Martin C. Putna

Rus Ukraine Russia

Scenes from the Cultural History of Russian Religiosity

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Czech Perspectives on the Cultural and Spiritual Roots of Russia

This book is being written at a time when the Czechs' relationship to Russia has again become a question, one that concerns the country's internal norms and its place in Europe. It is being written as Russia vigorously asserts its claims in Ukraine and, no less vigorously thought by different means, reasserts its influence in Central Europe and thus in the Czech lands as well. One part of Czech society expresses shock at these developments, the other part trivializes Russia's actions or even supports them as part of a desirable process that is historically and morally justified. Both sides appeal in their arguments to historical experience, referring to Russian mentality and its roots as well as to the history of Russian-Czech relations. While this Czech book about Russia avoids direct engagement with contemporary politics, it does seek to provide a more systematic interpretation of those historical experiences and to describe the spiritual and cultural roots from which the present situation has arisen.

In the long history of Czech thinking about Russia's spiritual roots, there have been several different traditions. First among them is romantic Russophilism. It arises from the idea of a genetic and historically fatalistic bond connecting all those nations which speak Slavic languages. Russophiles admire the power of the Russian state and the hierarchical structure of Russian society; they desire as strong a Russian influence as possible in the Czech lands, even direct annexation of their country by Russia. This tradition was born of European romanticism in the early nineteenth century and its spirit pervaded the scientific and artistic creations of that era.

The canonical expression of early Czech Russophilism in this sense was provided by Jan Kollár's epic poem, *The Daughter of*

Sláva (*Slávy dcera*). In typically romantic fashion, Kollár considered himself no less a scientist than a poet, expressing in verse the same truths revealed in his etymological and archaeological studies.[1]

Kollár's ideas contributed to the development of the Czech National Revival during the early nineteenth century. His ideas were picked up in literature by many writers not normally considered particularly Slavophile: one might for example consider the many Russian motifs in the work of Julius Zeyer.[2] Slavic scholars of greater caliber than Kollár developed his ideas further.[3] In the twentieth century Kollár's thinking was adopted in cultural and political writings by authors of a national-conservative persuasion: texts by Josef Holeček emphasizing the supposed moral purity of the Russian people,[4] Karel Kramář's project of "neo-Slavism" with its vision of a Slavic federation headed by Russia,[5] Rudolf Medek and his experiences as a Russian legionnaire,[6] or Karel VI Schwarzenberg's references to the genealogical and heraldic ties between the ruling dynasties of Bohemia and Russia.[7] This tradition retreated to the background during the communist era and survived on the margins in exile—only to emerge more recently on the extreme right-wing of the political spectrum.[8]

A second tradition was born of Czech liberal-democratic orientation and observed Russia with equally great interest, but did in a way

1 Cf. Jan Kollár, *Slávy dcera: Báseň lyricko-epická v pěti zpěvích*, with commentary by Martin C. Putna (Prague: Academia, 2014).
2 Cf. Janina Viskovatá, *Ruské motivy v tvorbě Julia Zeyera* (Prague: Slovanský ústav, 1932).
3 Cf. Milan Kudělka, *O pojetí slavistiky: Vývoj představ o jejím předmětu a podstatě* (Prague: Academia, 1984).
4 Cf. Josef Holeček, *Rusko-české kapitoly* (Prague: privately printed, 1891).
5 Cf. Ljobov Běloševská and Zdeněk Sládek, eds., *Karel Kramář: Studie a dokumenty* (Prague: Slovanský ústav, 2003).
6 Cf. Katya Kocourek, *Čechoslovakista Rudolf Medek: Politický životopis* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 2011).
7 Cf. Martin C. Putna, ed., *Karel VI Schwarzenberg: Torzo díla* (Prague: Torst, 2007).
8 Cf. *Proti Proud: Kontrarevoluční magazín Petra Hájka*, protiproud.parlamentnilisty.cz, accessed June 9, 2015.

that was critical and analytical. A "forerunner" of this perspective was the first modern author from Bohemia to spend time in Russia, Count Joachim von Sternberg, who had experienced life there while traveling with priest and linguist Josef Dobrovský. In his narrative of the journey, *Bemerkungen über Russland* (Remarks about Russia, 1794), the author wrote of his shock at the inhumane treatment of the Russian people.[9] But it was not until Karel Havlíček penned his Pictures from Russia (*Obrazy z Rus*), published serially in the 1840s, that the "realistic" Czech approach to Russia received its foundational text. Based on the author's long sojourn in Russia among the Slavophiles of Moscow, Havlíček clearly demonstrated that neither the tsarist regime nor Russian mentality could provide a model for Czechs to follow at home. The greater part of Czech society, with Palacký at its head, arrived at a similar conclusion after witnessing tsarist armies crush "the springtime of peoples" in Europe.[10]

Havlíček toyed with the idea of writing an original history of Russia in Czech, but he never found time for more than a collection of essayistic observations. What Havlíček originally intended, T.G. Masaryk brought to completion with his work *Rusko a Evropa* (1913–1919, originally published in German as *Russland und Europa*, in English as *The Spirit of Russia*), a systematic, scholarly and in-depth analysis grounded above all in Russian literature and religious (as well as anti-religious) philosophy. While many of the details found in Masaryk's study have since become outdated, the work's enduring value consists in its distinction between two currents in Russian mentality: the nationalistic-theocratic-autocratic and the liberal-critical-democratic. However, when considering present events these currents can no longer be categorized according to

9 Cf. Vladimir Andrejevič Francev, *Cesta J. Dobrovského a hraběte J. Šternberka do Ruska v letech 1792–1793* (Prague: Unie, 1923).

10 Cf. František Stellner and Radek Soběhart, "Rusko jako hrozba? Vytváření negativního obrazu Ruska u české veřejnosti v letech 1848–1849" in *19. století v nás: Modely, instituce a reprezentace, které přetrvaly*, ed. Milan Řepa (Prague: Historický ústav, 2008), 554–566.

Masaryk's original labels "Muscovite" and "Saint Petersburgian." Those Czechs familiar with the literature considered the work by the Russian historian and liberal politician Pavel Milyukov, Studies in the history of Russian culture (*Ocherki po istorii russkoi kultury*, translated into Czech as *Obrazy z dějin ruské vzdělanosti* between 1902 and 1910), to be a Russian parallel to Masaryk's analysis.

