THE POETICS OF EVERYDAY BEHAVIOR
IN RUSSIAN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CULTURE

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The title of the present work calls for some explanation. To treat everyday behavior as a special kind of semiotic system may in itself give rise to objections. Indeed, to speak of the poetics of everyday behavior amounts to claiming (for the historical and national cross-section of culture indicated in the title), that certain forms of ordinary daily activity were consciously oriented towards the laws and norms of literary texts and were lived through as direct aesthetic experiences. If this thesis could be proved, it could become one of the most important typological features for the culture of the period under investigation.

It cannot be said that everyday behavior as such has been neglected by scholars. In ethnographic studies it is seen as a natural object for description and investigation. The theme is a traditional one also for researchers concerned with relatively remote periods such as the ancient world, the Renaissance or the Baroque periods. The history of Russian culture can also lay claim to several works which are still significant, from Kostomarov's Description of the Domestic Life and Customs of the Great Russian Nation in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries [Kostomarov 1860] to Romanov's The People and Customs of Early Russia [Romanov 1947].

The following observation follows from what we have said: the further a culture lies from us historically, geographically or culturally the more clearly can we see that its particular everyday life-style is a specific object of scientific study. This may be linked with the fact that the documents which record the norms of everyday, ordinary behavior for a particular social group as a rule originate with foreigners or are written for them. Such documents take for granted an observer who is located outside the given social group.

There is an analogy here with descriptions of everyday speech: when this is first recorded and investigated the descriptions are nearly always oriented towards an outside observer. As we shall see, this parallel is no accident. Both everyday behavior and one's own language are semiotic systems which are perceived by their immediate bearers as "natural," as
belonging to Nature rather than to Culture. Their semiotic and conventional character is apparent only to an outside observer.

What we have said so far would seem to run counter to the title of this work since an aesthetic experience of everyday behavior would seem to be possible only for an observer who perceives such behavior as one of several semiotic phenomena in culture. The foreigner who experiences the alien pattern of everyday life as something exotic may perceive it aesthetically; whereas the immediate bearer of the culture as a rule simply does not notice its special features. However, in eighteenth century Russia, the culture of the nobility had undergone such a transformation in the very essence of everyday behavior that it had acquired features which were usually alien to it.

In any community with a relatively developed culture people's behavior is organized around a basic opposition:

1. On the one hand, usual, everyday, ordinary conduct, which is felt by the members of the group themselves to be "natural," the only possible, normal kind of behavior;

2. On the other hand, the two types of ceremonial, ritualistic, and non-practical modes of behavior. This may be connected with the state, with worship or some other ritual; these types of behavior are perceived by the bearers of the culture as having an independent significance.

The bearers of the culture learn the former as they do their native language, being as it were immersed in its use directly without noticing when, where or from whom they acquired familiarity with this system. It seems to them that mastery of this system is so natural that it cannot be called into question. Even less likely is it that anyone might take it into his head to compile for them grammars of the language of everyday life, metatexts describing the "correct" norms. The second type of behavior, however, is learned as one does a foreign language, by using rules and grammars: first its norms are assimilated and then on this basis "texts of behavior" can be constructed. The first type of behavior is acquired spontaneously, unawares, the second is assimilated consciously from teachers and mastery over it is, as a rule, marked by a special act of initiation.

After Peter the Great, the nobility in Russia experienced a change that was far more profound than a mere development in their way of life. The area which is normally left to unconscious, "natural" behavior became something to be consciously and explicitly acquired. Manuals appeared dealing with the norms of everyday conduct since the whole of the existing structure of everyday behavior was redefined as incorrect and replaced by a "correct," European pattern.

The result was that a member of the Russian nobility of Peter's time and after was like a foreigner in his own country: even when fully grown up he had to learn artificially what people usually absorb in early childhood by direct experience. The alien and the foreign became the norm.

To conduct oneself correctly was to behave like a foreigner, that is to act in an artificial way according to the norms of an alien life-style. It was as necessary to bear these norms in mind as it was to know the rules of a foreign language in order to be able to use it properly. The True Mirror of Youth [Yunosti krasnomu celenku, 1767], desiring to portray the ideal of courtly behavior, suggested that one should imagine oneself to be in the society of foreigners. "One should explain what one needs elegance in pleasant and polite words as if one were speaking with some foreigner, so that one becomes accustomed to this sort of thing." 1

This sort of cultural inversion did not by any means amount to the "Europeanization" of the way of life in any straightforward sense of this expression, since the forms of everyday behavior and the foreign languages which were imported from the West and became the normal means of communication among members of the Russian nobility, altered their function in this process. In the West they were native and natural and, consequently, subjectively imperceptible. Obviously the ability to speak Dutch did not particularly increase a person's prestige in Holland. But transferred to Russia, European everyday norms acquired high prestige, they increased a person's social status as did knowledge of foreign languages. In The True Mirror of Youth, quoted above, we read:

Young people who have returned from abroad and have learned languages at great expense, should keep practising these languages and should make every effort not to forget them, and further improve their knowledge of them by reading useful books and associating with others for this purpose. They should also do some writing and composition in order not to forget the languages. 2

Those who have not been abroad and who come from school or elsewhere to the court should behave meekly and humbly before everyone and be willing to learn from whoever they can. They should not be haughtily keeping their hat on as if welded to their heads. They ought not to rush about or be boastful as if they respected no one. 2

Such a picture makes it obvious that, contrary to the widely held view, Europeanization emphasized the non-European features of the way of life rather than eliminating them, for in order to be constantly aware of one's own behavior as foreign, it was necessary not to be a foreigner (a foreigner does not feel his behavior to be foreign), one had to assimilate the forms of the European life-style while retaining the outsider's, "alien," Russian attitude to them. One did not have to become a foreigner, but to behave like one. It comes as no surprise, then, that the acquisition of foreign customs, far from eliminating antagonism to foreigners, occasionally intensified it.

A direct result of these changes in the attitude to daily life was the ritualization and semioticization of those spheres which in the non-inverted culture were perceived as "natural" and not significant. The
result was the very opposite of the “privacy” which so forcibly struck Russian observers of European life (cf. Count Peter Tolstoy’s remarks about Venice: “They do not accuse one another of anything and have no fear of one another. Everybody does what he chooses”). The image of European life was duplicated in the ritualized game of playing at European life. Everyday behavior was turned into a set of signs for everyday behavior. The degree of this semioticization, of the conscious, subjective perception of the way of life as a sign increased sharply. Daily life took on features of the theater.

