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AUTHORSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP:  
A PROBLEM FOR MODERN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

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Во всем мерещится мне драма...

N. Nekrasov

«Еще волнуются живые голоса  
О сладкой вольности гражданства!»  
Но жертвы не хотят слепые небеса:  
Вернее труд и постоянство.

O. Mandelstam

Societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievements can be measured and towards which aspirations can be directed.

T. H. Marshall

To formulate the problem pedantically: can literary scholarship accommodate the political experience of modern Russian literature with the same degree of catholicity as the imagination of the intelligentsia has done both in Russia and the West?<sup>1</sup> I would like to offer a perspective that favors an affirmative answer. As one who

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper, "The Writer Meets the State," appeared in *The Gorbachev Era*, eds. Alexander Dallin and Condoleezza Rice (Stanford Alumni Association: Stanford, 1986). I would like to thank Victoria E. Bonnell, Edward J. Brown, Lazar Fleishman, and William Mills Todd III both for their willingness to discuss drafts of this paper with me and for their generous comments.

has shared in this imagination (despite my own Kantian better judgement), I find it both advantageous and appropriate to draw on the material of the last two decades or so, the period when I observed the workings of Russian literature, first from the margins of the Moscow literary milieu and, later, from the perch of strictly academic literary studies in America.

All histories of Russia's recent past, including histories of literature, turn on Stalin's death, and I, too, shall employ it as a point of departure, as a necessary, if not sufficient, reason for the liberalization that followed in its wake. As the state's grip on Russian society began to loosen, the production and reception of Russian literature, including the nineteenth-century classics, continued to be tied by the old transmission belts to the center of power. However, by contrast with the last years of the Stalin regime, the government's ability to manipulate literature as well as the political self-discipline of its practitioners (the Zhdanov dressage notwithstanding) were becoming problematic. Granted, none of this would have happened but for the changes in the character of state power under Khrushchev; still, the less immediate causes for this loosening must be sought in the very special authority that imaginative literature enjoyed in Russia among the party leadership as well as the country's educated elite. In a culture where mass communications were dominated by the printed word and national consciousness was anchored in an enforced worshipful reverence for the "classics" (and they still are), even episodic confrontations between writers and the state resonated with ever-increasing intensity throughout the educated society. Indeed, for a while during the late 1950s and early 1960s, one could get the impression that significant literary figures were either resisting or succumbing to the pressure to insert themselves, their work, or the work of a recently reinterpreted Russian classic into the more risky regions of the political realm.

Whether to lend support to a particular undertaking by the government or, more notably if less frequently, to question the legitimacy of its actions or even its *raison d'être*, the writer's name was sure to be invoked—an implicit acknowledgement of the pivotal function assigned to the profession in the interaction between the Soviet society and state. One need not go far for examples of

the more significant cases. Solzhenitsyn's role in Khrushchev's attack on the Stalinist guard of the Party is an example of the first kind. Although they were far too tame to elicit the same sort of gasp as did *One Day*, the heavy artillery of Ehrenburg's memoirs and the precision guided missiles of Evtushenko's topical verse played a similar role in Khrushchev's "civil-war" strategy,<sup>2</sup> as did Kochetov's infamous novels in the service of the Party's "hard line." More important, not all troops were prepared to fight the commander's battles or march in step. Indeed, some who might have happily stayed in the ranks of the loyal opposition, that is, maintained their critical stance from within the literary establishment, fell out of line or dropped out altogether: the Pasternak affair (1958), the trial of the poet Joseph Brodsky for "social parasitism" (1964), the trial of Siniavsky and Daniel (1966), and, finally, the exile to the West of Solzhenitsyn in 1974.<sup>3</sup> These and other similar cases did not exist in isolation but drew sustenance from and relied on the sympathetic readership of the more daring among the loyal, some of whom were old enough to have begun their career in the 1900s and 1920s, like Chukovsky, Ehrenburg, Paustovsky, Kataev; some in the 1930s, like Tvardovsky; some in the post-war years, like Dudintsev; and, finally, the "young" whose careers took off during the Thaw (i.a., Evtushenko, Aksenov, Granin, Kazakov, Iskander, Okudzhava, and Trifonov). There is no denying that the celebrated crescendos in the incessant tug-of-war between the *literatory* and the Soviet state have influenced the way educated readers—Russian and American—have looked at

