest thanks go to the group at Duke University Press with whom I have had the privilege of working on this project and others. The two anonymous readers for the press gave this manuscript a timely and very close read and offered good, cogent suggestions that helped bring this manuscript together. Laura Barneby, senior editorial assistant at the press, sensed that I was organizationally challenged and thus made doubly sure that all the pieces of this project came together in just the right way. Pam Morrison, as always, went over this manuscript as if it were her own. Mindy Conner's impeccable eye and editorial skill extraordinaire brought this volume together. My greatest debt is to my editor, Valerie Millholland, whose every conversation was punctuated with "this is going to be a great book" and who has the rare gift of knowing when to push an author and when to suggest the ocean instead.

This volume came together in several different cities. In Moscow, Ekaterina Stetsenko and Vladimir Alpatov, Maya Koreneva, Nadezhda Azhgikhina, Natal′ia Dmitrieva, Larissa Morozova, Alexei at Betkhoven, and Valerii Varlakov all helped me with everything from logistics to pets and with much in between, often incredulous at the sorts of things that academic scholarship is up to in the United States these days. At the University of Illinois, Peter Maggs helped access a phenomenal number of databases and went out of his way through numerous acts of kindness. In Tucson, Gary Kabakoff's wondrous technical expertise freed me from the infuriating detail of formatting a manuscript just about to go into production. My thanks also to Dawn Winsor-Hibble, Jodi Kelber, Jane Hill, Mia Schnaible, Brett Soulages, Travis Vandell, and Sabrina Lee. Special thanks are due to my friend and colleague Sabrina Ramet at the University of Washington, with whom many of the ideas for this volume

were originally hatched and who gave so much of her time and energy in the initial stages of the project.

Sometimes the most generous help comes from those who aren't involved in the project at all. Mary and Xavier Leon, Jill McCartney, Jane Arons, and Ivanna Abril helped in innumerable ways. Georgia Maas, Julia Clancy-Smith, Del and Lafon Phillips, and Marian and Dawn Binder provided deep and sustaining friendship. In Paris Marty Reubin, Jacqueline Wales, Serena, and Samara were there for us as we were settling in. And Susan Aiken, my sister, listened like only a sister can, gave my prose its most generous and critical read, and urged me throughout "not to give away Peaches."

Acknowledgments frequently end with thanks to one's family for putting up with all those things families put up with when books are being written. Rather than sit around and wait for the book to be done, my son Noah decided to join in, becoming an intrepid traveler in the process and a great researcher of Moscow's pet sites.

This book is dedicated to the memory of two dear friends. To that of my father, Jack Porter Barker, a kind and gentle man from Tennessee, whose life was inscribed with an abiding love of nature and of the written word, and an inherent sense of justice and commitment to the work he chose to do. My father did not live to see this volume completed. But he lived long enough to see the changes in the new Russia and to both marvel and ruminate upon them as I have. It is dedicated as well to the memory of my friend and colleague Chuck Isenberg, whose love of teaching and whose gifts as a reader were matched only by his generosity of spirit and modesty about his own accomplishments.

Part I INTRODUCTION

■ CHAPTER 1

ADELE MARIE BARKER

REREADING RUSSIA

Sometime in the spring of 1993, I had occasion to spend more than an hour in a cab with a Moscow taxi driver hurling and honking his way through the streets in our mutual quest for an address that had been given to me. After an hour of precipitous stops — as the driver leaned out, hailed passersby, asked for directions, and engaged in protracted discussions over how to find the elusive address — we arrived at our destination, only to have the embarrassed driver confess that he knew all along where the address was and would have gotten us there sooner if only the "bastards" at the top hadn't changed the names of all the streets in Moscow.

This taxi ride suggests the kinds of disorienting surface changes that abound in post-Soviet society. Streets metamorphose, their "old" familiar revolutionary names giving way to even older, less familiar names from the prerevolutionary past. Billboards advertise everything from the laundry delights of

Prokter i Gembl to *dzhinsy* Wrangler or Levi-Strauss. A cathedral erected to celebrate Russia's victory over Napoleon, then subsequently blown up in 1931 to make room for Stalin's Palace of Soviets but turned instead into a swimming pool, now rises again out of the cavernous mass that once housed the pool. Oddly inappropriate buildings — office high-rises, a neighborhood Orthodox church, and a McDonalds — eye each other uncomfortably on property once state owned, now privatized. And living spaces — once communal and scarcely able to contain those who dwelt within them — now squeeze out their former inhabitants as the New Russians remodel and renovate this former domestic territory. The geographic and physical landscapes of urban Russia today — ruptured, defamiliarized, jolting to the eye and to other senses as well — speak of other kinds of displacements and permutations at work, this time in the cultural landscape of the new Russia. These dislocations may best be summed up by Anna Krylova in her chapter in this volume on Soviet and post-Soviet anecdotes ("Saying 'Lenin' and Meaning 'Party': Subversion and Laughter in Soviet and Post-Soviet Society"): Krylova recounts an evening in 1994 spent at a performance of Erofeev's play *Moskva-Petushki,* a play she had first seen in 1988. Returning to Russia after six years, she sat in the audience and noticed that something had changed. "The audience was laughing, but it was not laughing the way I remembered it, expected it, and wanted it to laugh. But," she adds, "I [myself] did not know when to laugh."

I begin my introduction to this volume on popular culture, sex, and society since Gorbachev with these two moments from post-Soviet life because they represent the enormous changes that have taken place in Russian society and culture over the past ten years and the kinds of questions we need to ask about these changes. Like the construction sites themselves, which seem to throw together past and present, disparate styles, or no style at all, so too does the new cultural landscape of Russia present itself as an indecipherable and sometimes impenetrable maze of everything from high fashion to rave clubs, from sushi parlors to shi-shi dog-grooming studios, at once imitative and original, and all reflective of the new popular culture that is emerging in this newly emerging nation.

The transformative changes that have taken hold of Russian society since the mid-1980s, unprecedented as anything that has occurred in that country since the Bolshevik Revolution, have brought with them a restructuring not only of the political and economic landscape but of cultural life as well. One of the most obvious changes in the life of the nation has been the emergence of a new

popular culture: new kinds of TV programming, pulp fiction, cruising strips, and tattoo parlors. Like Russia itself, this new popular culture finds itself torn between its own heritage and that of the West, between its revulsion with the past and its nostalgic desire to re-create the markers of it, between the lure of the lowbrow and the pressures to return to the elitist prerevolutionary past.

The contributors to this volume have attempted to navigate through the maze of popular culture in the new Russia. Although there are numerous areas in which the popular has made its mark, not all could be included in this volume. Much remains to be done, for example, on the relationship between structures of ownership and control of culture in post-Soviet Russia, on fashion, reading habits, and popular culture in the rural areas — to name just a few — that for reasons of space could not be included. The chapters that do appear here raise some of the most salient questions regarding popular culture in contemporary Russia: How, for example, are Russians negotiating cultural stereotypes from their past in the production of this new culture? How have notions of the public and the private realm changed? What is the relationship between the producers and consumers of this culture and between elitist and popular culture in post-Soviet society? And finally, to what extent are Western paradigms applicable to both the production and the study of this culture? Many of the issues raised here may serve as a guide to research in other areas of the popular culture boom in Russia today. For example, Eliot Borenstein's insights on the new religious cults ("Suspending Disbelief") might serve as a framework within which to examine alternative realities and the UFO craze in Russia today; Nancy Condee's analysis of tattooing the postcommunist body ("Body Graphics"), Laurie Essig's chapter ("Publicly Queer"), and my own chapter ("Going to the Dogs") might provide an entrée for those wishing to study configurations of public and private in postcommunist Russia.

This volume is divided into sections dealing with popular culture, sexualities, society, and social artifacts. Just as studies of popular culture examine how culture, gender, economics, and national identity come together in the formation of culture, a similar kind of weaving is at work between the various chapters in this volume. Although Alexei Yurchak's "Gagarin and the Rave Kids" and Theresa Sabonis-Chafee's "Communism as Kitsch" appear in different sections, both are engaged with patterns of consumption in the transition from the Soviet to the post-Soviet state, specifically with what happens when certain signs and symbols lose their ideological value in the new order. Sim-

ilarly, Julia Friedman and Adam Weiner's "Between a Rock and a Hard Place," which explores the nationalistic strain among some Russian rockers today, and Essig's "Publicly Queer" both look at issues pertinent to the construction of identity. Essig argues that the notion of identity as it is understood in the West is simply not applicable to queer life in Russia today, which she sees as being more accurately defined as a set of subjectivities. Similarly, Friedman and Weiner explore the desire among certain Russian rockers not only to move explicitly away from any identification with the West but to find a way to negotiate the Russian past, which, in the authors' words, is simultaneously rock's "saving grace and deadliest temptation." Similarly, the complex and not easily resolvable issue of the past — where to put it, how to think about it — is fundamental to several chapters, notably Friedman and Weiner's chapter, Larsen's "In Search of an Audience," Boym's "From the Toilet to the Museum," Bushnell's "Paranoid Graffiti at Execution Wall," Judith Kornblatt's "Christianity, Antisemitism, Nationalism," and Eliot Borenstein's "Suspending Disbelief."