It is entirely typical of the Russian eighteenth century that the members of the nobility passed their lives as if they were players, conceiving themselves to be forever on the stage, the people on the other hand tended to look on the gentry as if they were mummies, whom they watched from the pit. An interesting indication of this was the use of European gentry clothing for masquerades during Yuletide. Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century at Yuletide V.V. Selivanov recalled crowds of peasant mummies, village and household serfs coming into their master’s house which was open to them at that time. Their gear consisted of peasants’ sheepskin coats turned inside out, or they wore clowns’ clothing which was not used in normal times (best caps and suchlike). However, along with this they also used their masters’ regular clothing obtained on the quiet from the housekeeper: “Some of the master’s old uniforms and other garments for men and women that were kept stored away.”

It is indicative that in cheap popular prints of the eighteenth century, with their tendency to depict their subjects as it were in a theater framed with side-curtains, “borders” and footlights, the folk characters, innamorati as they were called, are portrayed in the clothing of the gentry. In a well-known print entitled “Please leave me,” the pancake-seller is drawn with beauty spots on her face while her suitor has a tie-wig and beauty spots and wears the dress uniform and cocked hat of a member of the nobility.

The reason for regarding the way of life of the gentry as more highly semioticized comes not only from the fact that, having made it “his own,” the Russian nobleman of the post-Petrine period also felt it as “alien.” This dual attitude to one’s own behavior turned it into a game.

This feeling was intensified because many features of popular lifestyle were preserved all through society. It was not only the lesser landowners in the provinces who switched back easily to the norms of the traditional popular lifestyle and behavior, but also the great magnates, even Peter the Great and Elizabeth. And so there were two possible types of behavior, the one being neutral or “natural” and the other specifically gentlemanly and at the same time consciously theatricalized. It was typical of Peter that for himself he preferred the former, and even when he did take part in the ritualized performances, he would reserve for himself the role of producer, the person who organized the game. He would demand that courtiers take part, but personally he kept out of it. However, this love for “simplicity” did not make his behavior any closer to that of the people, rather it indicated something that was the direct opposite. For the peasant, holidays and festivals were associated with a transition into a sphere of more ritualized behavior. A church service, the unfailing mark of any festival, a wedding and even a simple entertainment in a tavern signified entry into a set ritual which even laid down what, to whom and when one should say or do anything. For Peter, however, leisure meant a transition to non-ritualized, unofficial behavior. (A peasant festival in particular, involved some form of public spectacle: a crowd of invited people would gather “to watch” outside the house where a wedding was taking place. Peter’s leisure activities, however, took place behind closed doors, in the narrow circle of “his own” people). This opposition is neutralized in the case of the parodic ritual: be an anti-ritual it tends to intimacy and the enclosed group, but being a ritual, though one turned inside out, it tends to publicity and openness.

During the Petrine period there was a confusion of the most varied forms of behavioral semiotics: official church ritual, parodies of church ritual in the blasphemous rites of Peter and his friends, the practice of foreign modes of conduct in everyday life, intimate unofficial behavior which was consciously opposed to ritual. All this set against the background of the popular lifestyle made it possible to perceive the category style of behavior. We may compare this with the fact that the colorful and disordered state of the lexicon of the language at the beginning of the eighteenth century sharpened the sense of the stylistic significance not only of speech levels, but of every individual word (not only of behavior, but also of each action), so preparing the way for the strict classifying and ordering of the mid-eighteenth century.

And so after the first step, the semioticization of daily life, there followed a second, the creation of styles within the framework of the norm of ordinary life. This was expressed in particular in the fact that stylistic constants of behavior were laid down for definite geographical zones. When he traveled from St. Petersburg to Moscow, from his estate near Moscow to another more remote one, or from Russia to Europe, a nobleman often unconsciously, but always unerringly changed his style of behavior. The process of style-formation in this sphere proceeded also in another direction, that of social differentiation. Differences in styles of behavior emerged between a government servant and one who was retired, between military and civil personnel, between the court nobility and the...
A Diagram Representing the Behavioral Opportunities Open to the Gentry

The Behavior Patterns of the Gentry

- Secular Life
- Religious Life

Abroad
- In Russia

Government Service
- “Retirement”
- or Non-service

Military Service
- Civil Service
- Military
- Guards
- Army

In the Capital
- Moscow Lord
- Landowner

In the Provinces
- Grandee
- Small Landowner

Various Types of Forces
- Diplomacy
- Other Forms of Civil Service

(Only those basic varieties of behavior, as practiced by members of the Russian nobility in the eighteenth century, that were realized as a consequence of choice between alternative possibilities, are taken into account.)

No attempt has been made to adjust the typology for age differences.

A nobleman from outside the capital. His way of speech, deportment and clothes unfailingly indicated what place any person occupied in the stylistic polyphony of everyday life. Gogol quoting in letters (and later in his play The Gamblers) the expression: “Rute, retitel no rute! prosto karla joda!” (“A run of luck, definitely a run of luck! it’s just a low card!”) directly that this sentence was “real army usage and in its own way not without merit”, i.e., he made it clear that neither a civil servant on the one hand nor a guard officer on the other would speak this way.

This stylistic coloration was brought out by the fact that any particular form of behavior was the result of choosing one of the possible alternatives. The existence of this choice, the possibility of replacing one pattern by another, was the basis of the gentry’s life-style. The life system of the Russian gentry was constructed like a tree-structure. And, the gentry, having achieved, by the second half of the eighteenth century, the freedom to enter government service or to live in retirement, to live in Russia or abroad, went on trying to increase the number of “branches” of the tree. The government, however, especially under Paul I and Nicholas I, took active steps to reduce to zero the opportunities for individual patterns of behavior, for choosing one’s own style and personal path. It aimed at turning life into service, clothes into uniform.

The main opportunities for types of behavior among the nobility are represented by the scheme above (see diagram). The existence of choice is what decisively separates the behavior of the gentry from that of the peasantry, which was regulated by the agricultural calendar and was the same from the bounds of each of its phases. It is curious to note that from this point of view the behavior of a noble woman was in principle nearer to that of the peasant than to that of her male counterpart, since it did not include any points of individual choice but was determined by her age.

