

*EXOTIC
MOSCOW*
under Western Eyes

Cultural Revolutions: Russia in the Twentieth Century

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For Yuri

Acknowledgments

I greatly appreciate the opportunity that Dr. Igor Nemirovsky and his publishing house have given me to collect some of the articles I have written since the 1990s and up till now, and to bring them together in book form. Rereading my previous works for the purpose of making a selection has of course brought the realization that they have many flaws. I have nevertheless taken the opportunity to reprint selected items from my publications, believing that some interpretations offered here retain validity and offer new perspectives on well known texts of Russian literature.

The slightly revised articles included in this collection appeared first in the following publications: *Scandoslavica*, tomus 50, 2005 ("The Music of Ecstasy and the Picture of Harmony: Nietzsche's Dionysus and Apollo in Turgenev's 'Pesn' torzhestvuiushchei liubvi'," pp. 5–22); *Rossiiia i SSHA: formy literaturnogo dialoga*, Doklady mezhdunarodnykh nauchnykh konferentsii: noiabr' 1998 (OSU), april' 1999 (RGGU), Moskva 2000 ("A Change of Gender Roles: the Pygmalion Motif in Jane Austen's *Emma* and Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*," in Russian: "Peremena roli: pigmalionovskie motivy v "Emme" Dzhein Osten i "Oblomove" Ivana Goncharova," pp. 96–116); "Kul'tural'nye issledovaniia. Sbornik nauchnykh rabot," pod redaktsiei Aleksandra Etkinda, Pavla Lysakova, Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt-Peterburge, Letnii sad, Sankt-Peterburg-Moskva, 2006 ("Rescuing Culture from Civilization: Gorky, Gogol, Sologub and the Mediterrean Model," in Russian: "Kak spasti kul'turu ot tsivilizatsii: Sredizemnomorskaia model' Maksima Gor'kogo," pp. 267–289); *Dostoevsky Studies*, New Series, Volume X, 2006 ("The 'Castrator' Rogozhin and the 'Castrate' Smerdiakov: Incarnations of Dostoevsky's 'Devil-Bearing' People?," pp. 88–114); *Poetica*, vol. 35, nrs. 1–2, 2003 ("Who Are the Tatars in Alexander Blok's *The Homeland*? The East in the Literary-Ideological Discourse of the Russian Symbolists," pp. 123–155); *Die Welt der Slaven*, vol. XLVII, 2002 ("Gothic Historiosophy: The Pani Katerina Myth in Pasternak's *Doctor*

Zhivago," pp. 359–380); *Eternity's Hostage, Selected Papers from the Stanford International Conference on Boris Pasternak*, Part II, ed. by Lazar Fleishman, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006 ("Larissa — Lolita, or Catharsis and Dolor in the Artist-Novels *Doctor Zhivago* and *Lolita*," pp. 396–424); *Gedaechtnis und Phantasma, Festschrift fuer Renate Lachmann, Die Welt der Slaven Sammelbaende*, Band 13, Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2001 ("Survival of the Superfluous: Doubling and Mimicry in Nabokov's *Podvig-Glory*," pp. 563–573); *Slavonica*, 4/1, 1997–1998 ("Moscow in the Tropics: Exotica in Valerii Briusov's Early Urban Poetry," pp. 7–28). The article "Clairvoyant Mothers and Erring Sons: Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Conrad's *Under Western Eyes*" has not been published previously. I appreciate the willingness of journal and book editors to let me reprint articles and chapters published relatively recently.

The transliteration system used here is that of the Library of Congress for all quotes in Russian. Names in the English text are given their traditional spellings (Dostoevsky, Herzen, Alexander) and simplified (for example, without soft signs: Raskolnikov, Gogol).

Introduction

This selection of ten articles comprises publications from the 1990s to the present. It deals with a broad range of writers and a wide variety of literary works from late realism to the end of modernism, but there is also an underlying unity. It may be found in two themes: the opposition of “culture versus civilization” and the constellation “civilization, barbarism, culture.” These constitute major concerns in the literary works dealt with.

The first unifying theme, namely the opposition “culture versus civilization,” immediately suggests a pitting of Russia against the Western world, with Russia as the carrier of a (future) genuine culture and the West as the wielder of a mere surface culture, or “civilization,” one that is in “decline” and bound to “fall.” This, of course, is a traditional perception of Russia in relation to Western Europe, at least in Russia. It derives from slavophile thought as well as thinkers and writers relating to this ideology’s predominating notion of Russia’s uniquely spiritual nature and, hence, equally unique cultural mission in world history. Thus N. Danilevsky, “anticipating Spengler” (Städtke, 30), in his influential *Russia and Europe* (1871), develops the concept of a Slavic ethnic-cultural type that is bound to synthesize religious, artistic, political, scientific and economic activities, eventually bringing about the “highest type of culture” the world is destined to know (Städtke, 31).^{*} Dostoevsky in his “Pushkin Speech” (1881) famously presented Russia’s historical mission as the reconciliation of all cultures in a universal all-embracing world culture, led and inspired by Russian spiritual ideals. The link to Pushkin is found in the