Many Czech historians and publicists continued to develop Masaryk's line of thought, most notably Jan Slavík. One result of Masaryk's attention to democratic currents in Russia was the Russian Action, an extensive relief operation to support exiles who left the country following the Bolshevik coup of 1917.[11] The literary scholar Václav Černý provided a distinctive postscript to Masaryk's volume with his study *Vývoj a zločiny panslavismu* (The development and crimes of pan-Slavism). Černý wrote the work at the beginning of the 1950s, though it would not be published until 1993, after the author's death. Composed in the early days of Czech vassalage to the USSR, the work bears the mark of passionate indignation.[12] According to Černý's dark vision, a direct path leads from naively romantic pan-Slavism, which arose in Russia as a response to German and Czech influences (Herder and Kollár),[13] right up to the ideological justifications of the Soviet Union's incursion.

The third tradition concerns the culture of Czech Catholicism. In this instance, too, one can identify a "forerunner": baroque Slavism, or the interest taken by seventeenth-century Catholic (but also Protestant) scholars in Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary in the historical ties between Slavic-speaking peoples, and above all their interest in Russia. Many looked to Russia for deliverance from the

11 Cf. Václav Veber, ed., *Ruská a ukrajinská emigrace v ČSR v letech 1918–1945* (Prague: Karolinum, 1996).

12 The study was first published by the journal *Střední Evropa* in 1993, as a book in 1995 and again in 2011. See Václav Černý, *Vývoj a zločiny panslavismu* (Prague: Václav Havel Library, 2011).

13 Though Russian pan-Slavism with its vision of the powerful state as the carrier of a spiritual message can also be traced back to the thinking of Hegel.

Turkish menace—and a possible destination for Catholic (and Protestant) missionaries.[14] In the nineteenth century Catholic Unionism followed in the footsteps of baroque Slavism. It was a movement that adopted as its proximate goal the study of Russian religious traditions. Its aim was to unite the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches (Scene 14). In the Czech lands, Unionism flourished more than anywhere else in Moravia among revivalist circles gathered around the person of František Sušil. Its symbolic center was Velehrad, once the seat of the mission of Sts Cyril and Methodius, whom Unionism understood as models for a Slavic-speaking church not yet divided into antagonistic Eastern and Western parts.[15]

While it is true that Unionism did not arouse mass sympathy for Catholicism among Russians, it did engender a large quantity of scientific and cultural material in the fields of Russian, Slavic, and Byzantine studies. In the form of translations and commentaries, Unionism introduced an abundance of texts from Kievan and Muscovite Orthodox culture (or their echoes in modern culture), texts with which the representatives of liberal trends, such as Havlíček and Masaryk, had little patience. The philologist and Catholic priest Josef Vašica was the prime mover of this cultural transfer. Thanks to him, Russian spiritual texts became a dominant feature of Josef Florian's Catholic publishing program in Stará Říše.[16] One of them, the publishing house of Ladislav Kuncíř, released a book in 1930 titled *Duch ruské církve* (The spirit of the Russian church), a first attempt at the comprehensive treatment of Russia's older spiritual history. Written in Czech and adopting a Unionist standpoint, the work emphasized those personalities and currents of thought that

14 Cf. Rudo Brtáň, *Barokový slavizmus: Porovnávacia štúdia z dejín slovanskej slovesnosti* (Liptovský Sv. Mikuláš: Tranoscius, 1939).

15 Cf. Michal Altrichter, *Velehrad: filologoi versus filosofoi* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2005).

16 Cf. Libuše Heczková, "Rozanov a ti druzí: Rozhovor s Andrejem Stankovičem," *Volné sdružení českých rusistů* 8 (1992): 65–67.

aimed to unite the Eastern and Western Churches. Its author was a Russian exile, the publicist Valerij Vilinskij. Although his later fate caused some controversy,[17] Vilinskij's work played a role for sympathizers of the Czech-Catholic take on Russia not unlike that played by Milyukov in liberal circles.

Needless to say, these views were removed from public sight along with the rest of Catholic culture after the communist seizure of power in 1948. From the 1960s, however, they began to appear again, at least marginally, in the tolerated "gray zone." Scholars of Church Slavonic or Byzantium, for example, were permitted to have their work published by Vyšehrad, a publisher that released series of translations of medieval legends and other mainly religious texts of eastern Christendom.[18] Other scholars chose exile. At least two, both of them Catholic priests, won renown abroad for propagating the understanding of Russian religious culture and eastern Christianity more generally: the Byzantine scholar František Dvorník[19] and the popularizer of eastern, especially monastic, spirituality, Tomáš Špidlík.[20] The latter was a close acquaintance of Pope Karol Wojtyła. Špidlík's appointment to Cardinal in 2003 was intended to demonstrate the church's official interest in the spiritual traditions of Orthodoxy. It was by way of Špidlík and Wojtyła that sympathy for Orthodoxy arrived to the Czech lands, where it has exerted a considerable influence since the 1990s.

The fourth tradition is that of the Czech left, which began looking with hope to Russia in 1917, the year of the Bolshevik take-over. This tradition found cultural expression in emphatic odes to Lenin and the revolution penned by first-rate authors like J. Wolker,

17 Cf. Anne Hultsch, *Ein Russe in der Tschechoslowakei: Leben und Werk des Publizisten Valerij S. Vilinskij, 1901–1955* (Köln: Böhlau, 2011).
18 Cf. Pravomil Novák et al., *Sborník 70 let nakladatelství Vyšehrad* (Prague: Vyšehrad, 2004).
19 Cf. Ludvík Němec, *Francis Dvorník: Mistr historické syntézy* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2013).
20 Cf. Tomáš Špidlík, *Spiritualita křesťanského Východu* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2002).

V. Nezval, F. Halas, and V. Holan, or in uncritical accounts of "building socialism" in the USSR, the tone for which was set by Julius Fučík's book *O zemi, kde zítra již znamená včera* (In the land where tomorrow is already yesterday). In scholarship, the tradition found expression in the obedient acceptance of theses put forward by official "Soviet science" in the USSR about the political and cultural history or Russia and the Czech lands. Political and artistic attitudes that before 1948 had been counted as private matters after 1948 became tests of loyalty to the regime in power, entry tickets into public life. The great paradox is that however much this new culture and science wished to emphasized its novel break with the traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia (tsarism, religiosity, reaction, and backwardness), it was in fact permeated by the tradition of Russophilia. Its exponents emphasized the superiority of Russian history, Russian culture, and the Russian nation. But "Soviet science" could never obscure the fact that it was, in truth, the heir of romantic-era "Slavic science."