The emergence of styles of behavior naturally made behavior resemble the aesthetically experienced phenomena, and this in turn caused people to come up with models for the daily conduct of their lives in the sphere of art. For someone who had not yet assimilated European forms of art, his models could only be such forms of visual performance as were familiar to him—the church liturgy and the fairground puppet theater. However, the former enjoyed such authority that its use in everyday life would be a parodic and blasphemous performance. We find a striking example of the use of forms from the popular theater for the organization of the daily routine of the life of a member of the gentry in the rare little book The Genealogy of the Golovins, the Owners of the Village of Novogusakov assembled by Peter Kazanski, Bachelor of the Moscow Theological Academy (see Kazanski 1847). In this curious publication compiled from the domestic archive of the Golovin family which included materials greatly reminiscent of those that were available to Ivan Petrovich Belkin when he set about writing A History of the Village of Goritichino,* there is, in particular, a description of the life of Vasily Vasil’evich Golovin (1696–1781), compiled on the basis of his own notes and family legends. Golovin’s tempestuous life (he studied in Holland, knew four European languages and Latin and was one of Catherine I’s gentlemen-of-the-bedchamber; he got into trouble in connection with the Mons affair, underwent torture under Biron and, having got out of there by means of an enormous bribe, settled down in the country) is of interest because of the theater he made of his daily life. It was a mixture of fairground puppetry, folk incantations and spells, and Christian ritual.

*In The History of the Village of Goritichino which Paškin wrote in the autumn of 1830, Belkin, who had figured as narrator in Tales of Belkin written just before, discovers papers in the attic of his house which enable him to set about his “history.” **Widow of Peter the Great. She signed from 1724 to 1747. ***In the last year of Peter the Great’s reign, William Mons won influence over Catherine, Peter’s wife, and used his position for corrupt ends. Peter ordered his execution in 1724. ****Emil-Johann Biron, favorite of Empress Anne (1730–1740), known for his cruelties.
The following is an extensive quotation:

He would go up in the morning before sunrise and then he would read through the morning and evening services with his favorite church-reader Jakov Dmitriev. After the morning observances his butler, steward, the elected delegate of his serfs and his headman would come before him with various communications. They usually entered and departed at the command of his housemaid Polotseva, a woman of proven honesty. She would begin by pronouncing the words: “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost” and those present would answer: “Amen!” Only then would she say: “Enter and be sure to come in quietly, humbly, with care and reverence, with purity and with prayer, when you come to our lord and master with your reports and to receive your instructions. Bow low to his grace and remember, watch very carefully!”

“I greet you,” replied their master, “my friends, you who are free from tortoise and torture, unrest and ungodliness!” This was what he always said. “Well, what’s been going on? Is everything all right, my children, are all our affairs prospering?”

The first to answer this question, with a low bow, was the butler. “In the holy church and the most precious possession of our home, in the stables and cattleyard, in the peacock-house and the store-house, everywhere in the garden, the birds and in all the other places, Our Saviour’s grace, my master, has always been preserved by God, and is in good order.”

After the butler, the steward began his report. “In your lordship’s cellars, barns, granaries and store-houses, in your sheds and crop-drying barns, apiaries and poultry-yards, hay-stores and drying-rooms, by Our Lady’s grace, everything is in order, my master, is safe and sound. Fresh spring water from the holy well that has been fetched by your lordship commanded on the skewbald horse and put into a glass bottle, placed in a wooden vat, surrounded on the inside with ice and closed up with stones piled up on top of it.”

The delegate reported as follows: “Throughout the night, my master, your noble house has been patrolled, both kinds of rattle have been sounded, the signal has been given, and the sound-board has been struck loudly; the horn, sir, has been blown at intervals and all four men have talked to each other in loud voices, the night birds have not been flying about nor making eerie noises, they have not frightened the young masters, nor have they pecked at the master’s windows; they have not landed on the roofs or been messing about in the loft.”

The headman ended up with his report: “In all four villages by God’s grace all is well and in good order.”

You lordship’s peasants are thriving, their cattle are in good health, the four-footed beasts are at their pasture, the domestic fowl are astir, no earthquakes have been reported, nor have there been any heavenly manifestations. The cat Vanja and the woman Zazikalka were living at Ritsa and by your honour’s command receive some unwhetted grain each year, they sigh daily over their maidenhead and, my master, with tears beg that your august anger should be replaced by mercy and that you should forgive your guilty slaves.

We omit the description of the painstakingly elaborate daily ceremonial consisting of household prayers, the church liturgy and the rites of breakfast, dinner and the desert, each of which provided a regularly repeated spectacle.

Preparations for going to bed would begin [between 4 and 6 in the afternoon—J. H.] with the command to close the shutters from inside the Jesus prayer was read: “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy upon us!”—“Amen!” came the reply from several voices from outside and at this word the shutters were slowly closed, and with a tercet bang the iron belts shot home. At this point the butler, steward, the delegate and the headman would arrive. The only person allowed into the master’s study was the butler who passed the orders on to the others. The delegate’s instructions were as follows: “Listen to our lord’s command: see that you stay awake all night, patrol around our master’s house, sound the rattles as loudly as possible, blow the horn, make the sounding-board hum, keep the piercing rattle going, hit the signal bell, do not wander about yawning, and remember carefully, you must see that the birds do not fly about making eerie sounds that might frighten the little children; or peck at the master’s window-putty, perch on the roofs or mess about in the loft. Be watchful, let be sure not to forget anything!” We hear, was the response. These were the headman’s instructions: “Tell both masters of the peasantry that should they strike the master’s eye on all the populations, young and old alike, unceasingly protect the inhabitants from fire, and be ever vigilant, and watch for disturbance in any of the villages of Calevo, Medvedki and Golovino, or any disorder on the roads Ika, Iachmos and Volos.” They should watch out for any strange manifestations in skies above or any fearsome earthquakes below their feet. If any such thing should come to pass or other wonder befal them, they should give thought or action themselves, but at once go to their lord and report it all to his noble grace and commit it all firmly to memory.”

Vorob’eva, a maid, passed the steward’s instructions on to them: “Our lord and master has commanded you to look after the provisions and to send a horse to Grigorovo for holy water. Place it in a vat, enclose it in ice, cover it all round and pile stones on it, with purity and prayer. Take good care of the people, look after the sick, do not let anyone or chatter idle remember this will!” this concluded the issue of orders. It was Vorob’eva who usually locked and unlocked the doors of the rooms. She would take the keys to the master himself and place them at the head of his bed would say: “Rest, master, with Jesus Christ, sleep, master, under the protection of the Most Holy Mother of God, may your guardian angel stand over you, my master.” Then she gave instructions to the maids of honour: “Mind the cats, do not let them chatter; do not let them speak loudly, do not fall asleep during the night, wait out for eavesdroppers, put out the light and be sure not to forget anything!”