* Klaus Städtke’s “Kultur und Zivilisation. Zur Geschichte des Kulturbegriffs in Rußland” offers a clear and concise overview of the semantics of the term. His article is found in: *Kulturauffassungen in der literarischen Welt Rußlands. Kontinuitäten und Wandlungen im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christa Ebert, Berlin: Berlin Verlag, Arno Spitz GmbH, 1995 (pp. 18–46).

notion that he, so Russian and yet drawing on a broad range of geographical settings and characters from many nations, guarantees that “all-reconciling all-understanding” is the dominating trait of the Russian national character, one that is missing in other nations.

The present collection of selected articles deals with Westernizing—Slavophile and Eurasian themes then. It does so in a broader historiosophic perspective, however, which is related to concerns about how to keep the “body” of a culture alive and how to hinder it from turning into its own “mummy,” i.e. into civilization (Felken, 68).^{*} Not always is the viewpoint patriotic-nationalistic. The overriding concern is the inquiry into what conditions give rise to a new culture and, conversely, what laws cause the decline into civilization, not to mention the final “fall” into cultural non-existence. This is an inquiry that unites writers from the most varied camps in a shared quest for Russia’s “true path to a genuine and lasting culture.” Naturally, “Slavophile” patriotism may enter into this quest. Notably this is the case with the socialist Gorky in his “god-building” period.

Turning to the second uniting theme in the present volume, the triangular constellation civilization-barbarism-culture, it is, of course, closely related to the civilization-culture opposition. In this constellation, barbarism is closer to culture than to civilization since the elemental forces (*stikhiinost*) released by the popular masses in, for example, revolutionary uprisings, guarantee that civilizations are swept away, leaving room for culture. Blok put this notion forward in very strong terms in his essay “The End of Humanism” (“Krushenie gumanizma,” 1919), being of the opinion that “during epochs when a wingless, non-musical und decomposing civilization hinders the further development of culture, . . . the barbaric and non-propertyed masses of necessity become carriers of culture” (quoted in Städtke, 34). This is not to say that barbarism always is exalted as a purifying force. Culture and barbarism may also engage in a struggle enacted between the intelligentsia and the “people” (*narod*). In this case, it is a struggle fought by the cultured intelligentsia for the sake of the uneducated, “dark” people’s potential to create future cultural values. Then it is a struggle with the people for the people, even when resistance by the people is strong. The third party in this conflict is the stagnant Establishment with its contempt for the “dark people,” i.e. those “civilized” layers of society whose treatment of the folk often demonstrates more barbarism than the *narod* is shown to be capable of. In this constellation it is perceived as tragic that the dark folk sometimes resist culture while yielding to the seduction of civilization.

* See Detlef Felken, *Oswald Spengler. Konservativer Denker zwischen Kaiserreich und Diktatur*, Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1988.

The thematic linkages outlined above have determined the structure of this tripartite collection of articles. The first section entitled *Dialogue*, discusses literary works engaged in conversation with other, often non-Russian, literary works and cultures. One item in this section is written by non-Russian author Joseph Conrad; the Russian connection is found in his response to Dostoevskian ethical and ideological positions.

The second section under the rubric of *Inner Divisions* examines a productive Russian literary mythology (based on the “Pani Katerina material”) about Russia as a woman wooed by suitors representing different alternatives for “her” future fate, and vacillating between them until she makes the wrong choice (for example, for establishment civilization). Section Three *Preserving the Heritage* may be seen as one that cancels the civilization-culture opposition, while also devaluating “barbarism” as a source of vitality. It interprets two novels by Nabokov as the émigré-protagonist’s reminiscence-dialogue with an unreachable and irrevocable past that yet must be preserved. A small article, dealing with Briusov’s early poetry, serves as an epilogue-*vignette* to the volume with its mini-encomium to civilization. The sequencing of the articles does not follow chronological order, neither by the publication dates of the articles, nor by that of the works dealt with. It follows a thematic inner logic elucidated below.

The first article in Section One, *Dialogue*, offers a prologue both to the “dialogic works” themselves and the entire book. Dealing with Turgenev’s late novella “The Song of Triumphant Love,” set in Renaissance Italy, it seems at first glance irrelevant to the themes outlined above. It presents the rivalry between the conventional painter Fabio and the mysterious musician Mucio for the love of Valeria and it has largely been read as a supernatural tale based on a triangle love drama. It could, however, be interpreted more symbolically as a struggle between a western culture, “stiffening” into civilization, and crude, but revitalizing, eastern forces ushering in a renaissance of culture. I argue that Turgenev was familiar with Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* with its famous notions of Apollo as the god of order and form and Dionysus as the god of “fluidity” and chaos, and of the complementarities and hostilities between the two deities that guarantee continued culture. Since, in my reading, Turgenev’s Italian tale is a meta-aesthetic work that deals with a general opposition of a culture slipping into conventionality (civilization), and the revitalization of civilization “back into real culture,” the article “The Music of Ecstasy and the Picture of Harmony: Nietzsche’s Dionysus and Apollo in Turgenev’s ‘Pesn’ torzhestvuiushchei liubvi’” opens the *Dialogue* section of the book.