<sup>2</sup> The publication of Evtushenko's "Heirs to Stalin" on October 21, 1962, was targeted at those who challenged Khrushchev's behavior during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Deming Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin* (Cambridge, England, 1978), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> On Pasternak see Robert Conquest, *The Pasternak Affair: Courage of Genius; A Documentary Report* (Philadelphia, 1962); on Brodsky, see Anonymous (F. A. Vigdorova), "The Trial of Joseph Brodsky," *New Leader*, August 31 (1964):6-17; On Andrei Siniavsky and Iulii Daniel see, Max Hayward, ed. and trans., *On Trial: The Soviet State Versus "Abram Tertz" and "Nikolay Arzhak"* (New York, 1966); on Solzhenitsyn see his own *Bodalsia telenok s dubom: Ocherki literaturnoi zhizni* (Paris, 1975); Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn: A Biography* (New York, 1984); John B. Dunlop, Richard Haugh, and Alexis Klimoff, eds., *Aleksander Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Belmont, Mass., 1974); and the most recent volume, John B. Dunlop, Richard S. Haugh and Michael Nicholson, *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Palo Alto, 1986).



Russian literature.

Indeed, these days we expect no less from a Russian author who, for his part, considers himself to be nurtured on the "heroic" tradition of literary authorship in Imperial Russia,<sup>4</sup> sanitized and deafeningly amplified by the propaganda establishment since the 1930s. Nekrasov's pithy dictum "You need not be a poet, but a citizen—that you must be," rings over the literary terrain, including the two most recent Congresses of Writers,<sup>5</sup> as much as it did when it was issued in the middle of the nineteenth century. Then, when Russia was an estate society of His Majesty's subjects, a call to citizenship, ostensibly evocative of the Republican Rome, was so subversive that its pathetic aspect—the suffering involved in sacrificing oneself in the struggle against despotism—tended to overshadow the cause itself, not to speak of the legal intricacies negotiating and protecting what the French Revolution defined as the Rights of Man and Citizen. Now, too, in what is ostensibly a union of republics, exhortations to *grazhdanstvennost'* continue to emphasize self-sacrifice—be they issued obsequiously as a reaffirmation of a writer's political loyalty or spoken with solemnity as a code word for defying the political elite of the state.

If we set aside for a moment the protective habit of filtering out stock quotations and listen afresh to the words with which Nekrasov's Citizen admonished the disillusioned Poet, we can begin to discern that something far more profound than mere civil and political rights was at stake in their "originary" debate:

Go and perish without reproach.  
You shall not die for naught: the cause is strong  
When blood is spilt for its sake...

Apparently Nekrasov's "citizenship," as its subsequent history indicates, was inscribed simultaneously in two different traditions: one secular, echoing the French Revolution's echo of the republican Rome; the other religious, an *imitation* of the suffering Christ. The "text" produced by its uses was therefore inherently ambiguous. For martyrdom, in the Christian sense, is ultimately mimetic and,

<sup>4</sup> S. A. Vengerov, *Geroicheskiĭ kharakter russkoi literatury* (The Heroic Character of Russian Literature), 2nd ed. (Petrograd: Svetoch, 1919).

<sup>5</sup> The Congress of the RSFSR Union of Writers (December 1985) and the Eighth All-Union Congress of Writers (June-July 1986).

unlike the secular virtue of citizenship, represents, as it were, a reward in itself. It should not be surprising then that self-sacrifice in the cause of citizenship or, more precisely, its performance, could push the civic purpose backstage. The more complicated pages of the history of the Russian "liberation movement" indicate that the martyr's stance of a revolutionary, which sometimes legitimated the sacrifice of individual freedom or freedom of expression, or simply human decency, occupied a privileged position in the mental universe of the Russian intelligentsia:

During the whole time when civic-mindedness predominated in our milieu, one encounters brilliant figures only among the revolutionaries; and this is because active participation in the cause of the revolution in our society constituted martyrdom [*podvizhnichestvo*], that is, demanded an enormous effort of shaping one's personality in accordance with one's consciousness, and involved inner renunciation of dear affinities, hopes for personal happiness; it is not surprising that a person who had achieved such a great victory in his inner self appeared brilliant and strong.<sup>6</sup>

In the Soviet period, one can hardly find a better example of this kenotic ambiguity than Maiakovsky's "stepping on the throat of his own song." But it is worth recalling others, among them the less proverbial exhortation to poets, issued by Osip Mandelstam, to turn toward civic poetry. "Compassion for the state that denies the word," he wrote in 1921, "this is the social cause and the ordeal (*podvig*, a hagiographical term for a martyr's ordeal) for the modern poet."<sup>7</sup>