This volume is both descriptive and theoretical. It is an attempt both to chart some of the manifestations of a newly emerging popular culture and to understand how this new culture is informed by models from both past and present, from both within and without. In Chapter 2, "The Culture Factory," I look at what happens to Western theories of popular culture transplanted onto Russian soil. Western culture critics continue to debate the precise nature of the relationship between elite culture and popular culture, a question complicated by the fact that popular culture is often produced by an elite class for the benefit of the masses. And thus this phenomenon potentially raises the question of whether the production of that culture becomes a form of social control. I trace the evolving history of the relationship between elite and popular within Soviet society and examine one of the fundamental premises to the study of popular culture in the West — the concept of everyday life — and how that concept is nuanced differently for those who lived under Soviet rule and those in the West who study Soviet society. Specifically, I suggest that the ambiguous nature of the public-private dichotomy in Soviet history is still a felt presence in post-Soviet life, pointing to the often complex interaction between older social and cultural patterns and the popular culture of today. Indeed, any study of TV viewing habits in the new Russia would have to take account of this public and private dyad. Television viewing in early post-Soviet society is exposing domestic spaces — Russian and foreign — to the public sphere. The average

post-Soviet viewer is being treated vicariously to people's private lives, an area Soviet citizens protected zealously precisely because the state implicitly condoned intrusion into those lives through its infamous system of *donosy* (denunciations).

The chapters in part 2 are all concerned in some way with what Dick Hebdige defines as "a set of generally available artifacts,"[1] under which he includes films, music, TV programs, pulp fiction, jokes, and so on. Within the Russian context those artifacts would be those pastimes and forms of entertainment generally available to the average Russian today in the urban areas.

Several of the chapters in this section take up the production and consumption of culture since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although not market based, the Soviet Union was nevertheless a consumer society. What was produced was ideology; what was consumed was some portion thereof, depending on the degree to which the average Soviet identified with the ideology and the degree to which the ideology happened to match the needs of the people at various times. Ideology had its own *reklamy* (advertisements) in the form of billboards heralding larger-than-life figures engaged in the process of moving the country into the "radiant future" (*svetloe budushchee*). But there are differences, and very important ones, between Soviet and post-Soviet society in matters of consumption.[2] Most important is the fact that the Soviet Union was not a monied economy. Although people had money — some a great deal more than others — privilege, not money, was the determinant of power. And that privilege was predicated on whom one knew and, in the case of Russia's writers, on the traditionally semisanctified role of the Russian writer. In "Markets, Mirrors, and Mayhem," Catharine Nepomnyashchy discusses what happens to the writer's, and more specifically the female writer's, authority as the traditional role of the Russian writer is supplanted by the market. These differences between Soviet and post-Soviet society are crucial in understanding the situation that the hapless Russian television viewer faced in the summer of 1994, as narrated by Eliot Borenstein in "Public Offerings: MMM and the Marketing of Melodrama." Borenstein recounts the infamous MMM scandal that mesmerized all of Russia in the summer of 1994. MMM was just one of many pyramid schemes that came into being in Eastern Europe and Russia between 1990 and 1994 (the largest and perhaps most outrageous by all accounts being the infamous Caritas scheme in Romania),[3] set up ostensibly to help the beleaguered citizens of these countries survive the transition from a socialist to a market economy by multiplying depositors' funds within a matter

of months. MMM was not just another pyramid scheme. One of its distinctive features was the way characters in soap operas were used to entice the Russian viewer to invest, promising her new furniture, trips, and even romance.[4] Borenstein explores what happened when Russian viewers, formerly such astute readers of party ideology, allowed themselves to become not only the TV viewers but the partners and even the coauthors of a narrative that most failed to read correctly.

Issues of how products and the ideologies they implicitly advertise are marketed in the new Russia are also taken up by Elizabeth Zelensky in "Popular Children's Culture in Post-Perestroika Russia." Zelensky focuses her attention on how Russia's children are negotiating their way through the maze of new consumer products and integrating models from their own past with the Americanized life around them. The effect of the transformative economic and social changes on Russia's children is far from clear. Recent studies have shown that children are among the biggest consumers of TV and billboard ads in Russia. Slogans from the ads have crept into the language of the youth subculture, a fact the older generation finds extremely worrisome and which has increased nationalistic sentiment among them as they respond to the increasing Americanization of Russia and Russian values. My chapter "Going to the Dogs" looks at the new pet culture not only as an example of what has happened to traditional notions of public and private in the new Russia but at what happens when economics transforms popular culture from a potential site of resistance back into the domain of elitist culture.

One of the underlying tensions in Russian popular culture today, no less than in other forms of post-Soviet life, is the still unresolved relationship with the Soviet and prerevolutionary past. Alexei Yurchak's "Gagarin and the Rave Kids" is an anthropologist's view of how Russia's youth, particularly its rock groups and the organizers of its nightlife, have been negotiating the disappearance of what he calls "the cultural logic of late socialism." Yurchak sees cultural production in postcommunist Russia as being framed by a "symbolic creativity" within which many of the traditional Soviet symbols, such as that of the cosmonaut Yury Gagarin, have been lifted out of the context of Soviet ideology and made to seem relevant to a youth culture for whom the figure of Gagarin is ideologically meaningless.

Anna Krylova's chapter, "Saying 'Lenin' and Meaning 'Party'," like Yurchak's, examines how forms of resistance come about and what happens when a cultural artifact such as a joke ceases to circulate as oppositional discourse and enters the "free marketplace of ideas." Both Krylova and Yurchak identify

moments in Soviet life during which Soviet citizens operated simultaneously within official and nonofficial cultures, thus suggesting that in Russia, as in the West, the origins of countercultures often lie within authoritative and dominant discourses. Nancy Condee's "Body Graphics: Tattooing the Fall of Communism" similarly looks at what happens when the symbolic import of nonofficial culture falls away. Condee traces the fate of the symbolic designs of skin decoration in light of the disappearance from post-Soviet life of the social and political context within which they were once produced. She argues that tattooing in Russia has changed to reflect people's reappropriation of their bodies from state control. Theresa Sabonis-Chafee looks at how the past has carved out a place for itself in the nostalgia bank of postcommunist culture through the symbols of communist kitsch, most of which are happily consumed by the postcommunist consumer. John Bushnell provides another take on this tension between past and present in "Paranoid Graffiti at Execution Wall," which details how the old Russian custom of creating martyrs for the cause is reflected in the transition to the new order. Similarly, Robert Edelman, in "There Are No Rules on Planet Russia," suggests that post-Soviet sport is still as much a contested terrain as it was under communism, although it is no longer the party vying for control of that terrain with the people, but rather a struggle between various members of the newly emerging elites. In a slightly different take on this relationship between the post-Soviet present and the Soviet past, Svetlana Boym, in "From the Toilet to the Museum," explores the dialectic between past and present in postcommunist Russia by asking what happens when an artist such as Ilya Kabakov begins to tamper with nostalgia and collective forgetting and alters the popular narrative of nostalgia.

Several of the chapters examine intersections between gender and popular culture — from ownership of one's body to power and pornography. In "Markets, Mirrors, and Mayhem," Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy examines detective writer Aleksandra Marinina, whose novels are topping the best-seller list in Russia. Marinina's female protagonist, Anastasiia Kamenskaia, overturns many of Russia's most hallowed female stereotypes. Kamenskaia, a police lieutenant colonel who works as an analyst at central police headquarters in Moscow, eschews the domestic, rewriting the narrative that Russian tradition appropriated to women. She earns respect less through maternal qualities (of which she seems utterly devoid) than through her sharp analytical mind, which enables her to solve from behind her desk the bizarre and often dastardly crimes in the new Russia.