The “dialogic imagination” is seen as a sine qua non for the continued vitality of culture in the three articles that follow. Thus Goncharov, in his *Oblomov*, as is well known, devotes his lengthy mid-nineteenth-century novel

to a Western-Russian exchange of opinions on the virtues and drawbacks of a strictly structured "civilized" life and one devoted to passive-contemplative dreaming of an Ideal Way of Life (preferably set in the countryside). A harmonious synthesis of the alternatives is presumably offered as the desirable outcome. Part of this debate is the proper gender-role for men and women in the creation of a harmonious culture. My article "Exchanged Roles: The Pygmalion Motif in Jane Austen's *Emma* and Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*," argues that Goncharov's Olga misunderstands her role when she tries to mould Oblomov into her vision of what a civilized man should be, as Emma did before her when she tried to force her friend Harriet, made for the agri-cultural life, into a grand lady role she was not meant to play. In the context of this unobserved inter-textual link, Shtolts functions as a German Mr. Knightley, the suitor-educator in Austen's *Emma*. Thus the debate on what paths Russia should follow and what models the country should emulate when creating a genuine culture includes gender harmony as an important factor.

Conrad's novel *Under Western Eyes* clearly evokes Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in its treatment of contemporary political-social issues, such as assassination and terrorism as a means to bring about change. This time it is "Western eyes" that scrutinize the validity of Russian claims to genuine culture, and this perspective presents the Czarist Empire as a civilization in decline. Nor does the novel accept the Russian model for "revitalizing" culture by the introduction of political assassinations, however idealistic the young "revitalizers" may be. In this reversed scrutiny of Russian civilization (the czarist establishment) fighting "barbarism" (revolutionary forces) by an English writer (of Polish origins), Conrad and Dostoevsky are "in agreement" on what constitutes the ethical foundations of a valid culture, contrary to the established view that Conrad invariably rejected this "excessively Russian" writer. In *Under Western Eyes* at least, Conrad examines the pre-text of *Crime and Punishment* most carefully and has no "quarrel" with its ethics, in my reading of their English-Polish — Russian dialogue, presented in "Mothers and Sons: Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*." What Conrad cannot accept however is the obfuscation of valid ethics by nationalist mythologies that Dostoevsky could not resist in his desire to see Russia as God's favored nation. Conrad's simultaneous rejection of Polish nationalism forms an undercurrent in this dialogue.

Maxim Gorky, who fervently rejected Dostoevsky, nevertheless is the twentieth-century writer in this section who comes closest to a "slavo-ophile" position in the conflict between civilization and culture. Replacing Dostoevsky's Orthodoxy as the uniting bond of a future world culture with the religion of Omnipotent-Omniscient Humanity, i.e. god-building Socialism, he basically follows the Dostoevskian model of Russia's reconciliatory mission in

world history. Interestingly, Gorky's model of the western civilization-Russian culture opposition exempts Italy from it, celebrating an Italian-Russian axis of cultural affinity instead. The god-builder Gorky believed Italy to possess the key to eternal cultural youth and very determinedly set out to study the one European culture he found to be valid and which he came to know at close quarters during his first long exile on Capri (1906–1913). More precisely, he set out to learn the secret of how "eternal Rome" kept itself "eternal" through a series of "renaissances" that was still continuing (in the *Risorgimento*, for example).

In his *Italian Fairytales*, the writer therefore explores the south-eastern axis of perceived Italian-Russian mental affinities and the resulting possibility of arranging a harmonious "marriage" of Italian cultural sensitivity and Russian untapped strength. Both these positive qualities are found largely in the "folk" of each country. Decrepit monarchs and their retinues of civil servants, the propertied classes and their servants form the "civilized" layers in both nations, while *il popolo* and *narod* offer the soil for a never-ending cultural Renaissance under the aegis of an eternally valid Socialism. Europeans from north-western Europe traveling or living in Italy are also shown as representatives of sterile civilizations in these "fairytales," and it may be assumed that in their homelands the creative spontaneity of the folk is given very little leeway. In Gorky's model of how to "rescue culture from civilization," the culture-civilization division is thus found on two fronts: the geographical opposition of south-east (Italy and Russia) versus north-west (western Europe and North America) and within the class structure of a nation, as shown in "Rescuing Culture from Civilization: Gorky, Gogol, Sologub and the Mediterranean Model," the last article in this section.

