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PHYSICAL INVIOLABILITY AND THE DUEL

PUNCH OR STAB: THE RUSSIAN DUELIST'S DILEMMA

The Russian duel was a surprisingly and consistently violent affair. I do not imply that Russian duels were more deadly than those in the West (the fatality rate in Russia never approached that in France in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries or in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century).[1] I mean rather that conflicts over honor were frequently resolved in unregulated spontaneous physical confrontations rather than in formal encounters. Furthermore, those confrontations differed from *rencontres* in that they involved direct physical contact—hand-to-hand fighting or the use of weapons unrecognized by the dueling ritual, such as walking sticks or whips. The use of standard dueling weapons—swords or pistols—appears to have been optional. In other words, from the introduction of the duel in Russia to its demise, a conflict over honor was as likely (and at times more likely) to result in an immediate and violent hand-to-hand fight as in a formal duel of honor. This happened so frequently that physical force seems to have been an accepted alternative to the duel. In fact, it would be possible to write

a variant history of dueling in Russia featuring fistfights, slaps in the face, and battering with walking sticks.

Historians of the Russian duel have consistently ignored or dismissed this ugly and violent alternative behavior as aberrant. Thus Iakov Gordin, in his *Right to a Duel*, sees unregulated physical violence as an anomaly characteristic of either the early (immature) or the late (corrupted) stages of dueling in Russia. He is right to some degree (there seem to have been more fights in the first half of the eighteenth century than a hundred years later), but my material does not completely support this interpretation. I find that unritualized violence accompanied dueling throughout its history. The regular duel of honor in Russia seems to have been a noble ideal realized by few and disregarded by many.

The so-called Nezhin quarrel that took place in 1744 between the aide-de-camp (de facto head) of the Guards Regiment (*Leib-kompaniia*), Petr Grinshtein (Grünstein), and one Vlas Klimovich is an early example of a confrontation over an alleged offense to honor that involved hand-to-hand fighting and weapons both appropriate and inappropriate to an affair of honor. Grinshtein was one of the leaders of the 1741 coup d'état. Elizabeth rewarded him by making him a noble. Klimovich was a brother-in-law of Elizabeth's favorite, Aleksei Grigor'evich Razumovsky, whose rise made Grinshtein jealous. The fight took place on a road near Nezhin, in Ukraine. The precise course of the encounter is difficult to establish, since the incident is known exclusively from the rivals' accounts: Klimovich's complaint to the empress, supported by members of his party, on the one hand, and Grinshtein's testimony, supported by his officers, on the other.[2] Even contemporary investigators of the affair reported to the empress that there was no hope of finding the truth and recommended that the case be closed.[3]

The conflict arose over the right of way: depending on who is reporting, either Klimovich's carriage collided with Grinshtein's in the dark of night or Klimovich demanded that Grinshtein's party make way for his and began the fight when Grinshtein refused. Heated words led to a fight involving both the principals and their retinues. In the course of the fight, sticks, swords, guns, and fists were all used.

Everyone present—nobles and commoners, officers and enlisted men, women too—had at each other. Klimovich's wife was beaten with a club and her mother threatened.[4] Grinshtein seems to have won this conflict, but he paid dearly for it: he was arrested, tortured, and exiled together with his wife and son to the northern provinces. There they stayed nearly sixteen years, until Peter III finally allowed Grinshtein to return to his estate.

This vulgar scuffle scarcely deserves to be considered a duel. Still, amidst the raw violence some nascent elements of an affair of honor can be discerned. All accounts mention injured honor as the conflict's cause. When the carriages collided, Grinshtein allegedly reacted to Klimovich's transgression with the question: "Who are these *canailles* who are traveling and why won't they honor military commanders [*geniralitetu chesti ne otdaiut*] and clear the road?"[5] In the following exchange, Grinshtein himself assaulted Razumovsky's honor: as the history of the Guards Regiment describes it (quoting from contemporary documents), Grinshtein "with foul words dishonorably cursed Aleksei Grigor'evich (Razumovsky), which words are even shameful to record." Furthermore, certain gestures, if considered outside of man-to-man combat, could be part of an affair of honor. Thus when Klimovich hit Grinshtein on the head with a stick, Grinshtein, "having smiled and crossed himself, with the words 'Even Aleksei Grigor'evich would not hit me,' slapped Klimovich on the cheek with a full swing of his right arm."[6] Klimovich responded like a duelist: he drew his sword and swung it at Grinshtein, but one of Grinshtein's officers stopped him, took away his weapon, and broke it in half.

References to honor and status ("Even Aleksei Grigor'evich would not hit me") indicate that this was a conflict over precedence—that is, over Grinshtein's and Razumovsky's positions in the hierarchy of honor (Klimovich clearly functioned in the conflict as Razumovsky's junior representative). In the West, such conflicts were customarily resolved by means of dueling, in defiance of the monarch's power.[7] In Muscovite Russia, by contrast, they were resolved through the institution of *beschest'e*, which was controlled by the state. In fact, any exchange of blows was as forbidden as dueling. Jacques Margeret writes:

> Moreover, even if a man is greatly injured by words, he is not permitted to strike his foe, even with his hand, on pain of being punished as above [i.e., like a duelist]. For if he does, and the other returns the blow, and a complaint is lodged, they are both condemned to be beaten as above or to pay a fine to the emperor. This is because, they say, whoever has been offended, in wreaking vengeance for the injury or in answering a blow, took upon himself the authority of the law, which reserves to itself alone the recognition of wrongs committed and the punishment of them.[8]

The "Nezhin quarrel," crude as it was, constituted an attempt to resolve the matter independently, outside the monarch's jurisdiction. Hence the severe punishment imposed on Grinshtein: not only did he overestimate his status in relation to that of Elizabeth's favorite, but he also directly threatened the monarch's right to determine the hierarchy of honor and to regulate disagreements about it. Grinshtein probably felt that his role in establishing Elizabeth on the throne allowed him such independence. Yet she refused to recognize his claim.

In their approximation of an affair of honor, Grinshtein and Klimovich used weapons both appropriate (sword) and inappropriate (fists, hands, sticks, and clubs) for a duel. These weapons have symbolic meaning. They not only indicate what type of conflict is taking place (duel, fight, etc.); they also symbolize the power relations among combatants. A sword and a fist are equalizers, although in opposite ways. A sword establishes (or reestablishes) opponents' equally high status, whereas a fist reduces both opponents to an equally low level. A stick used to deliver a blow and an open hand used for a slap are weapons of punishment; they introduce or reinforce a hierarchy of power.[9]

The semiotics of noble and vulgar, equalizing and punishing gestures seems to have been lost on Klimovich and Grinshtein. In their fight over hierarchy, they randomly moved from one to the other: Klimovich hit Grinshtein on the head with a stick; Grinshtein slapped Klimovich; Klimovich drew a sword on Grinshtein; Grinshtein's officers took a sword away from Klimovich and beat him and his men. The opposition between a fist (a real weapon) and an open hand (a symbolic weapon) seems to be blurred: the blow that Grinshtein gave Klimovich was not simply humiliating; he hit "with the full swing of

his right arm," a blow that clearly must have inflicted real physical damage. Moreover, according to another account, Grinshtein "slapped Klimovich in the face about three or four times"[10]—far more times than was necessary to establish his superior status. Such apparent indifference to the semiotics of weapons and gestures was to become a distinctive feature of the Russian duel.

Interpreting the Nezhin quarrel as an early, clumsy attempt at dueling, one would expect that indiscriminate violent responses to insults against honor would disappear as dueling was assimilated and the symbolism of the honor code established.[11] Yet historical documents reveal that fistfights and the wielding of sticks between officers and gentlemen in defense of their honor continued throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. Most important, the fight and the duel remained intertwined. The 1753 duel between Chernyshev and Leont'ev, mentioned in Catherine's memoir, began as a fight: "On January 11, 1753, Colonels Chernyshev and Leont'ev, being at Count Roman Vorontsov's, first had a fight and then, taking out their swords, stabbed each other with those swords." Similarly, in the mid-1750s, two officers of the Guards, Fedor Smol'ianinov and Aleksandr Shvanovich, having quarreled over a game of billiards, first pushed and slapped each other, then drew swords and seriously wounded each other.[12] Nikolai Grech tells the story of A. V. Khrapovitsky's quarrel with a provincial gentleman who mistakenly sat at a restaurant table prepared for Khrapovitsky and his high-ranking friends:

> At that time this party came in and took their places around the table. One of its members, seeing a stranger and figuring from his manners that he was a visiting provincial, began to tease him. The traveler first tried to laugh the matter off, but when the attacks became more serious, he began to curse and finally responded to an insult with a slap. A fight followed, from which the steppe dweller emerged a winner, having left the purple marks of his courage under the eyes of his red-faced foes.[13]

In this case, the symbolic gesture (a slap) was avenged not in a duel and not even in an unregulated sword fight, but in a fistfight. Furthermore, when the winner (who did not know who his opponents were) came to Khrapovitsky as a petitioner the next morning and the latter

recognized him, Khrapovitsky made no attempt to restore his honor. On the contrary, he, "amused by [his visitor's] embarrassment, offered him his hand and said: 'Now, that's enough, let's make peace. I'll do whatever I can for you, and anyone who mentions the past should have his eye gouged out [*kto staroe pomianet, tomu glaz von*].' He not only did what he could for the petitioner but from that time on received him as a friend."[14]

Even the prudent A. T. Bolotov, bragging of his discreet behavior in a confrontation with a German officer who suspected that Bolotov had pulled at his queue, first mentions a blow in the face as the natural response to an insult and only then the possibility of a duel: "He decided that it was me, and, flaring up like gunpowder, began to curse me without mercy in such a way that anyone else in my place couldn't have stood it and would have punched his mug [*s"ezdil by v rozhu*] and would have been ready to quarrel [*rugat'sia*] and fight with him." Indeed, Bolotov's fellow officers readily support their comrade: "We can't stop marveling that you had enough presence of mind not to punch this German in the mug [*etogo nemchuru ne s"ezdil v rozhu*]. We all would have helped you teach this churl a lesson." Bolotov, however, behaves as a rational human being, apologizes, and eventually elicits the German's reciprocal apology. Wrapping up his story, he again expresses satisfaction about his restraint and again mentions vulgar violence as part of a normal affair of honor: "For me this victory was a hundred times more pleasant than if I had beaten him up with sticks."[15]

Substituting violent fights for formal duels of honor persisted to the end of the eighteenth century. In 1797, for example, an officer of the Guards, Koltovsky, crudely joked about a fellow officer's sister; her brother struck Koltovsky so forcefully that he left "blue marks and a big swelling on the whole left side [of Koltovsky's face]." No duel followed.[16] Furthermore, even after formal duels had been accepted and proliferated in Russia in the early nineteenth century, vulgar physical violence still remained a part of affairs of honor. Most important, it was integrated into the dueling ritual as a way to initiate a duel or force a reluctant opponent to fight. Both functions are evident in the 1811 quarrel between N. N. Murav'ev-Karsky (1794–1866), the future military commander of the Caucasus, and a certain A. M. Mikhailov. Mikhailov, teasing the seventeen-year-old Murav'ev at a ball, spoke disrespectfully of the regiment to which the lad had just been appointed. Murav'ev slapped the offender in the face, clearly aiming to provoke a duel: "'What have you done?' exclaimed Mikhailov, who, having lost his balance, grabbed me by the hand. 'My duty,' I answered him, 'and I am ready to give you immediately any satisfaction you may wish. Let's go.'" When Mikhailov refused to accept the challenge and threatened to complain to the authorities, Murav'ev attempted to use a stick to force him to duel: "'Ah!' I cried. 'You scoundrel, this isn't enough for you; then wait!' I shuddered with fury and ran to the next room to look in the corners for some walking stick so I could thoroughly beat Mikhailov up." The duel did not take place because Murav'ev's father, concerned about his young son's future career, forced him to apologize. Nonetheless, Mikhailov found it necessary to leave the capital in shame, whereas Murav'ev enjoyed his colleagues' admiration.[17]

Whereas Murav'ev went looking for a stick in a fit of fury, Ryleev used an instrument of punishment on an unwilling opponent in a calculated, almost formal way. The Decembrist Nikolai Bestuzhev relates the story of a naval officer, Wilhelm von Dezin, who refused to fight a duel with Bestuzhev's brother, Aleksandr. Ryleev then decided to teach von Dezin a lesson: "He [Ryleev] met him twice and the first time, after he refused to accept the challenge, spat in his face. The second time he got so carried away that he snatched a whip out of his opponent's hands and whipped him in public. But neither [Ryleev's] first action nor his second could convince [von Dezin] to give satisfaction [to Bestuzhev], which he wanted to receive from the police instead."[18] The third Bestuzhev brother, Mikhail, also describes the incident: "Ryleev met him by chance on the street and, in response to his insolent talk, whipped his stupid mug with a *cravache* [riding whip] that he had in his hand."[19] Despite the brothers' claim that Ryleev acted impulsively, the fact that he repeatedly assaulted von Dezin's face suggests that his actions were premeditated.[20]

The symbolic meaning of Ryleev's actions notwithstanding, the physical force that he used far exceeded the token violence needed to

dishonor a reluctant duelist. The same is true of Murav'ev's slap: it almost knocked his offender down. As the century progressed, the use of such excessive force for supposedly symbolic gestures continued to be the rule rather than the exception. Often opponents literally knocked each other down while initiating an affair of honor. In the late 1820s or early 1830s, two Guards officers, Savva Iakovlev, a notorious gambler and drunkard, and Colonel Vadkovsky, also a famous brawler, quarreled over the attentions of a popular circus rider, who was attracted first to Iakovlev, then to Vadkovsky:

> Once, in a burst of wild jealousy, Savva locked his beauty up and took the key to the circus with him, claiming that Liudovika was ill. . . . Vadkovsky, who arrived in the box soon afterward, demanded the key and, being refused, treated [*ugostil*] Iakovlev to a full-force slap in the face that knocked him down to the carpeted floor of the box. Picking himself up, Iakovlev challenged Vadkovsky to a duel. "With the greatest pleasure," the lucky rival replied, teasing Iakovlev with the key that had fallen out of his pocket. The duel did not take place.[21]

Vadkovsky's slap was anything but ritual: it sent a member of the Horse Guard—traditionally a man of enormous stature and great physical strength—flying to the floor. Yet the fight ended with a challenge: a sign that man-to-man combat had become incorporated into the dueling ritual.