Other chapters move more explicitly from issues of gender to those of sex-

uality. Paul Goldschmidt's "Pornography in Russia" provides a historical overview of pornography in Russia and then focuses on some recent legal battles over what constitutes pornography. Goldschmidt focuses on the role of the erotic in popular culture today, in Russia and elsewhere. It is the play on the potentially transgressive nature of the erotic that informs much of popular culture, from Madonna to rock music, and it is that transgressivity that is at issue in the pornography debate in post-Soviet Russia. In "Queer Performance" Tim Scholl takes on the St. Petersburg Muzhskoi balet (Male Ballet), a group that was never intended to be a gay ballet, as an example of this transgressivity. The Male Ballet's "self-presentation" exposes the tensions between high and low art, Western and Russian, male and female, gay and straight, and sacred and profane found in Russian society in the early post-Soviet era.

As the chapters in this volume suggest, popular culture is ultimately inseparable from the process of social change and the re-formations of identity that accompany it. As Russian history reveals all too clearly, the impetus toward social change as well as the forces that have retarded it are often characterized by a powerful religious element. This trend is as true today as it was in prerevolutionary or communist Russia. Susan Larsen's "In Search of an Audience: The New Russian Cinema of Reconciliation" picks up on the theme of the "Russian idea" introduced by Friedman and Weiner and discusses its fate and that of Orthodoxy in general in the new Russian cinema. In "Christianity. Antisemitism. Nationalism," Judith Deutsch Kornblatt argues that despite the factionalism both inside and outside the church, many Russians still believe in an "all-pervasive single Russian idea," although one no longer grounded in adequate spiritual training. Eliot Borenstein's thought-provoking essay on the new religious cult of Maria Devi, "Suspending Disbelief," correctly suggests that the emergence of cults in the unstable days of the new order, whether or not they are ascribed to pernicious foreign influence, is suggestive of a nostalgia for a mystical spiritual haven, a place of retreat from the instabilities of the present, which many believe are leading Russia once again toward an apocalypse.

Why popular culture? Because as Russians search for answers to the uncertainties of the present and try to forge a new discourse and a new culture for themselves, they must inevitably confront the fact that they no longer have a dominant discourse, if there ever was one to begin with. No longer is there a party rhetoric, or even a discourse of an elitist intelligentsia, seeking to preserve "high" culture, however one chooses to define it. That Russia's popular culture during the Soviet era was often conflated with both elitist and mass

cultures may account for the enthusiasm with which popular culture from the West, which makes no claim to being other than what it is, is greeted in Russia today. In examining this evolving cultural palate, each chapter implicitly struggles with the question of whether Russia can resuscitate its cultural life, not in elitist terms but in the new forms of "people's" culture it is experimenting with and experiencing today.

Note on Transliteration

In general, we have adhered to the Library of Congress transliteration system.

Notes

1 Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 47.

2 It is important to note that the prevalence of this culture does not automatically guarantee that Russians can participate in it. Most Russians, for example, have TV sets, but most cannot begin to afford the products directed at the New Russians that are advertised on it. Pampers, for example, is a luxury item — seen in ads by everyone but consumed by only a few. Procter and Gamble has made interesting use of this Soviet determinant of status in ads that say, "Prokter i gambel zhaesh′?" (Procter and Gamble, do you know it?). Here the marketers are deliberately alluding to a Soviet marker of status in which one person might say to another, "Do you know Ivan?" (Ivana zhaesh′?). For more on the use of Soviet linguistic and social forms in the new advertising, see, Aleksei Levinson, "Zametki po sotsiologii i antropologii reklamy," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie,* no. 22 (1996), pp. 101–28.

3 For an account of the Caritas pyramid scheme in Romania, see Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), ch. 7, "Faith, Hope, and Caritas in the Land of the Pyramids, Romania 1990–1994." For most of us in the West, it was the dissident movement in the socialist countries that signaled the fiction of the facade. But on an everyday level for those who lived there, the existence of the second economy in which most dabbled in order to make ends meet and the various layers of Soviet official and unofficial discourse were all marks of a culture in which there were degrees of resistance at virtually every turn.

4 One of the reasons Russians were so successfully duped by the pyramid scheme was the average Russian viewer's identification with the characters on the TV program. The actor Vladimir Permiakov, who played the character of Lenia Golubkov, stated in an interview that Mosfil′m was looking for someone with peasantlike features (*muzhitskaia vneshnost′*) to play the role of Lenia, and he fit the bill. See *Litsa,* no. 3 (March 1998), pp. 33–36.

■ CHAPTER 2

ADELE MARIE BARKER

THE CULTURE FACTORY: THEORIZING THE POPULAR IN THE OLD AND NEW RUSSIA

About eight kilometers north of the center of Moscow lies a neighborhood I have come to know rather well over the past twenty years. I have had occasion to get lost there, to shop there, to visit friends there, and to stay there. Like most neighborhoods in Moscow this one is most easily reached from the metro, whose ornate décor once contrasted sharply with the drabness of the life one encountered on emerging from its depths onto the street. Things have changed now. There is still a certain contrast, but it is no longer contrast between monumentalism and the gray exterior. Instead it might best be summed up as that between the old Soviet style underground and the chaos of styles above-ground, which consequently leaves one with the impression of no style at all. Not long ago the only voice that could be heard over the PA system on the escalator in this metro station was an official one exhorting the public to stay to the right on the escalator. Since the early 1990s, less official voices advertise

package tours to Tunisia, Morocco, or the Canary Islands, places that in the past the average Soviet could only dream about. Ironically, such destinations remain equally unattainable now, as the salaries of the average Russian have failed to keep up with the goods proffered on the market.

On this particular day I emerge with the throng onto the street and head toward one of the many hastily constructed stalls selling everything from the magazine *Andrei* (the Russian version of *Playboy*) to other "pet" magazines (animals, this time), to brochures on the history of the Orthodox Church in Russia. I share the space near one particular book and magazine stall with a couple of young guys with spiked hair who are thumbing through rock magazines and *Ptiuch,* the trendy new magazine for Russia's youth, while surreptitiously surveying the offerings in *Andrei,* which the vendor recommends to me as "better" than the American *Playboy.* People of varying ages, shopping on their way home from work, elbow their way through the crush of stalls. Several of those who pass by appear to have been touched little if at all by the changes in the new Russia. Further on — the boundaries between stalls becoming indistinguishable at a certain point — sellers proffer the latest Vladimir Bezymianny thriller or the more introspective detective fiction of Nikolai Leonov, both of which soon give way to the salacious offerings of Sidney Sheldon, Harold Robbins, and the darling of the romance set, Barbara Cartland. Extracting myself from the sea of kiosks, I notice the inevitable line — one of the many holdovers from Soviet times. But this one is not for food or hard-to-get items, but for currency exchange at the local bank.

This bustling new consumer culture — free of the constraints of censorship and party ideology, although not altogether devoid of other kinds of ideology — still bears the economic marks of a past from which it will take decades to make the final break. One feels the persistent hold of that past in the bizarre and often random nature of the offerings in the stalls that have sprung up outside most metro stations in Moscow. In March 1997 the food kiosk I visited to get some salmon for my friend Katya prominently displayed imported baby food and French liqueurs alongside one another on the front shelves.[1] This phenomenon — so sharp a break from the past in terms of what was being offered, so like it in the seemingly random nature of its offerings — spoke volumes about the complexity of the transition from socialist to market economy that had already begun to emerge in the last years of socialism.

I pass through an eighteenth-century arch into a world little changed over the twenty years I have been visiting Moscow. Before me stands a small

eighteenth-century Orthodox church whose interior and the life it represents bespeak a world untainted by what lies outside. Not far from this place is a park that once housed a hospital for those injured in World War I. The dead were buried in a cemetery that lies along its now demolished walls. But even here small signs of the new order are omnipresent. On my daily strolls I pass a Chinese teahouse — an architectural jewel with virtually no customers since it has priced itself out of the market in this particular neighborhood. Instead the locals throng to the formerly state-owned *prodovol'stvennyi magazin* (food store) down the street, now privatized and run by an Azerbaijani family; it stocks and sells local and imported products priced more in accordance with most people's pocketbooks.