Molded in the image of this tradition, writers today must be loath to disappoint their audience by failing to live up to the old

<sup>6</sup> Mikhail Gershenzon, *Istoricheskie zapiski* (Moscow, 1910), p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> Osip Mandelstam, "Slovo i kul'tura," in his, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by B. F. Filippov and G. P. Struve, vol 2, 2nd ed. (New York, 1971), p. 226. The quoted passage is followed by the second stanza of Mandelstam's "Sumerki svobody" ("Proslavim, brat'ia, sumerki svobody," 1918), a hymn to Lenin's seizure of power. See A. Morozov, "Mandel'shtam v zapisiakh dnevnika S. P. Kablukova," *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo studencheskogo dvizheniia* 129, no. 3 (1979):134. This should, perhaps, end the controversy surrounding the translation of the word "sumerki," which in Russian, on rare occasions, may also refer to sunrise. Here, the word refers to "sunset," which is exactly what Mandelstam "glorifies" in his hymn, showing his empathy for the "people's leader" (Lenin) "assuming in tears the fateful burden of power." For a recent discussion of the Russian "podvig" see Peter Henry, "Imagery of *podvig* and *podvizhnichestvo* in the Works of Garshin and the early Gor'kii," *Slavonic and East European Review* 61, no. 1 (1983):139-159.

expectations. What is more it is the writers themselves who have been keeping these expectations alive.<sup>8</sup> Take another example from Mandelstam, now from his 1930 "Fourth Prose," a work animated by something other than compassion for the state:

I divide all the works of world literature into the permitted ones and those written without permission. The first kind are junk, the second are stolen air. I want to spit in the face of the writers who write with an advance permission, I want to beat them on the head with a stick, I want them all seated at the Herzen House (Writers' Club) with a glass of policeman's tea in front of each and Gornfeld's urine sample in hand. . . .

I would make it illegal for these writers to get married and have children. How can they have children when the fathers have been sold to the pock-marked devil for the next three generations—after all, it is up to our children to continue our work, to tell to the end the most important part of our story.<sup>9</sup>

This demand for literary eugenics which the poet Osip Mandelstam flung at the writers' community in 1930 was in wide circulation among the literati in Moscow and Leningrad in the 1960s and 1970s. Its traces are discernible in the more legal-minded and decorous rhetoric of Solzhenitsyn's 1967 "Letter to the Fourth Congress of Soviet Writers" (emphasis added):

The right of our writers to voice judgements which are ahead of their time concerning the moral life of man and society, their right to an independent elucidation of social problems or of the historical experience of our country, *gained at the cost of such great suffering*—these rights are neither presupposed nor recognized.<sup>10</sup>

And again, this "cost in suffering" as a foundation of Russian literature was invoked at the RSFSR Writers' Congress by both Yevtushenko and Rasputin in December 1985.<sup>11</sup> Six months later,

<sup>8</sup> "Even if literature is not a wave but only a drop in the people's sea, still, even in a small drop the sun of world history finds its reflection." R. Ivanov-Razumnik, *Pisatel'skie sud'by* (New York, 1951), p. 2. See also discussions of this tradition in the Introduction, in Rufus W. Mathewson, *The Positive Hero in Russian Literature*, 2d ed. (Stanford, 1975); and Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, 1981). Among the more recent examples of the tradition in action is Lidia Chukovskaia's, *Proissess isklucheniia: ocherk literaturnykh nravov* (Paris, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Osip Mandelstam, *The Fourth Prose*, in his *Sobranie Sochinenii*, vol. 2, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> John B. Dunlop, Richard Hough, Alexis Klimoff, eds., *Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Belmont, Mass., 1973), p. 464. The 2d, rev. and expanded ed. was published by McMillan in 1975.

<sup>11</sup> *Literaturnaia gazeta*, December 19, 1985. For a fuller text of Yevtushenko's speech (although in a corrupt translation) see *The New York Times*, December 18 and 19, 1985.

speaking at the All-Union Congress of Writers, Viacheslav Shugaev defined authorial martyrdom with a noteworthy clinical precision:

In our literature of the immediate future, the main conflict will be generated by the character of a protagonist who has decided to live according to conscience. In his soul, there will emerge a struggle between his decision and the habitual conservative [*okhranitel'naia*] reaction. It is over this coronary-prone, bleeding crossroads that our pens shall stand poised [*zastynut*]. Here will be located the fundamental emotional knot of the drama of civic courage [*grazhdanskoe muzhestvo*].<sup>12</sup>

