

## The image of the Other as a reflection of cultural identity (a case study of Russian postmodern prose and dramaturgy)

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The creation of the image of the Other gains particular topicality during cultural crises, when the situation demands a stronger cultural identity and a revision of existing views on the world and one's own self. The study of such transitory phases makes it possible to educe the characteristics of the particular kind of crisis mentality and to demonstrate the productivity of all kinds of dialogue, both pertinent to a specific culture and intercultural (Bagno 1996; Isupov 2003; Kondakov 2003; Merezhinskaia 2001; Khrenov 2002).

In the literature of the late 20th and early 21st century, writers in many literatures have attempted to create and comprehend the image of the Other. The popularity of this topic has become a productive literary trend for the last decade. In the row of such authors are the American writer Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray, Love*, 2006), the Polish prose writers Olga Tokarczuk (*Bieguni*, 2007, Eng. trans. *Flights*, 2018), Andrzej Stasiuk (“Dziennik okrętowy” [Ship's Diary], 2000), the Ukrainian writer Yurii Andrukhovych (*Perverzia*, 1997, Eng. trans. *Perverzion*, 2005; *Dezorientatsia na mistsevošti: Sproby* [Disorientation on Location: Attempts], 1999), etc. For many Russian or Russian-American authors such as Victor Pelevin, Piotr Vail', Aleksandr Genis, Pavel Krusanov this topic has become dominant. The most common strategies for interpreting the Other are revising the traditional landmarks and images and strengthening the philosophical, existential dimension.

The texts discussed in this article have mainly been chosen for their postmodern nature that allows them to solve serious problems in a playful, provocative manner, not in an ideological light. The playful style of the texts tends to involve the readers in the discussion, to make them more active. This pattern may be traced to the tradition of first journeys or religious peregrinations. In Russian literature, it presents at least three dominant strategies. The first presupposes the discovery of the Other in order to create one's Self, essentially reforming the scope of one's own identity. The new generation of authors regard Nikolai Karamzin's *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika* (1789–1790; *Letters of a Russian Traveler*, 1976) as an attempt to change the cultural paradigm, the language, and literature (Levental' 2014). The second strategy consists in mythologizing the Other, in emphasizing otherness, oddities,

differences; this is how Ivan Goncharov describes the Japanese in his fictionalized diary *Frigate "Pallada"* (1858). The third strategy aims to demythologize the Other, to reconsider his cultural authority, but at the same time it is an attempt to understand the nature of his attraction for the Self. Exactly in this light Dostoevsky describes Western Europe in his *Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniakh* (1863; *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, 1955). The writer tries to go by the tradition of the complimentary image of the western culture loci and sharpen the problem of national cultural identity. Most significantly, that a serious topic is solved in a playful manner. Dostoevsky creates an image of the narrator using self-parody, as a person who is unable to perceive cultural sights in a traditionally enthusiastic manner for a number of reasons (bad mood, illness, bad temper, etc). Thus, the writer forms an atmosphere of provocation for actualizing the dialogue with the reader and the search for landmarks of self-identification. Much later, this tradition of provocation was adopted by postmodern literature.

In contemporary literature, the array of artistic strategies for interpreting the Other grew substantively. Both the East and the West are equally subjected to reflection, exemplifying the intermediate and transitional nature of Russian culture, similar to other frontier cultures of the Caucasus Mountains, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Spain (Grishkovets 2005). These patterns of interpretation bring forth a set of features affecting the images of the Other and the One-of-Us. On the one hand, these lead to the "conceptual ambiguity, and amorphousness, so uncharacteristic of Europe and Western culture" (Kondakov, 2003, 133), and on the other, to a synthesis, amalgamation of different cultural codes, perceived as native or close. Vsevolod Bagno defines the mission of frontier cultures as a connective one (1996, 420). This article aims to define the array of immediate creative strategies for the image of the Other (the West and the East) as a phase in self-knowledge and actualization of a frontier culture. All the texts that are in the main focus of the discussion avoid the documentary base of a travelogue, and even challenging the strategies of the genre, like Evgenii Grishkovets's anti-travelogue *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika* (Notes of a Russian traveler, 2001), parody the travelogue's plot structure, like Maria Arbatova's *Podoroge k sebe* ([1992] 1999; Eng. trans. *On the Road to Ourselves*, 1998), or ironically reframe pre-existing images and myths by revising the philosophical and mystical sides of the culture of the Other, like Vladimir Tuchkov's "Russkii I Tszin" (Russian I Ching, 2009), or Valerii Kislov's "Kratkii kurs u-vei" (A short course on wu wei, 2009). The authors of these texts are not interested in documentary, but rather enter a neo-baroque game of images, theatrically staging the very process of perceiving the Other. The revision is exercised on a symbolic level, it seeks to define the cultural existence of the Other and the One-of-Us, and so aspires to achieve a higher level of artistic convention and generalization.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE PROVOCATIVE AUTHOR'S POSITION IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ONE-OF-US