The fifth tradition emerged from polemics with the fourth, developing as it were within the womb of the latter. Some members of the interwar left reconsidered their enthusiasm for Soviet Russia after confronting its underside. An example of this waning enthusiasm are the novels written by Jiří Weil, whose books *Moskva-hranice* (Moscow-border, 1937) and *Dřevěná lžíce* (The wooden spoon, published posthumously in 1992) offer a literary depiction of Stalinist terror. During the communist era in Czechoslovakia, Russian studies were elevated to the status of a privileged scholarly and cultural discipline that drew many Czech intellectuals into its orbit, albeit not always voluntarily. In other words, there were among the Russianists some who engaged with their subject in a "subterraneous" manner: scholars who resuscitated marginalized, forgotten, or repressed authors; who recovered lost intellectual trends and values, presenting them to the public under the guise of disseminating "fraternal Russian culture." They did so as much as was permitted by the cultural politics

of the regime. When this sort of subterfuge proved unworkable, finished texts were set aside for publication as samizdat.

With regard to this tendency, mention should be made of Jan Zábrana, a poet who was allowed to work as a translator in the "gray zone"—but who at the same time helped translate Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* into Czech for samizdat, noting with bitterness in his diary how revolting he found "Byzantine Asiaticism, characteristic not only of Stalin, but of Russian mentality generally—Chaadaev knew that about his compatriots already."[21] Mention must also be made of Karel Štindl, who by contrast directly joined the dissidents and translated the works of Russian religious authors. One should mention Miluše Zadražilová, who translated and composed epilogues together with her husband Ladislav Zadražil, although her name was no longer permitted to appear in print after 1968. Zadražilová simultaneously maintained secret contact with Russian dissidents inside the USSR and in exile (Scene 19).

After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, Zadražilová and her husband, Karel Štindl and other Russianists of the "gray zone" or dissident circles arrived—or returned—as instructors in the department of Russian Studies at Prague's Philosophical Faculty. Once there, they began to foster a new conception of Czech Russian studies: the Czech Russianist should not be one who loves, admires, and propagates all things Russian. Above all, he should not be a supporter of Russian or Soviet imperialism. The Czech Russianist should be intimately familiar with the Russian cultural context and, as a consequence, be able to evaluate it critically. The Czech Russianist should support those people and values in Russia that stand on the side of individual freedom against the regime, against state terror, against hollow institutions, against the repression of freedom of conscience and expression. It was of secondary importance whether these individuals and their values hailed from the liberal

21 Jan Zábrana, *Celý život: Výbor z deníků 1948–1984* (Prague: Torst, 2001), 440.

tradition (in the spirit of Havlíček or Masaryk), from the religious tradition (in the spirit of Vašica or Špidlík), from the tradition of leftwing social criticism, or whether they maintained an ironic, postmodern distance from all preceding values.

I passed through this school myself and, like many others, I initially found myself having become an "involuntary" Russianist. From the mid-1990s, when I began to turn my attention to topics beyond the field of Russian studies, I repeatedly ran up against the problem of Czech perceptions of Russia: in my work on the history of Czech Catholic literature and the Unionist tradition of Sušil and Vašica; in my study about Václav Havel's reception of the liberal-critical tradition of Masaryk and Černý; when working through the legacy of Karel VI Schwarzenberg and also upon composing a commentary to Kollár's *Slávy dcera* about the tradition of romantic Russophilism. Thus instructed, I now return by way of detour, motivated by the intention to address one of Czech society's urgent needs as well as by a feeling of gratitude to my former teachers and the desire to repay old debts by means of the present book.

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This Czech book about Russia is titled "scenes from the cultural history of Russian religiosity." The title is meant to recall Havlíček's *Pictures from Russia* and Milyukov's *Studies in the History of Russian Culture*. But above all, it follows my earlier book, *Obrazy z kulturních dějin americké religiozity* (Scenes from the cultural history of American religiosity).[22] As in that volume, this book arranges vast and complicated material—material which might have threatened to become too unwieldy or to take on the proportions of Masaryk's *Spirit of Russia*—into a collection of "scenes." Each "scene" represents a chosen moment, a point in Russian history when an event of fundamental significance occurred within some spiritual current

22 Martin C. Putna, *Obrazy z kulturních dějin americké religiozity* (Prague: Vyšehrad, 2010).

or movement, an event directly or indirectly reflected in some particular cultural object, an object which itself in turn shaped the further development of Russian spirituality.

The crucial importance of literary works for the comprehension of developments in Russia has been demonstrated many times over. In Russia, where beyond a few brief epochs and happy exceptions an open and free public life has never existed, let alone an open and free political life, literature played an even more important role as medium for social reflection than it did in Central or Western Europe, to say nothing of America. For that matter, Masaryk's *Russia and Europe* also considered Russian literature as the key to understanding Russian spiritual life. As with Masaryk, the objective here is not so much to offer an aesthetic analysis of Russian literary works and artistic creations (there are plenty of those already) as it is to examine how these works document spiritual trends. The concern is with the scenes chosen and the works selected; some classic authors will be addressed only marginally, others not at all, while in some scenes the more "marginal" works will prove the most illustrative.

As a method, this approach to "setting the scene" comes with certain risks. Many important personalities, works, and events are of necessity left out (this book is not and does not want to be a substitute for a history of Russian literature or of the church in Russia). Nor does the method necessarily prevent one from drowning in the material—it is enough to recall Alexander Solzhenitsyn suffocating in his attempt to structure the history of the Russian Revolution into similar historical "junctures" in his voluminous, and never completed, cycle *The Red Wheel* (1984–1991, see Conclusion). Solzhenitsyn's attempt should thus serve as a warning and admonishment to single out that which, from the perspective of the book's conception, represents—put biblically—the *unum necessarium*.

But what is the *unum necessarium,* the "one thing necessary?" Five basic thoughts run through the individual "scenes" which comprise this book, scenes that I consider necessary for understanding

Russia's spiritual past and, by means of them, understanding Russia's present, politics included.

The first three are "negative"—they consist of reversing the ideological trinity of Russian imperialism, a motto formulated in 1833 by the tsar's minister of education, Count Sergei Uvarov (Scene 15): autocracy, orthodoxy, and nationality. The motto is clear and intelligible as a political program—formulated in full awareness that it was to force into its image a reality to which it did not at all correspond.