After he had read the regulation evening prayers Vasili Vasil’evich would go to bed and crossing himself would say: “The servant of God lays himself to rest, he bears upon him Christ’s seal and confirmation, he is guarded by God’s invincible wall and defence, the Baptist’s blessed right arm, the all-powerful and omnipotent cross of my guardian angel, the faces of the incorporeal powers and the prayers of all the saints. This cross is my stronghold, I drive out the Demon and root out all his enemy hosts, now and forever and unto the ages of ages. Amen!” At night in
Novospasskoe there was a tremendous din to be heard, banging, ringing, whistles and shouting, and the crashing and running of the four men on duty and the same number of watchmen on their rounds. If something prevented the master from going to sleep quickly, he did not go to bed and was out of sorts the whole night. In that case he would either begin reading aloud his favorite book, ‘The Life of Alexander of Macedon’ by Quinitus Curtian, or would sit down on a large armchair, and utter the following words, gradually raising and lowering his voice: “Satan, my enemy, depart from me into the empty places, into the thick forests and the earth’s abysses where the light of God’s countenance never goes! O Satan, my enemy! Depart from me and remove yourself to the dark places, to the bottomless sea, to the wondrous mountains, empty of dwellings and men, where the light of the Lord’s countenance never goes! Damned ugly mug be gone and take yourself off to hell, depart from me you damned ugly mug and go to the outer darkness of hell and into the thickest-bottom-most fires of hell and never come here again! Amen! Amen! Amen! I say unto you, vanity utterly, thrice-damned one, thrice-pagan and thrice-accursed one! I blow upon you and I spit!” On completing the incantation, he would get up from his chair and begin pacing about through all seven of his rooms, banging his rattle. These peculiarities naturally aroused curiosity and many people watched him through chinks in the walls. But this situation too could be dealt with. Then there was all kind of shouting and fearsome and facetious remarks and they would throw cold water over the eavesdroppers from the upper windows. The master would approve of their actions saying: “The thief is getting his deserts, it is nothing to do with them, thrice-accursed one! Thrice-pagan! Thrice-damned! Untried! Untortured! And unpunished!” stamping both his feet and repeating the same thing over and over again.12

What we have here is indeed a theater with its fixed and regularly repeated performances and texts. However, this was still folk theater with the thymed monologues of the puppet-show and with a typical ending when the audience has water thrown over it from the stage. The “master” is on the stage, a character very well-known from the folk theater and popular prints. He is moreover in part also the “black magician” who makes incantations and reads aloud Latin intermepied with puppet-show verses in Russian. This fusion of the comic with the menacing and frightening in the performance is highly typical.

But the master was not just an actor, he was a spectator too, and for his part watched the carnivalesque ritual into which he had turned the daily routine of his life. He enjoyed playing at the same time both menacing and comic roles. But in this case he did not depart from the style of the game. It is unlikely that he be, being an enlightened astronaut and geographer, who had travelled all over Europe, talked with Peter the Great, was the grandson of Sophia’s* favorite, V.V. Golcyn, believed outside the game that his favorite cat Van’t’s had continued to “live out” dozens of years in exile and “to sigh over his crime daily.” But he preferred living in this conventionally based pretend world, rather than in the one where, as he wrote in his calendar, “I, poor sinner that I am, have had my nails tidied up, which had been mutilated.”13

Subsequently we can observe how the system of genres which took shape in the aesthetic consciousness of the high culture of the eighteenth century began to reflect the behavior of the Russian gentry actively, creating the tree-structure system of genres of behavior.

Striking evidence of this process is the tendency to divide up the space of everyday living into scenic areas, the transition between these being accompanied by a change in the behavioral genre. Before Peter’s time the binary opposition of ritual and non-ritual space in the world and in the area of human habitation was a familiar notion. This opposition was realized at various levels as “dwelling house—church,” “area outside the altar—altar,” “black corner—red corner in the peasant’s hut”*** and so on. This was carried over into the construction of the landowner’s house as the division into living rooms and reception rooms. However, later on there emerged a tendency on the one hand to convert the reception rooms into living space and on the other to differentiate the living space. The move from the winter quarters to the summer residence—the switch within a matter of hours from the Classical or Baroque halls in the palace to a village “log cabin” or a “medieval” ruin, a Chinese village or Turkish kiosk, and in Kuskovo*** the move from the “Dutch cottage” to the “Italian cottage,”—signalled a change in the type of behavior, speech and place. It was not only the palaces of the Tsars and great lords, but also the much more modest estates of the ordinary gentry that were filled with summer-houses, grottoes, temples for solitary contemplation, and ways for lovers and suitors. As the residence became a stage set (another parallel with the theater was that the change in space was accomplished by a change in the music that went with it), it might, if necessary, be made simpler and cheaper: instead of a construction of special space (as was the case in the outstanding architectural ensembles) there could be signs of such a construction which were within the means of the ordinary landowner as well.

A later development in the poetics of behavior was the evolution of the category of the role. Just as a theatrical role is the invariant of its typical performances, so an eighteenth century man would choose a certain type of behavior for himself that simplified his role, everyday life-style and elevated it to a certain idealized form. This role as a role involved the selection of a historical figure, a statement that the latter or character from a poem or tragedy. This figure came to be the idealized double of the actual man, in some sense displacing his patron saint. His

*Peter the Great’s half-sister, who was Regent during Peter’s minority.

**The estate of the Serebrov family, near Moscow.
was passing through the washroom with Lavraev and Prince Dolgorukov. They saw a magnificent bath made of silver.

Lavraev: "What a fine bath!"

Prince Potemkin: "If you can fill it (this is what appears in the written version, but a different word appears in the oral version), I'll give it to you as a present." 15

The audience was meant not only to admire the generous sweep of Potemkin's imagination, but also to assure him that he, as the legal owner of such a magnificent bath, might himself easily perform such a feat. Potemkin's legendary character had another aspect: it was no accident that Paulkin, hearing that Denis Davydov's article had been submitted to the censor Michajlovskij-Daniljevskij to be approved, said: "One might just as well have sent Prince Potemkin to learn from eunuchs how to deal with women." 16 This background serves to emphasize how immense were his political schemes, his banquets and feasts, his eunuch-moving and tribe-taking, his magnanimity, generosity and patriotism. In fact any anecdote, whether about his criminal or heroic features, could join into the biographical epic of anecdotes about Potemkin, but only if these features are magnified to the fullest possible extent.