My walk has taken me through the sights, sounds, and textures of some of the many manifestations of what can be termed popular culture in Russia today: the *makulatura* (pulp fiction) on the bookstands, the bustling consumer culture (for those who can afford it), the sites of resistance to that same culture, the cultivation of travel and leisure time, what is viewed and listened to — in short, life as it is lived by the average post-Soviet *Homo consumptor* in Moscow today. And it is precisely this new consumer culture — much of which has been inspired by the West, and much of which is anything but elitist — that has become the focus of lively debate and study in both Russia and the West. While the New Russians are buying up Cartier watches as fast as they come into the Almaz Jewelry Store or putting down fifty-five thousand dollars in cash at a GM dealership for a Chevy Caprice, many of the older generation are digging in their heels and refusing to go along. What perturbs them is not just the spending habits of the New Russians, but the lack of *kul'tura* that seems to accompany these habits.[2] It is not surprising that some of the most stringent objections to this new "culture" come from the older generation of Russians, many of whom are from the intelligentsia and, regardless of class allegiance, perceive themselves to have been unceremoniously dumped into the miasma of post-Soviet culture. Interestingly, class affiliation under the Soviet regime has become much less a marker of how former Soviet citizens are responding to post-Soviet culture than is the fact that Soviet citizens, irrespective of class, were educated to regard culture in general and literature in particular as more than mere entertainment. Thus, for them, some of the most disturbing moments in post-Soviet life center on their discomfort with this new culture, which ostensibly seems to have little to redeem it, either socially or ideologically. As a colleague of mine from the Gorky Institute of World Literature, lamenting what she sees as the

demise of culture in the new Russia, recently put it: "The point is not whether Russians are reading Tolstoy or Sidney Sheldon but whether they will even be able to read Tolstoy or appreciate real art after being exposed to what is available to them today." Most disturbing to the aesthetic sensibilities of some has been the recent establishment of the Association for Mass Literature (Assotsiatsiia massovoi literatury), which now awards prizes for the best works in detective fiction, sci-fi, and thrillers as well as providing data banks on the economics, sociology, and aesthetics of the new fiction.[3] Although in one sense no one will argue that what we are seeing in the new Russia is as decisive a break from the past as anything the country has witnessed since the Bolshevik Revolution, my colleague's argument is, in fact, an old one that reflects a debate among Russian Marxists even before the revolution: could the proletariat best be served by absorbing the culture of the so-called civilized world or by fashioning a separate proletariat culture of its own in forging the revolution?[4] Ironically, as the members of a once-cohesive intelligentsia continue to argue vehemently for the cultural richness of Russia's past in the face-off with post-Soviet culture, the very reforms set in motion through glasnost under Gorbachev were accomplished precisely with the intelligentsia in mind. Hoping to secure their support in the political and economic arenas, Gorbachev introduced the free marketplace of ideas whose cultural products the former intelligentsia now see as the scourge of the tradition they cherished and often sacrificed their lives to preserve.[5]

In the pages that follow, I will look at how some of the questions we are asking about popular culture in the West play themselves out on Russian soil today. The current vogue in the West for studying everything from shopping malls to sporting events has also begun to attract the attention of Russian critics searching for ways to interpret the new popular culture craze in their own country.[6] By understanding this phenomenon, Russian sociologists, economists, culture critics, and consumers alike hope to negotiate a middle-of-the-road position between the massive consumption of the popular and the desire not to be ultimately consumed by it.

The study of popular culture in the West is part of the larger field of cultural studies that has made its way into the academy during the past ten years, helping academics rethink the boundaries of knowledge and traditional notions of disciplinarity.[7] In its scrutiny of long-standing notions in traditional disciplines about what constitutes high versus low culture, dominant versus marginalized, and the appropriate venues of academic study, to name but a few, cul-

tural studies has concerned itself in almost every sense with what Michael Holquist calls "the negotiation of borders."[8] It is precisely the study of popular culture that has brought many of these issues to the foreground. Moreover, traditional approaches to the concept of text saw the writing of literature, and its implied status as high art, as the principal form within which to speak about textuality. Within the sphere of popular culture, *text* has taken on a very different meaning. I have in mind here the work of people such as David Morley, Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, John Fiske, Megan Morris, Tony Bennett, and others who posit that symbolic configurations of all sorts — what we wear, what we buy, the kind of music we make and listen to, the sports we play, and even where we walk — constitute forms of textuality in our lives that are every bit as important to "read" as what is inscribed in the written text.

A colleague of mine remarked not long ago that she is glad popular culture is now part of the academic curriculum because it legitimizes what most of us do on the sly anyway when we are not engaged in teaching high art — namely, consuming a certain amount of junk TV, reading trash novels, or even secretly stealing a peek at *People* or the *Enquirer* in the grocery store checkout line. But whether we consume these products or not, they have become compelling objects of interest in their own right as they have helped culture critics piece together the relationship between the production and the consumption of culture — between high and low art, between gender and cultural production, and between marketing and ideology, to name but a few. For many critics, the lure of popular culture is not just that it is great fun but that finally it becomes a way of defining what it means to be a consumer in the cultural production line of late capitalism. Certain critics such as Adorno and Horkheimer and other members of the Frankfurt school take a pessimistic view of the role of the consumer in this dyad, viewing popular culture as just another means by which capitalism secures its tenacious hold on society. In their view, those of us who consume this culture, passively and unthinkingly, become "cultural dupes."[9] Other critics, however, such as John Fiske and members of the cultural populist school, predicate the study of the popular on the assumption that it is not just a degraded form of high culture imposed on us from above for purposes of control and profit. In Fiske's view, we are, in fact, creative consumers of the culture that is produced for us, acting on it rather than letting it act on us.[10] For Fiske, then, the study of popular culture demands that we look not only at who is producing the cultural products but at ourselves as consumers and at the ways

we use these products. Thus, acknowledging the economic or ideological power of such culture conglomerates as Disney or Reebok or McDonalds is not the same as acknowledging the influence they have on us.

Two interesting examples from Soviet and post-Soviet popular culture illustrate how Fiske's thesis might work within a Russian context. High Stalinism, as I will discuss later, was a complex merging of elitist and lowbrow cultures designed to create a culture for the masses, who became both its producers and its consumers. The culture that evolved in the 1930s was meant to be consumed in a very specific way, as illustrated by the number of readers' clubs (*chitatel'nye kluby*) that were created under Stalin with the express purpose of ensuring that the literature being produced in the people's name would be read properly.[11] Problems arose when Soviet "consumers" failed to consume the culture as they should. But according to whom? Although it was relatively easy for censors and for the literary establishment as a whole to police a work in an effort to ascertain whether it was written, composed, or painted in the spirit of the times, how was that same establishment to keep tabs on whether readers were reading as they ought to or responding with the appropriate level of fervor to the mass parades celebrating various socialist holidays? People went to the movies, participated in the requisite parades, and read official literature that often stirred them deeply, as Thomas Lahusen's recent study of Vasilii Azhaev's novel *Far from Moscow* (*Daleko iz Moskvy*) shows.[12] The real policing of public response to literature and other areas of Soviet life came not from above but from Soviet citizens themselves, many of whom welcomed the values of the system, internalized them, and proceeded to apply them by engaging in *samokritika,* or "self-criticism." Thus it was that in memoirs and biographies of the time the failure to consume properly made itself felt not in any expressed desire to subvert the system but rather in feelings of unworthiness among writers and readers alike, who frequently felt that they didn't measure up to the goals set forth in the literature they read. A case in point is the Soviet novelist and poet Vera Inber, whose notebooks written in the 1930s lament her feeling that she is an outsider — "a stepdaughter" — to Soviet literature because of her petit bourgeois origins, which have kept her from ever having a "proper" biography. Her writings communicate her sense of failure because her background did not conform to the sort of heroic life the times demanded. Alas, she laments, "I was not lucky with my biography."[13] Similarly, in her diary written between the years 1932 and 1936, Galina Vladimirovna Shtange talks about her

community work for the party in Moscow: "I was terrified: would I be able to do as much as I should? Noblesse oblige! Tomorrow I'll get down to work, I'll try to measure up to those expectations that Pogrebinsky talked about."[14]

The phenomenon of billboard advertising that increasingly saturates the urban landscape in Russia's larger cities is another area in which Fiske's theories of the popular can be tested. Interestingly, a billboard advertising Wrangler jeans, for instance, proffers something many Russians were consuming long before perestroika through gifts from Western friends, the black market, or *blat.* Thus the assumptions on which much American advertising is predicated — that consumers will purchase a product as a result of seeing an ad — are not necessarily applicable to the Russian experience given the history of how consumption was determined in the Soviet Union. There are two important issues here. First of all, advertising functioned very differently in the Soviet Union than in the West and was used as a way to reenforce party policy. Because advertising was intrinsically political, it was strictly forbidden to advertise Western products. Nevertheless, Soviet citizens procured Western products aplenty without the benefit of advertising — and continue to do so now perhaps in spite of it — a fact that tends to support Fiske's thesis that consumers "consume" very differently than producers intend.[15] Fiske sees a constant tension in the culture industry between the production of popular culture and the way the consumer receives it, a tension created by the fact that we are refashioners of that culture even as we seem to be its passive recipients.[16]

As we begin to look at the explosion of popular culture in post-Soviet Russia, we will need to shift our gaze more than geographically. The fact that many of the groundbreaking works on contemporary popular culture have been produced by British and American scholars has shaped our theoretical reflections, and also suggests that we need to decontextualize these reflections as we carry them into Russia. Moreover, as we export everything from Disney to Barbie and Reeboks to the new Russia, we are exporting not only products but also the markers of an entire complex ideology. Indeed, the very theory we use — most of it Western in origin — to interpret the new culture in Russia may, if we are not careful, become yet another colonizing strategy on the part of the West over the postcommunist world. One of the questions we might ask is whether we are assuming that we can study the fate of American popular culture and cultural products in Russia in the same way that we study them in the United States. The comments that follow suggest why that question is important.