First: a single Russia with a single, immutable identity has never existed. Rather there existed several distinct formations, each one with a separate regional center and cultural trajectory: Kievan Rus, Novgorodian Rus, Lithuanian Rus, Muscovite Rus, Ukrainian Rus and Belarus, and the exile "Russia beyond Russia." The word "Russian" itself contains multiple, mutually exclusive meanings. It is usually identified with the Muscovite state and its imperial successors right up through the USSR and the empire of Vladimir Putin. But such an association is an "Uvarovian" simplification. One can only understand the ambiguity and contradictions of that which we call "Russianness" after recognizing the many and varied traditions of Rus.

Second: never in its history has "Russianness" been identical with Orthodoxy. On the one hand, Orthodoxy itself was never so unchanging in its cultural forms (Scene 4). On the other hand, there were contacts with Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Uniatism or Greek Catholicism. There were individual attempts to combine confessional identities, as in various forms of domestic "heterodoxy" from the ultra-Slav Old Believers to radical "sectarians", or as in Judaism and esoteric beliefs. These all belong to the cultural history of Russia. The dynamism of Russian culture does not arise from some single, permanent Orthodoxy—to the contrary, it comes from religious plurality.

Third: never in its history has Russian culture been ethnically homogenous. The Scandinavian Rurikid dynasty, Finnish shamanism, Byzantine Orthodoxy, Bulgarian apocrypha, Mongolian military

and administrative forms and families of Tatars intermarrying with families of Russian boyars, German intellectuals and officers from the conquered Baltics and from Germany itself, Polish intellectuals and officers from "tripartite" Poland, and of course Jews—these all contributed to the making of Russian culture. Moreover, Ukrainians and Belarusians—the former more vociferously than the latter—assert a claim to no small part of that history which the ordinary Russian simply assumes to have been ethnically Russian. The unity of all this is real only on the level of Russian as a shared language of culture, one that forms a discrete sphere of civilization. And even with that caveat, one must remain aware that up to the era of Petrine reforms the cultural language of this civilization was a slightly modified form of Church Slavonic, of which we can regard Russia as an heir. There were also periods in which other languages predominated, above all French.

The fourth basic thought is "culturally comparative." It consists in recognizing the uneven cultural development of Russia, on the one hand, and Western and Central Europe, on the other. If in Europe one can identify a "pendulum of artistic movements"[23] according to which artistic creation and thinking developed along the arch "Romanesque art—Gothic—Renaissance—Mannerism—Baroque—Classicism—Romanticism—Realism" etc., then in Russia, and above all in Muscovite Russia after centuries of isolation from the West, this sequence cannot not be applied. Historians of art and literature have resorted to various criteria to discern something one might label a Russian Gothic, Russian Renaissance, or a Russian Baroque (in fact, only with the rise of Classicism in the eighteenth century does one finds any true correspondence, Scene 11). They find parallels in slightly delayed echoes of Western influences (influence that of course were present in Lithuanian Rus, but by no means

23 Cf. Jiří Kroupa, *Školy dějin umění: Metodologie dějin umění* (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2007).

in Muscovite Rus),[24] or they find them in much belated cultural effects, which allegedly play roles analogical to phenomena which in the West occurred several centuries earlier (hence the literature of Pushkin's era is sometimes referred to as the "Russian Renaissance"[25]). Or they do not find them at all—and consider this absence not a sign of Russian cultural backwardness, but instead evidence of Russia's cultural autonomy and singularity.[26] This book stands neither with the first nor with the second of these theses, but rather with a third. It seeks to show that this ambiguity in the definition of cultural epochs, this alteration of voluntary and involuntary isolations and belated "Renaissances" taken together lent unique form to the dynamic of Russian culture.

The fifth basic thought, which might be called "religiously comparative," concerns modern Russian culture roughly from the end of the eighteenth century—that is, from the time when Russia "caught up" with the culture of Western Europe. Under the impact of the radical reforms of Peter the Great, Russian society also underwent the process that had transformed Europe—secularization, edging the church out of public life and especially out of the cultural horizon of intellectuals. A specifically Catholic culture emerged in Europe as a reaction to this secularization, one that can be represented by the three points of a conceptual triangle: Catholic reformism, Catholic restoration, and Catholic romanticism. In the West, nineteenth and early twentieth-century Russian literature and religious thought are considered the most valuable and original contributions

24 Cf. Evgeny Vasil'evich Anichkov, *Zapadnyye literatury i slavyanstvo* (Prague: Plamya, 1926); Cf. Dmitrij Lichačov, *Člověk v literatuře staré Rusi* (Prague: Odeon, 1974).

25 Or they at least speak of the Pushkin era as a "golden age." See Radegast Parolek and Jiří Honzík, *Ruská klasická literatura* (Prague: Svoboda, 1977), 57ff.

26 Consider the extreme notion of the theologian Ioann Ekonomtsev that "Russian Renaissance" is actually Hesychasm and that a further wave of the Renaissance is the return to patristics in the restorationist spirituality of the 19th century. Ioann Ekonomtsev, "Isikhazm i vozrozhdenie (Isikhazm i problema tvorchestva)," in *Pravoslavie, Vizantiya, Rossiya,* vol. 2 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 177–206.

Russia has made to the world. The fifth thought does not deny this. It does however insist that the entire gallery of geniuses, writers such as Gogol, Tolstoy, or Dostoevsky; religious thinkers the likes of Rozanov, Berdyaev or Sergei Bulgakov, must *also* be understood contextually in analogy to the modern Catholic culture of Western Europe. It is possible, even necessary, to speak of an "Orthodox reformism," "Orthodox restauration," and "Orthodox romanticism" as well as of those wider streams of thought which the above-named authors met and contended with in their works.

The first four thoughst may be found in various formulations in the works of historians and interpreters of Russian culture, Russian and Western. Should we wish to do so, we can place this book into the context of contemporary historiographical trends such as postcolonial history, penetrating below the surface of imperial interpretations of history; area studies, penetrating below the surface of national interpretations of history; or *histoire croisée*, aiming to establish connections between previously antagonistic imperial and national approaches to history.[27] The fifth thought behind this book, the one pointing to the analogous development of modern Russian Orthodoxy and European Catholic culture, represents the most recent contribution to my method of interpretive spiritual history which I have developed over the last quarter century on topics ranging from Czech Catholic culture, the culture of late antiquity, American religious culture etc. This fifth idea I take the liberty of calling my own, regarding it as this Czech book's original contribution to the history of Russia.

