

across national borders? If so, can we distinguish between firm boundaries and porous border zones and travel lightly between them?

Instead of vetting typologies and definitions we will engage in rigorous storytelling and follow cross-cultural dialogues between political philosophers, artists, dissidents, and lovers who address the very ground of the possibility of freedom and deliberate its boundaries. Many of these encounters took place in the wake of major historical cataclysms, wars, and revolutions, when the dreams of the new beginning and initial moments of liberation were followed by attempts to establish a regime of freedom. In all of them, experiments in thinking and imagination were also connected to life experiments, sometimes producing more contradictions than continuities. These experiments allow us to explore the relationship between *freedoms* in the plural (political freedoms, human rights) and *Freedom* in the singular (religious, artistic, or existential freedom) and look at the moments in which political and artistic understandings of freedom become intertwined. My freedom stories won't take the shape of military epics or romances of independence or martyrdom.<sup>1</sup> Neither will they function merely as cautionary morality tales. At best, they can shed some light on the dilemmas of freedom that are sometimes more difficult to confront than the discreet charms of power.

The experience of freedom has not been valued equally throughout history and across cultures. Even today freedom is out of sync with other highly desirable states of being, such as happiness, belonging, glory, or intimacy. While those states suggest unity and fusion, freedom has an element of estrangement that does not by definition exclude engagement with others in the public world but makes it more unpredictable.

Not only has freedom been a contested value, there has been no agreement as to what freedom would look like. Defining freedom is like capturing a snake: the snake sheds its skin, and we are left with the relic of her trickery as a souvenir of our aspiration. There was no god or goddess of freedom in any ancient mythology, only a belated Roman statue of *Libertas*, which caused many cultural scandals throughout the centuries. Her "liberty cap" covered the shaved head of a former slave, who acquired rights in the democratic city-states of antiquity, thus making an attribute of liberty into a simultaneous memento of slavery. As late as 1855 Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, soon to become the president of the Confederacy, objected to the idea of erecting a statue of Freedom wearing a liberty cap on top of the United States Capitol, arguing that this ancient badge of emancipated slaves would offend Southern sensibilities.<sup>2</sup>

The most famous American Statue of Liberty does not wear the memento of slavery either; instead, the traditional liberty cap is transformed into the crown of enlightenment, a beacon for the new modern world. The statue was a gift from a disenchanted Frenchman, who believed that Liberty no longer resided in Europe but only in the United States. To create the goddess of enlightenment, he was inspired, so it is said, by the body of his wife and the face of his mother. But his creation—accepted with great reluctance in the new world—soon shed its skin, metamorphosing into a goddess of immigrants, a tourist attraction, and a security threat. In other countries, like Russia, statues of Liberty were highly unpopular and lacked native iconography. Much preferred was Mother Patria, with classical breasts clad in prudent drapery not dissimilar to those of Lady Liberty.<sup>3</sup> Curiously, the Chinese Goddess of Liberty erected by dissenting students during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989 referenced both the American and the Russian monuments; it also bore an uncanny resemblance to a Soviet Peasant and Worker statue from the 1930s mass-reproduced all over the world. Quickly brought down by the government forces, this destroyed Goddess of Socialism with a Human Face had unpredictable multicultural features. Of course, all iconographies have their own pitfalls; in the case of freedom, they only point at the unrepresentable.

Having lived half my life on the westernmost point of Russia and the other half on the eastern edge of the United States, I am forever haunted by the specter of two worrying queens—America's Lady Liberty and Russia's Mother Patria. This kind of personal and historical double exposure prompts me to recognize the fragile space of shared dreams that sometimes must be rescued from both extremism and mediocrity. While examining cultural differences in various dialogues on freedom, I will not focus solely on the clash of cultures or external pluralism but will explore internal pluralities within cultures and trace elective affinities across national borders. The examination of freedom requires a creative logic of its own.