Another typical role that organized several biographical legends and actual biographies is that of the wit, humorist and buffoon. It too is associated with the world of the puppet theater and the popular print. Such, for example, is the biography of A.D. Kop'ev, 17 episodes from which as retailed by his contemporaries, generally, are no more than random anecdotes about a wit who manages to extract himself from awkward situations by his bold replies. Vjazemskij even while narrating episodes from Kop'ev's "biography" pointed out that these actions and responses were attributed to other people as well (to A.N. Golovin) or might arise from well-known French anecdotes. The mask or role has a force or attraction and the legendary biography becomes a text that tends to expand by absorbing a variety of anecdotes about wits.

S.N. Marinin's 18 case is especially interesting in this connection. He was a military man who had been hit by four gunshot bullets at Austrofritze (in the head, hand and two in the chest) and was awarded the golden sword for bravery and promoted to the rank of staff captain. At Friedland he was wounded by a shell fragment in the head and received the Cross of St. Vladimir and was rewarded with an aide-de-camp's sigolettes. In 1812 he was duty general under Bagration and died at the end of the campaign from wounds, ill-health and exhaustion. He had been an active politician and a participant in the events of March 12, 1801 19; he had met and talked with Napoleon to whom he conveyed the Russian Emperor's letter; and lastly he was a satirical poet. But all

*A.D. Kop'ev, minor writer of the late eighteenth century.
**S.N. Marinin, 1775-1813.
***The palace coup when Paul was assassinated.
this was pushed into the background in the eyes of his contemporaries by his reputation as a joker and a wit. This is the image of Martin which entered the consciousness of historians of Russian culture at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The "Russian Diogenes," the "new cynic" was another widespread type that incorporated a combination of philosophical contempt for wealth with poverty, breaking the norms of propriety and, as a necessary concomitant, desperate drinking. The stereotype for this was created by Bakunov and subsequently provided the overall pattern for the image and behavior of kostrov, milorad and dozens of other literary figures.

A person who oriented his conduct on a definite role made his life resemble a sort of improvised performance in which solely the type of behavior of each character was predictable, not the plots and situations arising from their conflict. The action was open-ended and could be prolonged by an endless accretion of episodes. This way of structuring one's life gravitated towards the folk theater and was ill-adapted for understanding tragic conflicts. A striking example was the biography of suvorov which had a mythology built around it. In constructing this idealized myth about himself suvorov was clearly orienting himself on Plutarch's characters, principally Caesar. This exalted image might, however, at times, in letters to his daughter or when he was dealing with soldiers, be replaced by the figure of a Russian warrior. (In letters to his daughter, the well-known "suvorovka," the stylized descriptions of the military operations bear such a striking resemblance to the fantastic transformations of the scene of battle in Captain Tuinin's mind in War and Peace that Tolstoy must have been familiar with this source.)

However, suvorov's behavior was guided by two norms rather than one. The second was clearly oriented on the role of the buffoon. Endless anecdotes relate to this role, recounting his eccentricities, his cockcrows and his comic escapades. The combination of two mutually incompatible roles in the behavior of one and the same person may be associated with the importance of contrast in the poetics of the pre-Romantic period. (See the fragment from batjikov's notebook 12: "Recently I happened to become acquainted with a strange man, one of many!" See also, "My Uncle's Character" by griboedov 15; or the extract from pulskin's high school diaries for December 17, 1815: "Do you want to see a strange man, an eccentric?"

The unpredictability of such a person's behavior came about because his interlocutors could never guess which of two possible roles would be actualized. While the aesthetic effect of behavior oriented on one constant role lay in the fact that in different situations a single mask would be sharply expressed, here the effect lay in the fact that the audience was constantly surprised. For instance, prince esterhazy who had been sent by the Vienna court to hold talks with suvorov complained to Komar: "How can you talk with a man from whom you cannot get anything?" He was more amazed at the next meeting: "C'est un homme de vaste d'esprit, que de connaissance," 20."A devil of a man. He has as much wit as he has knowledge."

The next step in the evolution of the poetics of behavior may be described as the transition from role to plot. A plot is not just a chance component of everyday life. Indeed, the emergence of plot as a definite category that organizes narrative texts in art may in the final analysis be explained by the need to choose a behavior strategy in extra-literary activity.

For everyday behavior can acquire ultimate meaning only if the particular string of individual acts at the level of reality can be correlated with a sequence of actions which have an overall meaning and finally, functions at the code level as a generalized sign for the situation, the succession of individual acts and their results, i.e., as a plot. The presence of a plot makes it possible to encode behavior, to classify it as significant or not, and to attribute meaning to it. The lowest units of semiotic behavior (gesture and individual act), as a rule, acquire their semantic and stylistic value, not in isolation, but in relation to categories of a higher level: plot, style and genre of behavior. The sum total of all the plots that encode individual behavior and the codes of behavior in a particular epoch can be defined as the myth of everyday and social behavior.

In the last third of the eighteenth century, a time when in post-Petrine Russian culture a mythology of this kind was evolving, the chief source for behavior plots was high literature which did not treat of everyday matters: the ancient historians, Classical tragedies, and in some cases, the lives of the saints.

To regard one's life as a text which is organized according to the rules of a particular plot implies laying heavy emphasis on the "unity of the action" and focusing one's life on one immutable goal. The theatrical category of the "ending," the fifth act, took on special significance. Structuring one's life as a sort of improvised performance in which the action was required to keep within the bounds of his role created a text without an ending. In it more and more new scenes added to and varied the course of events. The introduction of a plot immediately introduced the idea of an ending and at the same time endowed the ending with a determinative meaning. Death and destruction, as the subject of constant reflections, came to be seen as the crowning event to a life. This naturally activated heroic and tragic models of behavior. By identifying yourself

*1.S. Bakunov (1732--1768), translator and author of ethical poetry.
**E.I. Kostrov (d. 1796), poet, translator among other things of Apuleius' The Golden Ass.
with the hero of a tragedy you not only acquired a type of behavior but also a type of dying. Concern with the "fifth" act became a distinctive feature of the "heroic" life at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

I was born so that the whole world should be the spectator Of my triumph or my ruin...21

These verses by Lermontov demonstrate with exceptional clarity the idea of the individual as an actor playing out the drama of his life before a mass of spectators (Romantic exaggeration manifests itself here in the fact that the "whole world" is the audience), and the idea that the culmination of one's life is to be identified with the theatrical notion of the fifth act (triumph or ruin). Hence Lermontov's constant preoccupation with the finale of his life: "The end, how how sorrowful this word is."