27 Cf. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (February 2006): 30–50.

Scene 1

Russia before Russia: Antique Cultures along the Black Sea Coast

YEAR:
422 B.C.

PLACE:
Crimea

EVENT:
Founding of the Greek colony Tauric Chersonesus

WORKS:
The Histories by Herodotus (before 425 BC);
Iphigenia in Tauris by Euripides, Goethe, and Gluck
(412 BC, 1779, 1787); "Who Knows the Land?"
by Alexander Pushkin (1821); *The Sun of the Dead*
by Ivan Shmelev (1926); *The Island of Crimea*
by Vasily Aksenov (1981)

Narratives about the cultural history of Russia typically begin with Kievan Rus. But to comprehend the modern Russian, Ukrainian and, indirectly, Belarusian senses of identity and understand their historical place on the map of European civilization (or their absence from it), one must penetrate more deeply into the past. One must take account of Russia's "prehistory," of the ancient cultures which shaped a region critical to Russian and Ukrainian self-understandings—the area along the northern Black Sea coast and the territory of Crimea.

The Greeks sailed as far as the Black Sea in their massive effort to colonize every favorable piece of coastline—favorable, that is, because it possessed something of a Mediterranean climate and reminded the explorers of their Greek fatherland. A chain of Greek settlements emerged along the Black Sea coast as early as the seventh and sixth century before Christ: from Olbia near modern-day Odessa to Tanais near what is now Rostov-on-Don. One of the last settlements was founded in 422 BC, just as the great wave of colonization began to subside. It would go on to play a crucial role in the future Russia and Ukraine—as Tauric Chersonesus on the southern tip of the Crimean Peninsula.[28]

Neither here nor elsewhere did the Greeks set out to subjugate the "barbarian" peoples of the interior. It sufficed to turn them into objects of intellectual inquiry and thereby draw them into the Greek mental orbit. Herodotus performed this sort of intellectual subjugation in the fourth book of his *Histories* (before 425 BC), where he describes in detail the territory and inhabitants of the northern Black Sea region: the Scythians and their predecessors, the Cimmerians in present-day Ukraine, the Tauri of the Crimea, the Sauromatae (Sarmatians) along the Don.

In certain passages, Herodotus trades the role of historian for that of natural geographer, as when he describes the physical landscape

28 Cf. Jan Bouzek and Radislav Hošek, *Antické Černomoří* (Prague: Svoboda, 1978).

of northeastern Europe, what would become Russia and Ukraine (the first author to do so). He calls attention to the landscape's characteristic features: the open steppe, rivers teaming with fish (most remarkable are the sturgeon), and winters full of snow. Apparently confused by second-hand reports, Herodotus supposes snow to be made of feathers, which is not entirely incomprehensible since something of the sort could hardly have been imaginable to a blissful inhabitant of the Mediterranean: "It is said to be impossible to travel through the region which lies further north, or even to see it, because of falling feathers—both earth and air are thick with them and they shut out the view."[29]

Herodotus elsewhere changes into a cultural anthropologist, describing the manners and habits of the peoples who inhabit the region. From the perspective of a Greek, these were clearly the customs of barbarians. The Scythians and others blind their slaves, use the skulls of their enemies as goblets, fashion handkerchiefs and overcoats from the flayed skin of humans, they drink mares' milk and human blood. They don't know civilization. On the other hand, they honor the same gods as the Greeks. Despite the bizarre details, Herodotus' description all the while remains objective, detached, and free of prejudice or offense. What's more, he integrates these northerly peoples into the Greek system of mythology. The Scythians, reports the historian, descend from Heracles. When the latter led the oxen of Geryon by a rather circuitous route from Spain to Greece via the Black Sea, he lay with the local viper-maiden and begot a son, Skythes. The Sauromatae, for their part, resulted from the union of local men with Amazons.

Other ancient authors relate other legends drawn from Greek mythology taking place along the Black Sea. Prometheus was chained to a rock in the Caucasus. The Argonauts sailed to Colchis, or Georgia, in their quest for the Golden Fleece. Thetis carried the ashes of

29 Herodotus, *The Histories* 4.7.

her son Achilles to the island of Leuke, today the Ukrainian island Zmiinyi near the Danube delta, thereby founding an enduring local cult of Achilles. The Crimean Peninsula, or Tauris, provided the setting for Euripides' play, *Iphigenia in Tauris* (412 BC), which more than any other work is responsible for associating Greece with the Black Sea. Iphigenia was to be sacrificed for the benefit of the Trojan expedition, but Artemis intervened and swept her off to Tauris. She was found there by her brother, Orestes, and brought back to Greece along with a sacred statue of Artemis. They stopped in Attica, at the sanctuary Brauron, where Iphigenia was made priestess of the "Crimean" cult of Artemis (and where today one finds remarkable evidence of the veneration of Artemis as patron of childbirth and traces of local female initiation ceremonies). Athens and Crimea thus hosted the same cult, for, as related again by Herodotus, "the Tauri themselves claim that the goddess to whom these offerings are made is Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia."[30]

There is thus a local dimension to Euripides' play, as it relates the origin of one of the most important cults in Athens. The play also features an existential dimension, describing the ordeal of siblings lost in the wide world, afflicted by an indifferent fate, offering a meditation on the human condition. It isn't surprising that the story provided material for many later adaptions, including the opera by Christoph Willibald Gluck, *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1779), and a play of the same name by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1779–1787). There is also an intercultural dimension to the play: confrontation between Greeks and barbarians, the latter represented by the Thoas, king of the Tauri. None of these variations—neither in Euripides, nor in Gluck, nor in Goethe—would satisfy adherents of Edward Said[31] who define as "Orientalism" Western perceptions of the East as inferior, populated by barbarians and cruel, unmanly cowards.

30 Ibid. 4.103.
31 Cf. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

Thoas is an adversary—but a noble adversary who in the end releases Iphigenia and her brother, along with the sacred statue, and allows them to go in peace. He does so, according to Euripides and Gluck, in order to submit piously to the will of Artemis. In Goethe's version, he acts out of pure benevolence.