One should not forget that freedom has also been associated with invisible elements like the free air of the city and that this "free air" is hard to export or commodify. Freedom's inherent strangeness or noniconicity finds its best reflection in experimental art. The avant-garde artist Kazimir Malevich preferred a zero degree of representation, an image of the black square, an "embryo of multiple potentialities," while his rival Vladimir Tatlin designed the enigmatic monument *To the Liberation of Humanity*, known also as *Monument to the Third Internationale*, a tower of two mirrored spirals that resembled both a ruin of the Tower of Babel and a utopian



himself up into the state needed to write the 'Ode,' he was in effect deliberately upsetting the balance of his own mind."<sup>39</sup> The poem, however, is not to be read either as extraneous to Mandelstam's opus or as a coherent and integral part of his hidden mythology. Rather, I propose to read it as a tragic offering to the leader and to the Russian civic tradition that took grotesque form at the time of Stalin's purges. The poem concludes with the corrupted sacrifice of the poet, not dissimilar in structure to those of the Greek tragedy that he knew and loved.

Were I to take a charcoal for the sake of supreme praise—  
For the sake of the eternal joy of drawing—  
I would divide the air into cunning angles  
Both carefully and with alarm.  
To make the present echo in his features  
(My art bordering on audacity),  
I would speak about him who has shifted the world's axis  
Honoring the customs of one hundred and forty peoples.  
I would lift a small corner of his brow  
And lift it again, and redraw it differently:  
Oh, it must be Prometheus blowing on his coal—  
Look, Aeschylus, how I weep as I am drawing.  
.....  
I would take a few thunderous lines,  
His youthful millennium entire,  
And would bind his courage with his smile,  
And let it loose again, illuminated softly.  
And in the friendship of his wise eyes, I shall find for the twin  
(I won't say who he is) that expression, drawing close to  
Which, to him—you suddenly recognize the father  
And gasp, sensing the proximity of [world].  
And I want to thank the hills  
That have shaped this bone and this hand.  
He was born in the mountains and knew the bitterness of jail.  
I want to call him, not Stalin,—Dzhughashvili!

In this "manic" state Mandelstam composes a strange text—an ode in the subjunctive in which the poet hopes to achieve—even more than a reconciliation—an intimacy with the Great Leader himself. The charcoal of the poem is a Promethean instrument: Mandelstam confesses that he couldn't draw, he could only dream. So here the master-poet presents

himself as a painter-beginner. He is summoning Aeschylus himself, who understood so well the fragility of the tragic theater and the boundaries of political freedom, as his distant addressee to bear witness to his tears.

If these verses sound awkward and not entirely comprehensible in English, it is not due to awkwardness in translation: Mandelstam's Russian is even stranger than any English can make it. At times, it resembles a "trans-sense" language used in Mandelstam's earlier odes and in the poetry of Velimir Khlebnikov. Paradoxically the strangeness resides in the fact that the poet tries not to be a stranger. He wishes to abandon estrangement; with a last asthmatic gasp he makes the ultimate effort to "get close" to the leader and to the Soviet world, to move from longing to belonging. There is a sincere desperation here. The words related to "closeness" are repeated excessively so that they begin to sound like incantation (*blizost* [intimacy, proximity], *bliznets* [close twin], *blizias* [getting near, closer]). The poet attempts to conjure up *closeness*—to the point of asymptotic tautology. It is customary to lament dramas of alienation, but here we have a horrific example of a drama of belonging, an attempt at intimacy with a leader.

The riddle of the mysterious "close twin" (*bliznets*) whose identity the poet won't reveal occupies a strange place in the middle of the ode. There are many uncanny doubles throughout Mandelstam's text: Prometheus-Zeus, Mandelstam-Stalin, Stalin-Dzhughashvili (Stalin's real name), Stalin and his double created by the "Ode." Mandelstam questions his own paternity as the author of the ode and asserts that the true epic singer of the epic leader should be a "people-Homer" (*narod-Gomer*). Such a predicament would be a writer's suicide, rendering obsolete the role of the individual poet using Promethean *techné*; he would be a mere "author-producer" who could be banned at any time from the not-so-Platonic republic.