Section Two, "Inner Divisions," presents writers who also treat the theme of inner social and cultural divisions within one nation, developing the "Slavophile" notion of the co-existence of "two cultures within one nation." The articles within this section explore the struggle of the creative intelligentsia — not against the folk — but against its "darkness," as well as against the "civilized" establishment that wants to keep it there. In this culture-civilization-barbarism syndrome a complex triangle of love and hate emerges, one that is put into images taken from the literary "Pani-Katerina mythology." This mythology was created by Dostoevsky, Blok, and Pasternak on the foundation of Gogol's "The Terrible Vengeance," as well as by other writers not dealt with in the present work. Its heroine is the lovely, but undecided, Katerina from Gogol's source-story (under the same, or new, names), providing the feminine proto-Image of an ambivalent and torn Russia, both sinning and sinned-against. "She" must choose between comfortable stagnation, i.e. civilization, continued barbarism ("marriage beneath her station") and a break-through to genuine spiritual-emotional values, a truly liberating culture.

The article "The 'Castrator' Rogozhin and the 'Castrate' Smerdiakov: Incarnations of Dostoevsky's 'Devil-Bearing' People?," opening this section demonstrates that the struggle between Rogozhin and Myshkin for Nastasya Filippovna's love (soul) offers a variation of the Pani Katerina story that Dostoevsky first attempted to give shape to in his early story "The Landlady." Within the framework of this story-myth, the Orthodox (genuine) *intelligent* Prince Myshkin tries to save Russia, Nastasya Filippovna, from the "dark world" of the sectarians, represented by the both destructive and self-destructive Rogozhin, a merchant close to the sectarian culture of the folk. She, of course, was initially seduced by the civilized, i.e. depraved, Totsky. Myshkin at the same time as he is wooing Nastasya Filippovna also tries to illumine Rogozhin with the light of a humane religion that does not see the "knife" as a solution to all problems. In doing this, the article argues, Dostoevsky lets Myshkin follow in the footsteps of Pushkin's young hero Grinev from *The Captain's Daughter* who tries to reason with the Old Believer rebel Pugachev, talking with him without the pomposity of "civilized" enlighteners. Grinev fails to save Pugachev and Myshkin fails to save Rogozhin (and Nastasya Filippovna), but the path to the people's and Russia's valid future clearly lies in the transfer of genuine, Orthodoxy-inspired intelligentsia culture to the dark realm of folk superstition, literalism and spiritual confusion. Smerdiakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*, is from the same sectarian world as Rogozhin, and rather than being a "Judas" who betrays his brother and murders his father, he is a victim of civilized society that abandoned the people to its spiritual confusion, even exploiting it, as Ivan Karamazov does.

The subsequent article "Who Are the Tatars in Alexander Blok's *The Homeland? The East in the Literary-Ideological Discourse of the Russian Symbolists*," attempts to offer an identification of the Tatar "horde" in Blok's cycle of poems *On Kulikovo Field*. This task is not as easy as the mention of the Tatar khan Mamai and the famous Kulikovo battle in that cycle seem to indicate. "Na pole Kulikovom" offers not only a historical reconstruction of past events but also a prophecy of future ones — a "last and decisive" battle with the forces of Evil. Who are the current Tatars then, i.e. the enemies of a *Rus'* that has been blessed by the Madonna (Sophia, The Beautiful Lady) herself, as the cycle makes clear? Are they the dark forces of Reaction, those "inner Turks" that Dobroliubov spoke of in his article "When Will the Real Day Come"? Or are they the "dark people" filled with the energetic restlessness of nomadic barbarians and therefore able to bring about a great revolution? Or, will the future apocalyptic battle between the two camps designated as "Russians" and "Tatars" perhaps at last bring the only valid victory? This victory would be the creative cooperation between an artistic Russian intelligentsia and a "Tatar" dark people yearning to transform destruction and barbarism into creation and culture. This is what

Blok hoped for as he demonstrates in the famous *The Twelve* of 1918 where the sudden appearance of Christ confirms that the sacred Revolution is bound to lead to a world that values Culture and Beauty above all else and therefore strives to create “diamonds” out of coal, a superior people made out of what now seems to be but dark “raw material.”

“Gothic Historiosophy: The Pani Katerina Myth in Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago*,” the third and last article in this section, presents Pasternak’s novel as a later summary and highly individualized synthesis of the myths constituting the “Pani Katerina” mythology. Katerina’s, in this case, Lara’s, number of rival suitors is again three, as in *The Idiot*, one of this novel’s numerous pre-texts. In Pasternak’s novel, the distribution of the values the suitors represent differs from that in Dostoevsky’s, however. In *Doctor Zhivago*, it is civilization that has two faces. One is the love for comfort, weakness for self-indulgence and egotistic sterility that the privileged upper-class member of society Komarovsky represents. The other is the fanaticism, abstract rationalism, and inhumanity that the proletarian Antipov, taking revenge on that society, incarnates. Zhivago is the defender of a genuine religious culture under attack from all sides, especially the new civilization that calls itself a genuine people’s culture, but is far removed from it. Prepared to embrace the most difficult task of all, i.e. that of going against the current, he, like Christ, triumphs through defeat.

