The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture

Iurii M. Lotman

The title of this essay needs explanation. Indeed, the very assumption that everyday behavior is a semiotic system may cause some controversy. To speak of the poetics of everyday behavior is to assert that eighteenth-century Russian culture patterned certain aspects of ordinary life on the norms and rules governing artistic texts and experienced them directly as aesthetic forms. If this hypothesis can be proved it will stand as a major typological characteristic of this cultural period.

Everyday behavior in itself is hardly an unusual subject for research: consider the field of ethnography, where it has been a traditional object of study. The topic is also a traditional one for students of such relatively distant cultural epochs as the classical period, the Renaissance, and the baroque. And historical studies of Russian culture also include a number of still significant works, from Nikolai Kostomarov's sketch of Russian domestic life and customs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to Boris Rybakov's book on the people and customs of ancient Russia (second edition, 1966).

On this basis, one can make the following observation: the further removed a society is in time, place, or culture, the more its everyday behavior becomes a well-defined object of scholarly attention. Most documents recording norms of everyday behavior have been written by or for foreigners, presupposing an observer external to the social unit. An analogous situation exists in relation

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to everyday speech. When a language is first recorded and studied, descriptions of everyday speech are generally oriented toward the external observer. This correlation is not coincidental; like language, everyday behavior belongs to the sort of semiotic system that "native speakers" view as natural, a part of Nature and not Culture. Its semiotic and conventional character is apparent only to the external observer.

Since only an observer who perceives everyday behavior as a semiotic phenomenon can experience it aesthetically, thus far my exposition would seem to contradict the title of this essay. A foreigner, for whom the everyday life of another culture is an exotic experience, can perceive that life as an aesthetic fact. The direct participant in a culture, as a rule, is simply unaware of its distinguishing qualities. In the eighteenth century, however, the everyday behavior of the Russian nobility underwent such an elemental transformation that it acquired uncharacteristic features.

In every group with a relatively developed culture, human behavior is organized according to the following basic opposition: (1) The ordinary, everyday, customary social behavior which members of the group consider "natural"; the only possible, normal behavior; (2) All types of ceremonial, ritual, nonpragmatic behavior. This category includes state ceremonies, religious cults and rites, and all those activities that "native speakers" of a culture perceive as having an independent meaning.

People within a given culture learn the first type of conduct as they do their native language. They are directly immersed in it through direct use and do not notice when, where, and from whom they acquired it. Its mastery seems so natural to them that such questions are meaningless. No one would think of providing such an audience with a grammar of the language of social behavior, a metatext describing its "correct" norms. The second type of conduct is learned in the same way as a foreign language, with rules and grammar books. At first its norms are assimilated and then, on their foundation, "texts of behavior" are constructed. The first type of behavior is acquired naturally, unconsciously. The second is acquired consciously, with the aid of a teacher, and its mastery is usually celebrated in a special rite of initiation.

Starting with the reign of Peter the Great, the Russian nobility underwent a change far more profound than a simple shift in the customary social order. The area of subconscious, "natural" behavior became a sphere in which teaching was needed. Instructions were issued regarding the norms of social behavior, since the entire

previously existing structure had been rejected as incorrect and replaced by "correct" European rules.

As a result, during and after the Petrine period, the Russian nobleman was like a foreigner in his own country. As an adult he had to learn through unnatural methods what is usually acquired through direct experience in early childhood. What was strange and foreign took on the character of a norm. To behave properly was to behave like a foreigner, that is, in a somewhat artificial manner, according to the norms of somebody else's way of life. Remembering these norms was just as crucial as knowing the rules of a foreign language in order to use it correctly. The book *Iunosti chestnoe zertsalo* (the mirror of honor for youth), desiring to illustrate the ideal of polite conduct, suggested that its reader imagine himself in the society of foreigners: "He should express his needs gracefully, using pleasant and courteous expressions as if he were speaking with a foreign person, so that he will become accustomed to behaving in this way."[1]

This kind of cultural inversion is not at all a "Europeanization" of everyday behavior in the straightforward sense of the term. When forms of social conduct and foreign languages were transplanted from the West and became the normal means of social interaction for the Russian nobility, their function was changed. In Europe they were natural native forms and consequently "native speakers" were not aware of them: in Holland, the ability to speak Dutch did not raise a person's standing in society. But once they were transferred to Russia, European social forms took on value; like the mastery of foreign languages they did raise an individual's social status. *Iunosti chestnoe zertsalo* further suggests:

> Young men who have traveled abroad and have learned foreign languages at great expense should imitate foreigners and take pains not to forget these languages. They should study them more thoroughly by reading useful books and by engaging in social intercourse and by occasionally writing and composing in these languages so as not to forget them.
>
> Those who have not visited foreign lands and have been received at court either from school or from some other place should be humble and restrained in the presence of others, desiring to learn from everyone; they should not, looking like idlers, keep their hats on their heads

[1] *Iunosti chestnoe zertsalo, ili pokazanie k zhiteiskomu obkhozhdeniiu, sobrannoe ot raznykh avtorov poveleniem ego imperatorskogo velichestva gosudaria Petra Velikogo . . . piatym tisneniem napechatannoe* (St. Petersburg, 1767), p. 29.

as though they were chained there, prancing about and boasting as if they had no respect for anyone.[2]

Thus, despite what is generally believed, Europeanization accentuated rather than obliterated the non-European aspects of daily life. In order to perceive one's own behavior as consistently foreign, it was essential *not to be* a foreigner: for a foreigner, foreign behavior is not foreign. What was needed was to assimilate forms of European daily life while retaining an external "alien" Russian attitude toward them. A Russian was not supposed to become a foreigner; he was merely supposed to act like one. Indeed, the assimilation of foreign customs had, at times, the paradoxical effect of intensifying the Russian antagonism toward foreigners.

A direct result of the change in everyday behavior was the ritualization and semiotization of those spheres of life that would be considered "natural" and nonsignifying in a culture that had not undergone an inversion. The effect was the opposite of that "privateness" which struck the Russian observer of European life. (Consider Petr Tolstoi's remarks about Venice: "Nobody reproaches anybody; nobody is afraid of anybody or of doing anything; everybody acts according to his will, each as he wishes."[3]) The image of European life was reduplicated in a ritualized play-acting of European life. Everyday behavior became a set of signs for everyday behavior. The semiotization of everyday life, the degree to which it was consciously perceived as a sign, increased sharply. Daily life acquired the characteristics of the theater.

Play-acting at everyday life, the feeling of being forever on the stage, is extremely characteristic of Russian gentry life in the eighteenth century. The common people were inclined to view the gentry as masqueraders; they observed their life as if watching a play. An interesting indication of this attitude is the use of European (gentry) attire for folk masquerades at Christmas. The memoirist Il'ia Selivanov recalls that at Christmastime in the early nineteenth century crowds of masked serfs—peasants as well as house servants—would stop at the manor house, which would be open to them at that season. For masquerade costumes most put on peasant sheepskin coats *turned inside out* or jester's garb made up of things not ordinarily in use (bast caps, and so forth). But it was also acceptable to wear the ordinary clothes of the nobility, obtained in

[2]Ibid., pp. 41-42.
[3]*Russkii arkhiv*, 1888, vol. 26, book 4, p. 547.

secret from the housekeeper: "old uniforms and other items of men's and women's apparel kept in the storerooms."[4]

It is revealing that in popular lithographs of the eighteenth century, with their clear theatrical orientation (their framing by curtains, marquees, footlights), the folk figures, *inasmuch as they are actors*, are depicted in gentry dress. In the well-known lithograph "Please Go Away From Me," the pancake vendor is drawn with beauty marks on her face while her admirer, decked out in braided wig and beauty marks, has on a nobleman's uniform and a three-cornered hat.

