

The lead articles in this issue of *Slavic Review* are studies of imagined community: the greater Polish state described by the National Democracy movement and ethnically defined nation inscribed in the constitutions of the formerly Yugoslav republics. We are acutely aware that such ethnographic texts are multivocal. Such exchanges show how, in politically charged contexts, imagination may combine with a totalizing will to render singular and sometimes brutal what are plural and always subtle—people and the linguistic cultures they shape. The Research Notes that follow dissect imagined cultural totalities, American and Russian, intentionally dispelling an historical isolation of Russian studies from our own cultural studies.

That isolation is often attributed to the cold war. It stems, however, from earlier attitudes toward linguistically foreign cultures, captured for example in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "college" novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920). Fitzgerald's intellectual adolescent asserts, "'Whitman's tremendous—like Tolstoi. They both look things in the face, and, somehow, different as they are, stand for somewhat the same things.'" Such was Whitman's own and the prevailing nineteenth century view. But Amory, one of "a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success," counters: "'You have me stumped, Burne. I've read *Anna Karenina* and *The Kreutzer Sonata* of course, but Tolstoi is mostly in the original Russian as far as I'm concerned.'" Language difference was the first ideological curtain drawn between Russians and Americans, and Russian was marked alien.

The west long maintained a fiction of Russia as primitive. Nowhere is this more evident than in Freud's 1914 study of infantile neurosis, "The Case of the Wolf-Man," the wealthy Russian landowner Sergius Pankejeff. "Ambivalence of emotion is the vestige of a primitive soul," Freud wrote Stefan Zweig in 1920, "much better preserved in the Russian people than elsewhere, more readily manifest in their present-day awareness, as I demonstrated just a few years ago in the detailed case history of a typical Russian." Freud is quite open in his elevation of patient history to cultural and national totality: the Wolf-Man's "phantasies correspond exactly to the legends by means of which a nation that has become great and proud tries to conceal the insignificance and failure of its beginnings." Freud took as the subject of his study of childhood trauma and adult hysteria the Russian soul; in that guise it served for decades as the episteme of neurosis.

At the other margin of Europe a different awareness took the name "soul," one borne of a population immobilized, denied national, familial and individual identity, permitted a furtive culture at best: in the lyricism of blues, African America transcended the isolating consciousness of enslavement. A similar lyricism gives contemporary

When a linguacentric scholarly community studies the logocentric former Soviet Union, a preoccupation with text is understandable. The soviet monopoly on the word had the result of simplifying tasks, drowning out the silent bazaar of a nation's reception of culture. This issue of *Slavic Review* is concerned with that silent bazaar—myriad challenges to the soviet monopoly from architecture, music, film and theater.

Consider two Moscow versions of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. At the Moscow Art Theater a class-reductive Stanislavsky production plays on to increasingly vacant halls. At the Krasnaia Presnia Youth Theater Iurii Pogrebnychko's sisters gyrate to silent beats of the Charleston and Twist as loudspeakers intone the syrupy lines of the MKhAT production across town. Irina hula hoops through her birthday party, lip-synching MKhAT, frivolity lifting the pall of a prospectless life dribbling from the loudspeakers. The sisters, sanitized of their pre- and post-revolutionary personae, make common ridiculous ground with the harmless Doctor and the manic Soleny, while the play's feckless men—the Colonel, the Baron, the Teacher—emerge heroes. There is more comedy here than even Chekhov could have tolerated; it desovietizes *Three Sisters*, restoring the work to the bazaar of multiple meaning.

At the same time in Ireland, England, Italy and the United States, *Three Sisters* is undergoing transformation in a different silent bazaar, the west-led denationalization and globalization of culture. Two productions of *Three Sisters* brought London critics to assert that “there is no greater post-Shakespearean play than *Three Sisters*.” In one, Adrian Noble's Dublin Gate Theatre production, the three Kusack sisters are cast in a sibling rivalry: Irina takes a run at the Colonel, Masha's man. The Doctor, played by the Kusacks' father, acts as though he fathered Irina, thoroughly confounding life and art, already thrice confounded. In the other production, that of the Georgian-born director Robert Sturua at the Queen's Theatre, the three Redgraves cavort like children in the nursery; sisterhood is totally unrehearsed, grabbing, hugging, patting, kissing, pinching, kicking, punching and tumbling in a giggling heap on the stage. Then, in the course of the play, they each have a go at the other's man and end alien to one another as well as isolated from the world. In both productions nature asserts its primacy over art, birth over the individual, as in early feminist thought.

Margarethe von Trotta's film *Three Sisters* sets the play in mid-1980s Italian feminism. This time, Masha-the-married-woman takes the married man away from Olga-the-spinster who then, to spite her sister, manages to restore him to his crazed wife. “You expect a man to betray you sooner or later, even the one you love most. That's one of the reasons why we draw up contracts, swear oaths and look for reassurance in words. But it's different with a woman friend. Friendship is a sentiment that doesn't need words. . . .” Alas, such optimism does not survive the film.

meaning to the Russian “soul” in Boris Pasternak’s poem so titled, “Dusha” (1956):

Душа моя, печальница
О всех в кругу моем!
Ты стала усыпальницей
Замученных живьем.

My mournful soul, you, sorrowing
For all my friends around,
You have become the burial vault
Of all those hounded down.