In Grishkovets's *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika*, the author's position is provocative, it is an apophatic – proving the necessity of a cultural dialogue

by contradiction – method of interpreting the Other and the One-of-Us. The opportunity to perceive and understand the Other is constantly lost, the focus of the characters is following a vicious circle, comically doubling and falling into itself. For the two characters in Scene II, their visit abroad (in Europe, as a side note informs the reader) does not bring forth a “discovery” of the Other. They get involved into habitual philosophy while drinking beer, and so become a parody of Dostoevsky’s “Russian boys” discussing philosophical topics from *The Brothers Karamazov* and Chekhov’s “learned neighbor”, the philosophizing know-nothing from “Pis’mo k uchionomu sovedu” (1880; “Letter to a Learned Neighbor”, 2015). They are resolute to see the world in a new light, but never set their gaze upon the Other and rather speak at great length about the amazing discoveries of humanity like the light bulb, the magnet, and the telephone. The necessity of an extraneous observer, a regard of the Other, is realized not in pondering about a European, but in fantasizing about aliens, so the perspective becomes maximally abstract and the Other is radically defamiliarized: “The first. [...] If to glance... you see... through the eyes of an alien... Here we love everything around, birch trees, nature [...]. But for an alien, it might be unpleasant... to see. Maybe he would not like birches most of all” (Grishkovets, 2005, 33).<sup>2</sup> The cultural conflict is comically defamiliarized in mentioning the birch as a poetic symbol of Russian culture, representing the One-of-Us and denied by the Other. It suggests that the cognitive object here is not the Other, but the borders, transitional nature, and flaws of the domestic mentality and character. In our view, we may find here a characteristic feature of transitional mentality in inversion, return to the older experience, to one’s own self, by passing the Other, who becomes just an excuse for a circular autoreflexion.

The same effect may be observed in the other episodes. In particular, the protagonist of Dialogue 5 finds it equally impossible to live in Austria or in Russia. In this context, Austria is provocatively equated to a provincial Chelyabinsk, lacking any cultural sights: “The Second. You know that I don’t care about Austria... What is this Austria to me... What if I returned from Chelyabinsk, what would you say then? Would you like to drink with me?” (38)<sup>3</sup> The Second realizes he is uncomfortable both here and there. He feels better in transit, in dreaming about another country or nostalgic thoughts about his own, or in a strange city, devoid of any attachment. The character wanders, as a ghost, through the unfamiliar streets or imagines himself a foreigner in his native city and in so doing revels in freedom to leave at any chosen moment: “I want to travel all the time! Just travel! Or should I say, I want to TRAVEL! Even to Chelyabinsk or Perm or Abakan” (42).<sup>4</sup> Consequently, Grishkovets uses the defamiliarization with comical effects (the incongruity of the situation of a cultural challenge and its answer, foregoing an opportunity to perceive the Other, and inversion) to discuss one of the characteristic features of the frontier mentality, that is “conceptual ambiguity, amorphousness, and uncertainty” (Makovskii 1996, 135). Grishkovets parodies such features of the Russian national character as melancholy (proper for the “superfluous person” – *lishniy chelovek*), “anxiety, restless urge for change of place” (as Pushkin described Onegin’s inner state), and constant soul search-

ing. Setting the Other in the negative, the Grishkovets gains an opportunity for a critical depiction of the One-of-Us.