I. Popular Culture and the Party

When we speak of popular culture within a Western context, what we generally have in mind are the sorts of activities and pastimes that Dick Hebdige refers to when he defines popular culture as "the set of generally available artifacts" such as TV, films, music, jokes, and various subcultures.[17] While Western culture critics often disagree over how this culture is consumed or over the relationship between producers and consumers, there is general agreement as to what lies within the domain of the popular. The question of what exactly popular culture *is* becomes much more problematic when transplanted onto Russian soil. For one thing, as several of the essays in this volume make explicit, popular culture in Russia today is heavily nostalgic, although in a very different way than nostalgia is usually understood in the West. Although much cultural production — from rave parties to anecdotes and art installations — in the new Russia deals with the past, it does so not merely to remember and to mourn but to rewrite the nostalgic text, often by domesticating, familiarizing, and even trivializing outworn symbols of oppression or by returning to what is familiar from a safe enough distance to preclude any real return to what is both mourned and despised. It is precisely because of this nostalgic tendency that much of the rock music scene simply cannot be studied the same way it is studied in the West. This retrospective stance of much of post-Soviet popular culture also suggests the complex intersection of past and present that informs post-Soviet life today. One of the questions we must ask as we begin to study post-Soviet popular culture is to what degree the experience of the past seventy-five years is a felt presence in the culture industry in contemporary Russia. On the one hand, many of the consumers and even producers of this new culture have only the memory of the latter days of socialism, and even fewer have direct experience with the ravages of Stalinism. On the other hand, collective memory, which derives much of its power from a realm outside individual experience, has also been a powerful stimulus in the production of culture in post-Soviet Russia, thus suggesting that the vestiges of lived experience among the older generation still play into the imaginations of the young.

Our understanding of post-Soviet popular culture is further complicated by the fact that the paradigms we use to describe popular culture in the West don't hold up very well when applied to the Soviet experience. I have in mind the distinction between high versus low, or elite versus popular, culture, and where — if at all — the two intersect. The issue is a complex one because the boundaries

between the two apparent opposites are often elusive. Moreover, the study of popular culture inevitably leads into issues of class, which, whether we take an elitist stance or not, is consumer based. How culture is produced is often, although not always, determined by the class of people for whom it is intended. Decisions about TV programming in the United States, what airs when, and who the sponsors will be are intricately bound up with the construction of economic and social privilege in U.S. society. Further, the assumption that the upper classes, although they may be heavily involved in both the production and consumption of popular culture, are by and large also the perpetuators and conservators of elitist culture suggests that the boundaries between the two realms may not always be clearly delineated.[18]

The history of Russian popular culture in this century suggests if nothing else that the relationship between elite and popular has been vastly more complicated than Western models might lead us to believe, resulting in the virtual collapse of this distinction, at least in theory, from the 1930s on.[19] To begin with, the identities and positions of the elite were really a function of whether we were looking at Soviet society from within or without. Sovietologists in the West tended to place the elitist culture on the fringes of official Soviet culture, and defined the elite as those who belonged to the dissident community and carved out their own path to create a cultural life that became an alternate source of power. Further, if official literature was associated with a locus of power — political, cultural, and even economic — it was precisely the location of certain kinds of cultural products on the margins of acceptability, or, sometimes, in a place of total unacceptability, that defined their centrality for many Sovietologists and Western intellectuals. Certainly the degree of influence writers such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sinyavsky, Boris Pasternak, or Anna Akhmatova wielded over our literary imaginations and our social consciousness was directly proportional to the distance those same writers occupied from the center of Soviet power, whether or not they were formally members of the dissident community.[20] But it is also important to remember that the disaffected intelligentsia constituted an extremely powerful intellectual subculture that challenged the official culture through the power of moral persuasion it exercised on Western intellectuals and, through nonofficial channels, on Soviet society itself. As the critic Lev Anninskii has noted, the literature that was part of that periphery and was passed hand to hand through samizdat from the 1960s on created the moral conscience of an entire generation of thinkers and writers long before those works were permitted publication

in the Soviet Union.[21] This power emanating from the margins of Soviet society, while not overtly political, had important political ramifications and suggested the uneasy relationship—sometimes accommodating, sometimes clearly hostile—that characterized the dealings between the center of political power and those who occupied a place on its margins during the 1960s and 1970s.

The tendency in the West to champion those writers who ran afoul of the Soviet system was linked to a much broader tendency to view the Soviet Union as a monolithic totalitarian entity in which the relationship between rulers and ruled was one of domination and subordination—rulership and resistance.[22] The totalitarian model led many westerners to see a country of indoctrinated Communists, on the one hand, and dissidents, on the other. That some Sovietologists in the West retained the concept of Soviet society as two monologic nonintersecting narratives may, in fact, have accounted for the disbelief expressed by many in the West at the reforms perestroika set in motion. The tendency most recently in Soviet and post-Soviet studies has been to view Soviet society as made up of "sites of contestation,"[23] in Stuart Hall's words, in which nonofficial life and daily life were engaged in various struggles with the dominant party line.

Although our proclivity to view everyday forms of resistance as radical contestations has undoubtedly been influenced by Western cultural studies theory, much of which is based on how marginalized groups and discourses find voice and access to power, this approach has also been useful in studying the Soviet experience because it has brought us much closer to the reality of Soviet life as lived by the average Soviet citizen. For Soviet artists, cultural life was characterized by a series of small victories and ideological compromises waged on behalf of works of art. Dmitry Shostakovich survived the Stalin era to compose his Symphony No. 10 and subsequent works because he made concessions after his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* was suppressed in January 1937. Likewise, several of the new generation of poets in the 1960s, the most notable being Evgeny Evtushenko, were criticized yet tolerated by the government for their liberal views because they toed the party line when they had to. And in the sphere of daily life, the struggle was waged, often on an unconscious level, by the people themselves as they sought to live within the strictures imposed by the regime.

Yet, these small victories and signs of so-called resistance, such as the flourishing "second economy" or the existence of unofficial clubs or unofficial art,

were not necessarily tantamount to dissent. Between the party line and dissent lay a vast arena where the infamous Soviet anecdote proliferated, where people purchased and sold on the black market, where Soviet citizens lived in cities where they were not registered (*propisan*),[24] where they procured what they needed through *blat* and did what they did not so much as a measure of dissent but as a survival strategy in a system whose economic and social realities fell far short of the promises it made on paper.[25] It was precisely in this area of the unofficial that most of Soviet life flourished. It was here in the everyday that the grand master narrative of the Soviet Union moved in a Bakhtinian sense from the monologic to the polylogic as Soviet citizens proceeded to reformulate or subvert it — not with the intent of bringing down the system, but simply to buy a decent pair of shoes, a Hungarian umbrella at Balaton, or some nice French cognac, or to find a good book at the black market down by the river on a Saturday.

