

Recovering the Past for the Future: Guilt, Memory, and Lidiia Ginzburg's *Notes of a Blockade Person*

EMILY VAN BUSKIRK

In this article, Emily Van Buskirk uses archival manuscripts to peel back layers of Lidiia Ginzburg's palimpsestic *Notes of a Blockade Person*. She finds in *Notes* the fragmentary, distanced, and carefully contained traces of Ginzburg's "A Story of Pity and Cruelty," an intense narrative about guilt and remorse. Relying on Ginzburg's own scholarship, Van Buskirk argues that the author's transformations of experience across multiple texts were inspired by Aleksandr Herzen. Herzen provided a model for developing—out of a family tragedy, personal failure, guilt, and remorse—an elevated memoir that would serve history. Yet Ginzburg's notion of character, her ethics, and her documentary aesthetic were born of a different era and gave rise to different kinds of narratives, written in the third person about a slightly generalized other, in a single situation. In Ginzburg's attempts to represent the typical Leningrad intellectual's blockade experiences there are tensions (characteristic of documentary literature) between desires for universality and specificity. Self-examination battles against self-exposure, while a commitment to literature of fact withstands an aversion to autobiography.

A Politeia in Besiegement: Lidiia Ginzburg on the Siege of Leningrad as a Political Paradigm

IRINA SANDOMIRSKAIA

In her reading of Ginzburg's notes about the siege of Leningrad, Irina Sandomirskaiia emphasizes Ginzburg's conceptualization of besiegement as the imprisonment of a polity inside a tautology. In the reality of the siege as depicted by Ginzburg, the extinction of life occurs in a self-devastating repetitiveness that dominates space, time, body, communication, action, thought, and ethics. Sandomirskaiia interprets Ginzburg's conceptualization of besiegement from within in terms of Michel Foucault's biopower, when life is administered and selectively awarded as an entitlement, depending on how the administration understands the usefulness of that life for the war economy. As a result, a dystrophic body politic develops, as the *polis* in besiegement is subject to devastation and implosion, reproducing the bodily processes of a patient dying from alimentary dystrophy. Ginzburg resolutely questions the biopolitical solution by presenting an alternative in the individual politics of "loopholes of lesser evil."

The Spectacle of the Besieged City: Repurposing Cultural Memory in Leningrad, 1941–1944

POLINA BARSKOVA

Focusing on less studied areas of the twentieth-century war experience, this article investigates the notions of "urban beauty" and "urban spec-

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tacle” as experienced by the residents of besieged Leningrad. Polina Barskova suggests that, via an estrangement effect, the siege gaze replaces the unrepresentable traumatic experience of presentness with an aestheticized cultural past containing such useable notions of cultural memory as *ruin, stage set, monument, and frame*. This replacement can be described as a siege urbanscape sublime, a sublime lying not in the distinction between the horrific and the beautiful but rather in the observer’s tendency to substitute the horrific with the beautiful. This particular species of sublime aims at psychological anesthesia and is thoroughly oxymoronic: the intense clashing of opposites—to the point that oxymoronic sensibility leads to rhetorical confluence—alerts us to the connection between the aesthetic discourse of besieged Leningrad and the perennial Petersburg text, thus opening new opportunities for the study of the functioning of cultural memory in Soviet society.

The Liberal Gene: Sociobiology as Emancipatory Discourse in the Late Soviet Union

YVONNE HOWELL

Sociobiology investigates all manifestations of human nature—including our moral, aesthetic, and intellectual strivings—from the perspective of evolutionary biology. In this article, Yvonne Howell examines V. P. Efroimson’s controversial 1971 *Novyi mir* article, “The Genealogy of Altruism: Ethics from the Perspective of Human Evolutionary Genetics,” in order to point out one of the paradoxes embedded in late Soviet culture: namely, the potentially reductive and reactionary discourse of sociobiology was used instead to make a compelling argument for social pluralism, intellectual freedom, and individual moral responsibility. Howell compares the initial rejection of sociobiology by liberals in the west with the valorization of Efroimson’s evolutionary ethics among a broad spectrum of the liberal, educated public in late USSR. She shows how Efroimson updated the “evolutionary humanism” championed by Soviet geneticists in the 1920s to challenge enduring Brezhnev-era dogma about the malleability of human nature. This account indicates a trajectory from earlier tensions between disciplining scripts for selfhood typical of Soviet modernism and alternative narratives (both humanistic and biological) for an ethics based on autonomous individual self-scripting.