### THE CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN DRAMATIC TRAVELOGUE

Maria Arbatova adopts a different strategy in her travel-play *On the Road to Ourselves*. The title itself implies the existential problem of the search for identity. In the play, it is solved both in personal stories and in the framework of national images. The central strategy is based on demythologization/remythologization as well as discrediting clichés and outdated models of identity. The image of the Other mirrors the typical behavior of a confused Russian abroad, their illusions and frustrations. The Other is represented by a group of Europeans with both steady and vague self-images. Early on, the Russians who came in “search of the self” behave in an infantile manner. They see Europe as a utopia, a place where their true value may be appreciated, where they may be loved and saved from the chaos of 1990s Russia, but disillusionment follows. The initial failure is caused by the orientation to outmoded models of behavior, extrapolated from books and movies. Tatiana and Evgenii imagine and model themselves on older patterns, and both of them feel like “superfluous people”. The names of the characters allude to Pushkin’s novel in verse *Eugene Onegin* and raises the problems of the cultural gap between the 19th and 20th centuries and new self-identification landmarks. Evgenii behaves like the frustrated Chatskii from Griboedov’s verse comedy *Gore ot uma* (*Woe from Wit*, 1825), his self-representation is one of an unappreciated genius who runs away from the places of his humiliation. At the beginning Europe or America seems to be a happy place, but even though reality breaks all his immature dreams, he tries to play the role of a successful westerner unconsciously travestyng the image of the Other. This is just the beginning of numerous internal and external metamorphoses of the emigrant. Tatiana is trying to look as attractive as possible in the eyes of the “foreigner” (whom the notorious and angry Evgenii pretends to be), seeing him as a potential groom. Maria Arbatova parodies the mythology of the mystical marriage between the West and the East. Tatiana creates the image of the One-of-Us by taking Pushkin’s Tatiana Larina from the school curriculum as the ideal of an honest, faithful, and beautiful woman with a truly “Russian soul”. The comic effect is created by the gap between this ideal and the real situation. In contrast with Pushkin’s Tatiana, the main female character is poor and watches her money, but nevertheless she remains a naive person. The combination of moral guides from different cultures enhances the comic effect. Pushkin’s role model of a Russian woman has some features of Cinderella (who met a beautiful Western prince) as well as some features of the “pretty woman” from the famous American film. Failures make them change roles and masks: Evgenii’s from the conqueror of the West to a sly apprentice, an enamored gigolo, or a servant, and Tatiana’s from a naive “bride” to a “mystifying Russian soul”, a desperate suicider, a “servant” or “slave”, and then to a creative person who discovered the potential to change the world and herself. Note that Arnold J. Toynbee has considered the mask of the “transformed” to be one of the dominants of the transitional thinking. Arbatova leads the heroes through dramatic trials, but universal values save

them from destruction: love, empathy and pity, penance, and the desire to help and share. These are the landmarks that contribute to the growth of the national identity. The change of masks grows comical in effect and so unveils the link to the outdated national images, leading to manipulative opportunities. In the same manner, another Arbatova's female lead the provincial Ukrainian Steshka concocts a story of the Polish princess Stephania, devastated, and traumatized by the Soviet regime. It allows her to marry a gullible Dutchman without being debunked as this image fits perfectly in his stereotypical view of a wild country as well as a fairy-tale plot about a rescued bride:

Tania: Stefani, what about Mr. Julian, for seven years he has not guessed that you are not a princess, hasn't he?

Stefani: Come on, he cannot distinguish Uzbekistan from the Baltic states. We are all Russian bears for him. (Arbatova 1999, 717)<sup>5</sup>

The two-way impossibility of a dialogue with the Other is caused by the falsity of images, secondary myths, and stereotypes.

The play also displays the obsolescence of the European self-image. This idea is presented by the German character Anita, who is trying to live up to abstract theories of anthroposophy (travestying Alexander Blok's image of a "dreary German genius") and exhort the "infantile" nations. Evgenii plays the part of a sly apprentice of a naïve mistress. False images of the Other are created by both parties of cultural dialogue. In particular, a German materialist and pragmatist Herbert tries to lecture the Russian and creates the myth of a dangerous country prone to the temptation of idealism, which leads it to the state of permanent turmoil:

You Russians are like greenhorn children. You don't care whom to believe. You believed Lenin, you believed Stalin, you believed Gorbachev, now you believe Yeltsin. Instead of building a house, you build an idea, live with it and wonder why the rain is dripping and the wind is rushing in. (1999, 722)<sup>6</sup>