The internal colonization that was stalinism—its disenfranchisement, ideological domination, cultural and psychic denigration and isolation—constituted conditions that give rise to ethical and political resistance, the *locus communis* of modern self-awareness:

The hounded slave that flags in the race and leans by the fence,
blowing and covered with sweat,
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck,
The murderous buckshot and the bullets,
All these I feel or am.
I am the hounded slave. . . .

Leaves of Grass

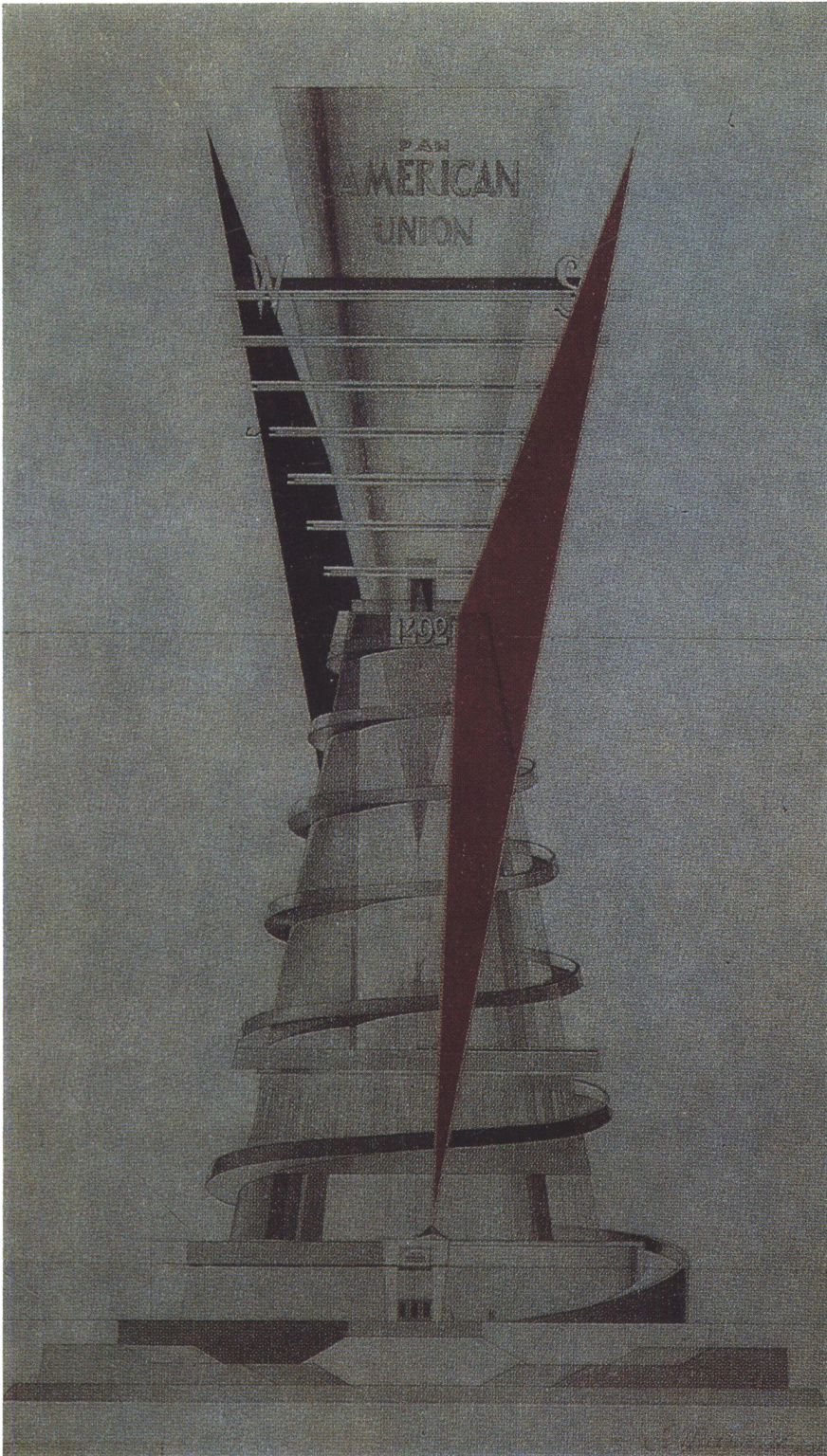
As between this year’s anniversaries the one that tells most about the plurality of culture and peoples is the centenary of Walt Whitman, 1819–1892.

E.D.M.

At Princeton's McCarter Theatre Emily Mann staged the first post-feminist *Three Sisters*. In the opening scene the sisters withhold touch, distancing themselves from each other as if in anticipation of the love triangles of Acts Two and Three, where all the above happens plus Olga makes a play for Masha's husband. Von Trotta's vast dichotomy of men and women applies better to Mann's production, for it is the *isolation of the beginning and the alienation of the action that permit* the sisters to fuse at the end into one speechless monument to sisterhood.

In all this post-Shakespearean celebration of *Three Sisters* there is no received Russian national theater, no established view of the play's meaning situated in a provincial town 14 kilometers from the railroad station from which you can't get to Moscow. There is the denationalization that seems inevitable as Russia throws off a false nation and there is the internationalization elsewhere in pursuit of its own undeniable dynamic. But the renationalization of Russian culture, the pure operation of the silent bazaar, waits in the wings.

E.D.M.



Monument to Columbus
Competition Project: Santo Domingo 1929
Konstantin Mel'nikov