Clearly for many in the West, Soviet elitist culture was an oxymoron, for what Western observers often perceived as elite lay on the fringes or under the surface of official Soviet life. But the perception of elitist culture from inside the party was an entirely different matter, particularly since party ideologues (ironically like some cultural studies scholars today) spent the better part of the twentieth century attempting to do away with the notion that there even *was* a distinction between popular and elitist culture. The early Bolsheviks attempted to forge a culture for the masses that would abolish this distinction. What the early Soviet leaders inherited was a population whose own culture was taken largely from the sphere of the popular, by which was meant anything from the traditional, prerevolutionary culture of the rural people to the culture of the urban masses or the various subcultures within Russian society with their own songs, traditions, theater, and mores.[26]

The problem in the early 1920s was that an enormous gap separated the revolutionary elite from the peasants and workers in whose name the former had made a revolution. That gap was both political and cultural. While the early Bolshevik leaders denied their own elitist position in Russian society, preferring instead to see the intelligentsia as the guardians of prerevolutionary high culture, the fact remains that the early Bolshevik revolutionaries themselves came from an intellectual elite that shared the intelligentsia's vision of a special class whose job it was to bring enlightenment to the masses below.[27] The early Bolsheviks were also elitist in that they dismissed urban popular culture at the time as being philistine, vulgar, and trivial, despite the fact that the new so-

called elite that came into being under Stalin managed to exhibit shockingly bourgeois tastes in their own right, in everything from home furnishings to ersatz art, as they sought to replicate old prerevolutionary culture as the mark of having acquired status in the new order.[28] As the early architects of the state drew up new cultural directives for the masses, they endeavored to forge a proletarian culture that would speak to the peasants and the workers and would eventually supersede both the culture of the prerevolutionary elite and the "vulgar" urban culture of the day.

The history of this early proletarian culture contained the seeds of the distinction between elite and popular as it came to be understood during much of the Soviet era. If many of the early Bolsheviks themselves came from an intellectual elite that they sought to repudiate even while seeking a new form of elitism, they also looked toward a time when there would be essentially no difference between elitist culture and so-called popular culture, a time when, with the withering away of class distinctions, the divisions between the art and culture of the various classes would also disappear. This dream supposedly reached its culmination in the creation of socialist realism as the artistic credo in the 1930s. Ultimately the culture that emerged from the revolution would be a proletarian one.

This vision was all well and good as an example of solid utopian thinking, but in actuality the gulf separating rulers from ruled was very real and remained so, although unstated, throughout the Soviet era. This fact is poignantly brought out by the Soviet writer Mikhail Zoshchenko, whose satirical stories of the 1920s describe the plight of the simple Soviet citizen simultaneously aspiring to emulate the high culture of Russia's prerevolutionary past and that of the new Soviet proletariat, and failing miserably at both. Although early proletarian culture drew on forms from Russian peasant and urban culture, it remained essentially elitist, the brainchild of the upper echelons of the party, who put no small effort into creating the ideology behind the production of the new culture. Thus, by the end of the 1920s, Soviet society was structured in such a way that *kul'tura* as it was understood was the product of an ideology designed by a small group of party elite for everybody else.[29] In order to reinforce their power and strengthen the ideological underpinnings of Soviet society, the party created a culture that, through its use of the popular tradition, both obfuscated and in some sense perpetuated the gulf separating the masses from those who ran the party and created its ideology.

Defining the relationship between elite and so-called popular culture under

Stalin is both simpler and ironically more complex. While there was still a substantial gap between elitist culture and that of the people during the early 1920s, that gap began to close by the late 1920s and the early 1930s with the institution of the First Five-Year Plan. The goals of the plan were to bring the city to the countryside by introducing technology, electricity, and education to Russia's rural peasantry, thereby bridging the gulf that had long separated Russia's urban classes from its rural one. Some party leaders felt that it was enough to introduce modernization to the countryside; others sought to bridge the gap by resettling large numbers of people from the urban areas into rural Russia. If the countryside was slowly becoming urbanized as a result of the efforts of the First Five-Year Plan, so too were the cities becoming ruralized as peasants, responding to the enormous need for labor in the cities and resisting collectivization, resettled in the cities en masse. Thus demographic shifts, some carefully planned to eliminate cultural gaps and some that came about in a way completely unforeseen by the leadership, were as responsible for the general merging of elitist and popular culture under Stalin as were cultural mandates from above. This fact suggests that one of the real differences that must be taken into account as we try to understand how culture was produced from the 1920s on were not just those between the party and the masses but those between city and country as well.[30]

If demographics helped to close the gap between city and country and thus to some degree between elitist culture and that of the people, Stalin's method of dealing with this gap was to close it by force, linking what Hans Gunther calls the culture "from above" with that "from below."[31] To this end Stalin and his cultural ideologues created a prodigious culture machine that produced and directed culture for the masses — everything from lavish parades to Stalinist musicals in the spirit of the Hollywood extravaganzas of Busby Berkeley, to the resurrection of folklore in order to create a kind of pseudofolklore in state-sponsored form. Traditional folk motifs and formulas were hauled into the service of the state in surprisingly new juxtapositions, such as: "It is not a prophetic bird talking / It is Soviet radio."[32] Or this song, composed by the bard Marfa Kriukova, one of many who employed models from Russian folklore to fashion a new folklore based on the heroic exploits of the heroes of the day:

> It was not the White Sea beginning to undulate —
> It was a hero's heart beginning to beat faster;
> His mighty shoulders had stirred,

Joseph-light had begun to think,
He thought a strong thought.
He sat through dark nights
And whole days thinking.
He decided to go into a great battle for the working people,
He got ready quickly,
And hurried off on his journey.[33]

If Lenin, following Marx's precepts, had perceived the distinction between high and low art as ultimately collapsible given time and social shift, Stalin perceived the creation of a mass culture (*massovaia kul'tura*) as the most effective way of controlling and socializing the population. He accomplished this in several ways. Early in the 1920s it was clear that the old prerevolutionary culture of Russia was completely incomprehensible to the new Soviet worker. The comments of one worker after seeing a production of *Swan Lake* speak volumes about the cultural level of the masses: "So, for four acts' time this most boring of all stories drags on, the story nobody needs, about the love of a 'prince' for a 'swan-princess.' " On Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra:* "Why does a worker who works hard all day need to look at this moldy historical trash?" Or this on Ilya Ehrenburg's *Julio Jurenito:* "They ought to beat up authors who make up a new grammar."[34] The problem was what to do about this cultural abyss.

One solution was to make high art accessible to the people, thereby blurring the distinction between the two cultures. One of the most prominent examples of how this process took place was the Sovietizing of Russia's great poet Alexander Pushkin, who became, in honor of the one hundredth anniversary of his death, the posthumous recipient of countless activities organized in his name by the All-Union Pushkin Committee to bring his work to the people. Collective farms and factories, schoolchildren, chocolate factories, libraries, pioneer groups, and more were mobilized to create Pushkin memorabilia, compose songs, or organize literary evenings in memory of the great poet who, with a little help from the party, was now appropriated by the *narod* as their bard.[35] Pushkin would no doubt have been more than slightly surprised to hear a peasant from the May Morning Commune declare in one of the commune's reading groups, "If we were to take apart every line of his [Pushkin's], every principle of his, then we'd get historical materialism from his poetry."[36]

This blurring of the distinction between elite and popular was masterminded

under Stalin through the creation of a new, comprehensible workers' culture. In order to understand how this workers' culture was formulated, we need to look at how the concept of culture was reconstituted under Stalin. From the 1930s on, Soviet culture was invested with a very different set of associations than it has in the West or even than it had in Lenin's time. Culture, as Katerina Clark notes in *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual,* was much more than listening to Bach, reading Shakespeare, or obtaining a university degree. It was that entire spectrum of changes that occur in a person's life as s/he makes the transition from a wooden hut to a more urban and Westernized way of life.[37] It included the acquisition of certain social graces, learning polite forms of expression, learning how to put one's napkin in one's lap, and acquiring a certain *comme il faut.* This *kul'turnost'* to which the new Soviet man and woman were busily aspiring was anything but high class. For example, peasants and workers desiring to be *kul'turnyi* accumulated everything from doilies to pink lampshades to collections of cut glass and figurines, which they saw as the symbols of having entered the world of *kul'tura.* The most spectacular example of the above is Stalinist wedding-cake architecture — an elaborate and overdesigned mélange of styles combining neogothic, baroque, and Stalinist kitsch that dotted the Moscow skyline. This particular understanding of culture and what it meant to acquire it characterized most of the Soviet period well after Stalin's time. For example, when I was a student in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, one of the most commonly heard criticisms of someone was that he or she was *nekul'turnyi* (uncultured).

It was this understanding of culture — more all encompassing yet more banal than culture's usual definition — that determined how literature was read and composed during the 1930s. Like culture in general, literature was meant to become universally accessible, thus paving the way for the formulation of socialist realism in the early 1930s.[38] Drawn up originally as a blueprint for the arts, socialist realism nevertheless managed to infect virtually every branch of Soviet society as it became the order of the day in everything from fiction to journalism to factory production statistics.[39] The official mandate was no longer the elevation of education and aesthetic consciousness but rather the lowering of art to the public level.

