"Our Home Is Russia":

Global Russians, Moving Bodies, and Post-Soviet Entropy

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The Russia We Have Lost

During the Clinton years, somewhere between the "reinvention of government" and "what the meaning of 'is' is," the American chattering classes were briefly engaged in a debate over "Who lost Russia?", an orgy of mutual recriminations about the failures of US foreign policy to turn the Cold War enemy into a complacent ally. Such questions are not meant to be taken literally, but literary scholars and specialists in allegory certainly know the value of investigating the multiple meanings of a turn of phrase. Metaphorical loss is always shadowed by the notion of physical disappearance. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. demonstrated this principle to great effect in his 1976 novel *Slapstick,* which posits a new offshoot of Protestantism called "The Church of Jesus Christ the Kidnapped." Everyone is trying to find Jesus, so they are constantly looking under their mattresses and inside teacups for their personal savior.[1] Vonnegut's scenario, while satirical, retains the inherent optimism of the expectation of the Second Coming; the case of the missing Russia, on the other hand, is dominated by notes of despair. The invocation of Russia's "loss" was something of a verbal ritual that united the

[1] "At the very top of the leaflet was a primitive picture of Jesus, standing and with

entire political spectrum: from Pat Buchanan on his blog, Leon Aron in *The Weekly Standard*, Caspar Weinberger at the Heritage Foundation, to George Soros in the New York Review of Books, with Robert Kaplan (America's most reliably apocalyptic journalist) weighing in on Stephen F. Cohen assessment that Washington is the source of the problem.[2] In the U.S., at least, commentators were not wiling to take the question literally and bring it to its logical extreme; no map of the Russian Federation ever appeared on the side of a milk carton, over the words "Have you seen me?"

Americans were hardly the first to lose Russia; years before this Beltway policy debate, Russia was often purported to have lost itself. Stanislav Govorukhin's famous 1992 documentary, *Россия, которую мы потеряли* ("The Russia We Have Lost") set the tone for a reflexive definition of a country that has always already disappeared. Here symbolic geography bids its final farewell to actual

[2] Patrick Buchanan used the "Who Lost Russia" headline twice: first on February 16, 1998 (http://buchanan.org/blog/pjb-who-lost-russia-255, last accessed February 17, 2013), and as recently as 2007 (http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1845028/posts, last accessed February 17, 2013). Leon Aron's assessed the situation in a *Weekly Standard* article entitled "Is Russia Really 'Lost'?" (October 4, 1999, Vol. 5, Number 3). Caspar Weinberger was one of four speakers who gave a lecturer entitled "Who Lost Russia?" at the Heritage Foundation (http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/who-lost-russia, last accessed February 11, 2013). Soros's NYRB contribution was printed on April 13, 2000. Kaplan's review of Cohen's *Failed Crusade* appeared in *The New York Times* on October 8, 2000. The lead story of the August 15, 1999 issue of The New York Times Magazine was called "The Russian Devolution," but the cover simply asked the question, "Who Lost Russia?" Former Secretary of State James A. Baker, III gave a speech at the Kennan Center on October 4, 1999 called "Moving Past 'Who Lost Russia'" (http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/moving-past-who-lost-russia, last accessed February 17, 2013). The trope reappears on a fairly regular basis: in 2007, Dmitri K. Simes contributed an essay to *Foreign Affairs* called "Losing Russia: The Cost of Renewed Confrontation" (November/December 2007). These are just a few examples out of many.

geography, since the country still physically exists, continuing to occupy prime Eurasian real estate. Yet the discourse of loss retains its power, attributing a sense of existential homelessness to the very people who would be expected to see Russia as their home. This, too, is not new; as my first epigraph reminds us, it was Pyotr Chaadaev who, in his first "Philosophical Letter" of 1829, famously described his compatriots as "resembling travelers," who never manage to seem at home in any home they make. With the benefit of hindsight, however, Chaadaev's situation looks almost cozy in comparison to that of his post-Soviet descendants. Govorkuhin's vanished Russia, after all, is the country in which Chaadaev was domiciled. If it also happened to be the country that put him under house arrest and declared him insane (rendering him the first, but not the last, free-thinker punished through psychiatry), this is only one of the many historical omissions that allows Govorukhin to view tsarist Russia in such rosy hues.