Can it be that Mandelstam's mysterious "close twin" (*bliznets*) is the impostor-ode writer, a Frankensteinian offspring of this impossible poetics of closeness? In the end, the ode failed to secure the intimacy of the poet with the leader, but it generated doubles and monsters, like Goya drawings in which the poet barely recognized himself. Yet, this is not merely a hack poem written for the occasion. Through a tragic mimesis, the poem mimics the *manias* of the time and reenacts the hypnotic state described by Nadezhda Mandelstam, which was a precondition for the mass incantation and euphoria of belonging. Mandelstam tried to push the boundary of mere sincerity to touch what he calls a "truer truth" that could obliterate the need for poetry altogether: "There is no truer truth than the sincerity of a fighter" (*Pravdivei pravdy net chem iskrennost' boitsa*). The problem

is that almost every "sincere" sentence is a quote either from the Russian poetic tradition or from Stalin's slogans. Every "truer truth" recalls a truism of the time.

It is as if by putting himself into a hypnotic state Mandelstam becomes a Socialist Realist poetic machine that recites, crying and gasping for air, ready-made sentences, permanent epithets, and rhymes like *kliatva* (oath) and *zhatva* (crop) without any coherent causal relationship between them, giving us an amazing insight into the orgasmic poesis of Socialist Realism. Incongruity or even logical absurdity is just as characteristic of Socialist Realist aesthetics as the teleological master plot.<sup>40</sup> It was incongruity based on fear. So at times "The Ode to Stalin" reads like a mediocre Mandelstam poem, and at other times it becomes a shamanic oath or mantra, consisting of the clichés of the "banality of evil." We recall Kafka's aphorism about the refraction of the light of truth on the grotesque mask of the tragic or comic actor. At the end of the "Ode," Mandelstam's "truer truth" and extreme sincerity remain as mysterious as Kafka's.

The landscape of the poem is epic and Soviet, remade in the image of a larger-than-life leader who can move mountains. In fact, there is hardly anything separating the leader and the people. This type of sweeping landscape was described by Hannah Arendt as a destruction of the theatrical architecture of the public realm. In Arendt's view, totalitarianism begins by abolishing the space of public freedom with all its little walls, partitions of civil society, and multiple channels of communication: "To abolish the fences of laws between men—as tyranny does—means to take away man's liberties and destroy freedom as a living political reality."<sup>41</sup> Totalitarianism, in Arendt's description, "substitutes for the boundaries and channels of communication between individual men a band of iron which holds them so tightly together that it is as though their plurality had disappeared into One Man of gigantic dimensions."<sup>42</sup> This results in a peculiar intimacy with terror.<sup>43</sup>

It is useful to evoke here Arendt's distinction between loneliness (a state of isolation in which an individual finds himself in the modern totalitarian or late imperial society, which devastates the individual's inner plurality and does not allow one to engage in dialogue with oneself) and solitude, which is a necessary state for the engagement of the life of the mind and the confrontations between conscience and consciousness and one's other inner *daemons*. This is the drama of the poem: in trying to repair isolation with intimacy and belonging, the poet risks his poetic solitude, inner plurality, and dialogues with world culture. This is how desire for extreme belonging leads to extreme alienation.

J. M. Coetzee wrote insightfully about a particular kind of alienation that Mandelstam's "Ode" produces: "Mandelstam's performance was to fabricate the body of the Ode without actually inhabiting it."<sup>44</sup> According to Coetzee, the poet attempted against all odds "not to yield the tool"—the Promethean charcoal—trying to hold onto his *techné* in spite of his *mania*. Coetzee evokes Shklovsky's estrangement, but in my view, the form of alienation we are dealing with here is the very opposite of a poetics of estrangement, which stands for the world's wonder. The homeless poet is at home in artistic estrangement and the cosmopolis of world culture. Psychic and existential alienation is caused by the fear of losing the space for poetic estrangement.