Nor shall I be forgotten when I die. My death will be terrible: alien lands Will be amazed at it, but in my own country All will curse even my memory.22

In the early morning of December 14, 1825, when the Decembrists went out onto Senate Square, A.I. Odesovski21 cried out: "We shall die, brothers, oh how gloriously we shall die!" The rising had not yet begun, and there was no reason at all to expect failure. However, a heroic end did indeed give the character of high tragedy to the event, exciting the participants in their own eyes and in those of future generations to a level of characters from a dramatic plot.

In this connection Radischev's career is of exceptional interest. The circumstances of his death are still unexplained.21

The reports of threats supposedly addressed to Radischev by Zavadovskii, or even by A.R. Voroncov,21 which have appeared many times in the scholastic literature, are not trustworthy. Of course, Radischev could easily have aroused hostility by some careless action or word. However, to anyone who is in the least familiar with the political climate—"the glorious beginning of the days of Alexander"—it is obvious that this was not a time when a courageous project, written at government command (and no other "dangerous" activities were attributed to Radischev during these months!), might provoke any serious repression.21

*Prince A.I. Odesovski (1802–1839), poet, follower of Rylev, condemned to hard labor.

**On A.N. Radiščev, see above, Part I, Ch. 1, p. 26. He committed suicide in 1802.

***Count P.V. Zavadovskii (1739–1813) was chairman of the Commission on the Revision of the Laws to which Radischev was appointed member in 1801. Count A.R. Voroncov (1741–1805), Radischev's lifelong friend and protector.

****Radischev's "Project for a civil code," which has not survived, made radical proposals for reforms.

venion is clearly tendentious.* There is a hint of irrepressible irony in it which was evoked by the lack of proportion between Zavadovskii's utterance ("sai, to him in friendly reproach") and Radischev's reaction ("Radischev saw a threat. He went home, dressed and terrified..."

[italics, Ju. L.] Pakhlin's article has not yet received a generally accepted interpretation, and until this is done and its purpose properly explained, it is highly risky to use excerpts from it. One thing is clear: Radischev was a brave man and it would have been impossible to scare him with the shadow of a danger, an ambiguous threat. His suicide was not brought about by fear. It is hardly worth seriously refuting. Storm's anecdotal argument to the effect that with regard to Radischev's suicide "everything was of significance, even the gradual deterioration in the weather recorded in the meteorological bulletin of The St. Petersburg Gazette for the 11th and 12th of September," 23 It was not only the weather that played a fateful role in Radischev's life at this point, in Storm's view, not only his disappointment at his failure to improve the condition of the peasants, but also circumstances "concerning him personally."

According to him, one of these, "without doubt," was that one of Radischev's distant relatives had been convicted of fraud.24

All attempts to find actual grounds in his biography for this tragic act in the autumn of 1802 have led nowhere.

Yet this act, though there were no grounds for it in the biographical circumstances of the last months of the writer's life, fits neatly into a long chain of his numerous meditations on this theme. In his Life of Fedor Vasilev'evich Ushakov [1789], in A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow [1790], and his treatise, On Idea, his Mortality and Immortality [1792] and other works, Radischev keeps coming back to the problem of suicide. These thoughts are on the one hand, linked with the ethics of the eighteenth century materialists and, directly contrary to the Church's teaching, affirm a person's right to dispose of his own life. On the other hand, the problem has not only a philosophical, but also a political aspect: the right to commit suicide and the liberation of the individual from the fear of death puts a limit to his obedience and restricts the power of tyrants. Free of the obligation to live under any conditions however bad, the individual becomes free in an absolute sense and thereby nullifies the power of despotism. This notion occupied an extremely large place in Radischev's political system and he returned to it again and again. "Oh my dear friends! rejoice at my ending: it will be the end of sorrow and torment. You who have been wrenched away 25 from the yoke of prejudice, remember this, that misery is no longer the lot of one who has died."26

This thought was not unique to Radischev. In Vadim of Novgorod by Kajazhin21 Vadim's last remark to Bjurik runs as follows:

*Pakhlin tells that Radischev was driven to suicide by Zavadovskii's threats of punishment for his Project. (Alekandr Radischev, 1836.)

**Ja.B. Kajazhin (1742–1791) wrote his tragedy Vadim of Novgorod in 1789.
oppression; then remember that you are a man, call to mind your true
greatness, seize the crown of bliss which they are trying to take from
you. Die. As a legacy I leave to you the words of the dying Cato. 33

Which words "of the dying Cato" did Radishev have in mind? Ja. L.
Barkov in the commentary of the Academy edition assumed that "he
had Plutarch's account of Cato's dying speech in mind." 34 * The most
recent commentators share this view. 35 However, it is clear that the
reference is to the final monologue from Addison's tragedy, the
monologue about which Radishev wrote later in Siberia:

I have always derived the utmost satisfaction in reading the medita-
tions of those standing at the edge of life, on the threshold of
eternity, and, having thought over the cause of their ending and the
motives acting upon them, I have derived much that I have been able
to find nowhere else. You know the monologue of Shakespeare's
Hamlet and that of Cato in Addison's play. 36

Radishev quoted this monologue in his own translation at the end of
the chapter "Bronniv" in *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow:*

But a certain mysterious voice says to me, that 'something will forever
live,'

"The star shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
The wrecks of matter, and the crash of worlds."

Radishev provided this extract with the remark: "The Death of Cato,
Addison's tragedy, Act V, scene 1." 37

The connection between the noblemen's speech at Krestov and this
extract is obvious and a constant one for Radishev. The idea of readiness
to commit suicide is only a variant of the theme of the heroic feat. And
this in its turn is associated with faith in the immortality of the soul:

It does happen, and many cases have been reported, that men, who
are told that they must die, face the meeting with advancing death
with calm assurance and fortitude. We have seen and do see people
who take their own lives courageously. In very truth you need
courage and spiritual strength to meet your own annihilation with an
unflinching eye. . . It is sometimes the case that such a person sees
beyond the bounds of the grave and expects to rise again. 38

Thus Radishev's suicide was not an act of desperation, an admittance
of defeat. It was a long premeditated act of defiance, a lesson in patriotic