That noblemen's attire was perceived as theatrical is further illustrated by the fact that well into the twentieth century actors of the Russian folk theater would wear ordinary jackets with decorations, ribbons, and shoulder-pieces as signs of theatrical costume. In his description of folk-theater costumes, Petr Bogatyrev notes that not only Tsar Maximilian and King Mamai but also the warrior Anika, Zmeiulan, and others wear ribbons across their shoulders and epaulets so that the player "does not resemble the audience."[5] Compare this observation with Bogatyrev's assertion that in the Czech puppet theater "the puppet speech of the noblemen is intentionally incorrect."[6] Clearly theatrical clothing is also seen as "incorrect" compared to ordinary dress. It is made from materials that seem real but are not. In this sense theater clothing is like funeral clothing (for example, *bosovki*—shoes without soles) sewn especially for the deceased before a burial. Both *represent* clothing of good quality.

For the consciousness still closely bound to pre-Petrine tradition, the theater retained an aspect of pagan revelry. It was a type of masquerade and carnival with the indispensable feature of "dressing up." The folk imagination (the traditional pre-Petrine point of view) perceived the moment of costume-changing as diabolical, permissible only at certain times of the year (Christmas), and then exclusively as magical play with unclean spirits. Because of this belief, it was natural to see the theatricalized and carnival-like life at court—the eternal holiday and the eternal masquerade—in a specific religious-ethical way. Conversely, the aestheticized life of the nobility tried to incorporate rural life into its orbit, interpreting rural behavior through a prism of idyllic intermezzos. There were

[4]I. V. Selivanovskii, *Predaniia i vospominaniia* (St. Petersburg, 1881), p. 115.
[5]Petr Bogatyrev, "Narodnyi teatr. Cheshskii kukol'nyi i russkii narodnyi teatr," *Sborniki po teorii poeticheskogo iazyka*, no. 4 (Berlin/Petrograd, 1923), pp. 83-84.
[6]Ibid., p. 71.

numerous real-life attempts to construct theatricalized images of the Russian countryside, against the background of the real countryside and in contrast to it. Such attempts are exemplified by the peasant girls in silk pinafores who danced on the banks of the Volga during Catherine the Great's journey, by Sheremetev's theatrical villages, or by the Kleinmikhel family who came to a ball dressed up as Georgian peasants to thank Arakcheev for his solicitude.

At the coronation of Elizabeth, the erasure of the boundary between the stage and real life was reflected in costume changes, as well as transformations in age and sex roles. The coronation was marked by brilliant masquerades and performances. On May 29, 1742, the opera *La Clemenza di Tito* was performed at the Iauza palace. Since the role of Tito was meant to be an allusion to Elizabeth, the part was played by a woman, Madame George, dressed as a man. The audience appeared in costume for a later masquerade. If one keeps in mind that Elizabeth was wearing a guardsman's uniform on the day of her coup d'état and that the men at her court, particularly young cadets, came to masquerades dressed in women's costumes while women dressed as men, it is easy to imagine how this world was judged by the peasants, servants, and common people.[7]

The Russian nobleman of the post-Petrine period has assimilated this sort of everyday life, but at the same time felt it to be foreign. This dual perception made him treat his own life as highly semioticized, transforming it into a play.

The dual perception was sustained by the fact that many aspects of everyday life retained their common national character. No only the petty provincial landowner, but also the distinguished gentleman—and even Peter the Great and Elizabeth—could easily make the transition to the traditional norms of everyday Russian customs and behavior. It was possible to select either of two types of behavior: neutral, "natural," behavior, a behavior that was markedly aristocratic and at the same time consciously theatrical. Peter characteristically preferred the former. Even when participating in ritualized re-creations of everyday activities, he assigned himself the role of director, organizing the performance, imposing it on others, but not involving himself. This love of "simplicity" however, did not bring Peter's behavior closer to that of the people, but rather signified something directly opposite. For the peasant leisure and

[7]Cf. Pimen Arapov, *Letopis' russkogo teatra* (St. Petersburg, 1868), p. 44.

holidays were associated with a transition to a sphere of highly ritualized behavior. The church service (an immutable sign of the holiday), the wedding, and even a simple visit to a tavern signified inclusion in some established rite that determined what should be said and done, when, and by whom. For Peter leisure meant a transition to a deritualized "private" behavior. (Ritualized behavior had the quality of a public spectacle: an uninvited audience thronged about the house in which a wedding was taking place. "Natural" behavior took place behind closed doors within a close circle of "one's own.") The contradiction between ritualized and "natural" behavior was, however, canceled within the parodic ritual. As an antiritual it tended to be exclusive, accessible only to a small circle. But although inverted it was still a ritual, and therefore tended to be public. The Petrine period saw the intermingling of behavior codes that were semiotically extremely diverse: the official church ritual and the parodies of church ritual in the blasphemous ceremonies conducted by Peter and his entourage, "foreign" behavior practiced in everyday life, and the "private" behavior consciously opposed to ritual.

If neutral European or "middle-class" behavior became sharply semiotized when transferred to Russia, the behavioral transformations experienced by Russians visiting Europe are no less interesting. In some cases behavior was highly semioticized as a continuation of pre-Petrine tradition. It is easy to understand the concern of these Russian travelers with the meaning of gesture and ritual, their perception of every detail as a sign. The Russian in Europe saw himself as a *representative*, an accredited individual, and transferred the laws of diplomatic protocol to his everyday conduct. European observers assumed that this was normal everyday Russian behavior.

The opposing transformation was also possible: behavior could be sharply deritualized, making Russians appear more natural than Europeans. This was the case with Peter, who despite his excellent command of the constraining norms of diplomatic ritual, preferred to startle Europeans with the unexpected simplicity of his behavior. His conduct was not only more spontaneous than the norms of "royal" behavior dictated; it was even more spontaneous than "bourgeois" conduct. During his visit to Paris in 1716, Peter demonstrated an understanding of the norms of ritual. Though burning with impatience to see Paris, he did not go out until the king had called on him. During the regent's visit he invited him into his room, passed through the door first, and was the first to sit down

in an armchair. The regent also sat in an armchair during the conversation, and Prince Kurakin interpreted standing up. But when Peter repaid the visit to the six-year-old Louis XV and saw the latter descending the staircase to meet the carriage, "he jumped out, ran toward the king, picked him up, and carried him up the stairs to the hall."[8]

Against the background of the traditional Russian way of life, the intermingling of behavior codes created a perceptible category of *behavioral style*. A similar process took place in early-eighteenth-century Russian language, in which the motley disorder of vocabulary intensified the feeling that not only modes of speech, but every isolated word had stylistic significance (not only behavior as a whole, but also every act). This development set the groundwork for the strict language classifications of the mid-eighteenth century.

Thus, after the first step—the semiotization of everyday behavior—there followed a second: the creation of styles within the framework of everyday norms. This process was expressed in part as the development of behavioral styles appropriate to specific geographical locations. When a nobleman traveled from St. Petersburg to Moscow, from an estate near Moscow to a provincial one, or from Russia to Europe, often unconsciously but always unerringly he changed the style of his behavior. Style formation also had a social as well as a geographical component. A difference in behavioral style was defined for the nobleman in state service and the one who had retired to his estate, for the military man and the civilian, for nobleman who lived in the capital (at court) and his counterpart in the provinces. A person's manner of speaking, walking, and dressing unmistakably indicated his position in the stylistic polyphony of everyday life. In private correspondence (and later in his *Gamblers*) Gogol used the expression "A losing streak, a definite losing streak! Nothing but spot cards!" He considered this phrase "a real army expression and in its way not without dignity." That is, he emphasized that neither a civilian bureaucrat nor an officer of the guard would express himself that way.