Tragedy is not merely another subtext of the "Ode"; it brings in a different space of memory of world culture, which debated the limits of the polis and of the leader's power. The space of tragedy is delineated by the poems of 1937 and by the events of the poet's life and death in 1937–1938. The tragic hero here is not Prometheus, but the poet himself, who in spite of his sacrificial zeal in the "Ode" misses the mark. His "tragic flaw" resides neither in the poet's character nor in the poem but in the relationship between the individual and the state and in the totalitarian predicament, which tries to abolish any possibility of nonstate theater. The poet used all his Promethean skills, the *techné* of charcoal, and all the hypnotic powers of Dionysiac *mania*, but failed to achieve his goal. Nadezhda Mandelstam said prophetically (she was, after all, called Cassandra) that the poem hadn't saved Osip Mandelstam but might have helped to save her. She preserved the "Ode," although she might have destroyed it, in order to speak about the tragic lives that people led and the multiple deaths that threatened them.

In retrospect we are not surprised that the "Ode" did not save Osip Mandelstam. It seems that the whole idea of Mandelstam's attempting to persuade the totalitarian leader of his love for him could not prove effective because there were always other "thin-necked leaders" more Stalinist than Stalin himself. Upon returning from exile to Moscow, Mandelstam went to many writers' apartments and to the Writers' Union offices performing his "Ode to Stalin" and asking for rehabilitation and help, or at least the possibility to lead a relatively normal life. He managed to convince very few people. The official writer Pavlenko thought that there were a few good and sincere lines in the poem, but this was not enough. The general secretary of the Writers' Union, Nikolai Ezhov, denounced him to the head of the NKVD (secret police), claiming that he was "stirring up discussions in the Writers' Union." Mandelstam was

rearrested. Stalin called Pasternak personally asking if Mandelstham was "a master," but Pasternak was so transfixed by the phone call that he asked Stalin to discuss life and death in general rather than the life and work of Mandelstham in particular. It might have been better for Mandelstham to have hidden somewhere in the deep provinces, as Mikhail Bakhtin did, and just keep out of the public eye during the purges. But neither the poet nor many in his circle had that kind of foresight. Osip Mandelstham died in the transit camps of the Gulag in 1938, one of approximately eighteen million people who passed through the camps. The poet is immortalized in a Gulag folk song: "A good fellow Os'ka Mandelstham is reciting Pertrach to us by heart here, by the campfire."

Totalitarian regimes did not tolerate tragic genres and preferred moralistic novels and cheerful musicals. "Life has become merrier, life has become better." The sacrifices were real but happened behind the scene of the spectacular theater of Socialist Realist representation.