However habitual and, perhaps, because they are habitual, these expectations of a writer's heroic stance do not make less puzzling the unspoken assumption that literature, and above all Russian literature, is a source of genuine power, a "second government," as Solzhenitsyn put it, and not just a political irritant as some might suggest. It is worth noting that a headline in the issue of the *Literaturnaia gazeta* devoted to the All-Union Congress of Writers, although it shied away from Solzhenitsyn's political metaphor, assigned imaginative literature what is, perhaps, the most privileged place in the anthropology of the Soviet society: "Literature is the People's Conscience." To what extent, if at all, this assumption corresponds to an author's actual influence on the social and political processes is another matter and one that warrants a separate discussion, based on a detailed analysis of the available historical evidence. Here I am interested in an interpretive framework in which such evidence may be meaningfully integrated. For the purposes of this essay, I shall assume that such a widely held belief, especially as it involves the country's educated elite, represents a dynamic force in its own right. An agglomeration of such beliefs, although hard to measure, should be counted among other more generally acknowledged societal forces such as, say, religion or education, which we identify with specific institutions. By the same token, the power of the belief in the potency of belles lettres ought not to be assumed as something self-evident. For it is one thing to invoke the "sacred mission of Russian literature" as an apostrophe addressed to the converted gathered for a ritual occasion (the Writers' Congress, the Nobel ceremony) and quite another to explain why—if we take the example of any one congress of

<sup>12</sup> *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 12, 1986.

Soviet Writers—even authors who have made a career out of abject obedience and fawning before the state should find it necessary again and again to resort to this particular vocabulary. Evidently, the beliefs in the power of the literary word are not necessarily to be taken for granted. They, too, have their unique conditions of possibility and, in Foucauldian sense, their history.<sup>13</sup> What, then, are the conditions that make the existence of this particular literary culture possible and how did they come about?

The first, perhaps the most necessary, condition is the *relative tolerance* of the present Soviet system. I emphasize both words for a simple reason that when intolerance or tolerance are for all practical purposes close to being absolute—the Soviet Union at the height of Stalin's power in the late 1930s and 1940s or the United States today—the aesthetic sphere tends toward either a full dependency on or autonomy from the political sphere. It is another matter when repression is only partial, as it has been in Russia since Stalin's death. Under circumstances like these a writer can take on the state even if the latter—as Daniil Kharmis is said to have pointed out to the NKVD—commands an army and a navy. Now, to paraphrase Stalin's dismissal of the Vatican's power, how many divisions did Solzhenitsyn command? In more inclement times, when politics were dominated by violence, a question of this sort could have served as a fitting epitaph to the public ambitions of a Solzhenitsyn. But where power, while still centralized, begins to be dispersed and violence, while present and real, is constrained, a calculus of a political superman loses its applicability. In the history of Russian literature in the post-Stalin era, Solzhenitsyn is a prime example of the effect that the new limitations on violence have had on the cultural sphere as well as a prime beneficiary of this development.

<sup>13</sup> "I would like to write the history of this prison, with all the political investments of the body that it gathers together in a closed architecture. Why? Simply because I am interested in the past? No, if one means by that writing the history of the past in terms of the present. Yes, if one means writing the history of the present." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans., Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977), p. 31. Cf. Boris Eikhenbaum: "History is a special method of the study of the present by means of the facts of the past." "Literaturnyi byt," in his *Moi vremenniki. Slovesnost'. Nauka. Kritika. Polemika* (Leningrad, 1927), p. 49.

The second condition of possibility involves the association of a particular body of work with an unusual public personality, one capable of sustaining a charismatic aura in the eyes of the readership. In this respect, too, Solzhenitsyn offers a rewarding example. His *Gulag Archipelago* helped to shape America's popular opinion of the Soviet Union, a matter not only of foreign policy but of internal United States politics as well.<sup>14</sup> This three-volume *Essay in Literary Investigation*, as Solzhenitsyn subtitled his hybrid history of repression in the Soviet Union, had an even more dramatic effect on the internal politics in France where the Left has been an institutionalized part of government.<sup>15</sup> The phenomenon of *The Gulag Archipelago* enabled the Socialist Party to increase its ranks often at the expense of the French Communists. Remarkably, these developments were precipitated by the literary work, the story of its appearance and, emphatically, the story of its author. The factual material contained in the volumes played only a secondary role, for the basic facts about the Soviet repression, particularly under Stalin, had been well-known and accessible to anyone in the West for decades.