The use of vulgar physical force in an affair of honor seems to have been accepted by all social groups that went in for dueling—by military men, intellectuals, and aristocrats alike. In a letter of August 12–16, 1840, to V. P. Botkin, Belinsky describes an embarrassing brawl between Katkov and Bakunin. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the future editor of the *Russian Herald* (*Russkii vestnik*) and the future leader of the international anarchist movement quarreled over rumors allegedly spread by Bakunin about a love affair of Katkov. After an exchange of insults ("Scoundrel!" "You're a scoundrel yourself!" "Eunuch!"), the rivals engaged in a furious fight:

> Katkov gave [Bakunin] a shove with the clear intent of starting a fight. Bakunin dashed for his cane and the struggle began. I don't remember what I did, I only shouted, "Gentlemen, gentlemen, what's wrong with you, stop it!" and remained in the doorway [of the bedroom where the fight was taking place] and didn't move. Bakunin averted his face and kept his hands moving without looking at Katkov. Catching the right moment, he struck a blow across Katkov's back with the bamboo [cane] that you had given him; but with this burst of power and courage both the former and the latter left him—and Katkov gave him two slaps in the face. Bakunin's condition was shameful: Katkov pushed his face toward him, but Bakunin arched in order to hide his mug. In the course of the struggle, he cried out: "In that case, we will duel!" Having reached his goal, that is, having given Bakunin two slaps, Katkov finally heeded my entreaties and walked out to my study. I closed the door. Bakunin's hat lay on the floor in the study and my bedroom was covered with the plaster that had fallen from the ceiling because of the scuffle.[22]

The fight is as violent and comical in its vulgarity as the Nezhin quarrel. Still, the combatants did not perceive its violence and vulgarity as obstacles to a formal duel. No duel followed, however: soon after the incident Bakunin left Russia forever.

In yet another violent incident—again involving prominent figures of their time, one a titled nobleman with royal blood in his veins, the other an intellectual—the prospective duelist received a blow in the face, beat his opponent senseless in retaliation, and then wanted to challenge him. The case in point is the 1857 confrontation between the historian Stepan Shevyrev and Count Aleksei Bobrinsky. Given the intellectual cause of their disagreement (Shevyrev, a Slavophile, defended Russian universities against Robert Peel's criticism, while Bobrinsky, a Westernizer, took offense and accused him of being overly patriotic and progovernment, a "*kvas* patriot"), the fight was inexplicably violent:

> Shevyrev lost his temper and hit [Bobrinsky] in the face. Bobrinsky flew off the handle [*ne vzvidel sveta*]: he dashed at him, knocked him to the floor, and began to trample him underfoot. Chertkov [in whose home the fight took place] vainly tried to separate them and drag Bobrinsky away, warning him that he might kill Shevyrev. Bobrinsky roared that that was what he wanted. Chertkov had to call his servants, who separated the fighters, or rather, freed the half-dead Shevyrev and carried him home on bedsheets. Now his life is in danger, but Count Bobrinsky will not calm down and wants to duel with him, claiming that the two of them can't go on living [i.e., one of them has to die].[23]

Bobrinsky's thirst for blood, however, remained unsatisfied: Shevyrev survived, and the duel did not take place.

The future author of a Russian dueling code, A. A. Suvorin, also was involved in a violent incident. In 1893, his long disagreement with the editorial board of *Russian Thought* ended in a confrontation that both parties understood as an affair of honor. Suvorin's father justifies his son's actions: "It's ugly to insult a person, but to stretch him on the rack [*vytiagivat' zhily*] is also ugly. 'I'll shoot you like a piglet'—those words of [V. M.] Lavrov must have driven Lelia [A. A. Suvorin] crazy. 'Shoot!' he cried. 'Do you really think that in an affair of honor I'll retreat in front of a revolver?' And, having slapped him, he repeated: 'Shoot.'"[24] In this conflict, the slap follows the challenge—proof that violent gestures have been well absorbed into the dueling ritual. Despite the parties' apparent readiness to fight, in this case, as in many others, no duel ensued.

The 1894 law, which was supposed to revive the chivalric spirit of the Russian duel, did not eradicate vulgar violence from affairs of honor. A 1909 conflict between the poets Maksimilian Voloshin and Nikolai Gumilev was also marked by the use of excessive force. The editor of the journal *Apollon*, S. K. Makovsky, who witnessed the confrontation in the studio of the painter A. Ia. Golovin, reports:

> I walked back and forth with Voloshin, Gumilev walking in front of us with one of the writers. Voloshin looked anxious, would not open his mouth, and only breathed heavily. Suddenly, having caught up with Gumilev, without a word he swung and with all his force slapped him in the face with his mighty hand. Gumilev's right cheek turned purple immediately, his eye swelled. He tried to attack the offender with his fists. But he was pulled aside: indeed, it was impossible to allow hand-to-hand combat between the puny Nikolai Stepanovich and a man as strong as Voloshin! Besides, this could not be the response to a grave insult. The challenge followed immediately.[25]

Makovsky also preserved Voloshin's explanation of his violent behavior: "'Are you disappointed in me?' Voloshin asked when he noticed that his rude treatment of the person who until then had been considered his friend jarred me. 'You are physically too magnificent, Maksimilian Aleksandrovich, to inflict blows of such power. In cases like that,

a symbolic gesture is quite enough.' The strong man was embarrassed and mumbled in shame: 'Yes, I haven't adjusted [my strength].'"[26] Significantly, Voloshin knew the norm but disregarded it anyway and beat his friend black and blue. Yet another literary affair of honor that featured physical violence was the 1912 conflict between Mikhail Kuzmin and Viacheslav Ivanov's brother-in-law, Sergei Shvarsalon. The conflict involved a challenge, a refusal to fight, and a slap in the face—the set of actions that we see time and again in affairs of honor throughout the duel's existence in Russia.[27] Behavior that supposedly was aberrant was in fact virtually indispensable.

Historically, the duel of honor emerged as a more civilized means of resolving conflicts, in opposition to raw physical violence. It served to distinguish the noble class as polite and set it apart from the rest of vulgar humanity. As Kiernan remarks: "A gentleman could not retaliate with crude physical force against someone who pulled his nose or trod on his toes; instead of knocking an aggressor down, as an ordinary man would want to do, he had to exchange cards, name his second, and be ready to appear in Hyde Park or the Bois de Boulogne and exchange sword-thrusts or shots."[28] The dueling ceremony mediated aggression by placing time and distance between opponents. The duel, consequently, favored weapons that enforced physical separation: swords and rapiers, which required a certain distance between opponents; and pistols, which obviated physical contact altogether.

The duel also acted preventively: knowing that they could be held accountable by means of a duel, gentlemen refrained from heedlessly bumping into each other or treading on each other's toes. Furthermore, they knew that they could be punished even before the offensive act had been committed. In his "Seventh Provincial Letter," Pascal disapprovingly quotes his imaginary opponent, an exponent of the honor code: "One may, in order to prevent a slap, kill the person who wants to give it."[29] Pascal's disapproval notwithstanding (his refusal to distinguish between killing in a duel and common murder is evident in his use of the verb "to kill" throughout the letter), his words demonstrate the duel's most important function: to guard a person's bodily integrity. While making a gentleman open to the violence of ritualized combat, it guaranteed his physical inviolability in

other contexts of civil intercourse. In fact, the duel's existence signaled society's readiness to recognize a person's right to private space and physical inviolability.

Inasmuch as Russians were adopting the duel as a more civilized means of resolving conflicts, why did they remain unresponsive to the duel's tendency to inhibit direct physical contact and fail to stop beating each other up? Granted, Russians were hardly unique in resorting to vulgar violence: regardless of how pure a particular dueling tradition was, all countries where dueling was practiced were likely to know impromptu fights, some of them, no doubt, vulgar. Furthermore, a slap in the face and other forms of assault were part of the Western dueling ritual as well. According to dueling codes put together in the nineteenth century, a slap constituted the gravest possible offense against honor and was a sure way to provoke a duel. Western duelists seem to have used physical assault sparingly, however, in an effort to avoid actual contact. They even preferred the verbal "Consider yourself slapped!" to an actual slap.[30] Russian dueling theory, following its Western models, also treated an offense involving physical contact (the "insult by action," *oskorblenie deistviem*) as the gravest insult possible, an indication of its rare and calculated use.[31] In practice, however, as my data suggest, violent clashes not only regularly accompanied duels but often replaced them. Moreover, Russian duelists seemed to prefer actual violence to a symbolic threat. In an 1833 incident, a quarrel between two officers escalated into an exchange of insults and ended with a physical assault: "'Keep quiet!' Kanatchikov finally cried out, regaining his composure. 'Keep quiet or... or I will slap you... in the face... Do you hear me?' 'That's not something that's said or promised, it's something that's done!' Voeikov replied, and with those words he grabbed a candlestick from the table and threw it at Kanatchikov." Voeikov was killed in the ensuing duel.[32]

The classical sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French duel was most often provoked by an accusation of lying—a *démenti*.[33] In contrast, the Russian affair of honor seems to have been most readily set in motion by physical violence. The reasons for this preference are twofold. On the one hand, Russians historically were not particularly

sensitive to accusations of lying. Captain Margeret points out Russians' tolerance of such charges:

> It is true that they do not take offense at every word, for they are very blunt in their speech (seeing that they use only the familiar form of address) and used to be even simpler. For if one were to say that something dubious were not so, instead of saying "That's your opinion," or "Pardon me," or something similar, they say, "You have lied!"—even the servant to his master. Although Ivan Vasil'evich [Ivan IV, the Terrible] was surnamed and taken for a tyrant, even he did not take offense at being called a liar.[34]

The presence of foreigners, in Margeret's opinion, had increased Russians' sensitivity to accusations of lying: "However, now, since there have been foreigners among them, the Russians do not 'give the lie' so liberally as they did twenty or thirty years ago."[35] Still, it seems that Russians never became particularly sensitive in this respect: although Vostrikov lists accusations of lying among the possible verbal insults that can initiate an affair of honor, he does not represent it as either especially frequent or more offensive than such insults as "scoundrel," "coward," "fool," and "cretin."[36] My own collection of dueling incidents does not contain a single example of a duel over an accusation of lying. It seems safe to assume that, in contrast to slaps in the face and other kinds of physical abuse, an accusation of lying was neither a particularly grave insult in the Russian dueling tradition nor a frequent one.

The issue of physical inviolability, however, was crucial for the eighteenth-century nobility as they organized themselves into a Westernized privileged class. Even as they continued to fight and brawl with no sense that they were doing anything dishonorable, nobles began to assimilate the Western notions of personal autonomy and sanctity of private space. Their newly acquired aversion to physical violence was addressed to their peers but even more to their superiors and the government. Given the symbolism of slaps, caning, and flogging as gestures of power, the nobility's attempts to resist corporal punishment—by stopping it altogether or at least making it reciprocal—were also attempts to establish their independence from authorities. The duel of honor was central to this important development.

While the duel's role in deterring private conflicts is clear, its capacity to restrain authorities from encroaching on their subjects' bodies needs further examination.

"One Beaten Person Counts for Two Unbeaten Ones"

> "Oh my! It seems they want to flog me!"
>
> —Grigory Vinsky, *My Time: A Memoir*

In his 1822 fragment known as "Notes on Russian History of the Eighteenth Century," Pushkin blames Catherine and her favorites (especially Potemkin) for crushing the nobility's spirit and taking away their ancient rights by subjecting them to dishonorable treatment, particularly to physical abuse. "The humiliation of the nobility's spirit" and "slaps in the face generously parceled out to our princes and boyars," he argues, resulted in "a complete absence of honor and honesty in the nation's upper class."[37] Historical documents, however, do not support Pushkin's theory. In fact, parceling out slaps to princes and boyars was typical for Muscovite Russia, whereas the eighteenth century saw the number of nobles subjected to physical molestation—at the hands of either their superiors or law enforcement—steadily declining. While Peter I did not hesitate to flog, torture, or slap around not only his enemies but any person who happened to displease him, regardless of that person's social status and service rank, Catherine II, in the 1785 *Charter to the Nobility*, officially exempted the nobility from corporal punishment. The Charter's fifteenth article states: "Corporal punishment shall not extend to the wellborn."[38] Pushkin's reproach thus seems unfair.

The nobility's increasing intolerance for physical violation explains the discrepancy between Pushkin's perception and historical evidence. Historians have frequently pointed out that corporal punishment was an egalitarian institution in Muscovite Russia. All classes were equally subject to it, and it carried no particular shame or dishonor.[39] Extraordinary measures (such as disrobing a person in public, flogging him or her on a special prop, the *kozel*, or beating the culprit through the

streets) had to be added before the punishment became shameful.[40] Flogging by itself did not interfere with one's career, nor did it carry any kind of social stigma. The same held for physical confrontations among peers and for informal kinds of corporal punishment, such as being hit by one's superior. As Kollmann puts it, "as a rule physical assault *per se* was not dishonoring."[41]

The situation began to change in Peter's time. Although Peter himself continued to slap his subjects around at will and even increased the variety of corporal punishments imposed by courts and other institutions of power (during his reign *Spitzruten*, long flexible sticks used to beat those running the gauntlet, and the cat-o'-nine-tails were introduced in the army and navy, respectively), his new legislation promoted the idea that certain kinds of punishment could dishonor a person. Gradually the idea emerged that any corporal punishment could be dishonoring. Initially it was considered dishonoring only if it were administered by an executioner: an officer flogged by an executioner was to be stripped of his rank, and a flogged enlisted man could not become an officer.[42] (In theory, a flogged person became ineligible for military service altogether, but for practical reasons this rule was disregarded.)

Peter also attempted to legislate against person-to-person physical abuse, sometimes in interesting ways. For example, the 1716 "Declaration about Duels and Picking Quarrels"—unlike the *Military Code* compiled earlier the same year, which relegated all punishments to authorities—gave the offended person an active role in punishing the offender: "If someone hits another person with his hand, he is to be imprisoned for three months and deprived of his pay for half a year; after that he has to ask the offended for forgiveness on his knees and he has to be ready to suffer an equal vengeance from the offended or be considered unsuitable [for service] and be stripped of his rank (if he has one), forever or temporarily, depending on the nature of the case." Assaults with sticks were to be punished in a similar way (imprisonment, reciprocal beatings, and asking for forgiveness) but more severely: pay was to be withheld for a year and rank stripped forever.[43] The law is curiously ambiguous as to the punishing authority: while it is the law that mandates the punishment, it is the offended person

who reciprocates. It seems that despite all his hostility toward dueling and reluctance to permit his subjects' independence in resolving personal conflicts, Peter experimented with allowing the offended individual to deal with the offender personally—but in circumstances regulated by law. This apparent inconsistency may have reflected Peter's attempt to curtail the nobility's growing independence by giving the state an active role in conflicts over honor and thus bringing them under its control. While the nobility rejected the monarch's intervention, the idea of reciprocity promoted by the "Declaration" proved to be crucial in the way they dealt with person-to-person physical abuse. At the same time, the contradictions in the law allowed the authorities to choose whatever punishment they wished.