Both Anita and Herbert's projects eventually result in failure. Herbert's "house", his family, proves to be frail. And Anita's "creative life" is comically defamiliarized in the sad outcome of her operation supposed to save a parrot from a cat. The author finds an opportunity for a cultural dialogue beyond the images of "master and apprentice", or "pragmatist and idealist", beyond the false myths of the Other, crumbling before the reality of a cultural crisis. The true understanding is achieved in the field of universal human values, beyond national factors. Just as the young cosmopolite Kristof takes Evgenii for a friend, because he helps him and spares no expense, so Kristof is ready to help him in return. Art becomes a unifying factor: the play twice proclaims the power of the modernist project of reforming the world through artistic means. At first, artists color all the gray walls in every country, beginning from China and finishing in Europe, and in so doing symbolically negate all limits and borders. In the end, all the characters join to create a text – a play about washing the grime from the world and so about its renewal. Those new parts provide deep existential basis found by the characters "on the road to Myself": Anita's warm heart, and Tatiana's tender spirituality (hard won and not pretended), Evgenii's translation talent and his

unselfish urge to promote dialogue, Kristof's the inner freedom of the new generation of Europeans. Maria Arbatova in her play *On the Road to Ourselves* proposes a review of the outdated images of the Other and the One-of-Us in context of the global cultural transformations of the turn of the century and emphasizes unifying instead of distinguishing features of those images, i.e. spirituality, aestheticism, and orientation to change.

#### THE POSTMODERN GAME WITH A DEEP CULTUROLOGICAL AND EXISTENTIAL SUBTEXT

The last of above mentioned characteristics – the acceptance of the fluidity or its contrasting statics – becomes the basis for the image of the Other in the “Chinese” group of texts. Tuchkov's and Kislov's works are developed as ironic stylizations of sacred oriental texts, a postmodern game with a deep culturological and existential subtext.

In the works of Tuchkov and Kislov, the image of the Other is built by defamiliarizing the philosophic matrix of the Chinese worldview (instead of recording subjective and mundane experiences as it is common for a travelogue). The focus of attention is centered on the deep and essential features of the Other's worldview. In both cases, a paradoxical result is achieved, for the decoding of the conceptual sphere of the Other is carried out by the narrators from a different culture, either naïve or provocatively philosophizing, which means the decoding is either consciously false or pursues another aim.

In Kislov's “Kratkii kurs u-vei”, a provocative defamiliarization is applied to the prime principles of Taoism – spontaneity, naturalness, and “doing nothing”, which means to undertake “no action contrary to Nature” (Khrenov 2002, 68). According to Huainanzi, as quoted and translated by Joseph Needham, “those who follow the natural order flow in the current of the Tao” (2002, 88). An existentially confused contemporary man wishes to flow in this current and chooses to contemplate passively the ambient chaos of the transition period. Trying on the masks of a master and an apprentice one by one, the narrator remains an admiring fool in discrediting both western and oriental frameworks. The teaching of *wu wei* loses its philosophical basis, the only remaining principle – travestied and hyperbolized – is “doing nothing”, which equals to ideological idleness, laziness, and living just for personal pleasure (as illustrated with an old Chinese story about an official eating gingerbread). The western values are hastily rejected in a fashion after the outdated Soviet ideology:

Don't fuss. Don't hustle [...]. Be content not to do your own; others will not do others' [...]. Remember: your non-doing ends where the non-doing of others begins. This is the indispensable condition of the so-called liberte (a notion brought to us from outside, together with the so-called cancan and the so-called broadmindedness). (Kislov 2014, 85–86)<sup>7</sup>

The text is dominated by comical modality and travesty, both realized in a variety of ways. First of all, it is rooted in the wordplay with Russian verb *delat'* meaning to do/to make (in different meanings: to cheat, to fail, to show off, etc.) as well as in coining a range of aphorisms based on the same verb to do/to make “Don't make money and it won't make you” (2014, 87),<sup>8</sup> or contamination “You've done the deed,

but you've messed up".<sup>9</sup> Secondly, the aforementioned strategy is realized in remarking Biblical commandments and folk proverbs "Do not consume, and may you not be consumed",<sup>10</sup> "Think seven times, don't do once" (87, 84),<sup>11</sup> and slogans of Soviet foretime: famous "Do with us, do as we do, do better than us"<sup>12</sup> is transformed into "Don't do. Like everyone else. / Don't do like everyone else. / Don't do better than everyone else. / Breathe deeply" (88).<sup>13</sup>