What effect did Solzhenitsyn, as a literary personality, have in the Soviet Union, where he ought to have counted most? In the absence of public opinion polls or other avenues of free discussion, it is hard to measure or qualify his influence. Suffice it to say that Khrushchev's campaign of de-Stalinization, the single most important event in Russia since World War II, came to be identified as much with Solzhenitsyn and his novella *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* as with any one symbolic figure or phenomenon.

This uncanny capacity of the Russian literary culture to invest the author of fiction with the symbolic intensity of historical events with which he has been associated largely as a passive agent brings us to the third condition: that readers, including the government, indeed, above all the government, take literature seriously. They did so with Pasternak, Brodsky, Siniavskii, Daniel, Solzhenitsyn,

<sup>14</sup> See "Solzhenitsyn's Reception in the United States" by John B. Dunlop, in John B. Dunlop, Richard S. Haugh and Michael Nicholson, *Solzhenitsyn in Exile: Critical Essays and Documentary Materials* (Palo Alto, 1986).

<sup>15</sup> See Georges Nivat, *Soljenitsyne* (Paris: Seuil, 1980). See also Pierre Daix, "Solzhenitsyn in France After 1974," in *Solzhenitsyn in Exile*.



Lidiia Chukovskaia, and, more recently, in the twilight of the Brezhnev era, with Voinovich and Aksenov.<sup>16</sup> To turn to the most celebrated example, the appearance of Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* had consequences powerful enough to warrant a full-scale press campaign of vilification against the author who only a few years ago was enjoying high official esteem. Because he had been lavishly praised, he could not be easily silenced; and because, in the eyes of the authorities, literature mattered, he could not be ignored. The affair came to an end when the government decided to cut its political losses and to suffer an international embarrassment by expelling him—all in order to avoid a greater potential embarrassment of having to incarcerate him for a length of time. Or so it seemed then. In retrospect, it appears that the damage ran much deeper but was obscured from sight by the anger many intellectuals in Russia and the West felt toward the Soviet government for exiling abroad Russia's foremost writer. However, for the average Soviet citizen, who remembered the good old days under Stalin when any expression of dissatisfaction landed you in jail for the rest of your life, a one-way ticket to the West, a coveted destination, signified a victory for the author and a defeat for the power of the state, the army and the navy notwithstanding.<sup>17</sup>

Would it not have been more prudent for the authorities, we may reasonably inquire, to remain above the fray and to ignore Solzhenitsyn altogether? For they must have known that by engaging him even in this, by Soviet standards, gentle way, they were amplifying his voice and enhancing his stature, thereby sharing with the writer—a single individual—some of the world's greatest authority and might. This fellow Solzhenitsyn was worth a few divisions, after all. And let us not forget that well before the Solzhenitsyn affair, and certainly since, more than a few authors (for example, Voinovich, Aksenov, Vladimov) have entered into a similar power-sharing arrangement with the Soviet state while a number of others, among them well-established writers, threatened to cross over from

<sup>16</sup> Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984).

<sup>17</sup> This sentiment must have been appreciated by the powers that be, which is goes a long way toward explaining why the Soviet government has turned a deaf ear to Western protests against the confinement of Andrei Sakharov.

the Gos- to the Tamizdat. Evtushenko's plea to the gray eminences of literary politics at the RSFSR Congress of Writers to allow serious criticism from within the system and not to worry about the uses such criticism might be put to by the "foreign Mariia Aleksev-nas" expresses a high anxiety felt by those spirited authors who, like the speaker, have thrown their lot with the state only to watch their thunder being stolen from them, thunder clap by thunder clap, by the defiant, suffering drop-outs.

Apparently, the government felt compelled to act as it did, as did the author. In fact, the two parties were operating within a distinct tradition, a particular cultural arrangement, an anthropologist would call it, in which the author feels compelled to play the part of the lone bearer of truth with the collective body of the government filling the role of the other protagonist—the faceless, brawny, and humorless Goliath. This uneasy theatrical symbiosis not long ago prompted Andrei Siniavskii to show mock empathy with the pathetic Russian (including Soviet) state:

The time has come now to pity not the writers, but their persecutors and oppressors, for it is to them that Russian literature owes its success. And what of the writer? He has no worries: there he is sitting calmly in prison or in the madhouse, hugging himself with delight: a story! And as he breathes his last, he can rub his hands: the job's done!<sup>18</sup>

Needless to say, Siniavsky, who himself was launched on his public career as a writer of fiction by his arrest, the trial and the subsequent lengthy imprisonment in the Gulag, had no intention of trivializing the personal tragedies of individual authors. But, being a writer and a literary scholar, he could not avoid noting in the uncanny recurrence of this phenomenon a rewarding, almost archetypal dramatic plot. Thus literature's involvement with power has come full circle—from the earlier confrontations to becoming preferred material for fictions, to the accepted fact of social and political life, to, finally, the ironic appreciation of the long-standing interdependence of literature and governmental repression.