*Cato is supposed to have said: "Now I am my own master."
fortitude and unswerving love of freedom. It is difficult now to reconstruct in detail his attitude to the political situation at the beginning of Alexander’s reign. By the autumn of 1802 he had evidently come to the conclusion that he had to perform some feat calculated to arouse and mobilize Russian patriots. Though we read in his children’s reminiscences that during his last days he was in a state of agitation and once even said: “Well, my dear children, what if I am again exiled to Siberia?”, if one bears in mind all that he did at the beginning of Alexander’s reign, such an assumption seems to be so ill-founded that one might naturally conclude as did his son Pavel: “Mental breakdown was becoming more and more marked.”39 Pavel Radeiiev was young when his father died, and when he wrote his memoirs, in spite of his unsigned and touching admiration for his father’s memory, he quite failed to understand the essence of Radeiiev’s views. The words recorded in the memoirs were obviously not occasioned by mental sickness. Most probably Radeiiev was in an excited state of mind having decided that the time had come for the final achievement, “the fifth act of his life.” However, at a given moment he had not decided what form this act of protest would take or whether it would be bound up with his death. But the inertia of the long contemplated action evidently triumphed. Puškin had grounds for saying that from the time of Usakov’s deathbed conversations with Radeiiev, “suicide had become one of his favorite themes for meditation.”40

We may assume that Radeiiev’s view of himself “as a Russian Cato” determined not only his own behavior, but also the view his contemporaries took of his action. Addison’s tragedy was well-known to the Russian reader. So, for instance, book VIII of the journal *Ippokrene* [Ippokrene] for 1801 contained a characteristic selection of materials as well as a full prose translation (by Gart [Hart?—Trans.]) of Addison’s tragedy entitled “The Death of Cato or the Birth of the Roman Anarchy. A Tragedy by the famous Addison”; we find also extracts entitled “Brutus” and “Hamlet’s Thoughts on Death.” It is interesting to find Cato’s and Hamlet’s monologues juxtaposed, an association which we are already familiar with from Radeiiev. This is what is said about Brutus:

Certain of your strict rules imply that you have sinned in shedding Caesar’s blood; but these honest people are mistaken. What mercy does the life of one who assists excessive power deserve from one who would rather kill himself than accept enslavement [my italics, Ju. L.].41

The hero of Usakov’s tale, A Russian Werther* killed himself leaving behind him on his small table Addison’s Cato open at the passage quoted in the chapter “Bromley.” S. Glinka,** who admired Radeiiev (one of his friends, the writer’s son, described Glinka as one of Radeiiev’s “greatest devotees”), at the time when he was a young cadet, had only three possessions, the books *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, Vadim of Novgorod* and *A Sentimental Journey* [by Sterne]. Once he was put in the guardhouse:

Cato’s noble deed in turning his dagger against himself when Julius Caesar had him put in chains, whirled round in my head, and I was ready to dash my head against the wall.42

Both the image of Cato, and Cato as portrayed by Addison, constantly attracted Karamzin. In his review of *Emilia Galotti* published in the *Moscow Journal* he described Emilia as a “heroine who speaks in Cato’s language about human freedom.” “Thereupon Emilia called for a dagger in her fanaticism believing that suicide was a sacred deed.”43 Later Karamzin was to call Martha Posadnitsa “the Cato of her republic.”

In his *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, Karamzin quoted the same lines from Voltaire which Radeiiev’s son later recalled when trying to explain the motives for his father’s action:

*Quand on n’est rien et qu’on est sans espoir, La vie est un opprobre et la mort un devoir.*

[When one is nothing and without hope, Life is a burden and death a duty.]

Elsewhere Karamzin wrote: “Addison’s fine tragedy is particularly good where Cato speaks and acts.”44 Karamzin included “Cato the suicide” among the ancient heroes in his *Historical Eulogy Addressed to Catherine II*.45 In 1811 he wrote in the Grand duchess Catherine Pavlova’s album a quotation from Rousseau where Cato is called “a god unwept mortals.”46 Of special interest here is that in an article by Karamzin published in *The European Gazette*, and which was a coded reaction to Radeiiev’s death,47 we find an elaborate polemic not with Radeiiev, but directed against a false reading of the ideas and images in Addison’s Cato:

Budgell,** a perceptve English writer, was a relation of the great Addison. They shared the publication of *The Spectator* and other periodicals. All the pieces in *The Spectator* signed X were by him. Addison tried to help Budgell make money, but he was a spendthrift; he was completely ruined after Addison’s death and finally threw himself into the Thames leaving in his room the following note:

What Cato did and Addison could not be wrong! We know that Addison wrote the tragedy “Cato’s Death.” So moral an author would not have approved of suicide in a Christian, but allowed himself to praise it in Cato, and the fine monologue: “It

*Karamzin wrote his review of Lesing’s tragedy in 1791.
**Entace Budgell (1686 – 1737), Addison’s cousin and collaborator.

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must be so... Plato, thou reasonest well,” released the unfortunate Bogutel from the pangs of conscience which might have saved him from suicide. Good authors! Think of the consequences of what you write! 48

Karazin condemned the very principle of constructing one’s life according to a dramatic plot and at the same time showed clearly that he had had no trouble in deciphering Radívčův’s action.

To approach one’s own life as if it were a plot marked a change in the poetics of behavior from elemental creativity into consciously regulated activity. The next step was the attempt, typical of the period of Romanticism, to fuse the biographical and artistic texts into one. Poems began to be joined together into lyrical cycles to form “poetic diaries” and “novels of one’s own Life,” and the biographical legend became an essential condition for the perception of any text as artistic. The trend towards fragmentation in Romantic texts has long been noted. However, it is vital to emphasize that this fragmentation was compensated for by plunging the text, once it had been fixed graphically (in print or manuscript), into the context of oral legend about the author’s personality. This legend proved to be the most powerful factor regulating both the poet’s actual behavior and the way in which the audience perceived this behavior itself and the writer’s works as well.

The development of the poetics of behavior to the absolute limit during the Romantic era was necessarily followed by a demonstrative exclusion of this category by the most literate writer. The poet’s life recedes from the realm of the artistically significant facts (the best evidence for this is the appearance of parodic pseudo-biographies like that of Kožma Prutkov*). In losing to some extent the element of play, art stops leaping over the footlights, it no longer steps off the pages of the novel into the realm of the author’s and readers’ real lives.

However, the disappearance of the poetics of behavior was not destined to be long. Having been associated with the last of the Romantics in the 1840’s, it was resurrected in the years between 1890 and 1900 in the biographies of the Symbolists, “štísněného léto” (“life-construction”)

“the theater for one actor” “the theater of life” and other manifestations of twentieth century culture.