Socialist realism was as successful as it was for many reasons: under Stalin the elite was constituted very differently than it had been under Lenin. By the late 1920s the new Soviet elite had incorporated into its ranks a worker-peasant intelligentsia, or *vydvizhentsy,* whose roots were not to be found in the tradi-

tional educated classes but who nevertheless formulated cultural and party policy in a vastly different way than the early Bolshevik leadership envisioned it. Further, socialist realism became much more than an artistic credo due to the evolving relationship between the producers and the consumers of this new culture. If we look at how culture was produced during the Soviet era in general and the Stalin era in particular, we need to understand how the party perceived its relationship to the *narod* as the class for whom this ideology was packaged. I use the word *consumers* intentionally to stress the fact that the Soviet Union, long before the advent of the current market economy, was predicated on the relationship between those who produced the goods — in this case the ideology — and those for whom that ideology was intended. And as in any consumer society, there was a symbiotic relationship between those who fashioned the product and those who "bought" it. Much of westerners' thinking about consumption is based on our understanding of it within the context of a market economy. And yet in a sense, every culture, regardless of its economic system, is consumer based insofar as it exists in relation to those who view it, listen to it, read it, act on it, and reflect on it. Further, Soviet society, as Nancy Condee and Vladimir Padunov have pointed out, has long been consumer based in the literal sense of the term in that numerous Soviet citizens blithely dealt in the black market — the necessary response to a command economy that attempted to create new needs rather than meeting the fundamental needs of the average Soviet citizen. Further, Soviets were almost invariably engaged in making a little on the side (*podrabatyvat'*) or pushing papers through a bureaucratic maze for a small fee in an effort to extend the limits of what the socialist economy made possible in their daily lives.[40] Even leaving aside the incipient market economy that has existed on the fringes of Soviet society for years, Soviet society under Stalin became heavily consumer based as a new middle class was created in the building of socialism with promises of perks and privileges in return for service to the party. Thus Soviet citizens, contrary to what official labels suggest, were clearly involved for decades in consuming much more than mere ideology.

In the early Soviet era the concept of the *narod* (masses) as consumers was defined by the ideologues and producers of Soviet mass culture. However, the way the party understood the *narod*-consumer was both ambiguous and subject to change depending on the current party ideology and political platform. The shifting nature of the *narod*'s role as consumer of mass culture was also determined by the fact that the Soviet Union was, as I have already suggested, not a

monolithic entity whose leaders issued strict edicts that were blindly followed by the unsuspecting masses. In *Russia/USSR/Russia: The Drive and Drift of a Superstate,* Moshe Lewin argues that the notion of the party as the all-encompassing organization responsible for the direction taken by the state was beginning to change dramatically by the 1930s.[41] Lewin suggests that the state — all-powerful in the early days of Bolshevik rule as both maker and mediator of ideology, policy, and cultural politics — was by the 1930s well on its way to devolving into an enormous bureaucracy that gradually swallowed up the party and the various functions it performed. Even when there were clear cultural directives from the top, there was often a good deal of slippage between those directives and the way they were actually carried out.[42]

If one accepts Lewin's thesis about the gradually devolving role of the party in the fashioning and implementation of ideology, then the question arises as to how cultural policy became adapted and integrated into daily life. The answer is simple when we look at Bolshevik culture in the 1920s. The early Bolsheviks saw the production of culture for the masses as the vehicle through which revolutionary consciousness would be instilled in the people. Many, Lenin included, rejected the notion of popular culture as having too many petit bourgeois antecedents and advocated a culture that would educate and ennoble the masses.[43] Lenin viewed the *narod* as a potential elite, but one seriously deficient in the cultural level demanded by a proletarian state and even by bourgeois society.[44] He believed that this cultural level had to be raised (*podniato*) through education in order for the masses to be able to understand the new proletarian art produced for them and to appreciate the art of the past that the *narod* was both repudiating and inheriting.[45] Unlike Zinoviev and Stalin, who unilaterally rejected Russia's cultural past because it had no obvious relation to the present, Lenin, along with Trotsky and Bukharin, set about rehabilitating that past partly for its own sake and partly because he needed the chief advocates of that culture, the intelligentsia, to be ideologically in sync with the party.[46]

Stalin, as we have seen, seemed to have a very different take on the *narod* as consumers of the culture that had been designed for them. Whether he deliberately misread Lenin's call to raise (*podniat'*) the cultural level of the *narod,* changing it instead to *poniat'* (understood) is something we do not know.[47] What we do know is that under Stalin the onus was no longer on artists, educators, and ideologues to *raise* the collective cultural level of the masses, but on the artists themselves to make their work accessible or *understandable*

to those same people — a concept that should find resonance with anyone concerned about the cultural "dumbing down" of America today. Whether intentional or not, Stalin's "misreading" of Lenin's directive had devastating consequences for the party's understanding of its mission vis-à-vis the masses.

Although there is no doubt that the masses consumed this public culture — both because they were enjoined to do so and because the culture frequently fit their needs — just how this process was actually accomplished is still open to debate.[48] A compelling argument, and one that supports what Lewin has to say about the transformation of the party in the 1930s, is made by Evgeny Dobrenko in *The Making of the State Reader.* Dobrenko shows that one reason the canon of socialist realism worked as well as it did was that it was not, in fact, ideologically constructed from above but in a very real sense was the product of the masses from below, answering their need for accessibility and a particular kind of realism in art. In Dobrenko's words, socialist realism became "the encounter and cultural compromise of two currents — that of the masses and that of authority" in the production of culture.[49] Thus the masses became not only the consumers of Soviet culture but also its producers, as most mainstream party-line writers from the late 1920s on were workers. Further, the worker as reader also became the critic par excellence, whose critique of a work often replaced the text itself in terms of ideological importance.[50] Thus, in an extension of Lewin's thesis, Dobrenko sees the making of culture as much less a product of party mandate and much more a function of the *narod* as the prime movers of their own culture.

How tightly the producers and consumers of this culture were intertwined is still an open question. Dobrenko implies that the intersection of the roles of producers and consumers was so tight that the product would automatically be "bought." Boris Groys argues similarly that although the aesthetic was completely alien to the tastes of the people, marketing conditions ruled out the possibility that the ideology would not be bought.[51] I think it is also possible to argue that although ideology guaranteed that the culture would be consumed to some extent, it was not entirely clear that it would always be consumed exactly as its planners hoped it would be.

A final factor needs to be considered as we look at the gradual conflation of high and low cultures in the 1930s: the creation of the Soviet Union's middle class. While no Soviet history admits as much, under Stalin a de facto middle class came into being consisting of those whom Stalin co-opted into service for the state with promises of rewards, perks, and privileges. Along with the emer-

gence of a middle class in postwar Stalinist Russia came a literature that reflected the tastes and desires of this new class. Much of this middlebrow fiction came into prominence in the works of Natalia Baranskaia, Maia Ganina, and Viktoriia Tokareva in the 1960s and 1970s. Although they often eschewed any identification with the new class, these and other writers were implicitly writing with it in mind.[52] The appearance of the middle class is particularly important because its very presence forces us to look outside the traditional categories of elitist and mass cultures that have defined critical approaches to the study of Soviet culture. If under Stalin elitist and popular cultures became conflated, a third simultaneously came into being which, because it ran counter to the ideological thrust of the party, went unacknowledged and thus has been little studied in terms of its relationship to the other cultural products of the Stalin and post-Stalin eras.

What effect, if any, this long-standing and complex relationship between the producers and consumers of culture and between so-called elitist and nonelitist cultures in the Soviet Union will have on cultural production in the new Russia is far from clear. A few tentative ideas emerge, however. For one thing, however we choose to define elitist culture, popular culture, or the relationship between the two during the Soviet era, culture — dissident, popular, and elitist — was informed by its relationship to the center. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, there is no longer a dominant culture to which all other cultures — whether dissident, official, or nonofficial — stand in some relation. As Friedman and Weiner make clear in their chapter on rock music, many rock groups in the former Soviet Union happily defined themselves as underground, or at the very least as on the margins of acceptability, and it was out of these margins that their self-identity was born. If cultural life for them became more difficult when their art "suffered" the transition from the margins to the center, popular culture today finds itself in that peculiar liminal place outside the confines of what both we in the West and Russians themselves once defined as either elitist or popular — no longer official, yet no longer sequestered under the umbrella of the nonofficial either. In short, there is no longer a dominant culture at Russia's center that defines the space one inhabits as either a producer or a consumer of that culture. Similarly, it is far from obvious how changing Soviet notions of the relations between the producers and consumers of culture will affect relations between production and consumption in the new Russia. What is obvious is that the new Russian consumer is still powerfully engaged with many of the

cultural artifacts, paradigms, and stereotypes of the past, partially as a way of disengaging from that past, partially as an expression of the longing for what Anna Krylova terms "the lost position of the Soviet subject."[53]

The question of how culture is consumed in Russia today may in the long run be affected by the experience of the past eighty years during which Soviets were both the producers, the passive recipients, and the creative consumers of their culture. Although many of the most avid consumers in Russia today have no recollection of the Leninist or even the Stalinist state, collective memory is deeply rooted, reaching back to a time when the state not only created an official culture for the masses but attempted to create the identity of those who would consume it as well. And because the relationship between the state and the people was not static or monolithic, most Soviets learned to negotiate their way within mass culture, utilizing it when necessary to form bonds between self and state, using it for their own amusement sometimes, and rejecting it or ignoring it at others.[54]

II. La Vie privée and *Byt*

The study of everyday life—what historian Henri Lefebvre calls "la vie quotidienne"—is often subsumed within the study of popular culture. Once considered outside the parameters of the historian's craft, the study of the everyday and of those once erased from the historical process now occupies center stage for those who study microhistory, partially because it is here that we find potential sites of resistance to the grand historical narratives that were traditionally the focus of the historians' craft.[55]

What exactly do we mean when we talk about "la vie quotidienne," and specifically what form does it take within the context of Soviet and post-Soviet experience? If, as Lefebvre suggests, the everyday is made up of the repetitive gestures of work and consumption that mask the changes that take place in our lives, the particular quality of that ritualized behavior undergoes permutations from culture to culture.[56] The French critic Michel de Certeau sees ordinary life as something like a guerilla war that people implicitly wage against prescribed official ideologies.[57] Thus, for de Certeau, the ordinary will always swim against the prevailing tide of inscribed official ideology or state or cultural myths. Likewise, Bakhtin, who approached the problem from the vantage point of a Russian *intelligent* who suffered under Stalinism, was looking for ways in

which common, ordinary life might conceivably function as a site of resistance against the prevailing ideology.[58]

As we begin to investigate everyday life in Soviet and post-Soviet society, we must remember that for the greater part of this century, everyday life (that is to say, unofficial life) in the Soviet Union has been invested with a specific set of associations that lie outside our experience in the West. While Western scholars were not urged to explore this facet of Soviet life, it was shockingly easy for American professors and students to gain access into nonofficial Soviet life. Sitting until the early hours of the morning in the kitchens of the intelligentsia was one of the ways Western students and academics were able to find out what was really going on in lives lived outside the prescriptive norms propagated by the media or by official discourse. We needed that nonofficial version, the version that took us beyond "life as it is becoming" to "life as it is" to construct for ourselves that more complete picture of Soviet life.[59] And just as important, the intelligentsia needed us because we were the conduit to the West that was otherwise inaccessible to them.

Much, though not all, of this nonofficial life was contained under the heading of what the Russians call *byt,* a term the late writer Yury Trifonov calls "perhaps the most enigmatic, multidimensional, incomprehensible word in the Russian language." It explains "how husbands and wives get on together, and parents and children, and close and distant relations — that too. . . . And the interrelationships of friends and people at work, love, quarrels, jealousy, envy — all this, too, is byt. This is what life consists of! . . . We are all enmeshed in byt in our own network of everyday concerns."[60] For students of Soviet society, there was often a truth in the study of *byt* that simply was not available through the study of official culture. *Byt* became the means of access to that elusive other half that told us what was going on behind the facade of the official story. For example, Nadezhda Mandelshtam's *Vospominaniia* is, in Donald Fanger's words, "a treasure house of *byt* in the thirties" because of its wealth of information about surveillance and search and arrest techniques under Stalin.[61] In a similar vein, Aleksei German's film *Moi drug Ivan Lapshin* (*My Friend Ivan Lapshin,* completed in 1982, but not released until 1985) — the tale of a police inspector in a provincial town in the mid-1930s out to capture a band of criminals who sell the bodies of their victims to compensate for the meat shortage — contains descriptions of *byt* that complicated the reception of German's film in the Soviet Union. Not only does German present the catastrophic state of human relationships during Stalin's time, but he also subverts the official ver-

sion of what life was supposed to be like through his descriptions of the deplorable living and moral conditions to which Soviet life had descended.[62]

Critics in the West connect the study of quotidian existence to the study of private life. In the Russian and Soviet experience, however, this identification does not always hold. *Byt,* while omnipresent in every Russian's personal life (including Stalin's!), was not contained by it. In other words, private life was and is often made up of *byt,* but *byt,* in and of itself, was not always private. The most telling example of this discontinuity is the nefarious and ubiquitous phenomenon of the *kommunalka* (communal apartment). Full to overflowing with *byt,* the *kommunalka* was anything but private, as the shared living and psychological spaces often culminating in the infamous *donosy* (denunciations) by one's neighbors during the Stalinist era testify.[63] I make this distinction between the everyday and the private precisely because private life (what is usually referred to in Russian as *chastnaia* or *lichnaia zhizn'*) has traditionally carried a complicated set of associations for Russians, particularly in this century. From the time Lenin declared the private life dead shortly after the revolution, people's attempts to garner some sort of personal privacy have been fraught with emotional ambiguity and even political risk. As Svetlana Boym notes in her book *Common Places,* there has even been a sense of publicly sanctioned guilt associated with personal life in Soviet Russia.[64] Further, the party under Stalin exerted every effort to make the public and the private virtually indistinguishable. Under Stalin, for example, motherhood became a public act, and countless faces of mother-heroines beamed out from the covers of magazines such as *Ogonek, Krest'ianka,* and *Sovetskaia zhenshchina,* exhorting Soviet women to produce more Soviet citizens (read "sons") for the motherland. Similarly, the infamous partition that was supposed to afford a modicum of privacy in the *kommunalka* only served to reinforce the notion that privacy was altogether impossible in such a setting.[65] Ironically, even if privatization has brought some the opportunity for privacy, it has also brought a nostalgia not only for the past but for the present, as many fear leaving the familiarity of their communal situations.[66]

The effect in the new Russia of the blurring of the lines between public and private for much of this century is not yet clear. If, as has been often argued, fiction enjoys the special privilege in Russia of providing the key to social and political issues (witness here Solzhenitsyn's famous remark that in Russia the writer is a kind of "second government"), then the prose of the contemporary writer Liudmila Petrushevskaia provides one possible take on the conse-

quences of this blurring. In story after story Petrushevskaia's characters relate their most intimate lives to perfect strangers — to passengers in cabs, anonymous colleagues at work, strangers in stairwells — people who have no vested interest in what the teller has to say. Petrushevskaia's stories suggest the psychological, emotional, and linguistic evisceration that has taken place in a world in which public and private are still hopelessly conflated.[67]

Other possible results of the ambiguous nature of the public-private dichotomy that informed so much of Soviet society are visible in Russian popular culture today. For example, the recent spate of pornography that has glutted the market since the collapse of censorship in 1991 has not been confined to magazines and newspapers that are explicitly pornographic. Porn has also appeared in mainstream newspapers and magazines. In 1991 an economics journal, *Ekonomika,* displayed a bare-breasted woman on one of its covers for reasons that may or may not have had anything to do with Russia's economic assets, while *Ogonek* has on more than one occasion used bare breasts and fleshy buttocks as lead-ins to stories that had nothing to do with the flesh proffered in the photos.[68] An analogous situation in the United States would be the appearance of pornography on the cover of *Time* or *US News and World Report.* This phenomenon is an interesting reflection of post-Soviet commercial culture in several ways. Catriona Kelly argues that this confusing juxtaposition of advertising in seemingly inappropriate venues is partly because niche marketing is not yet well developed in post-Soviet society.[69] Further, while one can argue endlessly over whether these photos are pornographic or merely highly erotic, and over the economic motive behind their appearance in magazines that are suddenly forced to compete in a cutthroat market economy, the photos are equally interesting in the way they illustrate traditional notions of public and private. In essence, what we are seeing is a kind of revenge of the private on the public. After years of the "public" invasion of "private" space and discourse (even sex becoming a public act in the Soviet communal apartment), private discourse and experience, or at least that which was blatantly barred from the public realm, seem to be reversing that process by insinuating themselves into the public arena, transgressively invading spaces where they "ought not to be."[70] In this sense, the new pornography in Russia can be seen not simply as a reaction to the demise of censorship, but as a response to the constantly shifting boundaries — no less in the new Russia than in the old — between what counts as "public" and "private," particularly in the sphere of ownership of one's body, formerly part of the communality of Soviet life.[71]