There is special value in this dramatic, theatrical view of what

<sup>18</sup> Abram Tertz (Andrei Siniavskii) "Literaturnyi Protsess v Rossii," *Kontinent* 1(1973):80.

Siniavskii called the "literary process in Russia." For it makes visible the background forces that script the performance in the theater of the real (to borrow a phrase from a recent novel by John LeCarre). In order to enter the stage in this playhouse, the authorities have to make everything, including literary production, their business, that is to say, maintain an absolute claim on power. But in order to remain on stage, they must accept limitations on what they can and cannot do, because the rules of theater, whether in politics or entertainment, require that even improvisation be coordinated with the invisible agencies behind the scenes. What is most paradoxical about the dramatic arrangement of this sort is that both the acceptance of limitations (implicit in a *political* process) and the unwillingness to share power with any one group (explicit in the authoritarian tradition of Russia, especially, after 1917) must coexist. Without this paradox, the popular show with a telegraphic title, "Russian Writer Meets State," will not go on.

Consider the alternatives. The stage, not to speak of the author, would be crushed under the weight of an unrestrained state power. If, on the other hand, as their modern counterparts have done and as Gorbachev's people appear to be doing today, albeit on a very limited, tentative scale,<sup>19</sup> the Soviet government had acknowledged explicitly the legitimacy of non-governmental autonomous institutions, the production would not have lasted past the opening night. What, then, are the forces that have maintained the precarious balance between the two asymmetrical protagonists on stage? Or, to pick up on the earlier question, how did this balance come about?

In part, the answer lies in the modern Russian culture of authority which, to use Max Weber's typology, blends the traditionalist view of the state as an immutable, almost patriarchal power (Father-Tsar or Father-Stalin) with the rational bureaucratic system that befits a modern industrial nation and then combines

<sup>19</sup> I have in mind the phenomenon of the semi-autonomous theater studios that have sprung up around Moscow in the last two years. There seem to exist similar, uncensored, clubs for public recital by the authors of their recent work. On the subject of autonomous youth organizations see a fascinating account by Iurii Shehekochikhin, "Na perekrestke," in *Literaturnaia gazeta* (October 22, 1986).

the two with a very strong propensity for bringing forth intensely charismatic figures.<sup>20</sup> Whereas no society can claim to be based on a single pure type of authority (the types are analytical abstractions), in a modern Western state, the universalist, legal-bureaucratic, (that is, rational and predictable) type of authority is assumed to predominate overall. The kind of citizenship that emerges in such a society, too, is based on a universalist, bourgeois rationality, involving access to and protection of an individual's economic, political and social rights.<sup>21</sup> It may be said that the legal-rational state and citizenship as such represent two sides of the same coin and, indeed, as concepts, they constitute a theoretical distillation of a very specific Western European historical experience.<sup>22</sup>

Russia offers a different case, but the application of this framework to the Russian context is justified by the efficacy of the idea of citizenship in the historical experience of modern Russia. There the apparatus of rational authority did not evolve out of the indigenous institutions, as it had in the West, but has had to exist in parallel with them and absorb some of their qualities.<sup>23</sup> Hence, in terms of Weber's typology, the power of the Russian state has been more traditionalist autocratic (under the Tsars) or dictatorial (under the Bolsheviks) and, especially in this century with its massive dislocations and instability, tended to concentrate in the hands of charismatic leaders (Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin), who shaped the Soviet

<sup>20</sup> Max Weber, "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York, 1958). For an appraisal of Weber's preoccupation with Russia see Richard Pipes, "Max Weber in Russia," *World Politics* 7 (1955):371-401. For a different view see Reinhard Bendix and Guenther Roth, *Scholarship and Partisanship: Essays on Max Weber* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1971), pp. 26-30.

<sup>21</sup> An English sociologist, T.H. Marshall, defined citizenship as a "status that involves access to various rights and powers" which fall roughly into three categories, namely, political, cultural, and social. T. H. Marshall, *Class, Citizenship and Social Development* (New York, 1963).

<sup>22</sup> T. H. Marshall, *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*. Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship: Studies for Our Changing Social Order* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1964). Although he does not dispute the dominance of the rational type of authority in a modern Western society, Edward Shils argues persuasively in his *The Constitution of Society* that charismatic phenomena play a far larger role in our day than Weber's followers have been willing to admit.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Pipes, "Max Weber in Russia," *World Politics* 7 (1955):371-401.

state, before passing into the feebler hands of the "collective leadership." Likewise, the concept as well as the institution of citizenship that has been developing under these circumstances bears the contradictory traits of universality—for it is a set of rational principles—and radical exclusivity, because, for the most part, these principles have applied to and benefited only the country's educated elite, the only group in the population that had a ready access to the political legacy of the Enlightenment.

It is among this elite, so small in proportion to the population even today, that writers form a particularly privileged group. Especially in the Soviet period, with its draconian censorship, writers have turned out to be the only ones who could use the modern, above-ground, means of communication, whatever the limitations, for individual expression. In this regard, they even preempt the Party itself, which holds a monopoly on the media. After all, no Party official, with the exception of the supreme leader, can address the public in his or, rarely, her own name but only in the name of the Party. This is one among the most significant although frequently ignored reasons why authorship and citizenship in Russia have become intimately intertwined. The field of the publicly disseminated individual expression, for historical reasons virtually the sole province of fine letters in Russia, has come to define citizenship: that imaginary but socially and politically palpable space where the power of government encounters the fullest complement of the citizen's rights implied in a "modern rational state."

When the government prevents an author from publishing his work—through censorship or, more benignly, by the use of its monopoly on public dissemination—or when the government confiscates the manuscript or, worst of all, when it arrests an author ostensibly for what he has written, our verdict is that the author's civil rights have been violated. But the same is true sooner or later for every Soviet citizen. Still, the writers' case is special, because—and this is crucial—his economic rights, too, have been trampled into dust. Unlike other citizens whose livelihood does not depend on public dissemination of their *individual* expression, writers can practice their *profession* (not to say trade) only to the extent that their rights as citizens—in the sense of a purveyor of

property as well as a legal agent—of a modern state are not undermined. In this respect, a professional Russian author becomes a professional citizen and (oh, blasphemy!) a professional bourgeois. The answer will be the same if we see an author prevented by the government from participating in the political process. Only now what is violated is the author's political rights—once again, his rights as a citizen.

These are the terms—civil and political rights of citizens, linked closely, albeit without proper acknowledgement, to the economic rights—which constitute the basis of our thought on the travails of the Russian author. And in Russia, too, many appeals have been made on this basis, not the least of it because the Soviet Constitution guarantees these rights, albeit with the proviso that they not conflict with the leading role of the Party in the society and state (see Solzhenitsyn's "Letter" above). To a legal scholar, this condition imposed on the freedom of expression may represent an insoluble quandary, but literary historians can accept this paradox wholeheartedly as yet another rhetorical conceit, accustomed as they are to poetic wishful thinking and poetic license. We do not dispute the poet when he calls somebody, say, eternally young. The poet knows that it cannot be and we know that it cannot be, but we still like to hear it and he to sing about it. In a similar way, no matter how devastating in its consequences, this spoil-sport condition in the Constitution of the USSR is compelled to share the limelight with the sweet music of the universal rights of citizenship. And it is the writers, because they belong to the modern institution of literary authorship,<sup>24</sup> who are obliged, as it were, to walk on both sides of the street, provided they wish to continue practicing their profession in a way expected of them in Russia.

There are, of course, other reasons for singling out the writers as a group. While these days, writers are far from being the only group insisting on its rights—national and religious groups are, in fact, in the forefront—in the post-Stalin years, both the primacy

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. and with an intro. by Josué V. Harari (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York, 1979), pp. 141-160. William Mills Todd III, "Institutions of Literature," chapter 2 of his *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Literature, and Narrative* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1986).



and visibility belonged to the writers of fiction and poets.<sup>25</sup> And I would insist that our concern with Soviet citizenship is still focussed primarily on writers. A Russian writer, then, is not merely a citizen—he is that, of course—but he is a sort of Symbolic Citizen, primarily—in his own eyes as well as those of his readers at home and abroad. And this includes the officials of the Soviet government insisting that writers be loyal to the policies of the party-state—especially ironic now that Gorbachev and his followers in the government feel the need to encourage writers to be openly critical and to promote change. And if Soviet writers are in need of such encouragement, one suspects that other segments of the intelligentsia must be even more conservative and cautious. Understandably, it is the literary bureaucracy that has come to function as the mouthpiece of the Soviet educated elite. Anyone familiar with the *Literaturnaia gazeta* (ostensibly the paper of the Union of Soviet Writers) must have recognized during the last decade or so that, far from addressing a narrowly defined professional group, it appeals to the urban educated elite of the Soviet Union, that is, the *intelligentsiia*—socially and culturally the closest group to the apparatus of the party-state and one that serves as repository for the nation's identity, the ideology of nationalism in a value-neutral sense.

Finally, how can we account for the relative ease with which Russian authors appear to generate charismatic aura, at least, in comparison with their Western counterparts? I will limit myself to a few suggestions. However “modern” their profession, its imperatives, such as individuality and insistence on unrestricted access to the public, tend to be interpreted in the light of the far more archaic, indigenous institutions of itinerant sages and holy men. Instinctively or otherwise, Nekrasov tapped this source for the moral and cultural authority with which his formula invested the citizen-poet. Here, many different strains of Russian culture, some new, some as old as Byzantium, converge and conjoin. The modern rights of citizenship and mass communications begin to blend with the holy

<sup>25</sup> Liudmila Alekseeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*, trans. Carol Pearce and John Glad (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1985). The Russian edition: *Istoriia inakomyслиia v SSSR: noveishii period* (Benson, Vt.: Khronika Press, 1984).

man's invocation of a divine calling, preoccupation with ethical and spiritual questions which have no other public forum in Russia except literature becomes inseparable from prophecy or spiritual enlightenment, modern individualism of literary expression recalls the individuality of sainthood, and the victimization by such a modern rational institution as political police comes to be identified with the tradition of martyrdom. The relatively easy “dispersion of the holy” which Russia inherited from the Byzantine Christianity—that facility with which an object or a person can come to be venerated by a community—helps to explain the charismatic propensity of literary authorship in Russia.<sup>26</sup> This is all the more so because in the Russian Orthodox tradition holiness and self-sacrifice have been uniquely intertwined. The recent Congress of Writers has once again upheld this very helpful association of literature with religion. Consider, for example, the speech of D. S. Likhachev bemoaning the shortage of literary museums in Russia:

Literary museums represent educational centers, very important for our youth and particularly effective. [...] But before the October Revolution, in Moscow alone there were forty times forty churches. And they, too, were, in their own way, educational centers. Thus one should not think that we have too many literary museums. We do not have a museum boom, we have a museum famine. One sees the evidence for this every day. In Leningrad there are thousands of people standing in line to get into the literary museums.<sup>27</sup>

The posthumous reception of the singer-poet and actor Vladimir Vysotskii would make a tantalizingly interesting case study in a “sanctification” of a Russian author. Thanks to Samuel Rachlin's documentary on Vysotskii, we now have a visual record of how a modern popularity of a verbal artist, a popularity based on a virtually uncontrollable medium of magnetic tape, could, at the instant of an artist's death, be converted into a public demonstration with political overtones and a following bearing many characteristics of a religious cult. It is remarkable enough that, for some of the admirers interviewed at the gravesite and at the box office of the Taganka theater, Vysotskii ranked with Jesus Christ, Sergei Esenin and Iurii Gagarin, or that the Taganka actors set up a small

<sup>26</sup> See Peter Brown, “Eastern and Western Christianity in Late Antiquity: A Parting of the Ways,” in his *Society and the Holy*, pp. 222-50.

<sup>27</sup> *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 2, 1986.

alter in Vysotskii's dressing room, complete with a burning candle, a glass of vodka and a pack of Marlboro cigarettes (the sacraments of the modern urban communion). Far more remarkable, this "cult" of the artist emerged despite the fact that Vysotskii had not been persecuted by the authorities, had in fact enjoyed a modicum of official recognition, and died of complications associated with a predilection for strong drink. This was, then, a rare occasion when a writer met the state half-way but the state, perhaps, enlightened by Siniavskii's ironic musings, or simply because it did not really care any more, did not appear willing to keep to the letter of the old tragicomic routine. But the audience, which had memorized this script through decades of repetition, did not seem to be aware of the change. It will take more than one improvisation, more than one *Pechal'nyi detektiv* or *Plakha*, or *Deti Arbata* (still to be published), to break the spell of one of Russia's longest running shows.

But with the spell gone, will the magic disappear too?