The semantic play in "Kratkii kurs u-vei" deserves a separate consideration. However, it is worth emphasizing that the general atmosphere of travesty discredits even the narrator himself, who is disoriented and does not comprehend the essence of the Other. He loses the mask of *an oriental master* explaining the Taoist wisdom, and under it emerges the archetypal countenance of Oblomov. Traditionally, Goncharov's character is interpreted as the embodiment of a number of negative traits of the national character. Oblomov is completely immersed in his own dreams and reflections, constantly drawing a "pattern" of his life, but he does nothing to implement his plans, moreover, he is afraid of reality or any changes. The basis of his worldview lies in "doing-nothing", in submission to the free flow of life, which seems to be a calm river for him. Goncharov considered such a life program to be a dangerous temptation, a sin, a kind of illness that is a clue feature of the Russian mentality. We can presume that he considered such a "non-doing" to be an oriental feature, that is why Oblomov's eternal attribute is an oriental robe. In the novel, Oblomov is opposed by the Other. The bearer of the contrast mentality is Stolz, who is seen as an embodiment of the Western energy and activity. Stolz, who could combine Russian sincerity and German pragmatism, embodies Goncharov's dream of a positive synthesis and a dialogue of cultures. The image of Oblomov is the result of the author's reflections on the national mentality, the strengths and the weaknesses. This image is perceived as a certain archetype and is actively used in the literature of the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, at a new stage of cultural self-determination. The plays by Olga Mikhailova *Russkii son* (1993; *Russian Dream*, 1998), Mikhail Ugarov *Smert' Il'i Il'icha* (Death of Ilya Ilyich, 2001), the novel by Yurii Poliakov *Zamyslil ia pobeg* (I planned to escape, 1999) could be such examples of different interpretations of Oblomov's archetype in the contemporary Russian literature.

In Valerii Kislov's "Kratkii kurs u-vei", Oblomovian inactivity is expanded to the Eastern "not doing" and provocatively brought to an extreme. In addition to stylization and travesty, the author uses a strategy of apophatitism as an attempt to proof of the need for cultural dialogue from the contrary with an aim to demonstrate the failure, "blindness" of the addressee of the teaching. Vladimir Tuchkov employs different strategies in his hypertext "Russkii I Tszin". Still, there is a similar aim: to see one's own self reflected in the Other. In the "Author's Note", readers are presented in an ironic and playful manner a paradoxical algorithm of a cultural dialogue. Tuchkov makes a stylization of the form and the language of *I Ching*. In the Chinese source, however, the hexagrams are perceived as cosmic archetypes or patterns, different realizations of Tao, while Tuchkov's work unveils national archetypes and sets up a problem of their inconstancy. This concept is proved by repetitive similarities of the modern and the classical, bringing forth the idea of cyclic recurrence

of Russian narratives. In this fashion, characters of Dostoevsky's *Demons* gain new guises (a neo-Stavrogin, who is prone to psychological experiments) as well as Chekhov's *Vanka* (a letter home from social and urban hell is written by a town councilor who hankers after the lost existence and rustic harmony). The emphasis is placed on the eternal return of Perov's paintings *Hunters at Rest* (now, the businessmen are boasting of their game), *Tea Party at Mytishchi* (the picture focuses on material – not spiritual values), and *Troika* (with modern children, forced to the periphery of life due to social turmoil of the 1990s).

The new appears to be a travesty of the old. For example, a nouveau riche who gained wealth in the social chaos of the 1990s is introduced as an eternal trickster, punished with anxiety, vanity, and dangers (it is worth noting that all these are unmistakable signs of a false way and misunderstanding of Tao). A ship (lowered in interpretation to a small boat) is used as a symbol of the transitional mentality, emblemizing a mystical change and absorbing an apocalyptic meaning. In European languages, "the words meaning *ship, boat, receptacle* are often associated with *final judgment, condemnation, punishment*" (Makovskii 1996, 195). Therefore, the author's interpretation of the image is deeply based in the philosophical subtext and mirrors the reflection of a social and cultural crisis: "You wear a red bathrobe and your beard is sprinkled with sparks like Uncle Ho's sack in which the old rascal hides the unknown. Because you are a billionaire, and your Tao is to run constantly, without stopping, across the river of life, jumping from junk to junk" (Tuchkov 2009, 10).<sup>14</sup> The existential senselessness of such an activity is contrasted with the high social status of the character.