The last section, *Preserving the Heritage*, restores the meaning of the term “civilization” that is given to it in English and French, as opposed to German and Russian, usage: that of spiritual *and* material contributions to human development. It is mainly devoted to Nabokov and his main theme: what a Russian émigré artist’s life should and, should not, be. Thus it is argued in “Larissa, Lolita, Or Catharsis and Dolor, in the Artist-Novels *Doktor Zhivago* and *Lolita*” that Nabokov’s famous American novel continues — from a very new angle to be sure — the Pani Katerina mythology discussed above. Humbert Humbert, the “wicked sorcerer” of the Pani Katerina mythology, is ostensibly not a Russian émigré, but he “belongs” to his Russian creator’s cultural heritage, the fundamental issue of which is: how best to retain a beloved legacy. Is it by clinging to a lost dream of genuine beauty while despising the “shallow civilization” around you? This is what Humbert does, imprisoning his American “Katerina,” while becoming blind to all consequences of doing so. Clearly there are more re-creative ways of preserving the past than imprisoning it in patterns that apply no longer — a conclusion that Humbert himself eventually arrives at.

The following article “Survival of the Superfluous: Doubling and Mimicry in Nabokov’s *Podvig-Glory*” suggests that Martin Edelweiss makes a wiser choice than Humbert does in *Lolita* in regard to recapturing an irreversible past. He makes that better decision, not by returning to his beloved Russia, however, as is usually assumed. He never crosses the border to the Soviet Union, it is argued

in the article, but just eliminates one aspect of himself: the self-pitying Russian hypostasis of a privileged member of the upper classes, longing for a culture gone forever. Crossing the boundary back to the past and disappearing there as “Martin Edelweiss,” he reemerges as “Darwin” — his own western double who knows the art of survival, as well as the reason why he must survive: in order to preserve what has been lost, not by restoring it as “it was then,” but in new creative refractions.

The small article on Briusov’s early poetry “Moscow in the Tropics: Exotica in Valerii Briusov’s Early Urban Poetry” is the last item of the last section, forming a concluding *vignette* to the book. Like the introductory article on Turgenev’s “Song of Triumphant Love,” it seems to have little connection to the main themes of the collection and none to the section it has been placed in. Nevertheless, it may serve as a concluding piece for these reasons: it deals with poetic texts that reflect a time (the Silver Age) when Russian writers did not have to transfer their cultural heritage to the “civilized” West in order to preserve it, as post-revolutionary émigrés had to. Instead, they were free to transfer a “decadent western civilization” to the sacred capital of Russian culture, i.e. Moscow itself; by “exoticizing” archetypal Russian Moscow, following similar poetic procedures as those practiced in decadent Paris. Briusov’s early urban poetry demonstrates the subjectivity of all value oppositions of the culture-civilization-barbarism type. If cultures are indeed succeeded by civilizations as the organic model of birth-maturity-decline posits, then there is also a counter-model that demonstrates that “decaying civilizations” are revitalized when genuine art transforms them into works of culture.

Hopefully then, the articles form a thematically unified collection interacting with and complementing each other. In view of the fact that cultural identity issues continue to play an important role in the current Russian discourse, the materials brought together here may even offer a valid comment on these.

1. *Dialogue*

The Music of Ecstasy and the Picture of Harmony: Nietzsche's *Dionysus and Apollo* in Turgenev's "Song of Triumphant Love"

Often regarded as a fantastic tale where Ivan Turgenev "gave free reign to his imagination" (Kagan-Kans 1969, 558), or sometimes as a story dealing with the psychology of a belated sexual awakening (PSSP 1982:10, 418–20),¹ "Pesn torzhestvuiushchei liubvi" ("Song of Triumphant Love," 1881) may well go beyond fantasy, however, and have additional strata of meaning. It is my contention that this artful pastiche of an Italian renaissance novella is not only a stylistic masterpiece, as has often been stated, but that it also thematically deals with aesthetic issues. Its overall theme is the nature of artistic creativity. In fact, it embraces the daring new concept of the double source of Attic tragedy — and any valid art — proclaimed a few years before the appearance of Turgenev's tale by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik* (*The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, 1872, *Birth* from now on).