Attempts from above to instill a sense of honor in the military continued after Peter. In 1745, Aleksei Razumovsky, the acting head of the Guards Regiment, issued an order forbidding corporal punishment of grenadiers, as well as fights among them. "Among themselves," he declared, the grenadiers "have to behave as their honor requires, and nobody should dare to inflict penalties on another and especially not to punish another with beatings; this way they all should be able to behave politely and properly and receive the greatest respect for this."[44] Divorced from reality, inconsistent, and poorly enforced, such measures nonetheless promoted the idea of physical inviolability among the military. The notion that an officer's rank was to exempt him from corporal punishment gradually emerged. Officers' understanding of such exemption as a prerogative of their rank is seen in a 1745 conflict in the Guards Regiment. A commanding officer, Mikhail Okhlestyshev, verbally abused one of the grenadiers, Pershutkin, and hit him with a stick. Pershutkin protested but was hit again. His comrades came to his defense, pointing out that officers should not be beaten. The offender, however, insisted on his right to beat them:

> "I'll beat all that officer's arrogance out of you!" "It was not you who made us officers, and it is improper to beat an officer," Chizhukhin responded. "What do you care? It's not you who is beaten!" Okhlestyshev shouted at him. "Today you choose to beat Pershutkin with a stick, but tomorrow I can receive the same treatment!" "Do you want to rebel, scoundrels! The most gracious Empress ordered you to be beaten with sticks!" "First announce her order to us, then you can beat us!" the officers shouted.[45]

The exchange makes clear that the officers saw their physical inviolability as ensured by their rank. In his complaint to the empress, Pershutkin pointed out that Okhlestyshev treated him "not as an honorable officer but as an enlisted man, and by doing so gave him great offense." In the same vein, another Guards officer, El'chaninov, refuted the accusation that he "had run the gauntlet" by invoking his rank: "But I am an officer."[46]

The connection between an officer's rank and his right to physical inviolability having been established, the idea emerged that the entire noble class was exempt. The fact that nobles overwhelmingly served in the military, and most often as commissioned officers, helped this development. Since most Russian nobles preferred to see their noble rank as a birthright, they began to insist that physical inviolability was their birthright as well.

The Russian nobility's yearning for physical inviolability was reflected in their efforts—particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century—to secure it legally. The draft of a legal code, prepared by the legislative commission that began its work under Elizabeth in 1754 and continued under Catherine, contains a paragraph exempting noblemen from corporal punishment and torture.[47] Many of the regional "Instructions to the Nobility's Deputies" compiled by the nobility in the various districts for the Legislative Commission of 1766 contain similar clauses.[48] The 1785 *Charter to the Nobility* was thus the culmination of a half-century's efforts.

Unfortunately, the protection offered by the *Charter*'s fifteenth paragraph quickly proved fragile. In the decree of April 13, 1797, Paul virtually repealed the *Charter* by using a loophole: he suggested that a guilty nobleman be stripped of his noble rank, and thus be made eligible for corporal punishment and torture.[49] Upon ascending the throne, Alexander restored the nobility's privileges, but he offered no firm guarantee that the *Charter* would not be repealed again. Most important, the practice of stripping noblemen of their rank continued. The nobles were thus left feeling that the privilege of not being tor-

tured and beaten could be taken away from them at any moment at a monarch's whim. Petr Viazemsky's 1844 note reveals the nobility's concerns:

> "A nobleman is free of any corporal punishment either imposed by courts or during his imprisonment."
>
> This is extracted from the law code published in 1842. These articles confirm the nobility's charter issued by Catherine II: *Charter for the Rights, Freedoms, and Privileges of the Russian Nobility Given April 21, 1785, Eternally and Unshakably*. This eternity, these rights and freedoms were partly overthrown by the decree... Now it remains only to repeal the fifteenth paragraph of the Nobility's Charter: "Corporal punishment shall not extend to the wellborn."[50]

The unfinished sentence clearly refers to Paul's decree of 1797.

The nobility's anxiety about their physical inviolability manifested itself in rumors about noblemen and noblewomen who had been secretly tortured or flogged, rumors that continued to circulate well into the second half of the nineteenth century. It is difficult to say how often, if ever, unlawful floggings were inflicted in reality: such cases are difficult to document, and flogged noblemen themselves were not eager to share such information. There are indications, however, that such beatings may have occurred. Khrapovitsky registers a comment by Catherine that may have reflected a desire to be able to flog her subjects—or at least her awareness that flogging was practiced by the head of her Secret Expedition, Semen Sheshkovsky: "In Anna's time she [one Natal'ia Passek] would have been flogged by the knout, and in Empress Elizabeth's time she would have been locked up in the Secret Chancellery; there are such letters [in Passek's case] that should have been burned and cannot be given to Sheshkovsky."[51] Catherine's view of Sheshkovsky is supported by the official transcript of Sheshkovsky's 1792 interrogation of the Freemason M. I. Nevzorov: "Finally, he, Nevzorov, was told that if he does not answer, then he, as a person disobeying authorities, will be flogged on Her Majesty's order."[52] According to the Freemason I. V. Lopukhin, Nevzorov's friend and benefactor, Sheshkovsky threatened to beat Nevzorov with a log rather than to flog him: "Her Majesty ordered that you be beaten with a quartered log if you do not answer." Nevzorov allegedly replied: "I do not believe that Her Majesty, who wrote the instruction to the Legislative Commission, could have ordered this," and was spared the beating.[53] The existence of two systems of law enforcement—punitive (*karatel'nyi*), applied by the courts in accordance with the law, and administrative (*administrativnyi*), applied by local police agencies as they saw fit—may well have increased the number of abuses.

Regardless of the actual frequency of unlawful beatings, the fear of physical violation persisted, as numerous rumors testify. It was rumored that when Aleksandr Radishchev was arrested in June 1790, he fainted when he heard that he would be interrogated by Sheshkovsky. Radishchev allegedly was spared torture only because his sister-in-law bribed Sheshkovsky.[54] Others, according to hearsay, were not so lucky. Mar'ia Kozhina, the wife of a major general, supposedly was taken to the Secret Expedition on Catherine's order and flogged. Catherine allegedly told Sheshkovsky: "Every Sunday she goes to a public masquerade; go there yourself, and when you have taken her from there to the Secret Expedition, flog her lightly [*slegka telesno nakazhite*] and take her back with all decorum."[55] Likewise, rumor had it that two ladies of high society, E. P. Divova and A. A. Turchaninova, were also abused by Sheshkovsky for drawing a caricature of Catherine.[56] Pushkin, painting Catherine's reign as a time when physical abuse of noblemen was routine, refers to rumors that Sheshkovsky tortured the Freemason Nikolai Novikov and that the playwright Iakov Kniazhnin had died under torture: "Catherine abolished torture, but the Secret Chancellery flourished under her patriarchal rule; Catherine loved enlightenment, but Novikov, who spread its first rays, went from Sheshkovsky's hands to prison, where he remained until her death. Radishchev was exiled to Siberia; Kniazhnin died under lashes; and Fonvizin, whom she feared, would not have avoided the same fate if only he were not so famous."[57] Novikov's torture is not documented, and it is highly unlikely that Kniazhnin died a wrongful death.[58] All the same, the story of Kniazhnin's death by flogging was widely accepted, and the Decembrists ranked him among the martyrs tortured to death by the Russian autocracy.[59]

Sheshkovsky, whom contemporaries nicknamed the "knout-flogger"

(*knutoboitsa*), was an ideal candidate for the role of the nobles' abuser. A person of low birth and poor education, the first in his family to acquire noble rank and high position on the service ladder, he personified corporal punishment. In a rough draft of Radishchev's biography, his son Pavel gives a vivid portrait of Sheshkovsky as a sadistic persecutor of nobles:

> Sheshkovsky himself bragged that he knew the way to elicit a confession, namely, he began by hitting the interrogated person under the jaw with a stick, so that his teeth would crack or even fall out. . . . The most remarkable thing was that Sheshkovsky treated only nobles in this way, since commoners were given to his subordinates. . . . He punished the nobles himself. He flogged and lashed frequently. He used the knout with extraordinary skill, acquired by frequent practice. . . . It would be inappropriate to name some of the gentlemen and ladies in the best cities of the empire whom he has punished.[60]

Another source also portrays Sheshkovsky as a torturer who enjoyed his job: "A horrible person was this Sheshkovsky; he would approach so politely, so nicely, would ask you to come to him for an explanation... and then he would explain it to you!"[61]

The nobility's hatred for Sheshkovsky the torturer produced reverse rumors—that Sheshkovsky had been flogged in retaliation. A former student at the elite military school, the First Cadet Corps, recalled his fellow students' alleged intention to flog Sheshkovsky. His son recorded the story:

> The cadets had found out about this [Kniazhnin's rumored flogging] and conspired to flog Sheshkovsky. Soon the opportunity came along. I do not remember what the occasion was, but Sheshkovsky appeared in our garden; I remember clearly his small puny body dressed in a little gray frock coat, modestly buttoned, hands in his pockets. About forty cadets had cut thin rods, hid them behind their backs under their uniforms, and began to follow Sheshkovsky along the garden paths. He probably noticed that something was wrong, went hurriedly to the gates, and drove off. When he went through the gates, the cadets, seeing their failure, took out the rods and, waving them in the air, shouted after him: "Lucky for you that you've fled."[62]

The narrator's interlocutor claimed that the flogging actually took place at his school: "Andrei Nikolaevich [Sokovin] interrupted him:

> And we at the Page Corps did flog him, flogged him properly: we caught him, stretched him out, and flogged him with rods. The Empress was very cross. Several pages were severely punished and expelled from the corps.'"[63]

The alleged practice of secret illegal floggings did not cease with Sheshkovsky's death in 1794 or with Catherine's in 1796. Similar rumors flourished in Paul's time. The same two memoirists discuss the following case:

> "And my uncle Sergei Nikolaevich, it seems, was flogged in the Secret Expedition. After that the poor old chap was so frightened that when he heard the sound of a sleigh bell he would start shaking and go all pale. He thought it was a courier coming to arrest him. At that time he was not alone in becoming terrified at the sound of sleigh bells... It's funny, when Ertel' came to him to take him to the Secret Expedition, he promised him everything, an English cow and all kinds of presents, but when they let him go, it turned out he deceived him!"
>
> "But why did they take him to the Secret Expedition?"
>
> "His lackey squealed that he had spoken about snub-nosed people."[64]

"Snub-nosed," of course, refers to Paul.

Dashkova offers a similar but far more tragic portrait of a nobleman tortured by Paul's secret police:

> His speech, I noticed, was not fluent, his face was twitching and he was shaking all over. "Are you not well?" I asked. "You seem to be in pain." "No," he replied, "no more than I probably shall be all my life," and he told me his story. A few of his brother subalterns in the Guards had spoken of the Emperor in offensive terms that had been repeated to him; he had found himself implicated in this affair, and had been put to torture, during which all his limbs were dislocated. His companions were sent to Siberia, while he was dismissed [from] the service and received an order to proceed to Vologda and live on an estate of an uncle who was made responsible for him.[65]

A. M. Turgenev (1772–1863) summarizes the nobility's perception of Paul's reign as a time of lawlessness and terror:

> Pavel Petrovich, who succeeded [Catherine] . . . had chosen Peter I as his example and began to imitate the enlightener of the Russian people—in what?—he began to beat nobles with sticks. . . . As soon as Pavel Petrovich had lifted the stick against nobles, everyone who had

> power and who surrounded him in Gatchina began to beat nobles with sticks. The Charter to the Nobility . . . remained in a golden shrine on the conference table in the Ruling Senate, not destroyed but inaccessible, as if hidden.[66]

Rumors about flogged noblemen continued to be generated during Alexander's reign. The new villain was Ivan Lavrov, an official in the Department of Police. Nikolai Grech portrays Lavrov as "a person quite intelligent, but rude and stern: he introduced flogging among the police measures applied to people exempt from corporal punishment."[67] A contemporary reports that both Pushkin and Grech had suffered at Lavrov's hands.[68]

Similar stories circulated during Nicholas's reign as well. The earliest refer to the investigation of the Decembrist revolt. The Decembrist N. R. Tsebrikov relates a rumor about Pavel Pestel' having been tortured in the course of the investigation: "[Pestel'] was recovering after an illness, having experienced all the possible torments and tortures of the early Christian time! *Two bloody scars on his head testified to those tortures!* We have to suppose that the iron hoop with two deep grooves, firmly tightened on his head, left these two bloody scars."[69] Many Decembrists' memoirs also tell about threats of torture as well as of informal ways to torture the rebels under investigation, such as keeping prisoners in chains for long periods of time and depriving them of water, fresh air, and exercise. The memoirists also believed that the authorities were deliberately negligent during the ceremony in which the convicted Decembrists were stripped of their ranks and during the execution of the five leaders. In the first case, the swords were not prepared appropriately and would not break without inflicting injury; in the second case, Ryleev, Sergei-Murav'ev-Apostol, and Petr Kakhovsky survived the first attempt at execution and had to be hanged twice.

In society at large, Nicholas's reputation as an abuser of nobles was also firmly established. Pushkin's friend S. V. Saltykov summarized this view. According to Wilhelm von Lenz (a musician and music critic who frequented Saltykov's salon in the early 1830s), Saltykov, with feigned seriousness, often warned his wife about the tsar: "I assure you, *ma chère*, he *can* flog you with rods if he *wants* to; I repeat, he

can."[70] In his 1844 account of his meeting with A. F. Orlov, the chief of gendarmes and head of the Third Department, the censor N. I. Krylov also captures the mood of the time. After the publication of a book that Krylov had allowed in print and that displeased Nicholas, Krylov was summoned to St. Petersburg. Once in Orlov's office, Krylov was offered a seat. He was reluctant to accept:

> And I stand there, petrified, and think what to do: it is impossible to refuse the invitation, but if you sit down in the office of the chief of gendarmes, you are very likely to be flogged. Ultimately, there is nothing I can do: Orlov again offers me a seat and points at the armchair near him. So I slowly and cautiously sit on the edge of the chair. My heart sinks to my boots. Just now, I expect, the seat cushion will sink and—you know what... Orlov probably notices, smiles slightly, and assures me that I can be completely at ease.[71]

Krylov's humorous story shows an awareness that the rumors about tricky chairs and secret floggings were probably baseless, but still testifies to their stubborn persistence.

In contrast, the story about Nicholas's torturing Mikhail Petrashevsky with his own hands has sinister overtones. N. D. Fonvizina, the wife of the Decembrist M. A. Fonvizin, described the alleged incident in a letter of May 18, 1850, from Tobolsk to her brother-in-law, I. A. Fonvizin. Her source was Petrashevsky himself:

> They tortured him in the most horrible newly devised manner. The signs of this torture were on his face: seven or eight spots or little circles as if drilled on his forehead; some were already drying up, some were still painful, still others were surrounded by scabs. The fingers on his right hand [were burned], and along this hand there was a line, as if burned. . . . It was obvious that his whole nervous system had been completely shaken. The E[mperor] himself interrogated him by means of an electric telegraph that connected the palace with the [Peter and Paul] fortress, but in the fortress a galvanic machine was affixed to the telegraph. I suppose it was not exactly torture, but while being interrogated, as he himself told us afterward, he answered rather boldly, not knowing who was interrogating him. The interrogator, apparently, got angry and hit the keys, and the electric current from the machine suddenly hit him [Petrashevsky], he fainted and fell, probably, with his forehead on some pointed parts, and this produced the signs on his forehead and on his hand.[72]

While technically not entirely impossible, the setup seems too complicated to be true, the more so in that Nicholas was abroad when Petrashevsky was arrested and imprisoned in the fortress. Petrashevsky was mentally ill at the time of his meeting with Natal'ia Fonvizina, a circumstance that explains the fantastic element in his story.[73] It is noteworthy, however, how readily Natal'ia Fonvizina believed his account. Rumors that Dostoevsky had been flogged while in a Siberian prison were also widely believed and frequently repeated.[74]

Regardless of the accuracy of the flogging and torture stories, it is important that they persisted and that the nobility and the educated public in general believed them. They were part of a cultural mythology that both described and defined the Russian nobility's mind-set. Dostoevsky, always sensitive to cultural myths, parodied the legend about the sinking chair in *Demons*. Stepan Verkhovensky confides in the narrator his fear of being flogged:

> "My friend, my friend, let it be Siberia, Arkhangelsk, stripping of rights—if I'm lost, I'm lost! But... I'm afraid of something else" (again a whisper, a frightened look, and mysteriousness). "But of what, of what?" "Flogging," he uttered, and gave me a helpless look. "Who is going to flog you? Where? Why?" I cried out, afraid he was losing his mind. "Where? Why, there... where it's done." "And where is it done?" "Eh, cher," he whispered almost into my ear, "the floor suddenly opens under you, and you are lowered in up to the middle... Everybody knows that." "Fables!" I cried, once I understood. "Old fables! And can it be that you've believed them all along?" I burst out laughing. "Fables! But they must have started somewhere, these fables; a flogged man does not talk. I pictured it ten thousand times in my imagination!"[75]

Leskov too registered the fear of flogging that was prevalent among the Russian Westernized classes. In his *Cathedral Folk* (*Soboriane*, 1872), the deacon Akhilla warns the teacher Varnava that he may be flogged by the secret police for his theft of human bones: "Do you know that if you're sent to the gendarme chancellery for this, they'll lower you up to your waist [*po poias*] into the cellar and start to flog you on both sides [*v dva puka*, lit.: with two bunches of rods]?" Varnava himself believes that a friend of his, a "new woman," was flogged by her father and her aunt two days before her wedding, and when she complained to the police, the police approved.[76]

Flogging is the main motif of Leskov's 1871 story "Laughter and Grief" ("Smekh i gore") At the beginning of the story, the protagonist, Orest Markovich Vatazhkov, argues that it is a good practice to flog children for no reason whatever, to prepare them for the future surprises of Russian life, revealing that he himself has been flogged in this manner by his uncle. As a student, Vatazhkov fell gravely ill after witnessing a mass flogging at his boarding school. Later in life he meets a general who suggests that the best way to deal with Europe in general and Poland in particular is to flog the entire population. As a result, Vatazhkov is well aware of the fragility of civil liberties in Russia. He instructs his young nephew: "And . . . everything you brag about can be taken away from you: it's only peasants who cannot be enslaved again, but as for you liberals, they can flog you all in the street, like the locksmith's wife Poshlepkina and the sergeant's wife, and then report to the inspector general that you have flogged yourself. And they will get away with it." At the end, however, despite all his training and apparent preparedness, Vatazhkov is taken by surprise and dies because "an infantry captain" flogged him on a sidewalk in Odessa, "not far from the new court building."[77]

As the dread of corporal punishment began to grow among the eighteenth-century Russian nobility, compliance with abuse became a litmus test for dishonor. The emerging disdain for recipients of *beschest'e*, dishonor money, was the first indication of this development. Fines for assault may have been viewed as a source of healthy income in Muscovite Russia, but toward the end of the eighteenth century the nobility came to regard such an attitude with contempt. Their contempt can be seen in a satirical piece of Fonvizin's in which the fictitious court councillor Vziatkin (Bribetaker) wishes to turn *beschest'e* into a source of regular income. In a letter to his unnamed benefactor, he requests "His Excellency's" help in collecting compensation for a slap in the face:

> Finally, I take courage to remind Your Excellency about my sorrowful situation. Up to the present, my well-known case concerning dishonor and injury, in connection with a slap in the face given to me by his High Nobility Mr. Major Nepuskalov, has not been resolved by the local government. Have mercy, sir and father, do not leave me without your

> beneficent recommendation to the local authorities and ask their high protection in the speediest recompense that is due to me for dishonor and injury according to the laws both for the slap in the face already given to me and in general for all the slaps that can follow, so that I will not have to burden Your Excellency with requests for protection again after every new slap.

His Excellency takes Vziatkin's requests to heart, since he himself used to be beaten in the early years of his career. Unexpectedly, however, he also expresses envy and regret that, since his move up the social ladder, he himself is no longer beaten and thus has lost substantial income:

> I also include the letter of recommendation with respect to the slap in the face that you, my friend, have received. When my rank was low, I too enjoyed the reckless zeal of petitioners and with such success that I used to receive the equivalent of a year's salary exclusively from slaps. But since I have become a great noble [*boiarin*], this branch of my income has disappeared completely. When, being of minor rank, I dealt with petty nobles, each of them, if offended by me, used to slap my face for every trifle and without even excusing themselves, whether it was for a page pulled out of a case or for an alteration and correction. But in my present position, regardless of what I do, nobody even dares to curse me to my face, to say nothing of slapping. Truly, my worthy friend, it is a pity to see how petty and timid are souls in high society![78]

Fonvizin implies that slapping a fellow gentleman and capitalizing on the insult are something new, characteristic of upstarts propelled to the top by Peter the Great's Table of Ranks and institutionalized favoritism. This view expressed the hostility that the Russian nobility with claims to hereditary rank felt toward the new nobility that was being created by Russian monarchs to provide support for their absolutist policies. It also signaled the emergence of the myth about a prè-Petrine nobility touchy about its personal honor and protective of its bodily integrity. The myth—which later would be developed by Pushkin and the Decembrists—lamented the disintegration of the honor code allegedly bequeathed to its exponents by their ancestors.[79] Furthermore, it pinpointed the main concern of the emerging Russian honor code: a gentleman's physical inviolability.

By the early nineteenth century, the practice of *beschest'e* was so outdated in the highest echelon of the nobility that Petr Viazemsky

could treat the subject with detached humor: "A poor old woman [*starushka*] was beaten painfully. The beater was forced to pay her 25 rubles for the beatings and dishonor. She liked to recall this occurrence and talk about it. She always concluded her story with the following words, which she pronounced with tender emotion and the sign of the cross: 'There is no way to predict from which direction God's mercy will find you.'"[80] Viazemsky leaves the old lady's social status undetermined: she could as easily have been a poor noblewomen as a commoner, but Viazemsky's benign tone suggests a commoner. In respect to his peers, Viazemsky showed no leniency whatever; he utterly disdained people who were able to continue normal existence after having been beaten. He writes bitterly about the connection between one's career success and one's attitude toward physical violation:

> In a crowded gathering, I always like to question mentally the backs of those present: how many of them would submit to sticks? And I am always frightened by the results. I do not even mean the backs that have been beaten from the time they were born, but only those that would negotiate with the sticks and would give up on certain conditions. Some delicate souls would agree confidentially, others in the presence of two or three witnesses. This is a test that I would suggest for choosing [the right kind of] people if I were tsar. With a virgin back, how difficult it is to live in society! Like dogs who sniff at each other and run away if they are mistaken, so the beaten ones, when meeting you, right away sniff at your back and, having determined [your status], either join you or leave you. There is no doubt that society [*obshchezhitie*] to some degree destroys souls. So many people have run the gauntlet to obtain honors and distinctions. How few have reached them untouched.[81]

Viazemsky's portrayal of a beaten career man is metaphorical, but the choice of metaphor signals the nobility's preoccupation with the issue of physical inviolability. Viazemsky sees a person's ability not to submit to corporal punishment both as an indication of his moral strength and as a weapon against abuse: a person who does not accept it cannot be beaten. Viazemsky's ironic use of the words "honors" (*chesti*) and "distinctions" (or "dignities," *dostoinstva*) in the plural is meaningful: in the plural they denote career success; in the singular they refer to moral qualities and to the honor code.

Dostoevsky had equally strong views on the proper response to

physical abuse. In *The Idiot*, he speaks about his contemporaries' propensity for accepting beatings in terms remarkably similar to Viazemsky's. Lieutenant Pirogov, the character in Gogol's 1835 story "Nevsky Prospekt" who is flogged by an angry husband yet quickly forgets the ignominy, exemplifies dishonor for Dostoevsky. He links Pirogov's tolerance for beatings with his potential for career success:

> The great writer was in the end forced to give him a thrashing to satisfy the outraged feelings of his reader, but, seeing that the great man merely shook himself and, to fortify himself after his severe punishment, treated himself to a cream bun, he just threw up his hands in amazement and left the reader to form his own opinion of his character. I never could quite reconcile myself to the idea that Gogol bestowed so humble a rank on the great Pirogov, for Pirogov was so self-satisfied that nothing could have been easier for him than to imagine himself, as his epaulettes grew thicker and more twisted with years and rise in rank, a great soldier; or rather not imagine it, but to have no doubts whatever about it. . . . And how many Pirogovs have there not been among our writers, our men of learning, our propagandists! I say "have been," but of course we have them still... [82]

Pirogov, epitomizing ignoble tolerance of physical abuse, appears again in Dostoevsky's 1873 *Diary of a Writer*:

> In public he is a European, a citizen, a knight, a republican, with conscience and with his own firmly established opinion. At home, to himself: "Eh, what the devil do I care about opinions! Let them even whip me!" Lieutenant Pirogov, who forty years ago, on the Bol'shaia Meshchanskaia, was whipped by the locksmith Schiller, was a dreadful prophecy—a prophecy of a genius who had divined so terribly, since of Pirogovs there is an immense quantity, so many that it is even impossible to whip them all."[83]

In accordance with the tradition handed down by Fonvizin, Dostoevsky portrays Pirogov's moral indifference as an inherent feature of post-Petrine Russian culture—the result of both its borrowed character and its alleged disregard for human dignity: "The two-hundred-year disuse of the slightest independence of character and the two-hundred-year spitting upon our own Russian face have expanded Russian conscience to such a fatal boundlessness, from which may be expected... well, what would you think?"[84]

It is important to remember that Viazemsky's and Dostoevsky's adamant refusal to accept physical violation was not shared by all Russian noblemen. Many remained indifferent to the issue of physical inviolability. Flogging of children was an accepted practice in provincial gentry families, as well as in elite educational institutions.[85] Many gentlemen were also not particularly touchy about their own physical inviolability. Nikolai Makarov echoes Fonvizin in his description of the provincial gentry as still capitalizing on *beschest'e* in the first quarter of the nineteenth century (he scornfully calls this financial operation "speculation on a noble's back"—*spekulatsiia dvorianskoiu spinoiu*).[86] As the old Russian saying had it, "One beaten person counts for two unbeaten ones." It was precisely this atmosphere of indifference that both fed the indignation of the nobility's intellectual vanguard and kept their fear of violation alive.

The Honor Code as a Bill of Rights: The Duel and Corporal Punishment

The nobility's persistent anxiety about physical violation was perpetuated by the looming threat of an unlawful flogging, an informal thrashing by one's superior, or a box on the ear by a fellow gentleman. With the threat of physical violation accompanying a nobleman from cradle to grave, a person concerned with his physical inviolability had to be always ready to defend his personal space. But what could one do to defend it when the law could not be relied on? Nikolai Markevich's commentary on Pushkin's alleged flogging by the police reflects the nobility's frustration with Russia's arbitrary rule. Markevich compares the state with a criminal who defies the legal system: "Who would be ashamed to bring a court action against a robber who flogged him? A court action, [however,] cannot be brought against a person who has Lavrov and soldiers"—that is, the tsar. Markevich suggests that publicity is the proper weapon against arbitrary corporal punishment: "[Such] an action—must be brought before the public without shame. It is necessary to explain [to the public] that every single individual can be insulted in the same way." To support his pro-

posed solution to the problem of the state's violence against the individual, Markevich offers an anecdote about Pushkin's alleged appeal to the public: "Pushkin . . . stuck [a piece of paper bearing the words] 'Catherine's Charter of the Nobility's Rights' to the upper part of the window in his room. And under it he displayed a [picture] of a lashed ass."[87] Pushkin's supposed gesture illustrates how very cynical the nobility had become about the laws that had been created to protect their rights.

In the absence of legal means to guard his private space, a gentleman was compelled to resort to symbolic ones. Suicide and the duel fitted the purpose. Aleksandr Sumarokov's reaction to a threat of physical violation clarifies the psychology behind the suicidal impulse. In a desperate 1758 letter to Ivan Shuvalov protesting an insult inflicted on him by Ivan Chernyshev, a courtier of Elizabeth, he evokes the idea of suicide: "Count Chernyshev should not brag about his intention to beat me up. If this happens, I would want to be counted out of not just honorable people but also out of humankind." Death appears preferable to a beating: "Believe me, His Excellency Count Chern[yshev] can kill me, but not beat me, if only they don't tie my hands, I swear upon my honor to you, dear sir—and neither [can he beat] any other good gentleman or officer."[88]

Pushkin considered both suicide and a duel in the wake of the rumor about his alleged flogging. In the rough draft of a letter to Alexander in 1825—a letter that was never sent—the poet wrote:

> Careless words, satirical verses <drew attention to me in society>, rumors spread that I had been taken to the secret chancellery and flogged.
>
> I was the last to learn these rumors, which had become common knowledge. I saw myself disgraced in public opinion, I felt dejected—I fought a duel, I was twenty in 1820—I considered whether it were better to kill myself or kill—V[89]

We do not know the identity of Pushkin's dueling opponent in 1820, but after he found out that the rumors were being spread by Tolstoy the American, he prepared for a duel with him. F. N. Luganin, Pushkin's acquaintance in Kishenev, wrote in his diary in 1822: "It was rumored that he had been flogged in the Secret Chancellery, but this is nonsense. He had a duel for that in Petersburg. He also wants to go to

Moscow this winter to duel with some Count Tolstoy the American who is spreading those rumors. Since he has no friends in Moscow, I offered to be his second if I go to Moscow this winter, which pleased him greatly."[90] Pushkin sent his challenge to Tolstoy on the very day he returned to Moscow in September 1826. Tolstoy was out of town, and friends eventually persuaded the enemies to reconcile.[91]

The nineteenth century offers numerous examples of contemplated or actual suicides committed to escape the dishonor of physical punishment. In 1826, Aleksandr Polezhaev was conscripted into the army as a private by order of Nicholas I. He attempted to desert a year later, was caught, and was stripped of his noble rank. According to Herzen, he planned suicide while awaiting the gauntlet: "Polezhaev wanted to kill himself before the punishment. Having looked for some time for a sharp instrument in the prison, he confided in an old soldier who loved him. The soldier understood him and appreciated his wish. . . . [The old man] brought him a bayonet and, giving it to him, said through tears: 'I have sharpened it myself.'"[92]

In an actual case of suicide in 1828, the Decembrist I. I. Sukhinov, imprisoned in Siberia, plotted to free his fellow inmates and flee to America. He was arrested several hours before he could carry out his plan, tried, and sentenced to be lashed, branded, and hanged. Sukhinov twice attempted suicide by taking poison but both times was revived. Finally he managed to hang himself on the eve of the execution. Sukhinov supposedly was to be spared the humiliating punishment and would have been executed by firing squad instead, but he did not know that and preferred to take his own life.[93]

The other means to counter the indignity of physical violation was a duel. While its capacity to instill civility among peers is most obvious, the duel also effectively prevented physical assaults of superiors against their subordinates. The duel rejected the superior's patriarchal right to punish, insisting on the essential equality of all noblemen. As Sumarokov put it in his protest against Chernyshev's abuse, "I am not a count but nonetheless a gentleman; I am not a chamberlain but nonetheless an officer and have been in service blamelessly for twenty-seven years." Sumarokov even hints that dueling is necessary in cases such as his: "I advise that nobody who has at least one drop of hon-

orable blood in his veins should tolerate assaults. The only reason I tolerated it was your quarters and the palace."[94]

The desire to end physical abuse by superiors may have inspired Golitsyn's 1775 affair. As reported by Corberon, the incident began when Golitsyn struck Shepelev with a stick. Several months later, Shepelev resigned his commission and went to Golitsyn to demand satisfaction. In the course of their confrontation, Shepelev allegedly slapped Golitsyn in the face, but Golytsin refused to fight, citing Shepelev's inferior status. At that point the authorities stepped in: according to Corberon, "it was ruled that Shepelev had to leave Court and at the same time Prince Golitsyn was ordered take leave and retire from service."[95] Lavrov's role in the affair is unclear. In Corberon's account, he was rumored to urge Shepelev to seek satisfaction for the abuse, and his interference eventually led Golitsyn to challenge him. However, a letter of Catherine's—dated October 27, 1775—that is, about a month before the duel—implies that Lavrov himself suffered abuse at Golitsyn's hands. She writes:

> Having read [the report on] the interrogation of Major Lavrov and having compared it with General Prince Golitsyn's letter, I find contradictory circumstances. I admit that Lavrov's guilt diminishes in my eyes, for Lavrov, having come to Prince Golitsyn's house intending to demand satisfaction for an old offense against his honor as an officer but not saying what [the offense] was, and having been recalled to a different room, instead of satisfaction and expiation [*udovol'stviia i udovletvoreniia*] received from the prince denials, words, and beatings far worse than before.[96]

Regardless of the identity of the beaten subordinate, the incident illustrates the intent to use the honor code and the duel to resist the abuse.

Radishchev provided theoretical support for such behavior when he argued—the only time he did so—that dueling was not only a proper response to physical violation but a necessary one. A lawyer, Radishchev fully appreciated the importance of the rule of law and legal guarantees of individual rights. In an unfinished essay of the 1780s and 1790s he declared that a person has the right not only to "life, health, and limbs" but also to a good name. He even supported the

idea of monetary compensation for personal offenses: "Nobody dares to scold, slander, and dishonor a citizen with impunity. The law imposes a fine for that."[97] In cases of physical violation, however, Radishchev's adherence to legal measures faltered.

In his *Life of Fedor Vasil'evich Ushakov*, Radishchev depicts the rebellion of a group of Russian students, the young Radishchev among them, against their supervisor, Major Bokum, at the University of Leipzig in 1767. Scholars have interpreted this rebellion as the writer's inquiry into the mechanics of an uprising against a despot, which in Radishchev's view was a right guaranteed by the social contract. The title character, Fedor Ushakov, is the leader of the uprising. Yet critics have overlooked the fact that this miniature uprising happens over a slap in the face given by a superior to his subordinate, and that Ushakov also acts as both expert and proponent of the honor code.[98]

At first the students display their awareness of the honor code in a rather inappropriate situation. Their priest, scolding them for a prank, calls one of them a swindler. The offended student prepares to defend his honor: "Grabbing his sword that hung on the wall and attaching it to his side, he briskly walked up to the monk. Showing him its tasseled grip [a symbol of officer rank], he told him, with a slight natural stutter: 'Have you forgotten, dear sir, that I am a Cuirassier officer?'" His fellow students laugh, since the honor code does not apply to priests. Significantly, although the student's attempt at dueling is out of place, the priest's failure to respond in an honorable way discredits him in the students' eyes: "This and similar occurrences diminished our respect for his spiritual authority over us."[99] Radishchev and his fellow students thus tend to regard honor as a universal rather than a class property.

Later a conflict develops between the students and the boorish and tyrannical Major Bokum. The conflict escalates when Bokum threatens the students with physical punishment: "He threatened that if we did not quiet down, then he, according to the authority vested in him, would punish us with the so-called *Fuchtel*, a bare broadsword [*tesak*], on the back." Eventually Bokum slaps a student in the face for insubordination: "Bokum, having been annoyed even more, slapped Nasa-

kin in the face. This sign of dishonor, partly illusory, so thoroughly disarmed Nasakin that without saying a word to our supervisor, he bowed and left the room."[100]

The two sides, of course, see the situation differently: whereas Bokum sees himself as a representative of the government (hence his interpretation of Nasakin's forthcoming challenge as a rebellion against the state), the students see him as a fellow gentleman committing a transgression. Bokum believes in his right to discipline the students by punishing them physically, whereas Nasakin views the slap as a transgression against his private space and thus an assault on his honor. Nasakin's friends, in whom he confides, decide that Bokum must give Nasakin satisfaction. Ushakov explains: "In society [*v obshchezhitii*], if such an incident takes place, it can be amended only by blood."[101] The students decide that Nasakin has to challenge Bokum, and that if Bokum declines the duel, Nasakin should reciprocate by slapping Bokum in the face. After some hesitation, Nasakin approaches his offender:

> NASAKIN: You offended me, and now I have come to demand satisfaction from you.
> BOKUM: What offense and what satisfaction?
> NASAKIN: You slapped me in the face.
> BOKUM: That is not true, get out of here.
> NASAKIN: If it is not so, here is one [slap], and another one.
> With these words, Nasakin slapped Bokum and repeated the slap.[102]

Immediately afterward, the students, sure of their rights, reported the incident to the university authorities. Bokum tried to present the confrontation not as an affair of honor but as an act of insubordination. He concealed the slaps he received and said that the students, "and especially *Nasakin*, made an attempt on his life, and that the latter had already half drawn his sword out of the sheath, but he scattered [them] and chased them away like children. And since even in his slander he did not forget to brag, he never acknowledged that Nasakin repaid the slap with interest."[103] Bokum's oversight is remarkable: by returning the slap, Nasakin in fact had changed the gesture's symbolism and thus the nature of relations between Bokum and the students: the slap stripped Bokum of his patriarchal power over his charges and

made them his equals. Bokum, however, refused to acknowledge this and continued to act as their superior: he placed them under house arrest and asked the university council to try them. He lost his case, however: the council acquitted Nasakin and his friends. Furthermore, the Russian minister in Dresden, having ordered the parties to reconcile, drastically curtailed Bokum's power over the students.

Again, it should be emphasized that Radishchev as an advocate of a law-governed society did not consider dueling the best way to deal with offenses against the individual. He notes that the students "did not yet understand how vile duels were in civilized [*blagoustroennoe*] society." Nonetheless, he believed that satisfaction for a personal violation was a natural right that could only be "limited or tempered by civil law." For him, this meant that dueling could serve as a means to exercise one's natural right when the authorities did not respect the laws or when appropriate laws were absent. Bokum does not respect the law: as Radishchev comments, "[We] knew that he did not have the authority to [behave as he had done], and everyone was aware that soft-heartedness, having abandoned all the cruel inventions [*izvety*] of the old . . . times, was beginning to write laws in Russia."[104] Nasakin thus has the right to demand satisfaction—or to reciprocate if his opponent refuses to oblige.

Nasakin's case is crucial for understanding the role of physical violence in the Russian affair of honor. In the context of natural law, Nasakin's right to slap Bokum is similar to his right to self-defense—or, in political terms, to the people's right to rebel against a despot. In the context of the duel, however, the right to return a slap can be used to establish equality. By challenging Bokum, Nasakin questioned not only his right to punish the students physically but also the hierarchy of power that, in Bokum's view, gave him that right. Refusing to accept Nasakin's challenge, Bokum refused to acknowledge his and Nasakin's essential equality. In turn, by slapping Bokum, Nasakin rejected the subordinate role that his opponent attempted to ascribe to him. The gesture Bokum had used to establish the hierarchy of power was reversed and thus served to affirm equality.

Radishchev's analysis of the semiotics of the honor code and physical violence reflected the sentiments of his contemporaries: by the end

of the eighteenth century, many of them were ready to use the duel as a weapon against any transgressor, regardless of status in the social or service hierarchy. Furthermore, if their challenges were not accepted, they were willing to use physical force to press their cause. By challenging their opponents and by reciprocating physical abuse, Russian duelists signaled their refusal to submit to the traditional hierarchy of power with its contempt for personal autonomy. It is thus logical that Russians embraced dueling in the wake of Paul's reign, infamous for its disregard of individual rights.

An act of defiance against the monarch and the state, the duel could be used to counter the state's attempts to violate a person's bodily integrity. By bringing conflicts to the person-to-person level, it held the violator personally responsible. Significantly, in cases involving physical violations, early nineteenth-century duelists meant to hold everyone accountable without exception, including the tsar's family. Mikhail Lunin's legendary acceptance of Grand Duke Constantine's (if only half-serious) offer to satisfy the offended officers testifies to this intent. According to the Decembrist A. E. Rozen, Constantine attempted to strike Lieutenant Koshkul' with a broadsword. Koshkul', "having parried the blow, said: 'Do not get excited, if you please [*ne izvol'te goriachit'sia*].'" Constantine later apologized and offered satisfaction, which Lunin promptly accepted: "Nobody can decline such an honor!"[105] In 1822, a group of officers attempted to challenge Grand Duke Nicholas for threatening a fellow officer with physical violence. Nicholas, in contrast to Constantine, displayed no chivalric impulses and did not accept.[106] Herzen relates yet another story about an officer's conflict with Nicholas: "Once during a military exercise, the Grand Duke so far forgot himself that he grabbed an officer by the collar. The officer responded: 'Your Highness, I have a sword in my hand.' Nicholas stepped back, said nothing, but did not forget the answer."[107]

Nicholas interpreted the officer's tacit challenge as a political act: "After December 14, he twice inquired whether this officer was involved or not. Fortunately, he was not involved."[108] Such a reading was not unreasonable: the idea of challenging the tsar or a member of his family had a clear political ring. Hence Aleksandr Iakubovich's at-

tempt to frame his planned assassination of Alexander I as a duel. A well-known *bretteur*, Iakubovich was exiled by the tsar to serve in the Caucasus for his role as a second in the 1817 Sheremetev-Zavadovsky duel, in which Sheremetev was killed. In 1825, while in St. Petersburg on a leave of absence, Iakubovich offered to assassinate the tsar for the Decembrist leaders. He justified the proposed regicide as vengeance for his "unjust transfer" to the Caucasus, which he interpreted as an insult to his honor.[109]

The duelists' readiness to obtain satisfaction by means of a duel protected the individual's physical inviolability. An actual duel was not necessarily needed, as long as a man's fellow gentlemen and the authorities were aware that, however helpless he might be in the absence of legal protection, he would not allow a violation of his honor. In *The House of the Dead* Dostoevsky notes the effectiveness of such readiness to defend one's bodily integrity. He attributes his observations to Gorianchikov, the book's protagonist and narrator, who, like Dostoevsky himself, had been stripped of his gentleman's rank and thus lost his exemption from corporal punishment. Discussing corporal punishment in the prison camp, Gorianchikov remarks that the authorities in Siberia treat noblemen discreetly, citing as reasons class solidarity between prison administrators and convicted noblemen, noblemen's readiness to defend themselves by physical violence, and the presence of the Decembrists, whose dignified behavior forced the administration to respect them and, by extension, all prisoners of noble origin:

> The reasons for this are plain: for one thing, these high-up officials are themselves noblemen; for another, it has been known for certain noblemen to refuse to lie down under the birch, and to assault their punishers, a circumstance which has in the past led to terrible atrocities being committed; and lastly, there is what seems to me the most important point, and that is that some thirty-five years ago a large number of deported noblemen appeared in Siberia; over the thirty years that followed, these same noblemen managed to make a place for themselves [*umeli postavit' sebia*], and got themselves recognized all over Siberia to such an extent that in my time, according to an already long-established tradition, the authorities were treating the upper-class offenders of a certain category differently from other deportees.[110]

To a large degree, the Decembrists' authority came from their reputation as the most devoted exponents of the honor code in Russia and thus the most ardent duelists. They projected the kind of resoluteness that guarded not only their own private space but also, decades later, the private space of others.

In an unfinished 1843 essay, Herzen seeks explanations for the duel's widespread acceptance in Russia in the 1830s and 1840s. As a true Hegelian, Herzen detects a historical rationale behind the duel's continuing popularity in Russia: he defines the duel as an institution based on the "feudal notion of the individual who stands firmly for his rights" and hails feudalism for introducing the idea of an individual's inviolability.[111] Restricted by the censorship (which held up the essay's publication until 1848), Herzen could not discuss the state's role in the suppression of the individual, nor could he analyze the contemporary situation of personal rights in Russia. He thus does not formulate his conclusions in detail, but their gist is clear: Russia's love affair with the duel results from a weak legal concept of individual rights and a person's need to defend those rights when institutional safeguards are lacking.

A nobleman's readiness to duel warned his peers against violating his personal space; it also made authorities less likely to treat his rights as dispensable. Quixotic as it was, dueling thus effectively guarded against trespasses by individuals in power and even, to some degree, against the state's disregard for a gentleman's physical inviolability. In these cases, the duel's effectiveness depended on the possibility of bringing a conflict to the personal level and on the other party's willingness to cooperate. It was therefore more effective against Constantine, who was willing to admit equality between himself and a member of the nobility, than against Nicholas, who saw himself not as first among equals but as absolute authority. It was, of course, even less effective against the impersonal state machine. Even against the state, however, the duel had value as a symbolic gesture of independence.

Dostoevsky, like Radishchev before him, cites another critical deterrent against personal abuse: noblemen's readiness "to assault their punishers." Ugly as it may seem, the Russian nobility's continued use of raw physical force against one another and especially against their

superiors served an important purpose: it signaled their refusal to accept the authorities' power over their bodies and their readiness to defend their personal autonomy tooth and nail.[112]

THE NEW SYMBOLISM OF VIOLENT GESTURES AND THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL TRADITION

When Russians rebelled against corporal punishment, they used the duel not only as a safeguard against personal offenses but also as an equalizer. Ideally, the duel was the weapon of first choice for nobles fighting for equal status within the nobility; the elite group of Russian duelists strove to make it the only choice. Since physical violence against the individual remained at the center of the nobility's struggle for equality, however, it had to be co-opted into the ritual of *point d'honneur* and made reciprocal. Once returned, a punch, a slap, or a stroke of a cane signaled the receiver's refusal to accept the lower status such a blow implied. Returning a blow also defied the state's prerogative to regulate personal conflicts. As reciprocal gestures, blows and slaps became equalizers, just like a thrust of a sword. The fact that such gestures made opponents equal on a lower, vulgar level was of secondary importance for noblemen concerned with equality rather than style. Fistfighting thus became the second means of choice in confrontations over status. In theory, direct physical confrontation was rejected by the dueling elite, but in practice both fighting and dueling were used with comparable, if not equal, frequency.

By regularly using violent gestures in affairs of honor, Russians modified their symbolism. They obliterated the difference between a slap (an inherently punishing gesture) and a punch (an inherently equalizing gesture) and turned both into potentially hierarchy-destroying acts. Consequently, slaps and punches acquired the same meaning: they caused equal moral (and frequently physical) damage and fulfilled similar functions. Even a cane lost much of its symbolism as a punishing tool and turned into an instrument of reciprocal assault.[113] As a result, all these gestures could be used interchangeably. Thus, in the Nezhin quarrel, the feuding parties punched, slapped, stabbed, and hit each

other with sticks—with no heed to who did what. A hundred years later, in the Katkov-Bakunin confrontation, Katkov slapped and punched his opponent, whereas Bakunin struck him with a cane. Again, it did not matter who did the slapping and who the hitting.

Co-opted into the dueling ritual, slaps and punches largely lost their significance as vulgar gestures and so lost their social stigma. This change influenced the dueling ritual; it particularly made the challenge more open to raw violence. The challenge was the moment that tested the opponents' equality. For a challenger, therefore, it was crucial to insist that his challenge be accepted. Hence the use of violent gestures, either in response to a refusal to duel or as a way to initiate the dueling procedure. In this capacity, a slap for the most part did not destroy the opponents' equality: by slapping his opponent, the prospective duelist said: "I am showing my contempt for you, but since I am prepared to duel with you, you are my equal and can restore your status."

The slap's symbolism as a dishonoring gesture had not totally disappeared, however, and its insulting power could be perceived as absolute. For some among the dueling elite even a duel could not undo the ultimate insult inflicted by a slap. Such an attitude can explain Aleksandr Chernov's murder of Shishkov in 1832. Not coincidentally, the murderer was the same man who in 1825 was ready to back up his brother in the duel with Novosil'tsev. It was thus not a lack of honor (as Gordin suggests) but its hypertrophy, an absolute intolerance of physical violation, that probably prompted Chernov's action.[114] Chernov's sentiment was rare but not unique, as at least two fictional examples show. One is the first-person narrator in Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's 1830 tale "The Terrible Divination" ("Strashnoe gadanie"), who kills his opponent for attempting to slap him in the face. Another is Turgenev's Bazarov, who turns murderous at the mere thought that Pavel Kirsanov can slap him in the face. Still, such hypersensitivity was an exception rather than the norm.

In some senses, the Russian nobility's liberal use of violent gestures brought the duel closer to the national tradition. Their tolerance for reciprocal punches and blows with sticks can be compared to the enthusiasm for fights among all classes of Muscovite society, a sport still practiced by the common people at the time the duel was blossoming.

Despised in theory by the Westernized elite, this tradition may well have encouraged the incorporation of slaps, punches, and sticks into dueling conflicts. The nineteenth-century Romantic interest in the national past inspired a certain idealization of fistfighting and allowed its direct comparison with dueling. Thus some contemporaries read Lermontov's 1837 poem *The Song of the Merchant Kalashnikov* (*Pesnia pro kuptsa Kalashnikova*), which features a fatal prearranged fistfight for the honor of one principal's wife, as an allusion to Pushkin's duel with d'Anthès.

The Romantic idealization of fistfights did not extend to boxing, a foreign custom of which Russians consistently took a dim view. Petr Viazemsky's son Pavel tells how Pushkin introduced him to boxing when he was still a child, and how the sport got him into trouble:

> In 1827, Pushkin taught me how to box in the English manner, and I took such a liking to this exercise that at children's balls I would challenge those willing and those unwilling to box; the latter I challenged by action even during dances. The universal indignation [I aroused] could not shake in me the awareness of poetic heroism passed to me from hand to hand by Pushkin, the hero poet. The consequences of this heroism, however, were distressing for me: they stopped taking me even to family gatherings at the estates of my father's closest friends near Moscow.[115]

The child saw boxing in a Romantic light, as a feature of heroic behavior, but the grownups did not share his view. Furthermore, their indignation expressed more than displeasure over a child's misconduct: it reflected the consistently unpopular image of boxing in Russia from the late eighteenth century, when Russians were first exposed to it, until at least the end of the nineteenth century.[116] Englishmen's love for this sport was seen "as the inexplicably crude and barbaric whim of the sons of Albion."[117] In describing a boxing match between the then-famous boxer John Jackson (nicknamed Gentleman Jackson) and a certain Rein, which he witnessed in 1787, Count E. F. Komarovsky stresses the perceived incongruity between England's high level of civilization and boxing's popularity there: "This was a brutal spectacle; it's amazing how enlightened people can find pleasure in it."[118] Similarly, when P. I. Makarov reported his impressions of a trip to En-

gland in 1795, he emphasized what he saw as the incompatibility of English political freedom with the brutality of boxing: "I have already seen on local streets one of the English people's favorite scenes: a fight, or better said, a fist duel. A scene disgusting for any well-mannered and sensitive man! The beaten man was taken away in a dead faint. The police do not have the power to restrict such fights when fighters do not have any weapons except their hands. This is one of the privileges of English freedom—the one that ministers do not attack."[119] Despite his dislike for the sport, Makarov saw its similarity to dueling. Fedor Rostopchin, who as a young man had watched the Jackson-Rein match together with Komarovsky, also saw the similarities. Komarovsky reports: "When it became known from newspapers that Rein had recovered completely, Rostopchin took it into his head to take lessons from him. He found that fistfighting was a science similar to rapier fighting."[120] The existence of rules mediating the fight permitted the comparison. Makarov, however, refused to regard dueling and boxing as equally viable means of resolving personal conflicts. In fact, he was appalled when a drunken English gentleman challenged his friend to a boxing match instead of a duel:

> The Englishman took him by the collar, dragged him into a room, and demanded a fistfight. Seeing that there were three others of us, he ran outside and brought three Englishmen. With difficulty we ended this unpleasant scene, but the impression it made on me will remain for a long time. I do not know how to fistfight, and one cannot go to the theater with weapons. What is one to do? Such self-indulgence is much worse than street theft. And who was this drunk? A lieutenant in the Royal service![121]

Makarov was not reacting to violence as such: judging by his regret that he could not take weapons to the theater, he would have been ready to duel with the offender. Rather, it was an officer and gentleman's indulgence in a sport practiced by commoners that appalled him.

On the one hand, Russians' dislike for boxing revealed their lack of self-awareness, their blindness to the vulgar elements in their own dueling behavior. In the face of a formalized and socially accepted version of violent conduct that they fancied themselves to have overcome, they refused to see its similarities to their own ways. Instead they saw

it as a vulgar parody of the pure art of dueling that they supposedly had assimilated so thoroughly. Hence Makarov's accusation of "self-indulgence" that is "worse than theft." Not surprisingly, Dostoevsky, an astute interpreter of behavior codes, saw the similarity between the Russian duel, with its tolerance for raw violence, and boxing. In *The Idiot* he portrays the novel's most consistent adherent of the honor code, Keller, as an exponent of three traditions: dueling, fistfighting, and boxing. Keller flaunts his expertise as he confronts the officer whom Nastas'ia Filippovna has whipped across the face and who is about to assault her physically:

> "Keller, retired lieutenant, at your service, sir!" he introduced himself with a swagger. "If you want a fight [*ugodno v rukopashnuiu*], Captain, I shall be glad to take the place of the fair lady. I am an expert at English boxing. Don't push, Captain. I deeply sympathize with you for the *mortal* insult you've received, but I cannot permit you to raise your hands against a woman in public. But if, as becomes a most honorable gentleman, you'd like a different sort of fight, then—but, I suppose, you see what I mean—er—Captain... "[122]

Dostoevsky not only sees the parallels but exposes them.

On the other hand, the democratic nature of boxing may account for the Russians' response to it. Pushkin regarded boxing favorably as a possible means of resolving personal conflicts across class lines: "Look at an English lord: he is ready to respond to the civil challenge of a gentleman and to have a duel with the Kuchenreuter pistols—or to take off his tail-coat and to box with a coachman at the crossroads. This is true courage." Pushkin also pointed to the similarity of boxing to the national tradition of fistfighting: "I equally like Prince Viazemsky in a skirmish with some journalist brawler and Count Orlov in a fight with a coachman. These are features of national tradition."[123] For all their irony (the fragment was written in the context of a bitter feud among journalists imbued with class animosity; hence the insulting parallels between journalist brawlers and coachmen), these statements still indicate a partiality to boxing. Pushkin's contemporaries, however, even though they fought with their fists against equals in conflicts over honor, rejected the idea of crossing class lines and allowing physical confrontation, however orderly and regulated, be-

tween members of the privileged class and commoners. Given the equalizing symbolism of slaps and punches in the Russian context, they were reluctant to allow those gestures—even in theory—in confrontations with socially inferior opponents.

Members of the Russian nobility felt even more reluctant to cross class lines when it came to flogging. In fact, they completely parted ways with the common people in this respect.[124] Unlike fistfighting, flogging could not be co-opted into the dueling ritual.[125] Although Dostoevsky suggests in *The House of the Dead* that one can counter flogging by honorable behavior, one's success depends wholly on the authorities' willingness to respect it. Furthermore, the person subjected to flogging is often helpless to resist it and thus is forced to accept his inferior status vis-à-vis the punishing authority. The procedure of flogging precludes a face-to-face confrontation between offender and offended, obviating reciprocation. (Stories about cadets flogging Sheshkovsky clearly were just wishful thinking.) The imposition of inferior status, with consequent damage to one's honor and dignity, is thus irreversible. Hence the intense fear of flogging registered in rumors of the flogged noblemen, and hence the nobility's dramatic responses to even a hypothetical threat of corporal punishment.

The Russian duel, with its idiosyncratic openness to vulgar physical violence, evolved to serve the needs of Russia's Westernized educated class. Having absorbed both Western and specifically Russian modes of behavior, the duel mediated between Western and national forms of interpersonal relations. Vulgar violence incorporated into the ritual of the duel largely lost its traditional hierarchy-building function, allowing dueling Russians to work out Western-like notions of the individual and private space. As a substitute for a reliable legal means of personal protection, a duel was viewed as an act of defiance against the state's patriarchal power over the individual. It was also viewed as a touchstone of the individual's integrity. Given its central role in defining the Russian idea of the individual, dueling became a subject of intense examination in Russian literature.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN LITERATURE: THE DUEL BEGINS

Just as eighteenth-century Russians initially received the duel coolly, so their literature paid it little heed. Even when portrayed in a work of literature, dueling was rarely discussed seriously and almost never positively. Not a single eighteenth-century work had dueling as its central theme or ideological issue. The highbrow literature of Russian Classicism—poetry, drama, philosophical and satirical prose—almost completely ignored it. Tragedy rejected its individualistic ethics. Satirical prose derided it—and did even that sporadically. Comedy alone regularly portrayed affairs of honor and duelists. It was thus in comedies that the honor code and dueling behavior were first examined in Russian belles lettres. Among the less prestigious genres rejected by Classicist aesthetics, prose fiction portrayed duels frequently, albeit superficially. A peripheral genre aimed at readers of low social status and despised by the educated public, eighteenth-century prose fiction was concerned mainly with adventure. Dueling served as a convenient device for plot construction. Only late in the century, when prose gradually began to gain respect, did some writers seriously examine the dueling theme and discuss the moral questions it raised. Those early examinations were the precursors of the

161. *Boston Globe*, Nov. 17, 1998, p. A31. I thank Eric Roston for this information.

162. See Vladimir Nabokov, *Drugie berega* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 103–5; *Speak, Memory* (New York, 1989), pp. 188–89.

163. See Vladimir Orlov, "Istoriia odnoi liubvi," in his *Puti i sud'by: Literaturnye ocherki* (Leningrad, 1971), pp. 696–702.

164. See Andrei Bely, *Nachalo veka* (Moscow, 1990), pp. 513–14; Valerii Briusov, "Perepiska s Andreem Belym," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 85 (1976): 381–83.

165. For a contemporary report, see "Epidemiia duelei," *Russkoe slovo*, Nov. 11, 1909; for memoir accounts, see V. K. Luknitskaia, ed., "Materialy k biografii N. Gumileva," in Nikolai Gumilev, *Stikhi i poemy* (Tbilisi, 1989), pp. 42–43; Sergei Makovskii, "Cherubina de Gabriak," in his *Portrety sovremennikov* (New York, 1955), pp. 342–45, 357. The person behind the pseudonym Cherubina de Gabriak was Elizaveta Dmitrieva (1887–1927?). For more on Dmitrieva and her poetic persona, see N. G. Lozovoi, "Vospominaniia o Cherubine de Gabriak," in *Cherubina de Gabriak: Avtobiografiia, Izbrannye stikhotvoreniia*, ed. E. Ia. Arkhippov (Moscow, 1989).

166. On the conflict, see E. B. Pasternak and E. V. Pasternak, "Boris Pasternak: Pis'ma k Konstantinu Loksu," in *Minuvshee: Istoricheskii al'manakh*, no. 13 (1993), pp. 164–65. For Pasternak's letter to his second, K. G. Loks, see ibid., pp. 181–84.

167. Veniamin Kaverin, "Molodoi Zoshchenko," in *Vspominaia Mikhaila Zoshchenko* (Leningrad, 1990), p. 114.

168. See Kaverin's autobiographical trilogy *Osveshchennye okna*, in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7 (Moscow, 1983), pp. 556–59. Kaverin's experience with dueling was surprisingly extensive for his time: in 1915, his older brother, Lev, fought a duel with an officer and was lightly wounded (see ibid., pp. 102–5); in 1918, he himself acted as a second in a duel in which the opponents reconciled at the dueling site (ibid., pp. 181–87).

169. E. I. Kviring, "Zheny i byt," in *Partiinaia etika: Dokumenty i materialy: Diskussiia 20-kh godov* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 364–65.

170. *Ugolovnyi kodeks RSFSR*, ed. S. Askarkhanov et al. (Moscow, 1925), pp. 281–82. Art. 142 states: "Premeditated murder is punishable by imprisonment in total isolation for no less than eight years." Art. 144 states: "Premeditated murder committed in a state of intense mental stress inflicted by reason of unlawful violence or severe insult on the part of the victim is punishable by imprisonment for up to three years." Tertov's "special circumstances" are not revealed in the Supreme Court's ruling.

171. Petro Grigorenko, "Vospominaniia," *Zvezda*, no. 7 (1990), pp. 188–89.

172. Ibid., p. 189.

Three: PHYSICAL INVIOLABILITY AND THE DUEL

1. For estimates of numbers of duels and fatalities in France, see Billacois, *Duel*, pp. 69–73, 130, 132–33. For the German data, see Frevert, *Men of Honour*, pp. 234–35; McAleer, *Dueling*, p. 224n43. The difference in rates is well illustrated by the anecdotal statistics: one of the most brutal Russian *bretteurs*, Fedor Tolstoy, was believed to have killed eleven people in duels, whereas the Chevalier d'Andrieu, mentioned in Tallemant des Réaux's *Historiettes*, "at thirty had killed seventy-two men in duels" (quoted in Billacois, *Duel*, p. 132).

2. The original documents are deposited in RGADA (f. 7, Preobrazhenskii prikaz: Tainaia kantseliariia, Tainaia ekspeditsiia, d. 943, pt. 1). In my analysis I use two published accounts of the affair based on those documents: one by Solov'ev (*Sochineniia*, 11: 309–10) and another in *Sbornik biografii kavalergardov*, 1: 255–59. Solov'ev's version blames Grinshtein, stressing his envy of Razumovsky and presenting the whole affair as a power play initiated by Grinshstein, whereas the *Sbornik biografii* slightly favors Grinshtein, portraying Klimovich as the more aggressive of the two.

3. Solov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 11: 312.

4. Ibid., p. 310.

5. Ibid.

6. *Sbornik biografii kavalergardov*, 1: 255, 257.

7. Billacois, *Duel*, pp. 78–79.

8. Margeret, *Russian Empire*, p. 65.

9. On the symbolism of a sword and a stick, a fist and an open hand, see Billacois, *Duel*, pp. 195–96. Valerii Savchuk's essay on the symbolism of the slap, "Sud'ba poshchechiny," contains interesting ideas and valuable observations but also unsubstantiated claims and historical mistakes (the essay can be found on the Web: http://www.arcom.spb.art.history/savchuk.html).

10. Solov'ev, *Sochineniia*, 11: 312.

11. This was the case in the American South: as Elliott J. Gorn points out in "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (1985): 21–22, some eighteenth-century Southern gentlemen engaged in ritualized hand-to-hand combats. By the early nineteenth century, however, this practice was replaced by dueling, whereas rough-and-tumble fights became a means to define status and defend honor among the lower social groups in the backwoods. Unlike Russian "spontaneous" brawls, American hand-to-hand combats, while brutal and often inflicting serious damage, were prearranged and followed rules, which forbade weapons.

12. *Istoriia kavalergardov*, 1: 270, 266–67.

13. N. I. Grech, *Zapiski o moei zhizni* (1886; Moscow, 1990), p. 77.

Grech does not date the incident, but, judging by the context, it must have happened toward the end of Catherine's reign.

14. Ibid., p. 78.

15. The episode is reported in A. T. Bolotov, *Zapiski*, Supplement to *Russkaia starina* (1870), 1: 978–81.

16. *Istoriia kavalergardov*, 2: 130.

17. N. N. Murav'ev, "Zapiski," *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 3 (1885), pp. 6–8. About this conflict, also see the "Zapiski" of the Decembrist A. N. Murav'ev (Nikolai's brother), in his *Sochineniia i pis'ma*, p. 81.

18. N. A. Bestuzhev, "Vospominanie o Ryleeve," in *Pisateli-dekabristy*, 2: 75.

19. Mikhail Bestuzhev, "Iz moikh tiurem," ibid., 1: 53.

20. Note the dynamics of the humiliating actions: from symbolic (spitting) to physical (whipping). Ryleev also reportedly spat in the face of another reluctant opponent, Prince Shakhovskoy, thereby forcing him to accept his challenge.

21. *Sbornik biografii kavalergardov*, 4: 56. M. I. Pyliaev, in his *Staryi Peterburg* (1889; Leningrad, 1990), pp. 335–36, gives a different version of the incident: he claims that Vadkovsky's slap knocked Iakovlev out, that he was brought home still unconscious, and that he was determined to challenge Vadkovsky and therefore was put under house arrest. Pyliaev implies that the incident led to Iakovlev's heavy drinking and eventually to his suicide in 1847. There are chronological inconsistencies in Pyliaev's account that make it less reliable than the version in *Sbornik biografii kavalergardov*.

22. Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11: 542. Belinsky refers to Bakunin simply as B and to Katkov as K; I have restored their full names.

23. Elena A. Shtakenschneider, *Dnevnik i zapiski, 1854–1886* (1934), Russian Memoir Series no. 32 (Newtonville, Mass., 1980), pp. 148–49. Bobrinsky (1800–1868) was Catherine the Great's grandson and Pushkin's friend.

24. Suvorin, *Dnevnik*, p. 30.

25. Makovskii, *Portrety sovremennikov*, p. 342.

26. Ibid., p. 343.

27. On this incident, see Konstantin Azadovskii, "Epizody," sec. 3, "Poshchechina v teatre Reineke," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 10 (1994), pp. 123–29; Nikolai Bogomolov, "K odnomu temnomu epizodu v biografii Kuzmina," in *Mikhail Kuzmin i russkaia kul'tura XX veka: Tezisy i materialy konferentsii, 15–17 maia 1990 g.* (Leningrad, 1990), pp. 166–69; Nikolai Bogomolov and Dzhon E. Malmstad, *Mikhail Kuzmin: Iskusstvo, zhizn', epokha* (Moscow, 1996), pp. 172–73.

28. Kiernan, *Duel in European History*, p. 136.

29. Pascal, *Lettres écrites à un provincial*, p. 102.

30. See Gustav Hergsell, *Duell-Codex* (Vienna, 1891), p. 17. McAleer, in

Dueling, p. 47, quotes this phrase to emphasize German duelists' reluctance to make actual physical contact while insulting an opponent. Cf. the decisive condemnation of physical assault as a means to enforce a duel in the 1777 Irish code (Seitz, *Famous American Duels*, p. 41) and the *British Code of Duel*, pp. 55–56.

31. For a discussion of the ritual use of physical assault see Vostrikov, "Poetika oskorbleniia v russkoi duel'noi traditsii," pp. 103–4. Russian dueling codes disagree on whether an intention to assault an opponent physically equals an actual assault: Durasov holds that "an oral announcement of a physical assault that substitutes for the actual act is a tertiary [i.e., most grave] offense" (*Duel'nyi kodeks*, p. 17), but Suvorin believes that "an oral or written announcement of a desire or intent to assault physically cannot be acknowledged as a substitute for an actual act and is considered a verbal insult" (*Duel'nyi kodeks*, p. 12).

32. N. I. Faleev, "Dueli," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 99 (1905): 909.

33. For a discussion of the *démenti* as the usual starting point for a duel of honor in France, see Billacois, *Duel*, pp. 8–9, 14, 195. As for the actual causes, see a classification suggested by Billacois on pp. 76–79. Greenberg discusses the accusation of lying (direct or symbolic) as the quintessential insult leading to a duel; see his *Honor and Slavery*, chap. 1, esp. pp. 8–9. He interprets the accusation of lying somewhat too broadly, in my opinion, arguing that any insulting gesture can serve as a *démenti*, since it "unmasks" a person, revealing him for what he really is. It seems that the original *démenti* was just that: a verbal accusation of lying.

34. Margeret, *Russian Empire*, pp. 65–66.

35. Ibid., p. 66.

36. Vostrikov, "Poetika oskorbleniia v russkoi duel'noi traditsii," p. 102.

37. A. S. Pushkin, ["Zametki po russkoi istorii XVIII veka"], in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11: 16.

38. *Catherine II's Charters of 1785 to the Nobility and the Towns*, p. 6. On the nobility's efforts to secure personal inviolability, see Robert E. Jones, *The Emancipation of the Russian Nobility, 1762–1785* (Princeton, 1973), esp. pp. 33, 114, 278, 279.

39. See P. O. Bobrovskii, "Mestnichestvo i prestupleniia protiv rodovoi chesti," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 12 (1888), p. 253; Mikhail Stupin, *Istoriia telesnykh nakazanii* (Vladikavkaz, 1887), pp. 21–22; A. G. Timofeev, *Istoriia telesnykh nakazanii v russkom prave*, 2d ed. (St. Petersburg, 1904), p. 87. These authors rely on contemporary documents and testimonies of foreign visitors.

40. See Stupin, *Istoriia telesnykh nakazanii*, pp. 14, 18–19; N. Evreinov, *Istoriia telesnykh nakazanii v Rossii* (New York, 1979), p. 36.

41. Kollmann, "Honor and Dishonor in Early Modern Russia," p. 139.

42. Stupin, *Istoriia telesnykh nakazanii*, p. 29. For an overview of military laws concerning corporal punishment, see Keep, "No Gauntlet for Gentlemen," pp. 171–92.

43. "Patent o poedinkakh i nachinanii ssor," in *Pamiatniki russkogo prava*, p. 458. See ibid., pp. 460–65, for a discussion of the "Declaration" as a more detailed and refined treatment of personal offenses than the *Military Code*.

44. *Istoriia kavalergardov*, 1: 260.

45. *Sbornik biografii kavalergardov*, 1: 263.

46. Ibid., pp. 263, 297–98. Okhlestyshev defended himself by accusing Pershutkin of reciprocal violence, claiming that Pershutkin, "having grabbed him by the throat, attempted to hit him" (p. 263).

47. *Proekt novogo Ulozheniia, sostavlennyi komissiei 1754–1766 gg.* (St. Petersburg, 1893), chap. 22, par. 15, p. 182; cf. also "Doklad kommisii o pravakh i preimushchestvakh russkogo dvorianstva, sochinennyi G. Teplovym i perepisannyi rukoi Ekateriny II (18 marta 1763 goda)," in *Sbornik russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 7 (1871), p. 248: "A gentleman [*shliakhtich*] is never to be subjected to corporal punishment while in the service, even less can he be given into an executioner's hands, or have his estate confiscated, unless his crime is so serious that he must be subjected to either."

48. See *Sbornik russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 4 (1869), pp. 288, 302, 462.

49. The practice was not invented by Paul; he just put it in writing. Radishchev, for example, was stripped of his rank in 1790 before being exiled to Siberia. Initially nobles themselves supported such an approach: almost all deputies of Catherine's Legislative Commission who called for the abolition of corporal punishment for the nobility added a special clause that would allow a gentleman to be stripped of his rank and privileges as a prerequisite to being subjected to beatings and torture. The deputies cited concerns for corporate honor as the grounds for such a procedure (see ibid., pp. 288, 302).

50. Viazemskii, *Zapisnye knizhki*, p. 278.

51. Khrapovitskii, *Pamiatnye zapiski*, p. 43.

52. *Sbornik russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva*, vol. 2 (1868), p. 141, quoted in A. N. Korsakov, "Stepan Ivanovich Sheshkovskii (1727–1794)," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 22 (1885): 680.

53. I. V. Lopukhin, *Zapiski* (1859; Moscow, 1990), p. 63n.

54. See a version of this legend in Radishchev's biography written by his son, Pavel Radishchev: *Biografiia A. N. Radishcheva, napisannaia ego synov'iami*, ed. D. S. Babkin (Moscow and Leningrad, 1959), pp. 63–64; cf. also N. S. Selivanovskii, "Zapiski," *Bibliograficheskie zapiski* 1 (1858): 17, col. 518: "He was arrested, tried, deprived of everything, flogged, it seems, with a knout, and exiled to Siberia." The journal's editor, however, attached a note to the word "knout": "This is not true."

55. P. F. Karabanov, "Istoricheskie rasskazy i anekdoty, zapisannye so slov imianitykh liudei," *Russkaia starina* 5 (1872): 138.

56. Nikolai Golitsyn, "Sovremennye izvestiia o Radishcheve," *Bibliograficheskie zapiski* 1 (1858): col. 734, n. 6. Golitsyn does not specify the nature of the abuse, simply indicating that they "particularly suffered" and adding (col. 735): "About Sheshkovsky they tell things that take the listener to the times of Louis XI, [Ivan] the Terrible, and Buehren." A slightly different version of the incident is offered by L. N. Engel'gardt; he claims that one of the transgressors was indeed flogged (*Zapiski* [Moscow, 1997], pp. 51–52n19). Engel'gardt also notes Sheshkovsky's reputation as an abuser of nobles—giving it, surprisingly, a positive spin: "Of course, some would say that that was barbaric, but if a secret mild punishment replaces the stripping of rank and nobility and exile required by law, then, of course, this sort of despotism is excusable—the more so that no one suffered without reason under Catherine" (p. 176n61).

57. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11: 16.

58. For a discussion of this issue, see E. D. Kukushkina, "Iakov Borisovich Kniazhnin," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 150, *Early Modern Russian Writers*, ed. Marcus C. Levitt (London, 1995), p. 180.

59. See Brigen, *Pis'ma. Istoricheskie sochineniia*, p. 450; Mikhail Lunin, *Sochineniia. Pis'ma. Documenty* (Irkutsk, 1988), p. 147.

60. Radishchev, *Biografiia A. N. Radishcheva*, p. 64n.

61. V. V. Selivanov, "Iz davnikh vospominanii," *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 1 (1869), p. 164.

62. Ibid.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid., p. 168. F. F. Ertel', the chief of military police in Moscow and later in St. Petersburg, was known for his strict enforcement of Paul's regulations, such as the prohibition of round hats. Both memoirists refer to Tainaia Ekspeditsiia simply as Tainaia (Secret); so does Khrapovitsky in his report on Catherine's remark about Natal'ia Passek (*Pamiatnye zapiski, p. 43*).

65. *Memoirs of Princess Dashkova*, pp. 264–65.

66. A. M. Turgenev, "Zapiski," *Russkaia starina* 47, no. 9 (1885): 388–89.

67. N. I. Grech, "Kratkie biografii," in his *Zapiski o moei zhizni*, p. 336.

68. N. A. Markevich, "Iz vospominanii," in *Pushkin v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 1: 162. This allegation echoes a rumor created by Fedor Tolstoy that Pushkin had been flogged by the secret police before he was exiled to the South. I discuss the rumor and Pushkin's reaction to it in this chapter.

69. N. P. Tsebrikov, "Vospominaniia, zametki i pis'ma," in Oksman and Chernov, *Vospominaniia i rasskazy*, 1: 259. Tsebrikov names the wife of F. N.

Glinka, A. P. Golenishcheva-Kutuzova, as the source of this information. Glinka allegedly saw Pestel's injuries during a face-to-face meeting that was staged by the investigators. Sergei Gessen, the editor of Tsebrikov's memoir, doubts there is any truth to the rumor; see ibid., p. 278n12.

70. Quoted in V. F. Savodnik and M. N. Speranskii, "Kommentarii k Dnevniku Pushkina," in A. S. Pushkin, "Dnevnik (1833–1835)," in *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Rumiantsevskogo muzeia*, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1923), p. 143. Savodnik and Speransky's commentaries have been reprinted in *Dnevnik A. S. Pushkina, 1833–1835: S kommentariiami B. L. Modzalevskogo, V. F. Savodnika, M. N. Speranskogo* (Moscow, 1997). My quote can be found on p. 321.

71. N. I. Pirogov, *Sochineniia*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1887), 1: 497. Iu. M. Lotman, in his "Simvolika Peterburga i problemy semiotiki goroda," in *Izbrannye stat'i*, vol. 2 (Tallinn, 1992), pp. 18–20, analyzes this episode as a feature of the Petersburg myth. Rumors about nobles having been beaten were not necessarily connected with St. Petersburg.

72. S. V. Zhitomirskaia, "Vstrechi dekabristov s petrashevtsami," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* 60, no. 2, bk. 1 (1956): 619.

73. See B. F. Egorov, *Petrashevtsy* (Leningrad, 1988), pp. 184–85. On pp. 185–86 Egorov discusses the reliability of Petrashevsky's account and concludes that while deprivation of food and water as well as threats of physical abuse were likely, the macabre electrical torture probably never took place.

74. For a discussion of the rumors and an evaluation of their reliability, see M. M. Gromyko, *Sibirskie druz'ia i znakomye F. M. Dostoevskogo* (Novosibirsk, 1985), pp. 44–51.

75. Dostoevsky, *Demons*, pp. 431–32; *Besy*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 10: 332–33.

76. N. S. Leskov, *Soboriane*, in his *Sobranie sochinenii v 12-ti tomakh* (Moscow, 1989), 1: 137–39.

77. Leskov, "Smekh i gore," in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 5: 167, 173. The "sergeant's wife" (actually, widow) refers to Gogol's *Inspector General*, act 4, scene 15, in which the mayor assures Khlestakov that the woman in fact flogged herself. Poshlepkina is Vatazhkov's invention.

78. D. I. Fonvizin, "Drug chestnykh liudei ili Starodum," in *Drug chestnykh liudei* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 107, 109.

79. Sigurd O. Schmidt, in his "Obshchestvennoe samosoznanie noblesse russe v XVI–pervoi treti XIX v.," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 34, nos. 1–2 (1993): 20, connects Pushkin and his comrades' search for an ideal of honorable behavior in Russia's pre-Petrine past with the "cult of the duel."

80. Petr Viazemskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 12 vols. (Moscow, 1878–96), 8: 351.

81. Viazemskii, *Zapisnye knizhki*, p. 51.

82. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, trans. David Magarshack (New York, 1955), p. 443; *Idiot*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8: 385.

83. F. M. Dostoyevsky, "Something About Lying," in his *Diary of a Writer*, trans. Boris Brasol (Santa Barbara, 1979), p. 141; "Nechto o vran'e," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 21: 124. Bol'shaia Meshchanskaia is the street where the incident with Pirogov takes place.

84. Dostoyevsky, "Something About Lying," p. 141; "Nechto o vran'e," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 21: 124–25. Pirogov is also mentioned in *Zapiski iz podpol'ia* (5: 128), in an 1861 essay on Russian literature (18: 59), and in notes for *Dnevnik pisatelia* (24: 102).

85. The author of educational reforms under Catherine, I. I. Betskoy, opposed corporal punishment and attempted to ban or at least restrict it in schools for young nobles, such as the First Cadet Corps, as well as in state-run orphanages; see his *Uchrezhdeniia i ustavy, kasaiushchiesia do vospitaniia i obucheniia v Rossii iunoshestva oboego pola*, vol. 2 (St. Petersburg, 1774), p. 108; and *Sobranie uchrezhdenii i predpisanii, kasaiushchikhsia vospitaniia, v Rossii, oboego pola blagorodnogo i meshchanskogo iunoshestva*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1789), pp. 37, 133–34. In practice, however, the use of corporal punishment depended on the personality of the headmaster and the mood of the time. Corporal punishment continued to be used not only in elite military schools but, in the first half of the nineteenth century, even in the Smolny Institute for Noble Maidens.

86. N. P. Makarov, *Moi semidesiatiletnie vospominaniia i s tem vmeste moia polnaia predsmertanaia ispoved'*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1881–82), vol. 1, bk. 1, pp. 17–20.

87. Markevich, "Iz vospominanii," p. 162.

88. *Pis'ma russkikh pisatelei XVIII veka* (Leningrad, 1980), p. 78.

89. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13: 227 (original in French). Words in angle brackets are crossed out by Pushkin; the last sentence is unfinished. For another rough draft of the same letter, see ibid., p. 548.

90. F. N. Luganin, "Iz 'Dnevnika,'" in *Pushkin v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 1: 237.

91. On the incident see S. L. Tolstoi, *Fedor Tolstoi Amerikanets*, pp. 49–56; L. A. Chereiskii, *Pushkin i ego okruzhenie*, 2d rev. ed. (Leningrad, 1988), pp. 438–39; *Pushkin v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 1: 162, 237; and Pushkin to Viazemskii, Sept. 1, 1822, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13: 43–44.

92. See A. I. Herzen, "A. Polezhaev," in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, 8: 167. Though Polezhaev was not flogged for his escape in 1827 (he was demoted and stripped of his noble rank), he did run the gauntlet in 1837 for absence without leave. Herzen's story is thus inaccurate in its details but conveys the gist of the case.

93. On the Sukhinov conspiracy, see V. N. Solov'ev, "Zapiska o poruchike Chernigovskogo polka I. I. Sukhinove," in Oksman and Chernov, *Vospominaniia i rasskazy*, 2: 21–32; S. Gessen, *Zagovor dekabrista Sukhinova* (Moscow, 1930); *Pisateli-dekabristy*, 1: 395, commentary; M. V. Nechkina, *Dekabristy* (Moscow, 1982), pp. 136–38. Solov'ev also mentions Sukhinov's failed attempt at suicide before his arrest for his part in the Decembrist revolt (p. 25).

94. *Pis'ma russkikh pisatelei*, pp. 77, 78. Read in its entirety, Sumarokov's letter is much less explicit about his desire both to commit suicide and to challenge Chernyshev. Many passages betray his uncertainty as to his status vis-à-vis Chernyshev and especially Shuvalov. His indecision can be seen in his last sentence: "As for the fact that I allegedly remained calm après ce grand coup [after this terrible blow], I remained [calm] par embarras et je n'avais point tant de présence d'esprit [out of embarrassment and I hadn't enough presence of mind] to decide what to do; in addition I was afraid of angering you; toute ma vie est changée et il ne me reste plus qu'à mourir [my whole life has changed, and nothing is left for me but to die]." His nascent sense of *point d'honneur* is nonetheless evident.

95. *Diplomate français à la cour de Catherine II*, 1: 110.

96. *Ekaterina II i Grigorii Potemkin*, pp. 79–80.

97. Radishchev, "Opyt o zakonodavstve," in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 3: 13.

98. See G. P. Makogonenko, *Radishchev i ego vremia* (Moscow, 1955), pp. 32–33, 341–44; V. V. Pugachev, *A. N. Radishchev* (Gorky, 1960), p. 10; Iu. M. Lotman, "Otrazhenie etiki i taktiki revoliutsionnoi bor'by v russkoi literature kontsa XVIII veka," *Uchenye zapiski tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 167 (1965): 13, 15.

99. A. N. Radishchev, *Zhitie Fedora Vasil'evicha Ushakova*, in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 1: 165.

100. Ibid., pp. 167, 169. Radishchev designates Nasakin as N; I have supplied his name for the sake of clarity.

101. Ibid., p. 170.

102. Ibid., p. 171. Note a rudimentary *démenti* ("That is not true") in this conflict of honor.

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid., pp. 170, 168. Radishchev's argument reflects his wishful thinking rather than the actual state of affairs: at the time of the incident (the late 1760s) the law protecting the nobility against corporal punishment was still in the making. It was in place in 1789, however, at the time he wrote *Zhitie Fedora Vasil'evicha Ushakova*.

105. A. E. Rozen, *Zapiski dekabrista* (St. Petersburg, 1907), p. 30. The date and circumstances of the incident vary in the accounts. *Sbornik biografii*

kavalergardov, 3: 232, dates it from 1805; V. N. Zvegintsov, in *Kavalergardy dekabristy: Dopolnenie k sborniku biografii kavalergardov, 1801–1826* (Paris, 1977), p. 74, from 1808; Rozen, from after 1812. S. Komovskii, in "Zametki," *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 1 (1868), pp. 1034–35, and Eidel'man, in *Lunin*, p. 29, cite two other versions of the incident. See a discussion of the episode in Gordin, *Pravo na poedinok*, pp. 408–10.

106. Nicholas allegedly said to V. S. Norov: "I'll make you knuckle under" (Ia tebia v baranii rog sognu). See Rozen, *Zapiski dekabrista*, p. 30; Gordin, *Pravo na poedinok*, pp. 409–10. Constantine's image as a chivalrous knight, as opposed to the usual portrayals of Nicholas as rude and tyrannical, is a recurrent feature of nineteenth-century cultural mythology.

107. Herzen, *Byloe i dumy*, in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, 8: 58.

108. Ibid.

109. Many of Iakubovich's fellow Decembrists testified that he formulated his proposal to assassinate Alexander I in terms of a duel of honor; see *Vosstanie dekabristov*, vol. 2 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1926), pp. 293–94, 296; "Iz pokazanii Kondratiia Fedorovicha Ryleeva," in *Iz pisem i pokazanii dekabristov: Kritika sovremennogo sostoianiia Rossii i plany budushchego ustroistva*, ed. A. K. Borozdin (St. Petersburg, 1906), p. 182; M. V. Nechkina, *Dvizhenie dekabristov*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1955), 2: 108–9.

110. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The House of the Dead*, trans. David McDuff (New York, 1985), p. 327; *Zapiski iz Mertvogo doma*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4: 212. McDuff's translation of *umeli postavit' sebia* as "managed to make a place for themselves" plays down the idea of honorable behavior that the Russian expression conveys.

111. Herzen, "Neskol'ko zamechanii ob istoricheskom razvitii chesti," in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2: 152, 163.

112. Cf. Greenberg's argument in *Honor and Slavery*, pp. 35–37, that slaves' readiness to resist could deter a master from abusing them.

113. Curiously, one of Paul's first actions as emperor was to make a cane part of an officer's uniform—just like a sword. E. F. Komarovsky reports: "On the next day [after Catherine's death] . . . the Grand Duke wanted . . . all officers to have canes and bell-shaped gauntlets at the time of the review" (*Zapiski* [1914; Moscow, 1990], p. 36).

114. Gordin, *Pravo na poedinok*, p, 453. Vostrikov, in his "Ubiistvo i samoubiistvo v dele chesti," pp. 28–29, suggests that an offender's intention ("if the insult is intended to dishonor rather than to provoke a duel") made the crucial difference. In contrast, I believe that the difference lay in the attitude of the person who was offended. Vostrikov's argument might work for the example he discusses: an officer gives another officer a flick on the nose and the latter kills him. For a discussion of assaults against the nose as particularly insulting, see Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery*, pp. 16–17. There is no

indication, however, that Shishkov treated Chernov in a particularly offensive way. It certainly looks as though it were Chernov's perception of the slap as unbearably offensive that led him to kill Shishkov.

115. P. P. Viazemskii, "Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin: 1826–1827," in *Pushkin v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, 2: 187.

116. See, for example, an entry on boxing in Brockhaus-Efron's *Russkii Entsiklopedicheskii Slovar'*.

117. M. N. Lukashev, "Pushkin uchil menia boksirovat'," *Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii* 24 (1991): 93.

118. Komarovskii, *Zapiski*, p. 18.

119. I. P. Makarov, "Pis'ma iz Londona," in *Landshaft moikh voobrazhenii: Stranitsy prozy russkogo sentimentalizma* (Moscow, 1990), pp. 502–3.

120. Komarovskii, *Zapiski*, p. 19.

121. Makarov, "Pis'ma iz Londona," p. 515.

122. Dostoyevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 337; *Idiot*, in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8: 291. In the original, "mortal" is "bloody" (*krovavaia*). Keller, in his taunting of the officer, uses a pun: "bloody insult" was a dueling term and did mean "mortal insult" in the sense that it could be rectified only by drawing blood; at the same time, he hints at the officer's bloody face, injured by Nastas'ia's whip.

123. Pushkin, "[Razgovor o kritike]," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9: 91; "gentleman" is in English. Pushkin's favorable view of boxing could have come from his long interest in dandyism. Consider an episode in Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* (a book that Pushkin rated highly), in which the title character proves himself an excellent boxer. See Lukashev, "Pushkin uchil menia boksirovat'," pp. 94–95, for the author's speculation that Pushkin learned to box from M. A. Shcherbinin, who accompanied Alexander I on his visit to London in 1814.

124. Abby M. Schrader, "Containing the Spectacle of Punishment: The Russian Autocracy and the Abolition of the Knout, 1817–1845," *Slavic Review* 56, no. 4 (1997): 616, argues that corporal punishment was "one means by which officials constructed and upheld status distinctions in Russian society. . . . By instituting and maintaining different estate-based penal practices, officials articulated a social and cultural hierarchy." When the populist Nikolai Mikhailovsky was striving for unity with the common people, he formulated his desire in terms of shared acceptance of flogging: "Let them flog us too—if they flog the people [Pust' i nas sekut, ved' narod sekut zhe]" (quoted in V. Gorskii, "Russkii messianizm i novoe natsional'noe soznanie," *Vestnik russkogo studencheskogo khristianskogo dvizheniia* 97 [1970]: 47n11).

125. I can offer a single example: Nikolai Leskov describes duels with lashes in *Ocharovannyi strannik*, in his *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2; published in English as Nicolai Lyeskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer*, trans. A. G. Paschkoff (1926; London, 1985). Leskov was very interested in the problems of

physical violence and personal inviolability and aware of their connection with the duel. At the same time, he tended to revise these issues by placing them in new, often unexpected contexts.