If we take Govorukhin's "lost Russia" literally for a moment, we are faced with a geographic puzzle even stranger than that of the Clinton-era American pundits: Russia managed to go missing while 150 million people were still standing on it. This rhetoric of loss is all the more powerful when we take into account the obvious fact of the disappearance of empire and great power status: juridically and (for the population) phenomenologically, the homeland had shrunk drastically in 1991. As former Soviet citizens were confronted by the transformation of the largely notional internal borders of the USSR into the bureaucratic obstacles to mobility that true borders constitute, the Nineties saw a proliferation of alternative imaginary geographies to compensate for the

grievous loss of great superpower status: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the ruble zone, the near abroad, the common cultural space, the Russian abroad, not to mention the revival of words that had previously been the near-exclusive domain of specialists (россиянин and русскоязычный).

To define a new Russian cultural space, then, is to combine lexicography (the meaning of the word) with cartography (the location on the map). Words and borders each require their own particular mode of definition. If geographic Russia constitutes a "center" of Russianness (in a political culture that has long placed high value on centrality), the loss of territory (satellite republics), influence (satellite states), and population (through the redrawing of maps and the vast movements of peoples) presents centrifugal pressures on a culture and, with the rise of Putin, a regime, that turns sovereignty into a cardinal virtue. Indeed, one can look at the intense rhetoric of *gosudarstvennost'* ("statehood") in Putin's Russia as an anti-entropic move, not just in the obvious sense that Putin and his apologists make clear ("we're stopping the country from falling apart"), but in terms of the very definition of Russian nationhood and identity.[3] *Gosudarstvennost'* is the antithesis of a postmodern, post-territorial mode of identity formation that can be, with at least limited comfort, assimilated to the ancient category of *diaspora*.

[3] "*Gosudarstvennost'*" is a difficult term to render in English; "statehood" is too neutral, while "sovereignty," though congruent with contemporary scholarship on biopolitics and human rights, tends to posit the state as it faces outward toward the rest of the world. *Gosudarstvennost*' is a variation on sovereignty that emphasizes the coherence of the state as seen and experienced by its citizens. See John Squier, "Civil Society and the Challenge of Russian *Gosudastvennost*," *Demokratizatsiya* 10.2 (2002): 166-182.

The Russia We Can't Find

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, intellectuals and state functionaries have intermittently lamented the lack of a "national idea," to fill in the gap left by communist messianism, and, more generally, the sense of historic mission that Berdyaev argued was central to the "Russian idea."[4] It would be far more productive, however, to posit that what is contested is not the "Russian idea," but the "idea of Russia." The current discourse in and on Russia can be roughly (indeed, crudely) divided into two broad camps: the "state reconstructionist" and the "centrifugal/diasporic." In the first category are the modes of thought that fight desperately against the forces of entropy, and that align themselves most closely with both the idea and the apparatus of state. The aforementioned *gosudarstvennost'* casts itself as the heir to the Great Power, as well as the modern recapitulation of the medieval central power engaged in the "gathering of the lands." The Putinist stress on sovereignty is a celebration of structures and borders, as well as a compromise between blood-and-soil nationalism and the affirmation of a multiethnic state.[5] Closely aligned is the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) as client and ally, celebrating it's own "state-building" role in a faith-based collectivism or "neo-sobornost'."[6] The ROC's extraterritorial ties also connect it to the discursive strands that celebrate Russian unity by minimizing,

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[4] [Insert note on Yeltsin's commission, the 1990s, debates, Berdyaev, etc.]

[5] The concept of "blood and soil" nationalism is usually associated with Alfred Rosenberg and the Nazi regime, but, as Giorgio Agamben points out, the Rosenberg's phrase has a long history, going as far back as Roman law. Agamben uses this connection as part of his larger argument regarding the biopolitical nature of citizenship (*Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[6] [Insert footnote on *sobornost*.']

rather than maximizing, the significance of borders and (current) territory: Russia as a hegemonic state, whose power and scope are defined by its influence on its once and future "brother nations." Even more expansive is the ideology of Eurasianism, particularly as revived and espoused by Alexander Dugin: here, the nation's destiny is cross-continental and trans-civilizational.[7] But even Eurasianism, though entropic in form, is a retrenchment in content. Russia is merely redefined on a broader scale.