This double source of tragedy, it will be remembered, is the Dionysian "spirit of music" marked by frenzy (*Rausch*) and the Apollonian "dream" (*Traum*), or sequence of images.² "Pesn torzhestvuiushchei liubvi" (from now on "Pesn") is a philosophical *Künstlernovelle* that pits the Apollonian image-maker (*Traumkünstler*) against the Dionysian musician of excess (*Rauschkünstler*; Nietzsche 1964, 53).³ It does so in order to demonstrate that genuine art is produced by their cooperation in a "metaphysical act of wondrous copulation" (p. 47). Beneath the story of the rivalry between the musician Mutsii and the painter Fabii for the chaste beauty Valeria, we discern the notion that Dionysian "music" — and all that it means in terms of tempestuous self-abandonment — challenges Apollonian plasticity, or the desire to cast the illusory veil of discreteness and order over the terrifying chaos of existence. Postulating that Dionysian frenzy, passion, obsession, the will to create in spite of all limitations, such as individuation, convention and morality, stand at the beginning of the creative process, Turgenev also shows that these simultaneously vitalizing and

potentially destructive forces subsequently must be tamed, halted, and shaped into forms of Apollonian harmony. The philosopher, then still officially a Greek philologist at Basel University, invariably speaks of the two gods as irreconcilably opposed, yet united in a “mysterious marriage bond” in which they, again and again, challenge each other to “give birth” to the “glorious child” of art (Nietzsche 1964, 65). Turgenev’s “Pesn” likewise demonstrates that Apollonian surface perfection, here represented by Fabii⁴ is by itself empty and meaningless. The Dionysian ruthless will to create, represented by the taciturn musician Mutsii,⁵ on the other hand, remains outside the realm of art, if it is not tamed into the limitation of form. Only the lasting struggle and momentary fusion of the two gods yield aesthetic validity—that aesthetic *value*, which *Valeria* embodies.⁶ To sum up: Turgenev’s “Pesn” integrates recent Nietzschean ideas on “Apollo’s inability to live without Dionysus” (*Birth*, p. 34). Apollo is needed to transform nature into culture, but culture, in its turn, can only be valid if it remembers its matrix—nature. In Turgenev’s tale, the last word, or, in this case, the last chord belongs to Dionysus, since closure would mark the end of the creative process. Here too Turgenev and Nietzsche agree (see Nietzsche 1964, 172–3). In fact, “Pesn” includes virtually every concept proposed by Nietzsche in his *Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*.

“Pesn” forms part of the writer’s late prose, generally seen as a departure from his previous oeuvre and as a text belonging to the “other Turgenev.”⁷ In his late works, it is often claimed, the writer fully expressed his lasting philosophical commitment to Schopenhauerian pessimism and the message of renunciation. Sigrid McLaughlin, for example, who has made a thorough investigation of the role Schopenhauer played in forming Turgenev’s philosophical-literary stance of self-renunciation is inclined to see this philosopher’s impact in “Pesn” also (1984, 132). She takes note of the German epigraph to the story though, which exalts the readiness “to dream and to err,”⁸ stating that it contradicts “the conscious morality of renunciation” and creates a certain “ambivalence” (1984, 142). This ambivalence may be resolved if one accepts the notion that Turgenev in his later works parted ways with Schopenhauer’s renunciation philosophy in favour of Nietzsche’s affirmation of life in all its tragic contradictions. Nietzsche himself had dismissed—however respectfully—Schopenhauer’s pessimism in his *Birth*, discovering in Greek art “a bulwark” against it (Kaufmann 1968, 131). The Turgenev scholar, Elizabeth Cheresch Allen, has applied Nietzschean criteria from *Birth* to Turgenev’s oeuvre as a whole, using these for a general characterization of the writer. She states that Turgenev is “to speak with Nietzsche, not a Dionysian but Apollonian writer” (Allen 1992, 40) adding that “Apollonian” does not mean “classicist,” but rather implies a more general commitment to the act of shaping chaos, to “storytelling” as an image “of the individual exercising control over experience”

(p. 48). In contrast to Allen's view of the writer as a disciple of Apollo, this article presents him as a writer who thematically focuses on the Dionysian "experience" rather than the Apollonian "control" that follows it, at least the "other Turgenev" of the late fantastic tales. It is true though that Dionysian content is couched in Apollonian form also in these late tales.

Nietzschean "praise of Dionysian folly" as a subtext in "Pesn" has, to my knowledge, not previously been perceived, and there is a very good reason why no critic has brought Turgenev's later prose works in general, and "Pesn" specifically, into the context of Nietzsche's *Birth*. Nowhere does the writer mention this, or any other, work by Nietzsche.⁹ Yet it seems unlikely that he would not have known about *Birth*. For one thing, Nietzsche's hypothesis about the double origin of Greek art was immediately hotly debated and quickly rejected by the philologists and, as a result, surrounded by an aura of scandalous revolt against well-established academe. Published in 1872, it preceded "Pesn" by nine years in terms of publication. There was thus plenty of time for Turgenev to acquaint himself with this "scandalous" work and its reception history and, of course, with his excellent mastery of German, he was not obliged to wait for any translations of *Birth* into either Russian or French to acquaint himself with it. Part of its "scandalous" aura, furthermore, was its fervent "encomium" (Köhler 1998, 76) to Richard Wagner, which could not but have been discussed in the music-obsessed Viardot household of which Turgenev formed such an integral part.¹⁰ The world-famous singer Madame Viardot and Wagner were even personally acquainted and she was a confirmed Wagnerite.¹¹

Unlike Wagner, Friedrich Nietzsche was not personally known in the Viardot household, but there were shared acquaintances. Thus Nietzsche befriended Malwida von Meysenbug in the 1870s, a former member of the Herzen household, a Wagnerite and Wagner family friend. Nietzsche and his close friend Paul Rée stayed at her "Sorrento colony" in the late 1870s.¹² It is Paul Rée who seems the most likely person to have told Turgenev about Nietzsche, since he was personally acquainted with him and paid him several visits in Paris in 1875.¹³ Even though Rée may have discussed his own psychological-philosophical interests and publications most of the time, some mention of Nietzsche's *Birth* and the philosopher himself seems very likely. In short, Turgenev must have heard of Nietzsche from either Rée, some (anti-)Wagnerite, or the public debate on *Birth*, and his knowledge of the work is highly probable even if it cannot be proven. The remainder of this article is therefore devoted to the textual evidence offered by *Birth* and "Pesn" bespeaking Turgenev's acquaintance with Nietzschean thought on the Dionysian element in any valid creative process.

Let us begin with the Schiller epigraph in German, containing the verb *irren*, which more clearly than the English "err" is related to madness. It thus brings the story into the Dionysian realm of transgressing the boundaries of

the rational and conventionally permissible. Not only *should* the artist and the lover “err,” the epigraph states, — s/he is even obliged to immerse him/herself into the depths of chaotic emotions, to be (self-) destructive, going “beyond good and evil.”¹⁴ Having “erred,” s/he may proceed to “dream,” i.e., to structure the experience. It may be noted in this context that Nietzsche speaks of Schiller as a poet who described his own process of creativity as beginning in “a musical mood” followed by the “poetic idea” only later (Nietzsche 1964, 67). In short, Schiller’s line used by Turgenev for his epigraph, encompasses Nietzsche’s aesthetics of creativity *en miniature*: daring to “err and dream,” the artist transits from “musical mood,” or the “imageless, primeval pain” of the Dionysian state (1964, 68), to the “poetic idea” of the Apollonian realm of “dreams,” where chaotic emotions are shaped into the “dream sequences” of narrative. To speak in Nietzschean terminology: “melody” is the “matrix” (*die Gebärende*) that bears the “sparks of imagery” (*Bilderfunken*) as frenzy passes into dream (1964, 73). These “sparks” may also owe something to Schiller’s “Ode to Joy” where joy is characterized as a “divine spark” (*Götterfunken*). Its message to overcome individuation in the “orgiastic” joy of “intertwined millions” exchanging a “universal kiss” also has a distinctly Dionysian message. This *Jubellied* (song of triumphant joy) by Beethoven was a favourite of both Wagner and Nietzsche and may have contributed to the title of Turgenev’s “Pesn” (see Nietzsche 1964, 52).¹⁵

A few more reminders of Nietzsche’s main concepts and images as presented in *Birth* and relevant to “Pesn” may be useful at this stage. To begin with the “concepts,” in *Birth* Nietzsche subjects Schopenhauer’s metaphysics of music to a dialectic shift, making it carry the idea of affirmation rather than the idea of renunciation. Retaining Schopenhauer’s notion of music as the direct representation of the Will, as the “language of the Will” that moves the world (Nietzsche 1964, 137), Nietzsche replaces renunciation of individual desires with the joyful affirmation of the tragic essence of being. There is “the overflowing fertility of the World-Will,” ready to impregnate Being with ever new phenomena (138–9), and when we merge with this “siring instinct” (*Zeugungslust*) that proclaims the All-unity of Being, we no longer experience the sadness of individual renunciation, but only the “primeval joy” (*Urlust*) of being part of that Oneness (139). There is no need for a “Buddhist” (read Schopenhauerian) “repudiation of willing” (81).¹⁶

To turn now to some recurring imagery in Nietzsche’s *Birth*, it has rightly been stated that although the metaphoric use of “giving birth” in relation to creating art has become absorbed by the language to the point of cliché, Nietzsche’s use of the “syntagmatic series” of “siring, impregnating, conceiving, being pregnant with and giving birth to” is insistent indeed. *Birth* is in fact the work that “gave birth” to Friedrich Nietzsche in an act of self-birthing” (Kohlenbach 1994, 352). Almost every section of the treatise speaks of “melting

mergers," "highest and most joyful fulfilment," "siring," "conceptions" and "births."¹⁷ Linked to this series is the preponderance of "penetrating motifs," such as the effort "to break into the Hellenic magic mountain" and the "irate sting" of pain (Nietzsche 1964, 163 and 139). "Pesn" is replete with penetration imagery (cf. footnote 1).