The life of the Greek cities along the Black Sea coast drew from more than references to "creation myths." The Greek-speaking Bosporan Kingdom arose in Crimea and parts of the adjacent mainland. It was controlled first by Athens then fell under the sway of various Hellenic empires until finally coming under the authority of Rome. The fourth century saw the migration of peoples, decline of the Bosporan Kingdom, and alternating dominance of various "barbarian nations" (Goths, Huns, Khazars). A small strip of land on the southern Crimean coast around the city of Chersonesus, however, survived the period's upheavals and remained in the possession of the Byzantium, the "second Rome" or "Christian Greece."

Christianity arrived to Crimea during the Roman period—and gave rise to new "creation myths." The fate of three early Christian heroes is associated with the region. The first church historian, Eusebius, reported that when "the holy apostles and disciples of our Savior were scattered over the whole world" Andrew was chosen for Scythia.[32] Tradition has it that the pagan emperor Traianus banished the fourth Bishop of Rome, Clement (or Pope Clement, to use his later title), to Crimea, where he was then drowned in the Black Sea. One of his successors, Martin I, was banished to the same location in the seventh century, but this time by the Christian Byzantine emperor, Constans II.

These early Christian heroes provided models for the early Christian martyrs among eastern Slavs more generally. Cyril and Methodius allegedly found the remains of Clement in Crimea while

32 Eusebius, *The History of the Church from Christ to Constantine*, trans. G.A. Williamson (New York: Penguin Books, 1965) 3.1.

undertaking their political and religious mission to the Khazar Khanate in 860, which at the time stretched along the territory of the earlier Scythians. The remains served them as the "armor of God" during subsequent journeys to Greater Moravia and Rome (where Clement's remains rest today in the Basilica of San Clement, known for its splendid collection of twelfth-century mosaics and the tomb of Saint Cyril). When the Kievan prince Vladimir had himself baptized in 988, he did so precisely in Crimean Chersonesus, which still belonged to the Byzantines. And when the chronicler Nestor assembled his collection of ancient chronicles in the beginning of the twelfth century, he dated the beginning of Kievan Christianity from the blessing given to the region by the apostle Andrew.

That, then, is the "Greece" from which Kievan and Muscovite Rus arose. Not the Greece of the Amazons and Iphigenia—but instead the Greece of Andrew the apostle, of the Crimean martyr Clement, of the missionaries Cyril and Methodius, and of St. Prince Vladimir "Equal of the Apostles." The Greece of which a small, peripheral part comes fatefully into contact with the boundary of Kievan Rus in Crimea and along the Dnieper Delta.

The northern Black Sea became part of the Crimean Khanate and an outpost of the Muslim world for several long centuries following the "barbarian" waves which swept across Kievan Rus in the thirteenth century, particularly the Mongolian raids (Scene 5). At the close of the eighteenth century, Catherine II and her favorite consort, Gregory Potemkin, succeeded in defeating the Khanate. Having conquered it, they adjoined it to the Russian Empire, doubtless a key moment in the political and diplomatic game of empire building (Scene 11). After the first war Catherine sought merely to "neutralize" the Crimean state and initially refused to incorporate the territory officially as a part of Russia: "It is not at all Our intention to have the peninsula and the Tatar hordes that belong to it in Our servitude. We wish only to see it torn away from Turkish

subjugation and remain forever independent."[33] It was the allegedly intolerable domestic conditions on the peninsula that, in the end, moved Catherine to annex the Crimean state to Russia in 1783.

Of course, the annexation of Crimea was outfitted with a specific ideological interpretation. What Catherine and Potemkin had in fact accomplished was Russia's return to a land over which it had historically held sovereignty: "Russian" Greece. But watch out! It was not Christian or Byzantine Greece that Catherine and Potemkin had in mind—but rather classical Greece, Greece of the Amazons and Iphigenia! A wave of Philhellenism swept across Europe at a time when cities were being reconstructed in the neoclassical spirit, Greek monuments unearthed by archaeologists, and writers turning to classical Greek materials and motifs.[34] The period when Catherine and Potemkin incorporated Crimea was also the time of Gluck and Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*!

The annexed territories received the name "Taurida," in antique fashion, and Potemkin was granted the agnomen "Taurian." The former Potemkin Palace in Petersburg, a gem of Russian neoclassicism, became the "Tauride Palace." Catherine stylized herself as queen of the Amazons, sitting at the head of her female entourage during festivities. Newly founded cities along the Black Sea were given Greek names and older Tatar settlements were renamed after antique localities or outfitted with Greek neologisms. Hence today one finds on the map of Crimea and the adjacent mainland names such as Sevastopol ("city of the venerable ruler"), Simferopol ("city of the common good"), Melitopol ("city of the bees"), Eupatoria ("city of the good father"), or Odessa (after a mistaken identification

33 Cited in Marina E. Lupanova, *Krymskaya problema v politike Ekateriny II* (Riazan: RVAI, 2006), 75. The citation of Catherine's rescript in this work is explicitly formulated so as to celebrate a brilliant diplomat sitting upon the Russian throne.

34 Cf. Terence Spencer, *Fair Greece, Sad Relic: Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (Athens: Denise Harvey & Company (1986); Cf. Martin C. Putna, *Řecké nebe nad námi a antický košík: Studie ke druhému životu antiky v evropské kultuře* (Prague: Academy, 2006).

with the Greek village of Odysseus, which in fact lies in present-day Bulgaria.)[35]

Naturally, the formal Hellenization of Crimea—a process, it should be mentioned, in which the surviving Black Sea Greek minority played no role whatsoever[36]—involved interests other than those of politically detached philhellenes among Europe's elite. Catherine planned, in a further move, to take Constantinople from the Turks and thereby renew the Byzantine Empire—with Russian oversight, to be sure. In what appeared a grand production of *Iphigenia in Tauris,* Russia's annexation of Crimea reflected the wider ambition to create a "Byzantine" axis stretching from Kiev to Chersonesus to Constantinople.

Two other ideas, each central to modern Russian history, were involved in the annexation of Crimea and the Black Sea coast. The first is the concept of New Russia. This term was introduced as a designation for the region along the Black Sea, a territory larger than Taurida itself, the entire southern half of modern Ukraine and territory farther to the East in the direction of the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus. In distinction to the historicizing label "Taurida," the notion of New Russia held purely colonial connotations, something similar to New England in America, New Brunswick in Canada, or New Zealand. Contrary to most of these other "New" territories, however, New Russia was not separated from old Russia by the sea. And so today, unlike those others, New Russia is not regarded by its rulers as part of a *former* colonial empire, but is instead seen as an integral part of Russia. This applies not only to New Russia on the Black Sea, but also to other parts of the Russian colonial empire.[37]

35 Cf. Gwendolyn Sasse, *The Crimea Question: Identity, Transition, and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

36 Cf. Yu. D. Pryakhin, *Greki v istorii Rossii, XVIII–XIX vekov: Istoricheskie ocherki* (Sankt-Peterburg: Aleteyya, 2008).

37 Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2011).

The second idea is that of the Potemkin village. In 1787 Catherine undertook a famous journey to the newly conquered territory, for which occasion Potemkin prepared his famous villages, duplicitous facades before which new Russian settlers enacted a happy existence. Some historians consider the story about Potemkin villages to be an exaggeration (arguing that the prince merely ordered the villages to be decorated prior to Catherine's arrival), or even hold it to be a malicious fabrication.[38] Whatever the veracity of Potemkin's villages, their relevance as a constantly recurring theme in Russian imperial culture cannot be denied. One need only recall the "Potemkin villages" presented to western intellectuals in Stalin's Russia, which artfully covered up the true condition of a terrorized society.[39]

The staging of Crimea and Taurida as "Greece in Russia," of course, did not remain an ideological construct. Eager visitors arrived from Russia and the West to take in this unexpected Arcadia with its nearly Mediterranean climate and recently unearthed ancient monuments, a place so unlike the "old," proverbially cold and inhospitable Russia. Alexander Pushkin (Scene 11) wrote enthusiastically of his visit to Crimea in 1821:

> Who knows the land where finest show of nature
> Inspirits oaken groves and meadows nigh,
> Where waters run and sparkle in their rapture
> Caressing peaceful banks as they pass by,
> Where on hills the laurels by their stature
> Forbid the gloomy snows to fall and lie?[40]

38 See the overview provided by Lupanova in the work cited above. Lupanova of course labels western historians who accept the reports about Potemkin villages as Russophobes. Lupanova, *Krymskaya problema,* 26.

39 Cf. Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921–1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

40 Alexander Pushkin, "Who Knows the Land?" trans. Adrian Room, in *The Complete Works of Alexander Pushkin,* vol. 2, *Lyric Poems: 1820–1826* (Norfolk: Milner, 2000), 57.

The educated European reader of the time would have recognized Pushkin's verse to be (just like the Czech national anthem!) a variation of Goethe's "Mignon," the heraldic poem of longing for Italy as a country of the South, an idyll, and symbol of antiquity:

> Know'st thou the land where lemon-trees do bloom,
> And oranges like gold in leafy gloom;
> A gentle wind from deep blue heaven blows,
> The myrtle thick, and high the laurel grows?
> Know'st thou it, then?
> 'Tis there! 'tis there,
> O my belov'd one, I with thee would go![41]

The philosopher Peter Chaadaev numbered among those Russian intellectuals who worried over Russia's status in relation to European civilization (Scene 14). Amidst their worriment, many of these intellectuals turned to the theme of a "pre-Russian" Black Sea. Their musings were often ambivalent. Which ancient inhabitants of the land should they appeal to? To the Greeks—or to the local "barbarians," the Cimmerians, Scythians, and Tauri? To Iphigenia—or to King Thoas? In these moments of doubt, one discerns that question so central to modern Russian identity: Is Russia (or better, does Russia want to be) more "European" or "Asian"?

In 1918, as the Bolsheviks seized power, the symbolist poet Alexander Blok (1880–1921) composed his poem titled "Scythians." He expressed in the poem what he felt was the insurmountable and fatal analogy with the barbarians who stand between Europe and Asia and are called upon to destroy the delicate blossom of culture so long as the "old world" will not submit:

41 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels,* trans. by Thomas Carlyle (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907), 124.

Try us in combat—let us see who dies!
Yea, we are Scythians! Yea, Asia gave us birth—
Gave us our slanted and our greed-filled eyes!
[…]
Between the Mongols and Europe's clans
For long we served as but a battered shield.
[…]
For the last time, Old World, think ere you cease!
Come to our feast as brethren; share our fire!
For the last time, to share our toil and peace
We summon you with our barbaric lyre![42]

Another symbolist, the poet and painter Maximilian Voloshin (1877–1932) who had spent his life in Koktebel on the Crimean coast, also made frequent reference to one of the ancient and mysterious inhabitants of the region—the Cimmerians. His poetic texts include "Cimmerian Twilight" and "Cimmerian Spring" as well as a number of culturological-esoteric essays on the spiritual history of Crimea (Voloshin had studied the science of anthroposophy with Rudolf Steiner in Swiss Dornach). The "Greek" and the "barbarian," in his view, by no means stood opposed to one another. Voloshin claimed it was the task of Russians, as heirs to Crimea, to join both together in a spirit of reconciliation, to fertilize and cultivate the barbarian by means of the Greek. The poet pursued his purpose in writings as well as in his own rather extravagant personal appearance—the poet wandering about Crimea dressed in pseudo-classical garb.[43]

Around the same time, Ukrainians also began to appeal to the antique traditions of Crimea and the Black Sea region. In the course of

42 Alexander Blok, "The Scythians," trans. Guilbert Guerney, in *An Anthology of Russian Literature in the Soviet Period: From Gorki to Pasternak* (New York: Random House, 1960), 27–29.
43 Cf. Maximilian Voloshin, *Istoriia moei dushi* (Moscow: Agraf, 1999).

(re)constructing their own historical identity, Ukrainians presented themselves as an autochthonous people and therefore more legitimate heirs to ancient traditions than were the "northern" Russians. It is by no means a coincidence that Kotlyarevsky's *Eneyida* (1798), a humorous Ukrainian take on Virgil's classical epic (Scene 12), became the foundational work of modern Ukrainian literature. Nor is it coincidental that the Ukrainian exile poet Evhen Malanyuk (1897–1968) spoke of his country as the "Hellados of the Steppe."[44] The Ukrainian conception lacks the ambivalence characteristic of the Russians. Ukrainians wish to see themselves as a people close to the Greeks and as far away as possible from the barbarian (i.e. Russian) North.

Of course, the nineteenth and twentieth century saw the rise of new myths centered on Crimea—by now these myths were explicitly political. There is the myth about the Russian defense of Sevastopol, first against marauders from the West during the Crimean War (1854–1855) and later during the Second World War (1941–1942). This myth functions as a heroic monument binding Crimea forever to Russia. And then there is the myth of the "white Crimea." Crimea held out as the last preserve following the Bolshevik coup, as the war between "reds" and "whites" led to the gradual diminution of "white Russian" territory. The final act of this "white drama" played out in the fall of 1920 as General Wrangel evacuated his massive army and thousands upon thousands of refugees from across Russia poured into Crimea before moving on to Constantinople and finally Europe where they founded the exile "Russia beyond Russia."[45] The red terror then arrived to Crimea.

44 Jevhen Malanjuk, "Varjažská balada," in *Děti stepní Hellady: Pražská škola ukrajinských emigrantských básníků,* edited by Alena Morávková (Prague: Česká koordinační rada Společnosti přátel národů východu, 2001), 38.

45 Cf. Martin C. Putna and Miluše Zadražilová, *Rusko mimo Rusko: Dějiny a kultura ruské emigrace 1917–1991,* 2 vols (Brno: Petrov, 1993–1994).

The fate of "white Crimea" has been immortalized in numerous literary works, two of which deserve special attention here. The first is an autobiographical novel by Ivan Shmelev (Scene 16), *Sun of the Dead* (1926), which became famous in Europe and earned the respect of literary celebrities such as Thomas Mann. Shmelev stayed behind in Crimea even after its fall and experienced Béla Kun's bloody reign of terror during which his only son was executed. Shmelev, broken and exhausted, was permitted to leave for Paris in 1922. His immediate concern was to bear witness to his experiences—to the destruction of Crimea, the daily bouts with hunger, the friends who had perished, and to the "dead sun" which scorched everything left alive in that once bright, "antique" Crimean landscape. Memory stood in absolute contrast to the present devastation. Shmelev's reporting gives way to the author's passionate indictment of everything held to be responsible for the ruin—not just the cruelty and stupidity of Bolsheviks, whose heads were clouded by a handful of confused phrases, but also the indifference of Europe that had allowed Crimea to fall.

The second work is a novel by Vasily Aksenov (1932–2009), *The Island of Crimea* (1981). The idea behind Aksenov's work is counterfactual; what would have happened had Crimea been an island rather than peninsula, if instead of falling into the hands of the Bolsheviks it had survived as an enclave of freedom near the Russian mainland, something similar to Taiwan off mainland China. An exile himself, Aksenov ironically describes how this "European" Russia on the utopian island of Crimea—free, democratic, and prosperous—fails to value its freedom, allowing itself to be devoured from within by Bolshevik agitators. Having sufficiently corroded the spirit of freedom among the Russians there, the Bolsheviks finally launch a naval invasion and occupy the island.

Miluše Zadražilová said of the work in 1994: "Reading the novel today is more tantalizing than ever—who knows whether Aksenov's fictional wordplay might not somewhere be taken up as one of the

possible solutions to problems currently facing Crimea?"[46] Twenty years later, the situation corresponds to her words exactly: Crimea, since 1954 part of Ukraine and inhabited by three nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, and Tatars), has been occupied by the Russian military and annexed to Russia—the official explanation being that this is the people's wish, that the land has been Russian since time immemorial.

The military occupation of Crimea and its ideological justification were prepared long in advance. Since the beginning of the 1990s when Ukraine became an independent state, Russian propaganda has churned out dozens of studies about Crimea, about "Taurida" and "New Russia"—historical studies, works of archeology, ethnography and even esoteric literature—purporting to show that the entire area, the whole of southern Ukraine belongs by historical right to Russia.[47] If one were to follow this line of thinking to its logical conclusion, then Crimea and the entire northern Black Sea would have to belong, "by historical right," to Greece. Or perhaps rather to the Scythians and Cimmerians?

46 Ibid. 2:230.

47 T.M. Fadeeva, *Krym v sakral'nom prostranstve: Istorija, simvoly, legendy* (Simferopol': Biznes-Inform, 2000); A.G. Makarov and S.E. Makarova, eds., *Malorossija, Novorossija, Krym: Istoricheskij i etnograficheskij ocherk* (Moscow: Airo-XXI, 2006); G.T. Chupin, *Predystoriya i istoriya Kievskoy Rusi, Ukrainy i Kryma* (Kharkov: Litera Nova, 2010).

Scene 2

Viking Rus and Germanic Culture

YEAR:
862

PLACE:
Novgorod and Kiev

EVENT:
The Viking Hrœrikr conquers both

WORKS:
The Russian Primary Chronicle by Nestor (1113); *Oblomov* by Ivan Goncharov and Nikita Mikhalkov (1859, 1979); "An Iron Will" by Nikolai Leskov (1876); *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoevsky (1880)

The cultural history of the eastern Slavic peoples begins with that formation called Rus with its center in Kiev. However, it was a non-Slav social elite who shaped this formation into a state—the Germanic Vikings, referred to in Slavic sources as "Varangians" and in later scholarly discussions (inaccurately) as Normans. Between the eighth and eleventh centuries, the Vikings circumnavigated Europe from northern Britannia to southern Italy. Their ships even navigated upstream deep into the continent's interior—mostly to plunder; only rarely did they create permanent settlements in these parts.[48] Thus the report of Nestor the Chronicler (Scene 4) seems almost unbelievably idyllic when he describes how the inhabitants of the eastern European plains themselves invited the Vikings, telling them: "Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us."[49] Among the first generation of Viking rulers is supposed to have been a certain Rurik (probably originally *Hrœrikr*), from whose line stems the Rurikid dynasty that governed Russia up to the beginning of the seventeenth century.

From the tribal name of these Vikings came the name of the state and nation: "These particular Varangians were known as Russes, just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans, English, and Gotlanders. […] And on account of these Varangians, the district of Novgorod became known as the land of Rus."[50] Russia thus received its name from the Germanic Russes, rulers from a foreign land, just as Normandy was named after the Normans, France after the Franks, Andalusia after the Vandals, or Lombardy after the Langobards. The name, however, was mediated by a third group, the Finns, who at the time were spread broadly among the Germans and Slavs. The term *Rus* is not Germanic, but Finnic: *Ruotsi* is the Finnish designation for Swedes.

48 Cf. Angus Konstam, *The Historical Atlas of the Viking World* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2002).
49 Nestor, *The Russian Primary Chronicle,* Laurentian text, trans. and ed. Samuel H. Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), 59.
50 Nestor, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 59–60.