The state reconstructionist idea of Russia plays itself out on the level of language itself. For it is more than an appeal to patriotism and boosterism that explains the insistent repetitions of the country's name in post-Soviet political movements; among the parties that have come and gone in the last two decades one finds Демократическая партия России (The Democratic Party of Russia), Российская экологическая партия "Зеленые" (The Russian Ecological "Green" Party), Социалистическая единая партия России (The United Socialist Part of Russia), Российская партия пенсионеров (The Russian Party of Retirees), Российская партия жизни (The Russian Party of Life), Аграрная партия России (The Agrarian Party of Russia), Наш дом—Россия (Our Home Is Russia), Отечество—Вся Россия (The Fatherland / All Russia), and of course Единая Россия (United Russia). In the case of the Greens and the Democrats, one can concede the need to distinguish Russia's homegrown version from the many parties throughout the globe that bear the same name, although the chances that anyone would have thought they were voting for German

[7] For an excellent overview of Dugin's ideas, see Chapter Two of Edith Clowes, *Russia on the Edge: Imagined Geographies and Post-Soviet Identity*. *Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Greens or American Democrats in Russian elections must be slim. Former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's defunct "Our Home is Russia" party has the distinction of being more than a name: it's an entire sentence, and a declaration of the patently obvious (any plans to pick up stakes and move the entire population to, say, Spain would have been impractical). But "Our Home is Russia" proves to be the deep structure to nearly all these party titles, precisely because of its ambiguous status as a speech act. On the surface, it is an entirely constative statement, the patriotic equivalent of that favorite example of English-speaking linguists, "the cat it is on the mat": it is either true or false. But the very banality of this phrase ("Наш дом—Россия") as a truth statement suggests that its greater locutionary value is as a performative utterance. But what does it perform? It performs the circular function of (re)affirming the country's existence and the population's residency in it. It does what nearly all these Russia-affirming parties' names do: provide an opportunity to say the country's name and thereby, once again, confirm its existence. More than merely patriotic, these party names are *phatic*. And in some cases, they are also deliberately proleptic, as if they were trying to call into existence a desired state of affairs, as in an incantation or magic spell. Nearly all the parties I have listed merged with each other or swallowed each other up, becoming the ruling party whose name is the antithesis (and perhaps antidote) to the post-Soviet anxieties over a lost or fractured Russia: Единая Россия (United Russia). And it is telling that the party's abbreviation, Едром (Yedrom), seems to be used primarily by those opposed to it, suggesting that they refuse to yield any rhetorical ground by repeating (and thereby disseminating) the magical thinking contained in the phrase "United Russia."

By contrast, most of the centrifugal/diasporic rhetoric is anything but reassuring. Indeed, much of this rhetoric actually serves to support the state reconstructionist stance, as evidence of the need for centralization. Elsewhere I have written of the discursive power concentrated in the term "bespredel," gangland slang for utter lawlessness whose very morphology encodes the dangers posed by a lack of boundaries and borders.[8] Today I am focusing on the much more explicitly biopolitical framework that structures the patently negative centrifugal phenomena (negative in the sense that few champion them, and that they reinforce state reconstructionism), before moving on to recent attempts to recast a decentered "Russianness" in terms of a deliberately positive, transnational diasporic framework (the "global Russians").

Indeed, so many of the woes repeatedly recited about Russia in the 1990s can be assimilated to a biopolitical understanding of threats to Russian statehood. First and foremost we have the various manifestations of depopulation: plummeting life expectancies, the spread of infectious disease, and declining birth rates (Murray Feshbach's notorious "ecocide").[9] These phenomena stand out from the rest in that they have little to do with travel and border-crossing (AIDS was an exception, initially framed as a threat from foreign bodies before becoming sadly domesticated as a now familiar Russian problem), and are framed in terms of

[8] Eliot Borenstein. *Overkill: Sex and Violence in Contemporary Russian Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. 195-224.
[9] Murray Feshbach. *Ecocide in the USSR: Health and Nature under Siege*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

internal weakness. The other threats, however, are understood as manifestly centrifugal problems. The real-life crimes of human trafficking take on nationalist significance in the 1990s, when the export of Russian women (either as willing brides or enslaved sex workers) is framed in popular novels and films not in terms of the individual women's suffering, but of the fatherland's humiliation at the hands of a rapacious West. The "export" of women is cast as a loss by Russian men (who can't have "their" women), and as a human expression of the generalized crisis constituted by the dismantling of national wealth for sale abroad. Here, women are the equivalent of the precious ores, metals, and hydrocarbons with which Russia parts at far too low a price, and which are in such demand because of their high quality ("Our women are the most beautiful in the world"). [10]

The losses from trafficking easily dovetail with a powerful set of urban legends that crystallize the anxiety over commodified bodies crossing borders: rumors abound that women are being lured not just for sex, but for the sake of their internal organs, to be sold to the highest bidders.[11] Unsubstantiated stories of forced organ sales are hardly unique to Russia, but in the Russian context they function perfectly as metaphors for the damage to national integrity (wholeness) that bodily border crossings pose. They also function synecdochically as yet another representation of a collective body that is being sold against the population's will, retail and piecemeal rather than wholesale. Here we should recall the traditional ultranationalist rhetoric that frames treason as sale: Russia

[10] Borenstein, 77-97.
[11] [Insert footnote on urban legends about organ harvesting.]

is being bought and sold, Russia's blood is being consumed by parasites. [12] In turn, the organ rumors crop up in the final component of the most crudely biopolitical centrifugal imaginings: the anxieties over transnational adoption. Stories of children sold abroad for spare parts have been a recurring feature in the Russian media since the last major public debates on adoption (in 1997, when a ban on foreign adoption was discussed but not instituted). The adoption debate, then and now, pits multiple conceptions of the country's orphans against each other: as victims of misery and deprivation (when discussed by proponents of transnational adoption) and as valuable human resources (when discussed by detractors). As with human trafficking, the characterization of international adoption as a centrifugal threat necessitates that the children in question be viewed as objects rather than subjects.

Transnational adoption is the topic of another chapter of this book project, so I won't deal with it in detail here. Suffice to say that adoption, trafficking, and organlegging are overlapping discourses of national commodification and loss, functioning as metaphors for the dismantling of the nation rather than its reconstruction. Each of them construes the various populations involved in a fashion that deprives them of agency; victims at best, these soon-to-be-foreign

[12] (Viktor Pelevin renders this imagery laughably literal in *"Жизнь насекомых"* (*The Life of Insects)*, with the introduction of a visiting American mosquito and rapacious businessman who has come to sample the local merchandise. When his date asks him what he did during his previous travels to France, he answers "Как обычно, кровь сосал" ("The usual. I sucked blood."). Should their be any doubt about the connection to nationalist rhetoric, the same scene also contains a driver who complains: "[П]родали нас. Как есть, всех продали. С ракетами и флотом. Кровь всю высосали." ("They sold us. As is, they sold us all. With our rockets and our fleet. They sucked out all our blood.")

bodies do not spread Russia and Russianness abroad, but rather represent a subtraction or amputation from the body of the nation. By extension, the bodies of Russian nationals are a resource to be husbanded; what looks like a romantic, anti-globalist, anti-capitalist nationalism can just as easily be interpreted as an older economic formation. The centrifugal threats are part and parcel of capitalism, but their rhetorical opposition resembles a nearly-forgotten mercantilism. The Russian population itself is a national treasure, to be guarded like a medieval dragon's hoard rather than to circulate in a global capitalist fantasy of frictionless trade and wealth creation.

The Russia We Take With Us

A far less Gothic fate awaits the border-crossing Russian national who is posited not merely as a body, but as a self. Emigrés, migrants, contract workers, and students enrolled in foreign educational institutions are not exterior to biopolitics (arguably, no one is), but they do fit in ontological categories that allow for at least the possibility of subjectivity, agency, and interiority. Indeed, the very notion of "brain drain" (an international phenomenon that became a relevant threat to Russia once borders were opened) is based on a bodily metaphor that nonetheless stresses interior, intangible properties such as education and intellect. Moreover, numerous Soviet and pre-Soviet waves of emigration have established models for the lives and social organizations of Russian speakers abroad. But even the periodization of emigration from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union betrays particularly limited assumptions of the nature of "Russianness": the massive outpouring of Ashkenazi Jews in the last decades

before World War I doesn't even count.[13] These emigrants were Jews who were presumed to have a weak affiliation with Russian culture (and, in many cases, a limited command of the Russian language); their departure was just another phase in the nearly 2000 years of Jewish diaspora. By contrast, the largely Jewish third wave of emigration under Brezhnev does "count," because the people leaving were, despite their minority status, perceived as thoroughly acculturated within the country at large.

Soviet-era emigrations constituted diasporas, but, for the most part, they were short-lived, yielding to the powerful pressures of assimilation by the various host countries. This is because the movements across the border were unidirectional and unrepeatable; with notable exceptions, those who left Russia or the Soviet Union were never coming back: what could be a clearer sign of removal from the state body than being stripped of citizenship? Biopolitically, the populations of these diasporas constituted a nearly non-renewable resource: Russian-speakers abroad could not be expected to "breed true," nor could they count on reinforcements from the mother country. These waves of emigration were not what is today considered *transnational*: for the home country, they were a loss of human capital, while for the emigrants themselves, these emigrations represented near-complete isolation from their former national homes.

Soviet and pre-Soviet emigration was never about simply moving from one place to another. As far back as the mid-nineteenth century, we find Dostoevsky continually configuring emigration to American as a trip to the underworld (for

[13] [Insert footnote on emigration scholarship]

Svidrigailov, the choice between moving to America and suicide is almost a toss-up). The Soviet years made the connection between emigration and death much more explicit, through continual reinforcement of the is trope: the White émigrés in Bulgakov's play *Flight ("Бег")* are dead in all but name, while the heroine of Olesha's *A List of Benefits* ("Список благодеяний") can only redeem the crime of merely considering emigration by dying in a communist demonstration on the streets of Paris. Even in the first years of perestroika, emigration was presented as a kind of civil death. In 1983, the American documentary series Frontline aired an episode about the lives of émigrés called "The Russians Are Here;" when it was aired on Soviet state television in 1986, it was simply called "Бывшие" ('Former"). Nor should one forget the paradigmatic film drama of the Gorbachev era, "Интердевочка" (*Intergirl*), which manages to make the post-emigration death toll a transnational phenomenon: when Tanya, a former hard-currency hooker has moved to Sweden with a client-turned-husband, her mother discovers Tanya's former profession and kills herself, and a distraught Tanya dies while driving her fancy foreign car.

The dismantling of the Soviet Union introduced multiple complications to the idea of diaspora for this part of the world, complications that resonate with broader trends in diaspora studies. The Soviet Union itself intersected with two prominent diasporic communities: the aforementioned Jews, for whom the Soviet Union was a prominent, but not exclusive, diasporic site, and the Armenians, whose homeland was part of the USSR (and whose nationals were not considered members of a diaspora when they lived in the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, but were arguably diasporic in Nagorno-Karabakh, a disputed

region in the Republic of Azerbaijan). Ethnic Russians living in the other fourteen constituent republics were technically outside of Russia, but did not typically consider themselves as being part of a Russian diaspora; their language was the Soviet lingua franca, and Soviet culture was their native culture virtually by default. After 1991, such Russians found themselves ethnic, and in many cases, linguistic minorities in foreign countries without ever crossing a single border. The Russian term for these countries, "ближнее зарубежие" (the "near abroad") is wistfully proprietary, acknowledging (just barely) the existence of new foreign vistas. Suddenly, the Russian diaspora had multiple, heterogeneous sites, which in turn contained multiple, heterogenous "Russian" diasporas. A culturally Russian Jew living in Tashkent had visible pathways for emigrating to Israel or the United States, but not to Russia, whereas an ethnic Russian (i.e., of Orthodox descent) might have a mechanism for getting to the Russian Federation, but a harder time ending up in the U.S. or Israel (unless, as is often case, by accompanying a Jewish spouse). At the same time, the disappearance of Soviet-era travel restrictions and the rise of Internet technologies resulted in a complete renegotiation of the terms of diasporic life. Return trips were possible and relatively common, while real-time communication has become reliable, widespread, and cheap.

Just as the Russian diasporas were taking on forms that were unprecedented in previous waves of emigration, the scholarly interest in globalization and contextually renegotiated national identities was prompting a reexamination of the diasporic idea. In his seminal 1990 article "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," Arjun Appadurai proposed a new framework for

cross-cultural interactions in a postmodern world, isolating "five dimensions of global cultural flow…: (a) ethnoscapes; (b) mediascapes, c) technoscapes (d) financescapes; and (e) ideoscapes." These "perspectival landscapes…are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part by their own sense of what these landscapes offer." Global cultural negotiations and renegotiations are never simple a straightforward case of influence, assimilation, or rejection; nor can any one of Appadurai's five dimensions be used as the key for explaining the other four. Diaspora as such was not Appadurai's primary concern here, but his work (along with that of Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Steven Vertovec, just to name a few) has led to what Thomas Faist identifies as the "awkward dance partners" of diaspora and transnationalism. [14]

Russian diasporas after 1991 seem tailor-made for a more nuanced, polyvalent approach to transcultural processes. The two post-Soviet decades that have come and gone provide a wonderfully messy and productive clash between postmodernism's flexibility regarding identity, ideology, and culture on the one hand, and the new circulations of Russian and former Russian citizens who are the product of a rigid, quasi-modernist, quasi-medieval classificatory system of ethnicity that is entirely opaque to the rest of the world. While nationalists within the Russian Federation are doubling down on blood-and-soil definitions of Russianness, Russian-identified diasporic subjects are confronted by essentialism in their new host countries, while taking the opportunity to attempt a

[14] [Insert footnote on the huge body of work regarding diaspora and transnationalism.]

redefinition of Russian identity that puts the diaspora at the center rather than the periphery.

The Russia That We Invent

In 2008 the Russian tycoon Mikhail Prokhorov teamed up with Vladimir Yakovlev, founder of the *Kommersant* newspaper, to create a new magazine called "Сноб" (Snob). The magazine was designed to both entertain and form a particular contingent of people, a task facilitated by its lively Internet site, snob.ru, whose users make up a community they like to call the "*snobshchestvo*". The magazine and site consist of well-written, but unspectacular essays, blog posts, and interviews, covering a wide range of subject matter of interest to its presumably well-travelled, not impoverished readers; in a different context, the October 2011 article, "Как попасть в элитную американскую школу-пансион" ("How to get into an elite American boarding school") would be almost offensively irrelevant. Far more noteworthy than the magazine's content is its definition of the community it serves. Yakovlev was no stranger to creating powerful catch phrases; many credit him with coining the term "новые русские" (New Russians), though Hedrick Smith might disagree. In announcing his new project, Yakovlev created a term for his readers that, while analogous to "новые русские," evokes an entirely different set of values "глобальные русские" (global Russians).

"Global Russians" was a concerted attempt to define an identity for the globe-trotting, border-crossing Russian that was based on positive, cosmopolitan traits,

rather than on nostalgia, loss, and displaced ethnicity. As Yakovlev puts it in 2009:

> На протяжении многих лет для успешных в своей профессии русских интеллектуалов выбор заключался в следующем: быть «совком» или стать иностранцем. Те, кто уезжал из страны, чаще всего это делали, чтобы больше никогда сюда не вернуться и перестать быть совками, а стать американцами/французами/англичанами, то есть принять корни и культуру тех стран, куда они переехали. Последние 5-10 лет формируется совершенно иная модель поведения. Это модель поведения человека, который легко живёт одновременно и в России, и в других странах и при этом не пытается перестать быть совком или стать иностранцем.
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> [Over the course of many years, successful Russian intellectual professionals could make the choice between being a "sovok" or being a foreigner. Those who left the country most often did so in order never to come back and to stop being "sovoks"; to become American/French/British, that is, to take root in the culture of the countries to which they moved. Over the last 5-10 years, a different model of behavior has been taking shape. This is the model of behavior of a person who can live easily at the same time in Russia and in other countries, and is not trying to stop being a sovok or to become a foreigner.]

The opposition between "sovok" and "foreigner" is key. "Sovok," slang that could signify either the entire Soviet Union or a single resident of the USSR, was a particularly powerful term in the 1980s. The *sovok* was the Soviet citizen (or émigré) as crass, tacky, acquisitive, and thoroughly uncivilized. An archetype of self-loathing, the *sovok* is a projection of anxieties about Soviet backwardness, rendering him the exact opposite of the cosmopolitan: local to the core of his being, the Sovok is the yokel of the USSR.[15] The *sovok* abroad was the equivalent of the Ugly American, but he represented a far greater threat to the identity of the nationals with whom he was associated. Arguably, there is nothing more characteristic of a *sovok* abroad than the frantic, self-conscious, and usually unsuccessful attempt to mimic the foreigner.

The global Russian, by contrast, is quite literally at home in the world: "Global Russians суть русскоязычные, свободно адаптирующиеся в любой стране мира люди, которые могут жить и работать где угодно." ["Global Russians are essentially Russian speakers who adapt freely to any country of the world, who can live and work anywhere."] One phrase that comes up again and again is: "жить, где вздумается" (to live wherever I feel like). Yakovlev himself admitted that global Russians were "a group that has not yet completely identified itself and is also in the process of development…and of the creation of a new system of values." But while the name quickly became fighting words (the object of ridicule by many in the blogosphere), *Snob* quickly developed an audience of people for whom the term made sense on a personal level. The Russian photographer Artyom Zhitnev writes,

[15] The *sovok* is also the subject of a separate chapter of this project.

"Она (идея) про нас. Живем, мол, мы себе в Берлине, Москве и Париже. А все равно русские. Как бы неважно, где живем. У нас общие книги, арт-перформансы, песенки в iPod' ах. Общая нелюбовь к консоме и любовь к пельменям. Это мы уверенно прикрикиваем на продавца в магазине миланской улицы Монте-Наполеоне. Придумываем Google. Смакуем „лафит" в Париже. Завоевываем подиумы. Покупаем дворцы и издательства. Заставляем Европу есть блины с икрой».

[It's about us. Let's say we live in Berlin, Moscow, and Paris. But we're still Russian. Like it's not important where we live. We have in common our books, art performances, and iPod playlists. A common dislike of consommé and a love of pelmeny. We're the ones who confidently yell at the sales clerk in a store on Monte-Napoleone Street in Milan. We come up with Google. We enjoy "Lafitte" in Paris. We win podiums. We buy palaces and publishing hoses. We make Europe eat bliny with caviar."]

Zhitnev's statement, while asserting cosmopolitanism, contains a definite element of national pride ("We invented Google") that borders on hubris (Google may preach the open-source gospel, but it seems unlikely that Sergey Brin would share credit with the entire *snobshchestvo).* It also, quite tellingly, associates the "global Russian" with a particular set of habits of consumption. This is important, but dangerous territory: the primary qualities that insulate the global Russian from the twin threats of the sovok (who loves his pelmeny and brags

about his country's contribution to World culture) and the "new Russian" (who buys palaces the way the sovok buys pelmeny) are taste and cultural accomplishment ("we win podiums").

The cosmopolitanism of the global Russians is encoded into their very name: though one can certainly find the phrase "глобальные русские" in both *Snob* and the sites that write about it, the global Russian community makes no secret about that fact that their name is English. An argument can be made that, in a bilingual community, "global Russian" simply sounds better. Each of the two words has two syllables with a stress on the first, while the Russian term has total of seven syllables, varying stress between the two words, and a near homophony with Russian obscenity. But "global Russian" is also a clear ideological choice, one that is in apparent conflict with one of the common definitions of the group: "*люди, живущие в разных странах, говорящие на разных языках, но думающие по-русски*" (people who live in various countries, speak various languages, but think in Russian). It should be no surprise that the English term itself proves a useful weapon in the arsenal of *Snob*'s critics. Yet the site itself displays a linguistic equanimity reminiscent of Zhitnev's globe-trotting ease. The writers do not engage in a self-conscious game of dropping English words when there are perfectly good Russian equivalents, but they also don't avoid foreign words that are found to be useful. Arguably, the global Russian is not showing off their English, but is, instead, comfortable enough to use English words without worrying about showing off.

The early proponents of the global Russian idea are clearly putting their

emphasis on the global, but the term that proves far more vexed, and also more potentially productive, is "Russian." The English word "Russian" has shown itself to be far more elastic and capacious than the Russian word "русский." The Russian adjective (also substantivized as a noun) is an exact match to the English term primarily when referring to the Russian language ("русский язык"); otherwise, the adjective used to refer to things or people connected with Russia as a country ("Россия") is "российский." As mentioned earlier, the corresponding noun for citizens of the Russian Federation is likewise derived from the country's name: россианин. One of the great ironies of the Soviet Jewish emigration is that Jews left the Soviet Union ostensibly because of discrimination facilitated by the country's rigid classification system; Jews were considered a "nationality," and therefore the infamous Line Five of their internal identification documents declared them Jews. In Russia, Jews, Tatars, Germans and any other people who were born and raised in Russia but not of specifically Russian (Orthodox/Slavic) descent are, by definition, not Russian. But Soviet Jews (and, indeed, virtually any white man or woman born in the USSR) immediately become "Russian" in their host countries.

This was always great fodder for jokes, and more recently rendered a failed American reality show almost nonsensical to observers back in the Russian Federation. "Russian Dolls" has the distinction of being canceled almost as soon as it was aired, but for Russian speakers outside of America, its attempt to trade in "Russian" stereotypes was a bizarre misfire: virtually ever single "Russian Doll" was a Russian or Ukrainian Jew. In turn, these women, when speaking in English, always referred to themselves and their families as "Russian" (even to

the point of musing aloud as to the likelihood of their parents accepting their marriages to men who weren't "Russian.")