Most relevant to our purposes, however, is the mythologeme of the two gods, Apollo and Dionysus, as engaged in a "fertile love-struggle" with each other (Kohlenbach 1994, 359), as engaged in a double paternity of sorts that yields the birth of "centaurs," i.e. to the "glorious" work of art that is sired by music but formed by Apollonian artful shaping.¹⁸ Art, Nietzsche states right away in his *Birth*, owes its continuous evolution to the Apollonian-Dionysian duality, even as the "propagation of the species" relies on the duality of the sexes, their constant "conflicts and periodic acts of reconciliation" (Nietzsche 1964, 47). The love story told in "Pesn" demonstrates this very Nietzschean duality in the rivalry between the musician Mutsii and the painter Fabii for Valeria's love; her eventual pregnancy seems to be the result of their combined efforts, their dual impregnation of her womb.

Let us now turn to Turgenev's story itself for closer textual analysis and more traces of Nietzsche's aesthetics of creativity. Set in 16th-century Ferrara, i.e., in the late Italian Renaissance, it tells the story of how Fabii, the skilful painter who constantly perfects his techniques,¹⁹ marries the beautiful Valeria. She has — upon her mother's advice — chosen him over his rival, the musician Mutsii, whom she is slightly timid with, although she herself is an accomplished lute-player and, like him, on the taciturn side. The two young men — blond, blue-eyed and amiable Fabii and dark-skinned, dark-eyed and verbally reserved Mutsii — were united by a close friendship in spite of their contrasting artistic occupations, temperaments and looks.²⁰ After Valeria's choice of Fabii, or, more correctly, her mother's choice of him, it can, of course, not continue. Mutsii departs for exotic foreign lands in the East, the original home of Dionysus; he goes to Persia, Arabia, India and China and in the Himalayas he visits the "living god" (PSSP 1982:10, 52), the Dalai Lama who, according to Buddhist beliefs, was immortal.²¹ Five years later — claiming he has overcome his passion for Valeria — he returns to Italy and is invited by Fabii to stay with him and Valeria.²²

Their marriage has been a very happy one. Surrounded by the beautiful forms of their art-filled estate and gardens, they have scarcely registered the passage of time and it has imperceptibly flown by like a golden dream dreamt under the aegis of harmonious Apollo. There have been few ripples to stir the veil of illusion, the *maya* of deceptive visions, the surface existence of happiness. They were reminded of the mortality of all human beings when Valeria's mother died, but the only lasting sorrow of their married existence is its continuing childlessness.

Mutsii returns from his Eastern journeys laden with exotic items ranging from jewels and wines to tiger skins and living snakes; his treasures include incense and musical instruments, in short all the classical paraphernalia of Dionysus. He is also accompanied by a mute Malayan servant who sacrificed his tongue to gain — undisclosed — “other” powers (see PSSP 1982:10, 57). Mutsii invites his friends to the pavilion they have offered him to live in, and, having served them a strange, apparently narcotic-magic, wine, plays a Ceylonese love song to them on his Indian three-stringed violin, the bow of which is crowned by a sparkling, sharp-edged diamond. The beautiful jewel “brosal na khodu luchistye iskry, kak by [...] zazhennyi ognem toi divnoi pesni” (“moving about threw luminous sparks...that seemed [...] ignited by the fire of that marvellous song,” PSSP 1982:10, 53). One is reminded of the “image-sparks born out of melody” in Nietzsche’s *Birth* (the *Bilderfunken* mentioned above), as well as the “fiery magic of music” (*Feuerzauber*) he also mentions (Nietzsche 1964, 63).²³ There is a transitional realm apparently where primal frenzy takes the form of musical melody, as it does here. The song’s melody renders the fullness of triumphant sexual passion and satisfied yearnings, the triumph of fluid life over rigid form. To speak with Nietzsche, it sings of Dionysus’s power, which is based on “the sexual omnipotence of nature” (83), but it also contains the “sparks” of future artistic images. It later resounds again in the night as Mutsii plays it again in his pavilion.

The evening has a disturbing effect on Valeria. During the night she has a dream, apparently inspired by Mutsii’s nocturnal playing. In this dream, Mutsii appears to her in a strange low-ceilinged room filled with a rosy glow and with incense emanating from burners in the shape of “chudovishchnykh zverei” (“monstrous animals,” PSSP 1982:10, 54).²⁴ Still in her dream, Mutsii emerges from a door that reveals a vast darkness; he embraces her forcefully and passionately and lays her down on the oriental brocade cushions on the floor. When Valeria wakes up from her dream — which may have been a descent to the depths of true reality and an awakening from Apollonian illusions — she sees her husband lying next to her, his face “bledno kak u mertvetsa” (“pale as a dead man’s”), and “pechal’nee mertvogo litsa” (“more sad than a dead face,” PSSP 1982:10, 54). The triumph of one rival is clearly the defeat of the other at this stage of the conflict between music and image. Fabii too wakes as the Ceylonese song of triumphant love is heard emanating from Mutsii’s pavilion. Replaying the song, his friend and rival confirms his victory. The dream that Mutsii has been able to conjure up emanates from the innermost recesses of being and is “deeper than the day thought,” to quote Zarathustra; they are not the Apollonian dreams of illusionary surface life, but reveal the “depths” of being.