At the same time, as in the other hexagrams, the author proposes a guide for true understanding of the character's way and its correspondence to the flow of Tao (in its national interpretation, a higher mission of the national archetype and historical course). Here, the author is faithful to the spirit of the original *I Ching*, meaning to improve the understanding of the situation and choice: "The Book of Changes contains images whose meaning needs to be revealed; to these are added judgements to be interpreted; happiness and unhappiness are defined here in such a way that a decision can be made" (Isupov 2003, 321).<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, the true pinnacle of life, the right path for an energetic person who has not discovered their calling lies not in symbolic jumping from one boat to another, but a flight in a spaceship (symbolized by *Gagarin, wings, and light*). In the same fashion, the pinnacles and guidelines for the true path are described in the other fragments. For example, in the hexagram "000 000. The Redemption" a medical doctor caught in the net of small goals and complexes has "forgotten" she was saving warriors' lives in her previous incarnation, felt her calling and knew happiness. The protagonist of "010001. The Difficulty at the beginning", an aggressive teenager, has forgotten his heroism in his previous incarnation. On the other hand, the text unveils a fatal mistake of refusing to listen to the innermost flow of existence. The protagonist of "111 111. The Creation" fragment (which frames the whole work, and so achieved a strong position) accepts the rules and part forced upon him, submits to the pressure of the community. He cannot dare to rebel and so forfeits his talent, doomed



to follow an alien “rut”. The vicious “rut” becomes a symbol of a wrong way. An unfulfilled scientist remains an eternal mechanic, locked as a part of a cruel mechanism. Describing each of the “archetypes”, Tuchkov discovers possibilities to change the path. He emphasizes the necessity of change instead of the eternal repetition. That concept is proved by the final thesis: “Not yet the end” (43).

## CONCLUSION

The actualization of the image of the Other is related to the reception of the global crisis as well as the search for national and cultural identity and existential self-knowledge. The transitional character of Russian culture is reflected in its interest in both the East and the West, reconceiving their frameworks as well as in the process of mythologization. In this article we defined the array of immediate creative strategies for the image of the Other and the One-of-Us on the base of the contemporary travelogues (by Maria Arbatova, Evgenii Grishkovets, Vladimir Tuchkov, Valerii Kislov) as a phase in self-knowledge and actualization of a frontier culture. The chosen texts are focused on a neo-baroque game of images, theatrically staging the very process of perceiving the Other not on a documentary. The image of the Other and the One-of-Us is reviewed, their paradoxical mutual mirroring is replayed, dramatized, and modeled. The essential strategies for creating an image of the Other are as follows: the defamiliarization, the discrediting of the outdated national images, the search for an existential basis (philosophical or mystical) of another culture, the mythologization/demythologization, the creation of the negative position, when the Other appears to be indefinable; and the apophatic proof by contradiction. The self-identification is realized through a wide range of strategies: inversion, transferring of the focus from the Other to one’s self, ironic depiction of a reciprocal reception, reviewing the outdated images of the One-of-Us, travesty depiction of the “apprenticeship”, stylization, emphasizing the cultural contrasts and similarities. The playful modality, baroque dramatization, and travesty are combined with deep philosophical subtexts. The works share a common intention in existential search and promoting the dialogue with the Other in order to meet the global cultural crisis.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> As noted earlier, the most important strategy for creation of the image of the Other was found in their “discovery” through actual or imaginary journeys. In such cases, the East was mostly represented by China or Japan, as in Aleksandr Genis’ *Bilet v Kitai* (Ticket to China, 2001), Aleksei Aliokhin’s *Pis’ma iz Podnebesnoi* (Letters from the Celestial Empire, 1995), Mikhail Bazhenov’s *Happy Hour* (2022); Gennadii Novozhilov’s *Moskovskii Bisei* (Moscow Bisei, 2006), Aleksei Ustimenko’s *Kitaiskie maski Cherubiny de Gabriak* (Chinese masks of Cherubina de Gabriak, 2010) and others (Merezhinskaia 2001). The image of the Other emerges consistently in émigré literature such as Marina Palei’s *Long Distance, ili Slavianski aktsent* (Long distance, or the Slavic accent, 2000) and Raia i Aad (Raia and Aad, 2009), or Nikolai Koliada’s *Amerikanka* (The American woman, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> “Первый. [...] Если взглянуть... понимаешь... глазами инопланетянина... Вот мы любимся на все вокруг, на березки, на природу [...]. А инопланетянину это, может быть, неприятно...