Translated by N.F.B. Ozen

NOTES

1 Junáš hleděl zrcadlo, 1761, p. 29.
2 Ibd., pp. 41–42.
4 Selivanov 1881, p. 155.
5 The idea that the clothing of the gentry was theatrical costume rather than everyday gear is illustrated by the fact that even in the twelfth century actors in the Russian folk theater performed in ordinary jackets which were decorated with orders, ribbons and shoulder-strings to indicate they were theatrical costumes. In P.G. Bogutseyev’s description of folk theater costumes it is not even Tzar Maximilian or King Manas, but also Anka the Warrior, Zvezdok and others who have ribbons across their shoulders and shoulder-strings on them, in order that the actor on the stage should not look like the surrounding audience,” as P.G. Bogutseyev remarks (see: Bogutseyev 1923, pp. 63–84). It is interesting to set this against the same author’s statement in the Czech puppet-theater “the puppeteer quite deliberately makes the speech of upper class people incorrect” (ibid., p. 71). Obviously the theatrical clothes are incorrect too as compared with normal dress. They are made from materials that seem to be real, but are not in actual fact. In this respect they are like the clothes used to dress the bodies of the dead (for example, botovki—shoes without roles), which were made up specially before funerals and which like the theatrical costumes represented high quality clothing. For the consciousness still closely linked with the pre-Petrine tradition, the theater continued to be a “spectacle” (výjev), a sort of masquerade and carnival, in particular, it is marked by the obligatory feature of dressing up or change of costume. If we recall that from a popular (i.e., traditional pre-Petrine) point of view the fact of changing clothes was invariably perceived as that of the Devil and only permitted at definite points in the calendar (Vánoce), and then only as a form of magical play with the powers of darkness, then it is natural that the theatricalization of the way of life of the gentry and its perception as a constant carnival (an endless festive) and a permanent masquerade was accompanied by a definite religious and ethical attitude towards that kind of life. On the other hand, it is no surprise there was a tendency for the authorized life-style of the gentry to absorb peasant life into its orbit, and this came to be seen through the prism of the idyll. Again we find great many attempts to create theatricalized images of the Russian peasantry in real-life (against the background of and in contrast with actual peasant life). Such were the round dances by peasant girls wearing shk-safarnce, which were performed along the banks of the Volga during Catherine the Great’s voyage; such were Serenkov’s theatrical villages, or the Kipenische family who dressed up in Georgian peasant costumes at a ball and publicly thanked the Lord for his kind help.

Elizaveta Petrovna’s coronation provided a conspicuous example of the erosion of the boundaries between stage performance and real life; it was accompanied by dressing up and a switch of sex and age roles. The coronation was marked by splendid masquerades and spectacles. On May 29, 1742 in the palace on the Jantar the opera La clemenza di Tito was put on. Since the role of Titus was meant to be taken as an allusion to Elizabeth, the act was taken by a woman dressed up as a man, Signora Giorgi. The audience in the hall, however, because of the masquerade that was to follow the performance was in masquerade dress. If we bear in mind that on the day of the opera Elizabeth was wearing a male guardian’s dress uniform and that was the usual arrangement for mask balls at her court was for men to dress up as women (especially the young cadets), and the women as men, then it is easy to imagine how all this must have looked to the peasants who were spectators, and the servants and the crowd in the streets. See Amper 1861, p. 44.)

6 If the average, neutral behavior of the European “bourgeois” when transplanted to Russia was transformed by becoming of much greater semantic significance, then the transformations in the behavior of Russian visiting Europe at

by Johann Adolph Hasse (1699 – 1783)
that time are no less interesting. In some cases this was a continuation of the pre-
Petite tradition and the semiotic significance was sharply increased. Close attention to
the sense of a gesture or ritual, the perception of any and every detail of behavior
as a sign in these cases is understandable: the individual saw himself as a rep-
sentative, an accredited person, and incorporated the laws of diplomatic protocol
into his daily conduct. The European observers, however, assumed that this was in
fact the normal behavior of Russians.

But the reverse transformation was also possible: behavior could be
markedly decontextualized and, against the background of the European life-style,
appear more natural. Thus, Peter the Great while being quite at home with the
restrictive norms of diplomatic ritual, during his travels abroad preferred to associate
the Europeans by the unexpected simplicity of his behavior, more direct not only
than the usual norms of “royal” behavior but also than the “burgers.” For
instance, during his visit to Paris in 1716 he demonstrated his understanding of the
usual ritual: although burning with impatience to see the city he did not go out of
the house until the king had visited him. During the Regent’s visit, he invited him
into his room, but went in first and was the first to sit down in an armchair (the
Regent also sat in such a chair while he conversed, but Prince Kurakin remained
standing while he interpreted); when, however, he paid a return call on the seven-
year-old Louis XV, seeing the latter coming down the stairs towards the couch,
“Peter jumped out, ran to the king, plucked him up and carried him up the steps

7 The diagram indicates the possibility of a career in holy orders. This was not
very typical, but was not totally excluded. Members of the nobility are to be found
both among the white and the black clergy in the eighteenth and the beginning of
the nineteenth centuries. One essential feature of the eighteenth century is not
reflected in the diagram: the attitude to suicide changed decisively in post-Petri
Russia. Towards the end of the century aristocratic youth was swept by an inevitable
wave of suicides. Radilov saw in man’s freedom of choice between life and death
a promise of liberation from political tyranny. This topic was actively discussed in
literature by Karazin and “Russian Wettiner.” And so, as yet another alternative the very fact of existence became the result of personal choice.

8 “He was held in detention for about two years until 1758, the third day of
March, and while there he suffered terrible torture and was subjected to indescribable
torments. While he was being lifted onto the rack he had his shoulder-blades dislo-
cated, hot irons passed along his back, red-hot needles stuck under his fingernails,
was beaten with a knout and, finally, returned to his family in a paralyzed state.
"Unfortunately for posterity it is not known what was his actual crime,” was the
melancholy comment of Petr Karazin (see Karazin 1847, pp. 57-58).

9 This was the master’s favorite cat. Once it had climbed into a basket of fish
and eaten a fish of an exceptionally delicious kind that had been prepared for the
master of the house. It had got stuck there and choked. The servants reported the
cat’s crime but not the fact that it was dead, and the master snift it into exile (note added by Karazin).
PART THREE

1. Tsar and Pretender: Samozvanyeto or Royal Imposture in Russia as a Cultural Historical Phenomenon

2. The Syriac Question in Slavonic Literature: Why Should the Devil Speak Syriac?

3. On the Origin of Russian Obscenities