In nearly every possible respect, the "Russian Dolls" are the antithesis of the global Russian ideal: narrow, provincial, and crass, they correspond much more closely to the archetype of the sovok (or even worse, to decades of Russian ethnic humor). But their utterly deracinated, deterritorialized deployment of the term "Russian" is instructive. In the New York context, if fits in perfectly with a tendency to use language as a shorthand for ethnicity (the "doll" who breaks off her relationship with a 'Spanish" man was almost certainly not dating someone who spoke Castilian and hailed from the Iberian peninsula). In turn, the *snobshchestvo*'s adoption of an English term to describe their identity is a rejection of everything narrow and exclusionary within Russian-language ethnonyms. In choosing English, Global Russians cast off the baggage with which the term "русский" simply cannot part. A *Snob* contributor named Aleksandr Goldfarb can comfortably muse about whether or not he is a global Russian in a way that he cannot consider his status as any sort of "русский." In Russian, the phrase "Aleksandr Goldfarb is Russian" ("Александр Гольдфарб--русский") inevitably sounds like an ethnic joke in search of a punchline.

The appeal of a more capacious word is quite clear. The official term "Россианин" ("Rossianin") is stilted and formal, and as one commentator on *Snob* puts it, the word sounds as alien as "Марсианин" ("Martian"). The same commentator points out that in English (and in many other European languages) one can quite comfortably refer to a "Russian of Polish descent," but

the same locution sounds ridiculous in Russian. This commentator's name? Iraklii Buziashvili.[16] This is a point any Russian speaker could make, but if the speaker's name is Ivan Petrov or Mikhail Ivanov, it is a safe bet that he would be less likely to bother.

As a self-selecting group, the members of the *snobshchestvo* are much more likely to see these issues as relevant. The last thing I wish to do is comb through the names of contributors and commenters in search of Jewish, Georgian and other non-"Russian" names, which would be problematic and offensive for so many reasons. But even the most cursory glance at the site suggests that ethnicity is at least as strong a motivator for entertaining the notion of "global Russianness" as is mobility or social class.

The Diaspora Begins at Home

The term "global Russian" is contused and problematic, both within the *snobshchestvo* and without. From a political or sociological point of view, the idea of the global Russian is marginal at best. At issue is a very small group of people who consider themselves an elite, representing an idea far more than an actual empirical trend. The idea itself has a great deal of value for understanding not just contemporary Russia, but also the vexed relationship between diaspora and transnationalism. On the face of it, the global Russians are transnational through and through. If they emigrate, they may just as easily come back. If they leave the country, they might simply be following jobs and opportunities, and

[16] Russian speakers would immediately recognize this as a Georgian name.

returning to Russia could very well be their next step. More important, one does not have to leave Russia in order to be a global Russian.

Yet the global Russians make a valuable contribution to our understanding of post-Soviet diaspora, thanks in part to the issues of loss discussed above. Traditionally, diaspora is about leaving the homeland for another country, and succeeding, failing, or not even trying to assimilate. What country are the global Russians leaving behind? The Soviet Union was a multi-national empire that technically lacked a titular nationality: "Soviet" was not an option for Line Five of the internal identity documents. But whatever one's attitude towards Soviet ideology and aspirations, despite the self-hatred encoded in the stereotype of the *sovok*, the identity that did, in fact, cover everyone, regardless of "nationality" (ethnicity), the identity that, for good or ill, posited a common culture, a common background, and even a common lingua franca (Russian) was *Soviet*. Everyone in Russia (and the other republics) has been exiled from that homeland. The elitism and cosmopolitanism of the global Russian is antithetical to the now defunct Soviet ideology, but this is a difference of content rather than form. In their aspirations toward internationalism and their focus on Russian culture as a default common ground, the global Russians are recapitulating some of the most appealing aspects of Soviet structures and Soviet discourse. This is a profoundly compensatory gesture, an attempt to define a community in the absence of a vanished home. That home is no address or street--that home is the Soviet Union.

Thus the transnational character of the global Russians is, like their name, deceptive, since the global Russians are a Soviet diaspora in a world that has

rendered a return to the Soviet home impossible. The global Russians allow for a redefinition of the Russian community itself: trans-ethnic (like Soviet identity) and deterritorialized (exiled from its form Soviet home). The global Russians posit a "Russian" diaspora that is capacious enough to include the Russian Federation itself. Just as millions of Soviet citizens "left" their native country in 1991 without taking a step, now Russians can belong to a diaspora while living comfortably in the suburbs of Moscow.