- видеть. Вот, может, березы ему не понравились бы больше всего.” Unless otherwise stated, all translation from Russian are by O. V.
- <sup>3</sup> “Второй. Ты же знаешь, что мне на Австрию...Что мне эта Австрия...А если бы я вернулся из Челябинска, ты что бы тогда сказал? Стал бы пить со мной?”
  - <sup>4</sup> “Я все время ехать хочу! Просто ехать! Или, лучше сказать – ЕХАТЬ! Даже в Челябинск или Пермь, или Абакан.”
  - <sup>5</sup> “Таня: Стефани, а что господин Джулиан, он за семь лет так и не догадался, что вы не княгиня? Стефани: Да он Узбекистан от Прибалтики не отличает. Для него мы все русские медведи.”
  - <sup>6</sup> “Вы, русские, доверчивы, как дети. Вам все равно, кому верить: Вы верили Ленину, вы верили Сталину, вы верили Горбачеву, теперь вы верите Ельцину. Вы вместо того, чтобы строить дом, строите идею, живете в ней и удивляетесь, почему капает дождь и врывается ветер.”
  - <sup>7</sup> “Не суетись. Не мельтеши [...]. Довольствуйся тем, что не делаешь свое; чужое не сделают другие [...]. Помни: твое неделание заканчивается там, где начинается неделание других. В этом – неперемное условие так называемой *liberte* (это понятие занесено к нам извне, вместе с так называемым канканом и так называемой широтой взглядов).”
  - <sup>8</sup> “Не делай деньги, и они тебя не сделают”
  - <sup>9</sup> “Обделал дельце – уделал рыльце”
  - <sup>10</sup> “Не потребляй, и да не потреблен будешь”
  - <sup>11</sup> “Семь раз подумай, ни разу не делай”
  - <sup>12</sup> “Делай с нами, делай как мы, делай лучше нас”
  - <sup>13</sup> “Не делай. Как все. / Не делай со всеми. / Не делай лучше всех / Не делай. / Дыши глубоко.”
  - <sup>14</sup> “Ты носишь красный халат, и твоя борода осыпается искрами, словно мешочек дядюшки Хо, в котором старый пройдоха прячет неведомое. Потому что ты – миллиардер, и твое Дао – постоянно, не останавливаясь, бежать через реку жизни, перепрыгивая с джонки на джонку.”
  - <sup>15</sup> “В книге перемен содержатся образы, смысл которых нужно раскрыть; к ним прибавлены суждения, которые следует истолковать; счастье и несчастье получают здесь определение таким образом, чтобы можно было принять решение”

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## **The image of the Other as a reflection of cultural identity (a case study of Russian postmodern prose and dramaturgy)**

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Russian literature. Myth. Transitional artistic thinking. The image of the Other. Symbol. Modernism. Postmodernism.

This article examines the strategies for creation of the images of the Other and the One-of-Us as exemplified in postmodern prose and dramaturgy (Evgenii Grishkovets' drama *Zapiski russkogo puteshestvennika* [Notes of a Russian traveler], 2011; Maria Arbatova's dramatic travelogue *Po doroge k sebe* [Eng. trans. *On the Road to Ourselves*, 1998], [1992] 1999; Vladimir Tuchkov's hypertext novel "Russkii I Tszin" [Russian I Ching], 2009; Valerii Kislov's comical treatise "Kratkii kurs u-vei" [A short course on wu wei], 2009). The close attention to the images of the East and the West and emphasis placed on similarities and differences with the Russian worldview is driven by the transitional character of Russian culture and its search for identity. The dominant strategy emerges in reviewing the outdated images of the Other and the One-of-Us. By creating these images, the authors employ a range of strategies: demythologization/mythologization, inversion, and apophatics. The common intention of the works lies in promoting cultural dialogue.

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