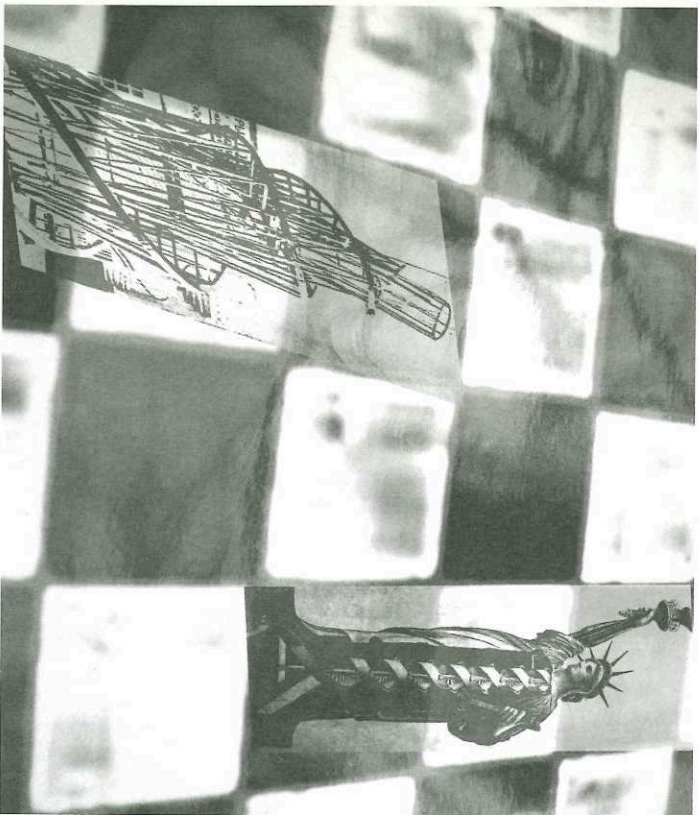
Nadezhda Mandelstham believed that Mandelstham's alienating experiment in the poetics of Soviet intimacy was not entirely wasted. She observed that, "out of the womb of the Ode other poems sprang that moved its themes in opposite directions. This Ode did not fulfill its purpose—to save his life—but it gave rise to a whole series of other poems which were not only unlike it but also flatly contradicted it. Rather like the uncoiling of a spring, they were a natural response to it."<sup>45</sup> Nadezhda Mandelstham's metaphor of the uncoiling of a spring reminds us of Warburg's zigzags and dancing serpents and of Nabokov's image of the spiral that is a "spiritualized circle" that produces co-creations instead of repetitions. For Nabokov the spiral is a key figure for understanding mimicry, not as a collaboration or tautology but as a cryptic disguise and creative cheating of the laws of nature and history.<sup>46</sup> In his other poems of 1937, Mandelstham transports his mimicry and *manias* into the landscape of world culture. The poem "Where Is That Bound and Fettered Groan?" written at the same time as the "Ode," speaks about what remains of Prometheus's voice.

Where is that bound and fettered groan?  
where's Prometheus, the rock's buttress and support?  
And where is the kite and yellow-gazing slash  
of talons flying out from beneath its brow?  
It cannot come again; tragedies have no return,  
But these forthcoming lips bring us to the very kernel  
of Aeschylus, the load carrier, and Sophocles, the wood chopper.  
He is the echo and the greeting; the milestone, no, the plough

The air-and-stone-built theater of our growing times  
Has risen to its feet; and we all want to glimpse all—  
Those born, destroyed, and dispossessed of death.<sup>47</sup>

At first we seem to be in Kafka's world of oblivion, but the dialogical form of the poem itself brings back the poet's own inner conversations as well as the shadows and the gestures from another, non-Soviet, tragic theater. The imperative of the "forthcoming lips" doesn't allow the poet to fall silent. The Soviet rhetoric and the "people-Homer" are absent from the poem. Rather we are back to the fragile architecture of the world culture made of air and stone that is present in much of Mandelstham's poetry. The "air" reminds us of another Mandelstham metaphor, that poetry under the authoritarian regime is either "abomination" (*merzost'*) or "stolen air" (*vorovannii vozdukh*), the air of the free city or republic of letters. The theater of Aeschylus persists in the stolen air of the poet's imagination in the last year of his life. Mandelstham's commemoration of tragedy is, strangely, more optimistic than Kafka's. He admits that tragedy "has no return," but does not concede the destruction of its fragile theatrical stage. The dialogical voices of the poem recreate the space of resounding echoes and tragic afterimages. More than a mere rock, a memory of the theater remains as the only place where the "ground of truth" can be glimpsed through suggestive shadows.

Mandelstham's last poem about Promethean memory is not about stealing fire but about stealing air for poetry. Looking through Mandelsthamian prisms back to Camus's Sisyphus and Kafka's Prometheus, we come up with the fifth version of the parable: in the "dark age" the unelucidated is not merely dark; it could be a space of luminosity and imaginative shadow play as long as it generates stories. To recite this version over and over again, like a labor of Sisyphus, might be the only hope for the poet inhabiting a Kafkaesque world of Stalin's imagination. Perhaps, we owe it to Mandelstham to imagine Sisyphus happy.