Stylistic coloration was emphasized because behavior was a matter of choice, a selection from several alternatives. The presence of choice, the possibility of changing from one type of behavior to another, was the basis of the aristocratic way of life. The life-style system of the Russian nobleman was constructed much like a tree.

[8]S. M. Solov'ev, *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, book 9 (Moscow, 1963), p. 68.

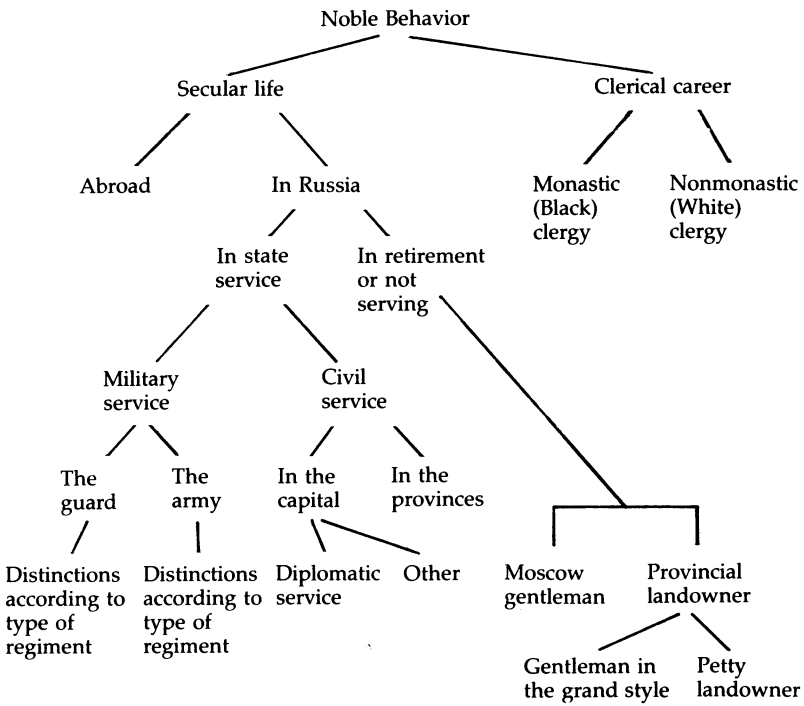
In the second half of the eighteenth century, the nobility had attained the freedom to choose whether or not to serve the state, and whether to live in Russia or abroad, and from that point on it continued its efforts to multiply the tree's "branches." The government, however, especially during the reigns of Paul and Nicholas I, actively sought to eliminate the choices for individual behavior and style of life. The attempt was made to transform everyday life into state service and turn all clothing into a uniform.

The diagram below presents the basic possibilities for noble behavior.[9] The availability of *choice* sharply separated the nobleman's behavior from that of the peasant. Peasant behavior was regulated by the agricultural calendar and was invariable within the boundaries of each stage. It is curious that from this point of view the behavior of the noblewoman was much closer in principle to that of the peasant than to that of the nobleman. In her life there were no moments of individual choice, and her behavior was determined by her age.

Through the development of behavioral styles, behavior naturally acquired the quality of an aesthetically experienced phenomenon. This in turn initiated the search for behavioral models within the sphere of art. The man not yet acquainted with the Europeanized forms of art had only the familiar types of dramatic performance as models: church liturgy and popular farce. Of the two, however, church liturgy enjoyed such authority that its use in everyday life was viewed as a parodic, blasphemous act. But a remarkable example of folk theater as an organizer of everyday activity among the gentry appears in a rare book of 1847, *The Family History of the Golovins, owners of the village of Novospaskoe, collected by the Baccalaureate of the Moscow Spiritual Academy, Petr Kazanskii.*[10] This curious work, based on the domestic archive of the Golovin

[9]The diagram indicates the possibility of a clerical career, which, although not typical for a nobleman, was not unheard of. There were noblemen in both the monastic and nonmonastic clergy during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The diagram does not indicate an essential characteristic of the eighteenth century: the decisive change in the attitude toward suicide in post-Petrine Russia. Toward the end of the century the young portion of the aristocracy was literally gripped by a wave of suicide. Radishchev saw in man's freedom to choose life or death a guarantee of emancipation from political tyranny. This theme was actively debated in literature (Karamzin, Russian Wertheriana) and in publicistic writings. In this way yet another alternative was added, and the very fact of existence became the result of personal choice.

[10]*Rodoslovnaia Golovinykh, vladel'tsev sela Novospaskago, sobrannaia Bakkalavrom M. D. Akademii Petrom Kazanskim* (Moscow, 1847); hereafter cited as *Rodoslovnaia Golovinykh*.



This chart shows only those basic types of noble behavior which could be chosen by the eighteenth-century Russian nobleman from among alternate possibilities. It does not take into account adjustments made according to the typology of behavior associated with age.

family, includes sources reminiscent of those used by Ivan Petrovich Belkin in his history of the village of Goriukhino. It includes among other things the life story of Vasilii Vasil'evich Golovin (1696-1781) based on the latter's own notes and on family legends. Golovin's life was turbulent: he studied in Holland, learned four European languages as well as Latin, acted as gentleman of the bedchamber at Catherine I's court, was implicated in the Mons affair, and wound up in Biron's torture chamber.[11] Having secured

[11]"He was imprisoned for about two years until March 3, 1738, subjected to horrible torture and inexpressible pain. Raising him on the rack, they twisted his shoulder blades out, they ran a hot iron down his back, stuck hot needles under his fingernails, beat him with a knout and finally returned him, broken by torture, to his family.... Unfortunately for posterity, the real nature of his offense is unknown," remarks Baccalaureate Petr Kazanskii mournfully (*Rodoslovnaia Golovinykh*, pp. 57-58).

his release with a huge bribe, he settled in the country. What is of interest here, however, is the theatrical aspect of his life. He transformed his everday life into a combination of marketplace theater, folk incantation, and Christian ritual. The following is an extensive passage:

> Rising early in the morning, even before sunrise, he would read the midnight mass and matins together with his favorite deacon, Iakov Dmitriev. After the morning prayers, the butler, the steward, the guard, and the peasant elder would present him with reports and announcements. They usually entered and departed at the command of Pelegeia Petrovna Vorob'eva, a chambermaid of proven honesty. First she would intone, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," and those standing before her would answer "Amen." Then she would say, "Come in and watch out, be quiet and humble, careful and cautious, with purity and with prayer, and go to our lord and master with your reports and for your instructions. Bow low to his noble excellency and make sure you remember it well." They would all answer in chorus, "We understand, little mother!" Having entered the master's study, they would bow down to the ground and say, "My lord, we wish you good health!" The master would answer, "Greetings, my friends, my untortured and untormented, my untried and unpunished!" This was his customary saying. "So, my children, is all well and good with us?" The butler, bowing low, would be the first to answer this question. "My lord, everything is blessed by our Savior's grace, all is well and good and in God's keeping—in the holy church, in the divine sacristy, in your lordship's house, in the stable and the cattleyard, in the peacock and the crane cotes, in the gardens, in the bird ponds, and in all places." Following the butler, the steward would begin his report: "In your lordship's cellars, in your barns and pantries, in your sheds and drying rooms, in your hives and henhouses, your smokehouses and drying ovens, by the grace of our Lord, oh master, all is intact and in order. By your lordship's command fresh spring water from Grigorovo has been brought on the piebald horse. The water was poured into a glass bottle, placed in a wooden barrel and surrounded with ice. The barrel was covered on all sides and a stone was placed on top." The guard reported thusly: "All night, my lord, we walked around the manor house, we beat mallets, we shook rattles, sounded the alarm, pounded boards, took turns blowing the horn, and all four of us spoke loudly among ourselves. The night birds did not fly, they did not screech in strange voices, they did not frighten the young masters, and they did not peck at the lord's putty. They did not perch on the roof and they did not flutter about the attic." In conclusion the peasant elder would report: "In all four villages, by God's grace, all is well and good. Your lordship's serfs are growing wealthy, their livestock is growing fatter, the

hoofed creatures are grazing, the domestic fowl are laying eggs, the earth didn't quake, nor were there any signs in the sky. The cat Van'ka,[12] the peasant woman Firebug[13] are living in Rtishchevo, and each month they receive their chaff by your lordship's command. Every day they lament their transgression and tearfully beg you, my lord, to have pity and set aside your anger and forgive them, your guilty slaves.