Skyscrapers, Consular Territory, and Hell: What Bulgakov and Eizenshtein Learned about Space from Il’f and Petrov’s America

ANNE NESBET

The Soviet comic writers Il’ia Il’f and Evgenii Petrov traveled across America in late 1935–36, gathering material for the travelogue published upon their return as “*Odnoetazhnaia Amerika*” (*One-Story America*) in the journal *Znamia* and then as a book in 1937, just at the time of Il’f’s death. The book was a popular success and remarkably influential: the archi-

tectural structures of “One-Story America”—its skyscrapers, staircases, one-story bungalows—reappear in literary and cultural monuments of the 1930s and 1940s, namely Mikhail Bulgakov’s novel about the Devil’s eventful visit to Moscow, *The Master and Margarita*, and Sergei Eizenshtein’s essays on montage. These works share an interest in the construction of space and perspective: paradoxical spatial constructions, embedded spaces, verticality, the “trick of the skyscraper,” and what Eizenshtein referred to as the “charm” of “acrobatic points of view.”

Micro-Periodization and Dynasticism: Was There a Divide in the Reign of Ivan the Terrible?

SERGEI BOGATYREV

In this article, Sergei Bogatyrev offers new insight into the problem of continuity and change during the reign of Ivan IV the Terrible by focusing on the micro-periodization of dynastic history. In modern cultural and historical studies, periodization often includes micro-periods that are based on the perceptions of contemporaries. A micro-period can open a longer historical period, mark dramatic events, or reflect day-to-day activities. Bogatyrev argues that the 1550s was an important micro-period in the dynastic history of Ivan IV’s Muscovy. The dynasty was in the center of many political and cultural projects of the 1550s, including the relations between the tsar and his cousin Vladimir of Staritsa, redefining the mechanism of succession, and formulating a dynastic vision of Muscovy’s past. The micro-periodization of dynastic history reveals important developments that may be easily obscured by the traditional division of Ivan’s reign into good and bad halves.

The Petrine Divide and the Periodization of Early Modern Russian History

RUSSELL E. MARTIN

Among the chief problems in determining the boundaries of the early modern period in Russian history is the reign and reforms of Peter I the Great. In this article, Russell E. Martin situates Peter’s reign within the context of dynastic marriage politics from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. He argues that the centuries from roughly 1500 to 1800 constitute a single, coherent period. Court politics were dominated by concerns of kinship and marriage: in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by the search for a domestic bride for the Russian rulers through bride shows; then, in the eighteenth century, by the gradual transformation of court politics away from domestic brides and toward a more traditional use of dynastic marriage as a tool in foreign policy. The early modern period ends, Martin argues, only with the promulgation of a new law of succession by Paul I (as modified by Alexander I). The so-called Petrine divide, then, is elided in a periodization of Russian history that very much mirrors the boundaries that are conventional in the west.

The End of Muscovy: The Case for circa 1800

DONALD OSTROWSKI

How Russia transformed itself from a relatively small principality on the steppe frontier in 1450 to a major Eurasian empire by 1800 is one of the fundamental questions of Russian historical study. The two main views posit a central role for Peter I (1682–1725) in that transformation either by singled-handedly “changing everything” and bringing Muscovy into the modern age through embracing contact with Europe and with the western enlightenment or by accelerating the pace of changes already occurring. In this article, Donald Ostrowski proposes that Russia’s transition during this period can be better explained by examining the general trends of historical development and influences across Afro-Eurasia. This essay also raises questions about the use of the term *modernization* and examines eight categories of historical development: contact with the world; establishment of an empire; court politics; military; society and economics; governmental administration; church relations; and culture and education. Ostrowski concludes that in the early modern period one finds no turning points in Russian history, only more or less continuous trends, and that only roughly around 1800 do fundamental changes begin to occur within these eight categories.