SVETLANA BOYM

**ANOTHER**

**FREEDOM**

The Alternative History of an Idea

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS | CHICAGO AND LONDON

which thereby accedes to the blessed otherness." Vernant, "The Masked Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae*," in *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, 388. "Otherness" refers to the culture of the polis.

16. In "Masked Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae*," 381–412, Vernant demonstrates how *Mania* and *Sophia* interplay in tragedy and how there is more mania in Penheus's supposed "common sense" than meets the eye.

17. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae*, 50.

18. Euripides, *Bacchae*, 168.

19. Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," 37.

20. Aristotle, *De arte poetica liber*, ed. Rudolf Kassel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965). For the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see the Oxford translation by W. D. Ross (LSJ); Oxford University Press, 1925). A good bibliography and commentary is given in Aristotle, *Poetics*, of Aristotle, introduction, commentary and appendices by D. W. Lucas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968). An intellectual history of the conception of catharsis can be found in Teddy Brunius, *Inspiration and Katharsis: The Interpretation of Aristotle's "The Poetics"* VI, 1449 b 26 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1966). For the interpretation of M. D. Petruszewski, see *Ziva Antika = Antiquité Vivante* [Skopje] 4, no. 2 (1954). A detailed summary is given in French. Petruszewski's arguments are partly derived from Heinrich Otte, *Kennst Aristoteles die sogenannte tragische Katharsis?* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1912).

21. David Hume, "Of Tragedy," in *Four Dissertations* (1757), discussed in Teddy Brunius, *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, 5 vols., gen. ed. Philip P. Wiener (New York: In P.J., 1973–1974), in idem, *Inspiration and Katharsis*, and in Lev Vygotzky, "Art as Catharsis," in *The Psychology of Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), 215.

22. Vygotzky, "Art as Catharsis," 215.

23. The argument for the thesis is rather detailed. First of all, there are different readings of the manuscripts. Instead of *pathematon* there is an alternative reading of *mathematon*, which is nonsensical. Second, there is the ambiguous wording in the definition of tragedy, which is against Aristotle's rules of definition. Third, there is a switch from objective to subjective qualifications, which is also against Aristotle's rules of definition. Fourth, there is a commentary in the *Poetics* on the different parts of the definition, but catharsis is not included. Petruszewski has identified these words as *pragmaton systasin*, and the meaning is then that tragedy involves pity and fear in the actions that are brought together. These words are commented on by Aristotle in the later chapters of the *Poetics*. The explanation of a misreading is that Aristotle's writings were damaged and then edited by copyists who made the emendation because they had read in the *Politics* that Aristotle intended to explain catharsis in the *Poetics*. But in the definition he did not use the word "catharsis." In fact, according to Petruszewski, there is no tragic catharsis, only a musical one. For an interesting contemporary attempt to rethink the relationship between catharsis and deliberation, see Alan Singer, *Aesthetic Reason: Artworks and the Deliberative Ethos* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

24. Aby M. Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. with an interpretive essay by Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 107. I am grateful to Michael Steinberg for introducing me to this text by Warburg. See also Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg et l'image en mouvement* (Paris: Macula, 1998), in English, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. by Sophie Hawkes, preface by Georges Didi-Huberman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), 332. See also Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Image survivante: Histoire de l'art et temps des fantômes selon Aby Warburg* (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 2002).

25. Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*. The lecture, entitled "Images from the Region of Pueblo Indians of North America," was delivered brilliantly and received most enthusiastically, only to disappear among his papers until 1988.

26. Georges Didi-Huberman and Michael Steinberg spoke about Warburg's fascination for Nietzsche and, specifically, his work on tragedy. Instead of Apollonian and Dionysian, I propose to look at Warburg through Promethean and Dionysian, which avoids the either/or approach: either the discussion of beauty (and what Warburg called "aestheticizing art history") or the discussion of symptomatic violence of representation to the "third space," what Warburg called "the interval," to trace creative self-liberation, violence, and chaos. On a different approach to the iconology of the interval, see Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

27. Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, quotations on 38.

28. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara E. Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

29. Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, 17.

30. Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, intro. by Kurt W. Forster, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and Humanities, 1999), 41.

31. Steinberg, "Interpretative Essay," 108–109.

32. Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, 54.

33. Didi-Huberman also talks about "pathic thinking" but without the reference to Hannah Arendt's "passionate thinking." In his insightful description, pathic thinking includes prehension and comprehension. *L'Image survivante*.

34. While we see many parallels between Warburg's search for the "iconology of the interval" and Walter Benjamin's "dialectic at a standstill," there is also a significant difference. Benjamin looked for crystallizations of the ambivalence and occasionally for the tragic cleavage; Warburg tries to delineate the fragile modern space where ambivalences can be preserved. My reading is informed by Giorgio Agamben's essay but ultimately I arrive at a different conclusion: Warburg is not about messianic abyss and radical cleavage but about a fragile space where Goethe and Nietzsche can sympathetically cohabit. There is no space for such humanistic ambiguity in Agamben's world.

35. Franz Kafka, in *The Complete Stories*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, ed. Nahum N. Glazer (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 432. I modified the translation to better reflect Kafka's original. The English translation of the two German words has been adjusted to better preserve Kafka's linguistic networks; thus *grund* is rendered as "substratum" instead of "ground," which loses connection with the "groundless affair" and *erklären* is translated as "to explain," which doesn't keep association with light and enlightenment. Kafka's other parable in Arendt's interpretation will be discussed in chapter 5.

36. One of the Stalinist marches—"We were born to make fairy tales come true"—was rewritten several decades later by an anonymous Soviet writer in a humorous fashion: "We were born to make Kafka come true."

37. Osip Mandelstam, *50 Poems*, trans. Bernard Meares and with an intro. by Joseph Brodsky (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

38. One expression in Russian, "enna chto ni kazn"—to malina," has puzzled translators because the word "malina," literally, raspberries, is "blamo!" or criminal slang.

39. Nadezhda Mandelstham, *Hope Against Hope*, trans. Max Hayward (New York, 1970), 203.

40. One may remember that the building of the Hotel Moscow had different, asymmetrical windows because Stalin signed two versions of the project, and nobody dared to ask him a second time which one he meant.

41. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1958; New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1969), 466. Similarly, in his essay "Moscow" (1927), Walter Benjamin made a striking observation about the collapse of the distinction between the public and private sphere in Soviet Russia. He noted that Bolsheviks had abolished private life and closed the cafes where pre-revolutionary artistic life had flourished. Walter Benjamin, "Moscow," in *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 124–136.

42. Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, 465–466.

43. Sadly, there is a revealing topos in Soviet culture of the 1930s: the conversation with Stalin, which worked its seductive power even on such independent minds as Boris Pasternak and Mikhail Bulgakov. Intimacy with terror became the central paradigm of Russian-Soviet culture.

44. J. M. Coetzee, "Osip Mandelstam and the Stalin Ode," *Representations* 35 (Summer 1991): 72–83.

45. N. Mandelstham, *Hope Against Hope*, 200.

46. Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

47. Mandelstam, *50 Poems*, 90. I have slightly modified the translation to bring it closer to Mandelstham's original.

## Chapter Two

1. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Problema soderzhanii, materiala i formy v slovesnom khudozhestvennom tvorchestve," in *Estetika slovesnogo tvorchestva* (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1979).

25. The English translation is by Gary Emerson and Gary Saul Morson in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 51. In their work on Bakhtin, Emerson and Morson offer a passionate defense for the potentials of such unfinalizable cultural dialogues: "For any culture contains meanings that it itself doesn't know, that it itself has not realized; they are there as potential . . . the process of dialogue may itself create new potentials, realizable only through future activity and dialogue" (55).

2. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1994), 434. *Democracy in America* was translated into Russian in 1861 in Kiev. See S. F. Stari, *Democratization and Self-Government in Russia, 1830–1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 71–90.