We will omit a description of the carefully organized daily ceremonial consisting of house prayer, church liturgy, and rituals associated with breakfast, dinner, and dessert. Each of these was a regularly repeated performance.

The preparation for bed began [at four o'clock in the afternoon—Iu. L.] with the order to close the shutters. Inside, they read the prayer to Jesus: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us." From without, several voices would answer "Amen." On this word, they would close the shutters with a horrible bang and fasten them with iron bolts. At this time, the butler, the steward, the guard, and the peasant elder would appear. Only the butler was allowed into the master's study, and he would then give the others their orders. This was the guard's order: "Heed your master's command. See that you do not sleep all night, walk around the manor house, bang the mallets louder, blow the horn, pound the boards, shake the rattle, sound the alarm. Don't gape all around, and bear this firmly in mind: the birds must not fly, they must not screech in strange voices, they must not nibble at the lord's putty, they must not perch on the roof or flutter about in the attic. Watch out, my children, that you heed me well!" "We understand you," was the answer. The peasant elder's orders went like this: "Tell the sentries and sentinels to protect and watch over all the village inhabitants both great and small, and to keep an unremitting vigilance against fire. Watch carefully: Is there a disturbance anywhere in the villages of Tselevo, Medvedki, and Goliavino? Will the Iksha, Iakhroma, and Volgusha rivers be turbulent? Can you see any strange signs in the skies? Can you hear a fearful earthquake beneath the ground? If anything like this should happen, or if a miracle

[12]"This was the master's favorite cat. One day it crawled into the fishing creel, ate a live fish that had been prepared for the master's table, was trapped there, and suffocated. The servants did not report the cat's death, but only its crime, and the master exiled it" (Baccalaureate Kazanskii's notes).

[13]This was the nickname given to the woman whose carelessness was responsible for the fire that destroyed Novospaskoe in 1775. This fire frightened Vasilii Vasil'evich so much that he ordered the house serfs, numbering over three hundred, to cook only in one room specially set aside for the purpose. Naturally this order was never carried out. (Kazanskii's notes).

should occur, don't deliberate over it yourselves and form your own judgment, but come immediately to your lord and master and tell his noble excellency all. Heed me well!" The steward received his orders from the maid Vorob'eva. "His lordship commands you to watch over the supplies; send a horse to Grigorovo and fetch some holy water. Place it in a barrel, put ice around it, cover it up and put a stone on top. With purity and with prayer, care for people, watch over the animals, do not gape all around, and do not chatter nonsense. Heed this well!" Thus ended the commands. Usually it was Vorob'eva who locked and unlocked the doors of the rooms. She would take the keys to the master himself, and placing them at the head of the bed, she said, "Stay here, my lord, with Jesus Christ, and sleep under the cover of the Holy Mother of God. May a guardian angel watch over you, my lord." Then she would give an order to the girls on duty: "Watch the cats,[14] do not bang nor talk loudly, do not fall asleep, watch for eavesdroppers, and blow out the light. Heed this well!"

Having read the evening service, Vasilii Vasil'evich would lie down in bed, cross himself and intone: "God's servant is retiring; upon him are the seal and confirmation of Christ, the indestructible wall and protection of the Mother of God, the blessed right hand of John the Baptist, and omnipotent, life-giving cross of my guardian angel, the countenances of the incorporeal powers, and the prayers of all the saints. I hereby protect myself with the cross, cast out the demon and destroy his evil power now and forever and for ages unto ages. Amen!" At night at Novospaskoe a great noise ensued: ringing, knocking, whistling, shouting, rattling, and the scurrying of four servants and four watchmen. If anything prevented the master from falling asleep right away, he did not stay in bed and was restless for the entire night. In this case, he would either begin reading aloud his favorite book, *The Life of Alexander the Great* by Quintus Curtius, or he would sit in a large armchair . . . and intone the following words, now raising and now lowering his voice: "Satan, get thee to the barren places, to the thick woods and to the crevices of the earth, where the light of God's countenance shineth not. Satan, Enemy of Mankind, unhand me, get thee to the dark places, to the bottomless seas, to the shelterless uninhabited mountains of the wilderness where the light of God's countenance shineth not. Cursed wretch, be off to the Tartars! Be off, cursed wretch, to the inferno, to the eternal fire and appear to me no more. Thricedamned, thriceheathen and thricecursed! I blow on you and spit on you!" After finishing these exorcisms, he would rise from his chair and begin walking back and forth through all seven

[14]Vasilii Vasil'evich had seven cats around the house who walked about everywhere during the day and were tied to a seven-legged table at night. One girl was charged with watching after each cat. If one of the cats got loose and went into the master's room, both cats and girls were punished (Kazanskii's notes).

of his rooms shaking a rattle. These strange habits naturally provoked curiosity, and many of the servants peeked thrugh the cracks to see what the master was doing. But this too was taken into account. The housemaids would begin shouting, employing various witticisms and proverbs, and pour cold water on the eavesdroppers from an upper window. The master approved all these actions, saying, "It serves the culprits right. Suffering means nothing to them, thricedamned, thriceheathen and thricecursed, untortured, untormented and unpunished!" Stamping his feet, he would repeat the same thing over and over again.[15]

Before us is genuine theater, with unvarying, regularly repeated performances and texts. It is also *folk* theater with its rhymed monologues and its characteristic farcical finale when the audience is dowsed with water from the stage. On stage is the "nobleman," a figure quite familiar from folk theater and popular lithographs. He is also in part a "conjurer," chanting exorcisms and reading aloud in Latin interspersed with Russian folk-theater rhymes. The blending of the humorous and the frightful in this performance is very typical.

But the nobleman is not only an actor; he is also a spectator who in his turn watches the carnivalized ritual into which he has transformed the everyday flow of his life. He plays his frightful-humorous role with satisfaction and sees to it that others do not depart from the style of the performance. It is very doubtful that this man, an educated astronomer and geographer, European traveler, acquaintance of Peter the Great and grandson of Sophia's favorite, Golitsyn, really believes that his favorite cat Van'ka continues to live for decades in exile and every day laments his transgression. But he prefers to live in this world of convention and play rather than in the real one where, as he noted in his diary, "they cleaned off my disfigured fingernails, poor and sinful man that I am."[16]

We can see how, in later years, the system of genres which took shape in the aesthetic consciousness of eighteenth-century high

[15]*Rodoslovnaia Golovinykh*, pp. 60-70.

[16]Ibid., p. 58. Compare this account: "The famous wealthy count Skavronskii . . . surrounded himself with singers and musicians. He conversed with his servants in musical notes and in recitative. The butler would inform him in a rich baritone that dinner was being served. The coachman communicated with him in bass octaves, the postilions in soprano and alto, the footmen in tenor octaves, etc. During gala dinners and balls the servants would form trios, duets, and choruses while waiting on guests. The master himself would respond in musical form" (M. I. Pyliaev, *Staroe zhit'e, ocherki i rasskazy*, 2d ed. [St. Petersburg, 1897], p. 88).

culture began to influence the behavior of the Russian aristocrat, creating a complex system of *behavioral genres*. The tendency to divide the spaces of everyday life into units of performance is an illustration of this process. The transition from one unit to another was accompanied by a change in the genre of behavior. In pre-Petrine Russia there was a binary opposition between ritual space and nonritual space both in the universe at large and in the sphere of human habitation. This opposition was realized on various levels as "home" versus "church," "nonaltar space" versus "altar," "black (stove) corner" versus "red (icon) corner" of the peasant hut, and so forth. The division of the manor house into living quarters and reception rooms was a continuation of the opposition. Later a tendency developed both to turn reception rooms into living quarters and to introduce differentiation into the living space. The move from a winter residence to a summer one, the transition, in a few hours' time, from neoclassical or baroque palace halls to a rustic "cabin," a "medieval" ruin, a Chinese village, or a Turkish pavilion, even the walk from a "little Dutch house" to an "Italian" house in Kuskovo signified a change in type of behavior and speech. Not only royal palaces and noblemen's mansions, but even the far more modest estates of the petty gentry were filled with gazebos, grottos, chapels for solitary contemplation, sanctuaries for love, and so forth. Insofar as living space became scenery (another theatrical parallel was the tendency to accompany a change in space with a change in musical accompaniment), the spatial arrangement, if necessary, could be simplified and the cost lowered, reducing a construction of exceptional dimension (such as the most outstanding architectural ensembles) to a mere indication of such a construction, accessible even to the small landowner.

A poetics of behavior developed further with the appearance of the stock character. Like the theatrical stock character, this was one of a number of invariants within a group of typical roles. The eighteenth-century man would select a particular type of behavior for himself, which simplified and elevated his everyday existence according to some ideal. As a rule, he chose to model himself on a particular historical personage, a literary or government figure, or a character from a poem or a tragedy. The chosen figure became an idealized double of the real man, in a certain sense replacing the name-day saint. Patterning oneself after this figure became a program of behavior, and names such as "the Russian Pindar," "the Voltaire of the North," "our La Fontaine," "the new Sterne,"

or "Minerva," "Astraea," "the Russian Caesar," "the Fabius of our times" were used in addition to real names ("Minerva," for example, became the literary name for Catherine the Great).

This choice of a stock role structured self-evaluation and organized behavior. It also determined the way a man's contemporaries perceived his identity. It created an entire program of personal conduct, in a sense predetermining the character of future actions and the way they would be perceived. This situation stimulated the appearance of anecdotal epics structured according to a principle of accumulation. The mask-role was the thread upon which new episodes would be repeatedly strung to form an anecdotal life history. In principle such a text of behavior was open; it could be infinitely expanded since new "events" could always be added.

The number of stock roles to choose among was not unlimited and in fact, not even large. For the most part, the set of roles resembled a set of literary characters and theatrical heroes.

The first kind of stock character I shall discuss was derived from ordinary neutral behavior through quantitative exaggeration or inversion. An example of this type of the stock role is the *bogatyr*, or legendary hero, typical of the eighteenth century. This role was created through the purely quantitative expansion of certain normal, neutral human qualities. The eighteenth century abounded in giants. Pushkin's characterization of Peter as a "miracle-working giant" has a clear origin in the eighteenth-century imagination. Anecdotes about Lomonosov consistently emphasize his superlative physical strength and the heroic quality of his pastimes. Suvorov's term for his soldiers, "marvel-heroes," is related to this same perception (compare: "but you *doubled* [italics are mine—Iu. L] your *bogatyr*'s stride," where *bogatyr* already signifies a doubling in relation to the ordinary[17]). A perfect manifestation of this tendency was the anecdotal epic about Potemkin, which created the image of a man whose every natural capability surpassed the norm.

[17]"Nastavlenie Suvorova Miloradovichu," in D. A. Miliutin, *Istoriia voiny Rossii s Frantsiei v tsarstvovanie imp. Pavla I v 1799 g*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1852), p. 588. Concerning the tendency in medieval texts to construct outstanding characters who possess ordinary human qualities but to an extraordinary degree, see Evelyn Birge Vitz, "Type et individu dans 'l'autobiographie' medievale," *Poetique: Revue de Théorie et d'Analyse Littéraires*, no. 24 (1975). Such a construction is based on a faith in the stability of the earthly role given to man from above. This construction created a tradition of "heroic" images (= models) which continued to affect people's behavior even when the role was actively chosen by the individual.

Here are stories of a monstrous appetite and digestion.[18] Consider examples like the following:

> Once in the last century Prince Potemkin was walking through a bathroom in the Tauride palace accompanied by Levashev and Prince Dolgorukov where they passed a magnificent silver bathtub.
>
> Levashev: What a splendid tub!
>
> Prince Potemkin: If you manage to fill it [this is the literary translation but in the oral text a different word is used] I will give it to you.[19]

Not only was the audience expected to appreciate the scope of Potemkin's imagination, it was also to suppose that, as the legitimate owner of the amazing bathtub, he was capable of accomplishing such a feat. There is yet another aspect of Potemkin's legendary heroism. It is no accident that Pushkin, hearing that Davydov's article had been given to the censor Mikhailov-Danilevskii for examination, said, "It's like sending Prince Potemkin to the eunuchs to learn about women."[20] Against this background appear the features of grandiose political designs, grandiose feasts and festivals, grandiose prodigality, thievery, bribe-taking, magnanimity, generosity, and patriotism. Essentially any anecdote that emphasizes the criminal or the heroic can become part of the biographical epic of Potemkin anecdotes, but these features must be highly exaggerated and carried to the extreme.

Another typical stock role that structures a group of biographical legends and real life stories is that of the wit, the jester, and the buffoon. This role is also connected with the marketplace theater and the popular lithograph. An example is the life history of Kop'ev, episodes of which were circulated widely among his contemporaries. For the most part, these episodes were simply rambling anecdotes about a wit who extricates himself from difficult situations with bold answers. Viazamskii, retelling episodes from the "biography" of Kop'ev, pointed out that these actions and rejoinders were also attributed to other persons (Aleksandr Golitsyn, for example) and that some were even known as French anecdotes. The stock role acted like a magnet for new material and the legendary

[18]The Potemkin stories are entirely in the spirit of Rabelais or the lithograph series "Great Glutton and Merry Drunkard." In its Russian variants, the series lost the feature of political caricature peculiar to the French original, and became closer to its true origin in the tradition of Rabelais and the marketplace carnival.

[19]P. A. Viazemskii, *Staraia zapisnaia knizhka* (Leningrad, 1929), p. 194.

[20]*Russkii arkhiv*, 1880, vol. 18, book 2, p. 228 n.

life history became a text that tended to grow by incorporating various anecdotes about wits.

Illustrative of this process is the fate of a certain Marin. Marin was a military man who received four grapeshot wounds at Austerlitz (in the head, the leg, and two in the chest), after which he was given a golden sword for bravery and raised to the rank of staff captain. At Friedland he received a shell fragment in the head and was awarded the St. Vladimir's cross and an adjutant's epaulets. In 1812 he was staff general under Bagration and died at the end of the campaign from wounds, disease, and exhaustion. He was an active politician (participating in the events of March 12, 1801), an interlocutor of Napoleon, to whom he delivered a letter from the Russian emperor, and finally, a poet-satirist. But in the eyes of his contemporaries all these accomplishments were eclipsed by the mask of the prankster and wit. It is this image of Marin that has impressed itself in the minds of historians of early-nineteenth-century Russian culture.

Another widespread type was the "Russian Diogenes," or "new cynic," a role that combined a philosophical contempt for wealth with poverty, a disregard for the norms of propriety, and obligatory incessant drinking. This stereotype, created by Barkov, later structured the image and behavior of Kostrov, Milonov, and a dozen other literary figures.

A man who patterns his conduct after a particular stock role transforms his life into a kind of improvised performance; the type of behavior for each character is prescribed, but not the situations that arise in the plot when characters confront one another. The action remains open-ended and can continue as an accumulation of episodes. Such a structuring of life inclined toward folk theater and was ill suited for comprehending tragic conflicts. Suvorov's mythologized life history is an example. In constructing an idealized myth about himself, Suvorov clearly focused on Plutarch's subjects, Caesar in particular. This lofty image could, however, be overlaid by that of the Russian *bogatyr* in his letters to his daughter or his addresses to his soldiers. (The stylized descriptions of military action in the letters to his daughter, the famous "Suvorochka," strikingly resemble Captain Tushin's transformation, in *War and Peace*, of military action into something like a fairy tale, suggesting that Tolstoi was familiar with the source.)

Suvorov's behavior was governed, however, by two sets of norms, not one. The second set was clearly patterned on the buffoon. An endless number of anecdotes about Suvorov's eccentricities, his

rooster's crow, and his jester's pranks, are connected with this stock role. The combination of two mutually exclusive stock roles in the behavior of the same person was connected with the poetics of preromanticism,[21] where contrast was an element of great significance. The eccentric also plays a central role in the sketch "Kharakter moego diadi" (my uncle's character) by Griboedov.[22] The unpredictable quality of a man's behavior in this case arises from the fact that his interlocutors can never tell beforehand which of the two possible roles he will play. If the aesthetic effect of behavior patterned on a single stock role was a matter of the consistent projection of that role in different situations, here the audience was constantly surprised. For example, Prince Esterhazy, sent by the Viennese court to negotiate with Suvorov, complained to Komarovskii: "You can't get any sense out of this man; how can you talk to him?" All the greater was his astonishment at their next meeting: "C'est un diable d'homme. Il a autant d'esprit, que de connaissance."[23]

The next stage in the evolution of a poetics of behavior may be characterized as the transition from stock role to plot.

Plot is in no way a chance component of everyday behavior. Indeed, the appearance of plot as a definite category organizing narrative texts in literature may ultimately be explained by the need to select a behavioral strategy for activity outside it.

Everyday behavior acquires a full-fledged interpretation only when each separate chain of real-life actions can be related to a meaningful, fully realized sequence of activities that has a unified meaning. On the level of coded message, such a sequence serves as a generalized sign of situation, of the chain of actions and results: in other words, plot. The presence of a set of plots in the consciousness of a particular group makes it possible to encode real-life behavior, to separate the signifying from the nonsignifying and to ascribe meaning to the former. In such a system, the low-level units of semiotic behavior—the gesture and the act—receive semantic and stylistic meaning not in isolation but in relation to higher level categories: plot, style, and genre of behavior. The

[21]Consider this excerpt from Batiushkov's notebook: "Recently I made the acquaintance of an eccentric man, of which there are many!" K. N. Batiushkov, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1934), pp. 378-380. Or consider a note from Pushkin's diary for December 17, 1815 while he was a student at the lycée: "Would you like to see a strange man, an eccentric?" Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12 (Moscow/Leningrad, 1949), pp. 301-302.

[22]A. S. Griboedov, *Sochineniia* (Moscow, 1956), pp. 414-415.

[23]*Zapiski grafa E. F. Komarovskogo* (St. Petersburg, 1914), p. 90.

totality of plots that encode a person's behavior in a particular epoch can be defined as the mythology of everyday and social behavior.

In the last third of the eighteenth century, when a mythology of this kind was taking shape in Russian culture, the main source for behavioral plots was literature with few ties to the everyday: the ancient historians, neoclassical tragedies, and in isolated cases, saints' lives.

Perceiving one's own life as a text organized according to the laws of a particular plot sharply emphasized "unity of action," or life's movement toward an immutable goal. The theatrical category of the "finale," the fifth act, became particularly significant. Structuring life as an improvised performance in which the actor must remain within the boundaries of his role created an open-ended text. One new scene after another could contribute and add variation to the flow of events. The presence of plot immediately introduced the idea of conclusion and simultaneously endowed this conclusion with decisive significance. Death, particularly tragic death, became the object of constant reflection and life's climactic moment. Naturally this attitude brought a focus on the heroic and tragic models of behavior. Identifying oneself with the hero of a tragedy determined not only the type of behavior but also the type of death. Concern over the "fifth act" became a distinguishing feature of "heroic" behavior at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth.

> I have been born so that the entire world should be a spectator
> To my triumph or my ruin. . . .[24]

In these lines Lermontov clearly expresses the concept of man as an actor playing out the drama of his life before an audience. (The romantic proclivity for overstatement is reflected in the fact that the audience is the "entire world.") The identification of life's culmination with the theatrical concept of the fifth act (triumph or ruin) is also expressed. Hence Lermontov's constant reflection on life's finale: "The end. How resounding is the word."

> And I will not die forgotten. My death
> Will be terrible: foreign lands

[24]M. Iu. Lermontov, *Sochineniia v shesti tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow/Leningrad, 1954), p. 38.

> Will marvel at it, but in my native country
> Everyone will curse even the memory of me.[25]

Early on the morning of December 14, 1825, when the Decembrists came out onto Senate square, Aleksandr Odoevskii cried out: "We are going to die, brothers, oh, how gloriously we are going to die!" The uprising had not yet begun, and it was still entirely possible that the affair would be a success. But the idea of heroic ruin was what gave the event the character of high tragedy, elevating the participants in their own eyes and in the eyes of their descendants to the level of characters in a theatrical plot.

The fate of Aleksandr Radishchev is an exceptionally clear example of fascination with tragic death. The circumstances surrounding his death remain unclear to this day. The stories often repeated in scholarly literature concerning threats supposedly addressed to Radischev by Zavadovskii or even by Vorontsov cannot be credited. Of course Radishchev may have incurred displeasure by a careless word or action. But to anyone in the least bit familiar with the political climate of the "splendid beginning of Alexander's reign," it is obvious that it was not the time when a bold project, solicited by the government, could cause any serious repression (and no other "dangerous" actions are attributed to Radishchev during these months!). The version Pushkin offers is clearly tendentious. Unconcealed irony is apparent, arising from the disproportion between Zavadovskii's reprimand ("he told him in friendly reproach") and Radishchev's reaction ("Radishchev *perceived* a threat [italics are mine—Iu. L.]. Hurt and frightened he returned home . . ."). There is as yet no scholarly consensus on how to interpret Pushkin's article, and until its purpose is duly explained, drawing conclusions from it is extremely risky. But one thing is clear: Radishchev was a courageous man, and he could not be frightened by the shadow of danger or by an ambiguous threat. He did not commit suicide out of fear. It is hardly worthwhile to refute Georgii Shtorm's anecdotal musings in connection with Radishchev's suicide: "Everything was significant, even the gradual worsening of the weather which was noted by the meteorological

[25]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 185.

bulletin in *The St. Petersburg News* on September 11 and 12."[26] According to Shtorm, it was not only the weather, or even his disillusionment with his hopes to improve the peasants' lot, that played a fateful role in Radishchev's life, but also "personal" circumstances. One of these circumstances, Shtorm says, was "undoubtedly" the conviction of a distant relative who had been caught swindling.[27]

All attempts to find a concrete motive for Radishchev's tragic act in the events of his life during the fall of 1802 lead to nothing. Yet this act, though unmotivated by the biographical circumstances of his last months, is a logical end to the long chain of his endless deliberations on this theme. In his life of Fedor Vasilevich Ushakov, in *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, in his treatise "concerning man, his mortality, and immortality," and in other works Radishchev persistently returns to the problem of suicide. His thinking on this theme is connected with the eighteenth-century materialist ethic and directly opposes the moral teachings of the church. He affirms man's right to dispose of his life as he wishes. On the other hand, he emphasizes not only the philosophical but also the political aspect of the issue. The right to commit suicide, to liberate oneself from the fear of death, places a limit on man's submissiveness and circumscribes the power of tryants. Delivering himself from the obligation to live no matter what the circumstances, man becomes absolutely free and negates the powers of despotism. This idea played an extremely important role in Radishchev's political thought, and he often returned to it: "Oh, my beloved fellow men! Rejoice over my death! It will be an end to torment and suffering. You who have been delivered from the yoke of superstition, remember that misery is no longer the lot of the deceased."[28]

This idea did not belong exclusively to Radishchev. In Kniazhnin's

[26]Georgii Shtorm, *Potaennyi Radishchev. Vtoraia zhizn' Puteshestviia iz Peterburga v Moskvu*, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1968), p. 439. See my review of the first edition: "V tolpe rodstvennikov," *Uchenye zapiski Gorkovskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, no. 78 (Gorki, 1966). The "second, revised edition" did not benefit from the criticism of the first but piled on more blunders. Let us note only that the author considered it appropriate to conclude the book with "unpublished lines in the spirit of the Radishchev tradition," hinting that the unknown author might have been Pushkin. Unfortunately these lines are a familiar text frequently published in anthologies, an excerpt from Viazemskii's poem "Negodovanie." They can be considered "unpublished" only in the sense that their author can be considered "unknown." This is not simply a random error but a glaring display of dilettantism, a fitting conclusion to Shtorm's book.

[27]Shtorm, p. 383.

[28]A. N. Radishchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2 (Moscow/Leningrad, 1941), p. 101. Compare Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, book 1, chapter 8.

Vadim Novogorodskii (Vadim of Novgorod) this is Vadim's final line, addressed to Riurik:

> In the midst of your triumphant troops
> Crowned, seeing everything at your feet,
> What are you next to him who dares to die?[29]

Consider also the ending of Ivanov's *Marfa Posadnitsa*:

> Marfa: . . . Recognize in the tsar a monster
> In myself an example for you.
> Live your life without dishonor
> And without dishonor die. (*stabs herself*)[30]

Being prepared to die, Radishchev believed, distinguishes the man from the slave. In the chapter entitled "Mednoe" of *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, the author addresses a serf footman, the accomplice and victim of a depraved master: "Noble ideas are alien to your mind. *You do not know how to die* [italics are mine—Iu. L.]. You will bow down and you will be a slave in spirit as you are on your estate."[31] The image of Fedor Ushakov's courageous death reminded Radishchev of "people who bravely take their own lives." And the final teaching he placed in Ushakov's mouth reminds the reader that "one must be firm of mind in order to die without trepidation."[32]

Radishchev attached great importance to the heroic conduct of a single individual as an instructive spectacle for his fellow citizens since, as he often repeated, man is an imitative animal. The demonstrational nature of personal behavior brought to the fore the theatrical component in the life of a person aspiring to the role of "teacher . . . in firmness," who provides an "example of courage."[33] "A man who is born with sensitivity, who is gifted with a powerful imagination and moved by a love of honor, is expelled from the midst of the crowd. He ascends the scaffold. All eyes are upon him; everyone impatiently awaits his pronouncement. He

[29]*"Vadim Novogorodskii." Tragediia Ia. Kniazhnina s predisloviiem V. Sadovnika* (Moscow, 1914), p. 63.

[30]*Sochineniia i perevody F. F. Ivanova*, part 2 (Moscow, 1824), p. 89.

[31]Radishchev, vol. 1 (1938), p. 351.

[32]Ibid., p. 184.

[33]Ibid., p. 155.

himself awaits either applause or mockery more bitter than death itself."[34]

Radishchev found Addison's *Cato* particularly significant because it combined theatrical qualities with this concept of heroic death. The hero of Addison's tragedy became a kind of code for Radishchev's own behavior. In the chapter entitled "Krest'tsy" from *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, Radishchev placed the following words in the mouth of a virtuous father: "This is my testament to you. If misfortune exhausts its arrows on you, if your virtue finds no earthly refuge, if you are driven to extremes, and can find no protection from oppression, remember that you are a man. Remember your greatness and grasp the crown of bliss which they try to take away from you. Die. I bequeath to you the words of the dying Cato."[35]

Which words of the "dying Cato" does Radishchev mean? The commentator for the academy edition (Barskov) proposed that "Radishchev had in mind Plutarch's account of Cato's death speech."[36] The most recent commentators also support this view.[37] It is obvious, however, that Radishchev was thinking of the concluding monologue of Addison's tragedy. He wrote of this same monologue later while in Siberia: "I always read with the greatest pleasure the reflections of those who stand at the edge of the grave, at the threshold of eternity. When I consider the reasons for their death, and the motives inspiring these men, I learn much more than I could find anywhere else . . . You know the soliloquy or monologue of Shakespeare's Hamlet and the soliloquy of Addison's Cato Uticensis."[38]

Radishchev includes his own translation of this monologue at the end of his chapter entitled "Bronnitsy": "Some secret voice tells me that something will be forever alive."

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

[34]Ibid., p. 387.
[35]Ibid., p. 295.
[36]Ibid., p. 485.
[37]A. N. Radishchev, *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu*, ed. L. I. Kulakova and V. A. Zapadov, (Leningrad, 1974), p. 157.
[38]Radishchev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, pp. 97-98.

He added this note to his translation: "The Death of Cato, Addison's tragedy. Act V, Scene I."[39]

The connection between the words of the nobleman from Krest'tsy and this excerpt is obvious. It is an unvarying element in Radishchev's philosophy: the idea of being prepared to commit suicide is merely a variant on the theme of the glorious deed. The concept of the glorious deed is connected with belief in the immortality of the soul: "It happens—and we see many examples of it in literature—that the man who is told he must die beholds his approaching death with contempt and without trepidation. We have seen and do see people who courageously take their own lives. And in truth one must be fearless and possess great spiritual strength to behold one's own destruction with a steady eye.... Often such a man sees beyond the boundaries of the grave and trusts in his own resurrection."[40]

Thus Radishchev's suicide was not an act of despair, an acceptance of defeat. It was a deliberate act of struggle he had contemplated for a long time, a lesson in patriotic resolution and in the unyielding love of freedom. It is difficult for us now to reconstruct in detail Radishchev's attitude to the political situation at the beginning of Alexander I's reign. Toward the autumn of 1802 he apparently came to the conclusion that it was necessary to perform some glorious deed to arouse and mobilize Russian patriots. His children write in their memoirs that during his final days he was agitated and one day even said to them, "Well, my dear children, what if I am sent to Siberia again?" The nature of Radishchev's activities at the beginning of Alexander I's reign make such a concern seem so unfounded that his son Pavel's conclusion is a natural one: "His mental infirmity continued to grow."[41] Pavel Radishchev was young when his father died and by the time he wrote his memoirs, though he had an unconditional and touching admiration for his father's memory, he was quite far from understanding the essence of Radishchev's views. The words recorded in the memoirs were not the result of mental illness. It is most likely that Radishchev was agitated because he had decided that the time had come

[39]Ibid., vol. 1, p. 269.
[40]Ibid., pp. 183-184.
[41]See *Biografiia A. N. Radishcheva, napisannaia ego synov'iami* (Moscow/Leningrad, 1959), p. 95. Radishchev was really ill in August 1802 (see his letter to his parents written August 18 [*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3 (1952) p. 535]). There is no basis, however, for surmising that he is speaking of mental illness. Such a conclusion is no more accurate than the official reason given in government documents for his death: "consumption."

for the final heroic deed: "life's fifth act." Nevertheless, there must have been a moment when he had still not decided what the act of protest would be or if it would involve his destruction. Apparently the momentum of long consideration took the upper hand. Pushkin had reason to insist that even from the time of Ushakov's conversations with Radishchev before his death "suicide had become one of his favorite topics of deliberation."[42]

One can suppose that Radishchev's estimation of himself as the "Russian Cato" determined not only his own behavior but also the way his contemporaries perceived his action. The Russian reader was very familiar with Addison's tragedy. The eighth issue of the journal *Ippokrena* for 1801, for example, included a characteristic assortment of materials. In addition to Gart's complete prose translation entitled "The Death of Cato or the Birth of the Roman Dictatorship, a tragedy composed by the great Addison," there appeared the excerpts "Brutus" and "Hamlet's Reflections on Death." It is interesting that Cato's and Hamlet's monologues were brought together here just as in Radishchev's text. One writer addressed Brutus: "Some people, judging by your own strict rules, believe that you have sinned in spilling Caesar's blood but these honorable men are mistaken. *What mercy should be shown to the usurper of excessive power from one who thought it better to die by his own hand than to agree to servility?* [italics are mine—Iu. L.]"[43] The hero of Sushkov's tale "The Russian Werther" commits suicide, leaving behind on the table a copy of Addison's "Cato" open to the same passage Radishchev quoted in the "Bronnitsa" chapter. Sergei Glinka was one of Radishchev's admirers (Radishchev's son, a friend of Glinka's, called him "one of Radishchev's greatest followers"). When Glinka was a cadet, his entire estate consisted of three books: *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, Vadim Novgorodskii,* and *A Sentimental Journey*. On one occasion he ended up in the guardhouse, and wrote of it in his memoirs: "Cato's act of stabbing himself with a dagger after Julius Caesar had locked him in chains spun around in my head and I was ready to smash it against the wall."[44]

Both Cato's image and Addison's interpretation of it continually attracted the attention of Karamzin. In his 1791 review of *Emilia Galotti* Karamzin called Emilia, "a heroine who speaks of human

[42]Pushkin, vol. 12 , p. 31.
[43]*Ippokrena*, vol. 8 (1801), pp. 52-53.
[44]*Zapiski S. N. Glinki* (St. Petersburg, 1895), p. 103.

freedom in Cato's language." (Later he called Marfa Posadnitsa "the Cato of her republic."—Iu. L.) "At this point," he wrote, "Emilia demands a dagger in her fanaticism viewing her suicide as a sacred deed."[45]

In his *Letters of a Russian Traveler*, Karamzin quotes the same verses by Voltaire that Radishchev's son was later to recall when explaining the motives for his father's death: "Quand on n'est rien et qu'on est sans espoir / La vie est un opprobre et la morte un devoir . . . " Elsewhere he writes: "Addison's wonderful tragedy is especially good where Cato speaks and acts."[46] In his historical eulogy to Catherine the Great,[47] Karamzin included "Cato the suicide" among the classical heroes. In 1811 he wrote in the album of Paul's daughter, Princess Catherine, a quotation from Rousseau in which Cato is called "a god among mortals."[48]

In 1802 Karamzin published an article in *Vestnik Evropy* (the European messenger) which presents a coded response to Radishchev's death.[49] The extensive polemic is directed not at Radishchev but at the false interpretation of the ideas and images in Addison's tragedy, *Cato*.

> Budgell, a clever English writer, was a kinsman of the great Addison. Together with him he published *The Spectator* and other journals. All the pieces in *The Spectator* signed with the letter X are his compositions. Addison tried to make Budgell wealthy, but he squandered everything and went to ruin after Addison's death. Finally he threw himself into the Thames, leaving the following note in his room: 'What Cato did and Addison approv'd cannot be wrong!' Everyone knows that Addison wrote *The Death of Cato*. So moral an author would not have justified suicide for a Christian but he allowed himself to praise it for Cato. His splendid monologue, 'It must be so . . . Plato, thou reasonst well,' rid the unfortunate Budgell of the gnawings of his conscience, which could have saved him from suicide. Good authors! Think on the consequences of what you write.[50]

In this article Karamzin condemned the principle of structuring one's own life as if it were a theatrical plot. At the same time he

[45]*Moskovskii zhurnal*, 1791, part 1, p. 67.
[46]N. M. Karamzin, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, vol. 1 (Moscow/Leningrad, 1964), p. 573.
[47]*Sochineniia Karamzina*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1848), p. 312.
[48]*Letopis' russkoi literatury i drevnosti* (Moscow, 1859), book 2, p. 167.
[49]For a substantiation of this hypothesis and a text of the note see Iu. M. Lotman, "Istochniki svedenii Pushkina o Radishcheve (1819-1822)," *Pushkin i ego vremia*, no. 1 (Leningrad, 1962), pp. 53-60.
[50]*Vestnik Evropy*, No. 19 (1802) p. 209.

clearly showed that deciphering Radishchev's action presented no difficulty to him.

The approach to personal life as plot signaled the transformation of the poetics of behavior from spontaneous improvisation to a consciously regulated activity. The next step in this development was the tendency, characteristic of the romantic era, to merge the life-text with the artistic text. Poetry began to form into lyrical cycles, forming "poetic diaries" and "romances of personal life." The biographical legend became an indispensable condition for perceiving any work as an artistic text. The fragmented quality of the romantic text has long been noted. It must be emphasized, however, that this fragmentation was redeemed by the immersion of the recorded (either printed or handwritten) text in the context of the oral legend surrounding the author's personality. This legend was the strongest factor regulating the poet's real behavior as well as the audience's perception of his behavior and his works.

The extreme development of the poetics of behavior in the romantic era made it natural that the realists should demonstratively exclude this category. The poet's life left the realm of artistically significant facts (the best evidence of this is the appearance of the parodic pseudobiographies of the type written by Koz'ma Prutkov). Art, having partly lost its play-acting element, no longer leapt over the footlights or descended from the pages of the novel into the sphere of the author's and the reader's real-life behavior.

But the eclipse of the poetics of behavior would not last long. Disappearing with the last romantics of the 1840s, it would rise again in the years 1890-1900 in the lives of the symbolists, in the concept of "life-building," the "theater for one actor," the "theater of life," and other cultural phenomena of the twentieth century.[51]

[51]This essay is related to a number of earlier publications devoted to the study of behavior as a cultural category from the viewpoint of historical semiotics: "Teatr i teatral'nost' v stroe kul'tury nachala XIX v."; "Stsena i zhivopis' kak kodiruiushchie ustroistva kul'turnogo povedeniia cheloveka nachala XIX stoletiia" in the collection Lotman, *Stat'i po tipologii kul'tury* (Tartu, 1973), as well as to the following essays in this book.