3. A closer linguistic examination reveals that *svoboda* and *volia* are uncanny doubles of one another. According to the Vasermer *Etymological Dictionary*, *svoboda* is a derivative from *sloboda*, referring originally to a town / neighborhood of escaped serfs. In this sense it is quite similar to the history of the Western concept of liberty. In the later nationalist version of the etymology of *svoboda* supported by some contemporary Russian philosophers, *svoboda* goes back to Sanskrit and Indo-European roots and is defined as "our" [i.e., Russian] community, in opposition to the Western polis of "liberal values." Max Vasermer, *Etimologičeskii slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow: Progress, 1971), 3: 582–583 (in the original, *Russisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* [Heidelberg, 1950–1958]). *Volia* is connected to the common Indo-European roots of *will* (English) and *volunté* (French) and refers both to a feeling of joyful, ecstatic and transgressive liberation, but also to a specific political practice of granting freedom to serfs in the Russian empire (Vasermer, *Etimologičeskii slovar' russkogo*

*iazuka*, 1: 347–348). Russian proverbs—the resource of the insightfully realistic and definitively utopian voice of the Russian people—are silent about *svoboda* but are eloquently ambivalent about freewheeling *volia*, which brings bitter fate ("vol'naia volia, gor'kaia dolia"). For the proverbs, see *Roslovitsy i pogovorki Russkogo naroda* (Moscow: Sinita, 1996).

4. George Fedotov, *Rossia i svoboda: Sbornik statei* (New York: Chaildiz, 1981), 174.

5. Fedotov, *Rossia i svoboda: Sbornik statei*, 183. In his other work, Fedotov also examines the Russian religious mind and the dimensions of spiritual freedom. A historical investigation into the Russian conception of freedom must confront cultural mythologies, legal / political / historical documents and actual social practices.

6. Fedotov, *Rossia i svoboda*, 174.

7. Moreover, according to Fedotov, there was more space for freedom in Russia under Mongol occupation than during the subsequent reign of Muscovy, which consolidated the centralization of Russian lands under Ivan the Terrible.

8. Here great literature flourished under the conditions of despotism, countering the remark of Tocqueville's admirer, John Stuart Mill, that only democracy produces genius.

9. Pushkin was killed in a duel with the Frenchman Baron George D'Antes, who supposedly courted the poet's wife.

10. Alexander Pushkin, "Гром Риндемонта," translated by Walter Arndt in *Pushkin Thebaid; Narrative, Lyric, Polemic, and Ribald Verse* (New York: Dutton, 1972), 256–257. I have slightly modified the translation to bring it closer to the original.

Не дорого цену я промкие права,  
От коих не одна кружится голова.  
Я не ропщу о том, что отказали боги  
Мне в сладкой участи оспоривать налоги  
Или мешать царям друг с другом воевать;  
И мало горя мне, свободно ли печать  
Морочит олухов, или чуткая цензура  
В журнальных замыслах стесняет балагура.  
Всё это, видите ль, слова, слова, слова.\*  
Иные, лучшие мне дороги права;  
Иная, лучшая потребность мне свобода:  
Зависеть от царя, зависеть от народа —  
Не всё ли нам равно? Бог с ними.

Никому

Отчета не давать, себе лишь самому  
Служить и угрождать; для власти, для ливреи  
Не тнуть ни совести, ни помыслов, ни шеи;  
По прихоти своей скитаться здесь и там,  
Дивясь божественным природы красотам,  
И пред созданными искусства и вдохновенья  
Трепеща радостно в восторгах умиленья.  
— Вот счастье! вот права . . .

[\* Hamlet—Пуши. Пушкина].

11. The initial version of the poem included explicit references to the French Revolution: "With the sonorous words Equality and Freedom, as if possessed and drunk, reveal the people" (the word *vesenoiia* *sia* is connected to demonic possession or mania). I cite the text according to Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR,