




EDITED BY MARK D. STEINBERG AND VALERIA SOBOL

Interpreting Emotions

IN RUSSIA

AND EASTERN

EUROPE

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ELEVEN

SERGUEI ALEX. OUSHAKINE

EMOTIONAL BLUEPRINTS

War Songs as an Affective Medium

Music today is largely a social cement. And the meaning listeners attribute to a material . . . is above all a means by which they achieve some psychological adjustment to the mechanisms of present-day life. . . . The so-called releasing element in music is simply the opportunity to feel something. . . . It is catharsis for the masses, but catharsis that keeps them all the more in line. One who weeps does not resist any more than one who marches.

—Theodor Adorno, *On Popular Music*, 1942¹

I can manipulate symbols without animating them, in an active and actual manner, with the attention and intention of signification. . . .

—Jacques Derrida, *Signature Event Context*, 1971²

On September 11, 2006, in downtown Manhattan thousands of mourners gathered at the World Trade Center site to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the tragic event. During the ceremony, they unfurled the American flag that flew over the ruins of ground zero in September 2001. They also observed a moment of silence. And then they talked—about the tragedy, and about different ways to remember it. In her brief speech, Susan Sliwak, whose husband died on September 11, said:

We had been married for only nine years, though it felt as if we had shared a lifetime together, because of all that we had been through. The light of his life

were our three children, Ryan and our twins, Kyle and Nicole. Of all the many things I wish I could still tell him, there is one thing my heart wants to say above all the rest, feelings best expressed in the words of an American song:

How much do I love you? I will tell you no lie.
 How deep is the ocean? How high is the sky?
 How many times a day do I think of you?
 How many roses are sprinkled with dew?
 How far would I travel to be where you are?
 How far is the journey? From here to a star?
 And, if I ever lost you, how much would I cry?
 How deep is the ocean? How high is the sky?³

She did not sing this upbeat song written in 1932 by a Russian-born Irving Berlin, the same famous lyricist who wrote *God Bless America*. Rather, the widow reduced the song to a collection of rhymes, to a sequence of mournful rhythmic questions. A moment of remembrance was literally turned here into a moment of recitation. The revelation of the personal connection with the dead was replaced by a touching yet impersonal quotation from a popular jazz-band song.

Of course, this widow was hardly original in her reliance on a memorable script for making known her own feelings. Today, practically any commemorative event involves a similar performance of well-known songs and poetry. In a very concentrated form the widow expressed a somewhat universal tendency to substitute an individualized recollection of the loss by ready-made verbal structures. A legitimate outlet to convey emotions in public, songs allow their performers and audience to recycle the existing repertoire of symbols and gestures in order to make a new experience recognizable. Desire for recognition, claims to the shared vocabulary of grief and mourning became more important than the representational authenticity of the survivor's affect. Equally, the public acknowledgment of trauma is rarely aimed here at understanding the specificity of the individual's experience. Rather the public acknowledgment is rooted in the recognition of symbolic formulas ("how deep is the ocean?") and publicly available scripts ("the words of an American song"), in which a concrete historical instance of loss becomes enveloped. In such contexts, popular songs act as acoustic and narrative containers capable of evoking or accommodating forms of collective sensibility.⁴

The structural framework within which emotions get released, experienced, and communicated here is simple: repetition of a cliché provokes its intersubjective recognition, which, in turn, eases the shared acceptance

of the social experience that the cliché was called upon to signify in the first place. For Theodor Adorno, this *social* function of popular music was a clear sign of the impoverished quality of the *musical* material itself.⁵ Indeed, repeatability usually relies on expressive simplicity, and appeals to a wide recognition often imply a limited scope of musical literacy and tastes.

Yet the involution of the musical vocabulary is not the only thing that music for the masses does, and the widow's regression to the familiar (and popular) cultural form points in an important direction. Recitation does not have to be reduced to a mechanical reproduction. Iterability of the sign, that is to say, its alteration through repetition, is a crucial feature of any text. While conscious about the form, repetition disrupts contexts in order to unleash new meanings or, for instance, to release unexpressed emotions:

Every sign, linguistic or non-linguistic, spoken or written . . . can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner that is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts, without any center or absolute anchoring.⁶

Framed as a part of a public performance, the iteration of the song by Susan Sliwak revealed the core element of ritual as such. To succeed, ritual must assume some competence on the part of its participants; ritual's referential nature requires as its crucial precondition some shared knowledge of cultural scripts.⁷ Using this example as my starting point, in what follows I approach the popular song as a form of ritual, as a scripted performance that translates individual feelings into forms of social connectedness and meaningful narrativity.⁸ As an affective medium, the song ties together emotion, signification, and (vocal) physicality, providing a completed and repeatable structure. It is precisely this ability of the popular song to cement the affective, the symbolic, and the social that I want to highlight in this chapter.

My second point is more narrative-driven. I suggest that apart from reanimating and solidifying familiar emotional and symbolic templates, the citational nature of the song also offers a possibility to reformulate (if not to alter) events. Songs reshape relationships and events by shifting emphasis, by establishing new metaphorical links, and by bringing to light details that have been omitted or marginalized. In this respect, recent songs about the Chechen war (1994—present), which this article examines, are especially important. Not unlike Susan Sliwak, many performers of war

songs achieved a social impact by relying on the language of abstraction and generalization; in this case, concrete stories of military losses and suffering have been translated into an emotionally charged language of patriotism. Performed against the background of the public's amnesia in regard to the Chechen war, these songs have been instrumental in creating a vision of war that is quite different from official accounts of "the military actions in the North Caucasus," as the war in Chechnya is known in the language of the governmental bureaucracy. By appealing to familiar emotional formulas and cultural tropes, war songs have managed to evoke respect or, at least, recognition that ex-soldiers have been denied by the state and society. In my discussion I will rely on materials that I collected during extended fieldwork in Barnaul, the administrative center of Altai region (Siberia, Russia), in 2001 to 2003 and during shorter visits in 2005 and 2006.

ACOUSTIC GESTURES

On August 2, 2003, in Barnaul, a Siberian city located eleven time zones away from Manhattan, a very different social and gender group engaged in a symbolic performance similar to the commemorative event in New York. Altai Veterans of the Afghan War staged a major public ceremony in the city's main square to remember soldiers killed in the military conflicts of the last two decades, known as "local wars." Associated with the nationally celebrated Day of Paratroopers, the event included a concert of war songs performed by the group *Slaviane* (The Slavs) and a show of the marines billed as "an example of real masculinity from military-patriotic clubs and special mission divisions (*spetsnaz*)." In the leaflet about the show pasted around the city, the heroic virility of the event was muted by a less harsh symbol. A picture of paratroopers surrounding a blond boy (also dressed in a camouflage uniform), was accompanied by a short poem:

We put on blue berets
So that the child's eyes will never know tears
So that mothers will stop aging in grief
So that a new war will never happen (fig. 11.1)

Even though the immediate connection between the family-oriented rhetoric and the veterans of the Afghan War who sponsored this event was not obvious, the attempt to locate the experience of war in the context of gender identities and family roles was hardly an accident. Russia's recent "local wars" still polarize public opinion, and in this context, framing violence or loss as a matter of daily life helps to shift public attention



Чтоб свет не тусил детские глаза,
 Чтоб матери от горя не старели,
 Чтоб не назревал покаян войны,
 Беречь голубые мы парашютисты!

**Алтайский краевой
 Союз ветеранов Афганистана
 представляет:**

площадь Ветеранов, 1
 2 августа 2003 года 9:30 утра

праздничное шоу, посвящённое
Дню Воздушно-десантных войск

В программе:
 захватывающий полёт парашютистов,
 праздничный фейерверк на Речном вокзале,
 концерт гр. "Славяне",
 военные песни,
 настоящее мужество от военно-патриотических клубов и
 спецназа,
 возможность показать свои силы во время спортивных игр
 на пляже "Солнечный".

телефон для справок: 38-00-92

Fig. 11.1. Celebrating the military past: "So that a new war will never happen..." A photo of a poster for a "festive show" in Barnaul. August 2, 2003. Courtesy of Dmitry Bychkov.

from questioning the putative political necessity of the organized violence. Presented as an emotionally charged event in one's biography ("grief and tears"), the traumatic past in the nation's history bypassed the stage of close public analysis and scrutiny.

This context-shifting was solidified even more in the choice of songs performed by Slaviane. Called "Let's Remember the Glory of Combats," the group's performance consisted of old Russian and Soviet war hits that described lost battles, dying heroes, and anguished relatives. It appeared that the source of national pride and glory was not in military victories or in warriors' courage. Instead, it was the noble suffering that mattered. Against its emotional background no other justification was necessary. An aestheticized emphasis on loss made redundant any questions about one's own aggression

or the hostility that could have demanded this heroic suffering in the first place.⁹ Depoliticized and domesticated, war, once again, was equated with rituals of personal trauma, brought about by an unspecified threat.

Songs about the Great Patriotic War, as well as the Chechen and Afghan wars, have become a major cultural device through which the commonality of war and loss is established in Russian society. In February 2010, preparing for the upcoming Sixty-Fifth Anniversary of the Victory, the Ministry of Mass Communication and the three major national telephone service providers widely publicized their new project called "Hurray for the Victory!" (*Ura Pobede!*). Until May 9, 2010, every owner of a cell phone could dial "1945" and download (for free) one war song as a ringtone.¹⁰ During the presentation of the project, Vasili Lanovoi, a film star famous for his portrayal of Soviet officers in the 1960–1970s, emphasized the importance of the victory and its songs: "We need to make sure that time remains powerless when it comes to the young people's memory. We just cannot forget it: the best songs ever are still war songs; the best melodies ever—are war melodies."¹¹

This second life of Soviet war songs is a relatively new phenomenon. During Brezhnev's stagnation the genre was hollowed out by the ideological industry, with its emphasis on the epic and the celebratory. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the genre went into a period of hibernation and was brought back to life around 1995 by a heavily orchestrated celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Victory Day. Since then the military and patriotic *chanson* has experienced an obvious upsurge. War songs are often played on radio and TV channels; new cover versions are frequently recorded by major Russian pop and classical stars.¹² In many cities there are annual festivals of war songs, as well as competitions for the best performance of these songs by school students. Alarmed by this cultural development in Yeltsin's Russia, some cultural critics defined it as a tendency to "mobilize" and "militarize" the musical genre.¹³

In the new millennium and under a new political leadership, the situation with war songs in Russia became more institutionalized, yet it hardly changed its overall message. In 2001, the Russian pop singer Oleg Gazmanov, known for his strong patriotic sentiments, started a project called The "Songs of Victory" (*Pesni pobedy*). Contemporary Russian stars were called upon to revitalize songs of the Soviet past. In an interview Gazmanov explains the motivation behind the project:

There were two important moments for us. First, we wanted to make these songs sound totally contemporary . . . Secondly, I wanted this project to be totally positive; this is why I picked not just any song that was performed

during the war, but the songs of the victorious generation. This is why the word *Victory* is so prominent in the title of the project. These are not just war songs, but an artistic testimony (*svidetelstvo*) of the great victory.¹⁴

Since 2001, “The Songs of Victory” has become an annual event, televised live for the whole country (fig. 11.2). Perhaps its biggest success was achieved on May 9, 2005, during the celebration of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Victory Day. As many newspapers reported, more than one million spectators attended “The Songs of Victory” staged in Victory Park (*Park Pobedy*) in Moscow.¹⁵

The general popular attraction to songs has to do with several factors. A long-established tradition of collective singing in Russia, which can be traced across groups with different social, economic, educational, or age experience, provides a cultural framework.¹⁶ Being “profoundly word-based,”¹⁷ Russian pop songs are usually accompanied by simple if not primitive melodies (*motivy*). In fact, music often becomes of secondary importance. What is crucial instead is an “acoustic gesture,” a culturally



Fig. 11.2. “The Songs of Victory” Performed in Victory Park, Moscow (no date). From the singer’s official website: http://www.gazmanov.ru/media/gallery/gallery_28.html#2

shared contour of articulation, an adopted sequence of voice modulation.¹⁸ One of the most indicative signs of this tendency is the dominance of the so-called conversational (*razgovornaiia*) intonation in Russian popular songs. Songs, “musical letters” of sorts, are constructed as a dialogue against the backdrop of music.¹⁹

The diminished role of vocal skills and musical quality greatly stimulates songs’ reproduction during informal gatherings, and contributes to their mass appeal. Moreover, musically, the military chanson is quite rhythmic. Depending on the time of their creation, songs tend to rely on various formats of march, tango, waltz, or disco.²⁰ The musical structure is also usually reinforced by a strong rhythmic structure of the lyrics, which help to uphold a sense of form. The “rhythmic-syntactical figure” (*ritmiko-sintaksicheskaia figura*), a specific configuration of pauses, stresses, and ending rhymes, firmly shapes the overall contour of the song.²¹ It is exactly this intonational map, it is this emotional blueprint that ensures the repeatability of the song. Words or even sentences can be replaced, as long as the overall acoustic shell is kept intact.

The production and reproduction of “rhythmic-syntactical figures,” be they songs or militarized performances, have their own transformative effect. As Jean Comaroff put it in a different context, a gap between “received categories and changing everyday practices” most frequently results in people’s attempts to reestablish control over their daily practices through “symbolic reformulations” and concerted ritual actions.²² In this context, articulation and ritualized performance can be seen as the joining of previously unconnected or even nonexistent forms and systems of meaning.²³

While recognizing as extremely important the ordering and authorizing effect with which rituals are traditionally associated, for the purpose of my discussion I want to emphasize a different aspect of ritual mediations—the performative aspect of the genre of war songs. Songs—as well as music in general—are indeed actions; they are performances in which people take part. From this point of view, songs, as any ritual, can be seen as a form of social involvement in which shared values—i.e., “shared concepts of relations”—are affirmed and explored.²⁴ In other words, songs emotionally cement social connections that did not exist before the performance.

It is crucial to realize that the unifying ground here is not so much ideological as aesthetic. The commonality of relations and values is produced/performed/established through the reproduction of the form—in this case, through the reproduction of the internal relationship of sounds. This overall combination of rhythm and melody is replicated—or at least projected—onto the social level. As with any ritual, the *actual* social order (people and institutions) and the *imaginary* social order (reflected in songs) coincide—if

only temporarily—in the community of performing people. To frame it yet another way: the repeatable form of the song provides a symbolic structure—a melodic and rhythmical contour—that could be paralleled by the corresponding structures of expressions and behavior.²⁵

By focusing on particular examples of the “pragmatic transformation of meaning through the reordering of signifiers in the ritual text,”²⁶ I suggest that the current deployment of the war songs in Russia offers a particular form of affective link that I call “the patriotism of despair.”²⁷ The personal attachment to country and the personal feeling of individual or group belonging are created through a repetitive, ritualized articulation and recognition of loss. The establishing of shared values is reached through the incessant circulation of metonyms of individual and/or collective traumatic experience. Emotional recollections of loss and symbolic reconstructions of suffering bring together history, nation, and the individual.

REFORMULATING THE WAR

Like many other unofficial popular genres, songs about the Afghan and Chechen wars originally emerged through various networks of *magnitizdat*. Recorded by amateur performers, tapes were circulated initially among veterans and soldiers; eventually they became available for a larger audience from street vendors and market kiosks, too. Below I discuss several collections (tapes, CDs, DVDs) that I bought in Barnaul during my fieldwork.²⁸

During the last decade, this cultural production gradually formed its institutions. The Soldier Studio, located in Yaroslavl, in central Russia, has become a major record producer of the military chanson. The studio collects amateur recordings and prepares them for publication: older tapes of the studio contained a brief recorded message asking potential authors and performers to send in their recorded songs. Published collections tend to be thematically organized; such series as *It Happened in the Caucasus* (*Na Kavkaze delo bylo*), *Black Tulip* (*Chernyi Tiul'pan*), or *Little Brother* (*Bratishka*) have already several volumes (fig. 11.3). A small number of professionally singing war veterans gained some national popularity and following; however, by and large, veterans' performances are mostly oriented toward the audience that has some connection with the Afghan and Chechen wars (fig. 11.4).

Another major source of Afghan and Chechen war songs comes in a slightly different form. Mostly recorded on CDs, these collections present war songs performed by professional rock groups and very well known singers who have no personal military background (fig. 11.5). Both types



Fig. 11.3. *It happened in the Caucasus*. Vol. 1. A tape cover from a collection of war songs published by Soldatskaia studiia in Yaroslavl.



Fig. 11.4. Studio Vostok: Advertising CD albums of war songs by the group *Golubye berety* (Blue Berets), 2002.



Fig. 11.5. A cover art of the album *Batia* (Dad) by Aleksandr Marshal (Soyuz Prodakshn, 2002). A professional rock singer originally known for his participation in the famous *Gorky Park* rock group, since 1999 Marshal has been positioning himself as a performer of contemporary military and patriotic chansons. Having no combat background, the singer tends to rely on an adopted last name (the singer's original name was Aleksandr Min'kov) and on generational links (this particular album is dedicated to "fathers and grandfathers," and the cover includes a photo of the singer's dad).

of performers and songs, however, are indiscriminately reshuffled and reproduced in various bootlegged copies, also easily available in kiosks and on the Internet. Given that professional and amateur recordings share the same path of circulation and target the same audience (first of all veterans themselves), in my analysis I will not distinguish between them on the basis of their origin.²⁹

The melancholic obsession with loss, typical for songs about World War II, still determines the main emotional impulse of songs about Chechnya (as well as Afghanistan). Yet there is at least one crucial aspect in which the current version of this genre drastically departs from the Soviet singing legacy. As I have noted, the Chechen war has been pushed to the sidelines of public attention. It is often labeled a "forgotten war" and usually does not provoke a lot of attention on the part of those who are not directly implicated in it. Politically dubious and socially unpopular, the war is also symbolically ambiguous. Unlike the veterans of World War II, the Chechen war veterans have no easy narrative about victory and sacrifice that might be straightforwardly employed for generating the reaction of recognition. No core images of this war have been formed yet. No martyrs and heroes have yet been canonized. In other words, both the symbolic framing of the war and the traditions of its perception have yet to be shaped. Yet tapping into this mass genre for communicative purposes presupposes an elaborate work of translating the war experience into available/understandable dis-

cursive constructions. It requires accomplishing the task of a purposeful symbolic mediation aimed at other audiences, the operation that veterans are otherwise reluctant to undertake.

What kind of "symbolic reformulations" do songs about the Chechen war suggest? What kind of transformation of established (or only emerging) meaning do they point to? In what forms do they reshape perceptions of daily practices and recent history?

It is quite predictable that the main theme of these songs has to do with an attempt to figure out the meaning of the Chechen war. In their quest for meaning, song writers have tended to point to the vacuity of war, its symbolic and legal ambiguity. The following line from the song "On the Way Home" is quite typical: "We are done with the service // We are going home // With no idea what we have fought for."³⁰ In some cases, this hermeneutic paralysis stems from an inability to draw a differentiating line, to distinguish between "us" and "them" ("Who is a stranger? Who is a friend?").³¹ The Chechen war, then, emerges as "a feral (*dikii*) world /With no right, and no wrong."³²

There are two connected but relatively independent tropes that are frequently evoked to "normalize" the situation of indeterminacy. In one, the current chaos is construed as a reflection of political corruption, as a clear sign of incompetence of the Russian leadership. Sometimes, metaphors of corruption are used to point out the national/ethnic dimension of the war, as in this stanza: "They are making some deals on the top // Paid by our Slavic blood // They started this Chechen game/Packaged as a sacred love to the Motherland. // There is no end to this war."³³

Some songs specify the nature of corruption even further. Military generals are one such target. Blinded by their desire for state awards, military officials are scolded for their complete disregard for soldiers' lives: "Our commanders are totally 'tiptop' // What a disgrace they got us into in Grozny // Yet everyone got some award // Without ever stepping on the battlefield."³⁴ Often the same idea of different outcomes of the war is metonymically displaced: "Some get stars for their epaulets // Some—cargo 200 or a medical ward."³⁵ Frequently, corruption is linked to oil interests: "For five years coffins are coming from there // As well as tank-wagons with oil."³⁶ The persistent references to two incompatible paths of circulation (stars vs. "cargo 200," tank-wagons vs. coffins, money vs. death) is paralleled by a vision of two different communities—"big shots" vs. "average soldiers."

What is striking in this rationalization of the war is the intonation of a profound hopelessness that accompanies these taxonomies and classifications. Doomed to protect commercial interests of the unnamed, undefined, yet corrupted "them," the figure of the soldier is often transformed into a passive,

unanimated object: "Tomorrow is a fight // And you will be used again // As a plug to stop // A pipeline from leaking."³⁷ The group *Rostov*, an emblematic collective of veterans performing war songs since 1995, summed up well this general attitude by describing in one of its songs the Russian soldier as "a throwaway sort of object" (*odnorazovyi kakoi-to predmet*).³⁸

Unlike corrupt politicians and military leadership, ethnic Chechens are rarely presented in songs (or published diaries and memoirs, for that matter).³⁹ Ethnic differences are noted ("One young boy kills another young boy // One—under the [red] star, another—under the crescent"),⁴⁰ yet these differences do not become essential. My interviews with veterans demonstrated the same tendency. Differences that were seen as important were the ones that were *comparable*, not alienating. Oleg K., a veteran of the Chechen war, for instance, explained to me in Barnaul that he could clearly see how differently Chechen rebels were treated by their leadership. "They were always provided with food, Coca-Cola, Sprite; and we had nothing. They had good cigarettes, and we had nothing to smoke for weeks."⁴¹ Contrary to usual expectations and narrative traditions, the metaphoric creativity of war songs is not inspired by describing the ethnic or religious alien. The main identifying vector lies elsewhere. Along with descriptions of corrupt officials, it is the theme of a "lost Russia" and disoriented Russians that determines the symbolic development:

Tree, where are your leaves?
Lost in disbelief?
Under imperial rubble,
We, children of yours, are dying . . .
Berries of the same field
With blackthorn as the only prize
We are called "occupiers"
Getting looks like punches.
Heavy blows of wind break the Tree's branches
Why is being a Russian not profitable anymore?
Are you Mother or Stranger?
Who are you, Russia?
And for how long
Would you kick us around like dry leaves?⁴²

The metaphor of "profitability" of one's national identity is not accidental here, demonstrating the superimposition of the economic and the patriotic, which is so typical for veterans' self-presentation: "War is war // It is also a job // And who would do it // If not us?"⁴³ Implying a break

("imperial rubble") in the usual flow of events, the destabilized ("unprofitable") identity is locked between the imposed image of the "occupant" and the unidentifiable Motherland.

In some cases, this "double bind" results in a modification of the "initial contract." It is not the (unidentifiable) Motherland that is presented as the main counterpart. Instead it is the enemy who has to be paid back tit for tat, or rather with the accumulated interest. "We'll take revenge mercilessly // For our friends and comrades // Paying an interest rate // For the blood they shed."⁴⁴ For many veterans it is the loss of close friends that finally turns the war into a meaningful enterprise, into a way of settling scores. To quote from an interview with an Altai soldier: "We entered [Grozny] on January 1, 1995, at 9:00 a.m., and started an assault right away. . . . Personally, for five days in a row I had no idea what I was fighting for. On the fifth of January, I was wounded, and I started taking revenge for this. And then it was all open: my commander was killed, my gun-layer, my best friend. I knew that I was fighting for them."⁴⁵

The symbolic vacuity of "Russia" as a meaningful identifying metaphor produces yet another important terminological development. To avoid the image of the alienating Mother-Russia or, in a different version, "Father(land) with a hangman's habits,"⁴⁶ songs rely on a medieval substitute, "*Rus*." Traditionally, *Rus*' is used either to refer to the times associated with the origin of the first state of Eastern Slavs in the ninth century (Kievan *Rus*'), or to denote the Russian state before it became an empire (Great *Rus*'). In either case, *Rus*' tends to emphasize key historical fights with foreigners in a process of creating a strong national state.

In the following stanza from the song "The Order to Back Off" from the CD *Bratishka*, a threatened *Rus*' is located within a web of three-dimensional relations that include morally superior officers, a (somewhat) lost Kremlin, and finally the generalized image of the enemy (fig. 11.6). Written by Aleksandr Marshal after the Khasavyurt ceasefire of 1996,⁴⁷ which is often seen by many soldiers as an act of betrayal on the part of Russian president Boris Yeltsin, the song's title can be simultaneously interpreted as an order being given *to* the soldiers/officers, and as an order articulated by the soldiers/officers to the Kremlin:

If there is an order "*back off!*"
The world won't collapse.
But we'd bring our privates
To look at the Kremlin's eyes.
We might drink and smoke
And still, the officer's honor is with us

As is the country behind our backs.
 We have a simple demand
 Let us get it done.
 Do not tell us “stop!”
 Do not turn us back.
 We’ve got rid of grief, we have touched death
 So that Rus’ won’t be torn apart
 By hordes of dregs.⁴⁸

The song introduces an important dimension to the theme of military brotherhood: notions of professional honor and dignity are historically associated with the figure of the Russian military officer, and act now as a moral counterweight to political uncertainty and corruption.⁴⁹ What these notions of dignity effectively delineate is collectivity, a military “wholeness” that is built not only around loss but also around shared values and norms. Yet, it is symptomatic that this attempt to create an alternative moral ground is oppositional, negative, and fundamentally tied to the things that are rejected (“Do not tell us ‘stop’ // Do not turn us back”). The identity that emerges here is formed by the decision *not* to make an available choice and *not* to succumb to compromising desires. Often, rejected desires are the ones that are driven by money:



Fig. 11.6. *Bratishka*: “There are no ties more sacred than camaraderie.” Vol. 3, 2003.

The Golden Calf is worshiped everywhere
 And daily life is gray, and grim, and sad
 Keep up, my friend, do not betray yourself
 Remember, we are officers! . . .
 You get aggrieved when seeing once again
 A friend shackled by golden chains
 Yet our dear Rus’ could be proud
 That such children are still serving it.⁵⁰


Emotionally charged, these songs about the brotherhood of men who have been able to sustain the continuity of their military profession do reach people who have not been necessarily affected by the Chechen war. In December 2002 in Barnaul I attended another public concert of Slaviane. As I mentioned in the beginning of the article, this group is a frequent participant in various patriotic events organized by the Altai Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers and veterans of local wars. Slaviane also had a tour in Chechnya, giving concerts for policemen and military deployed there. The group is quite popular in the region, and its latest CD has an endorsement from the regional bishop (figs. 11.7 & 11.8).

Unlike Slaviane’s many other performances, that concert was a regular commercial show. Titled “Songs of Russian Squadrons” (*pesni russkogo voinstva*), it was staged in a local concert hall and was attended by a mixed audience. The six soloists, young men in their early twenties, all dressed in black, were accompanied by a full-fledged orchestra of “Russian folk instruments,” as the playbill explained it. Among a diverse arrangement of war songs from different periods of Russia’s history, one was Oleg Gazmanov’s ballad about officers of recent wars. During the performance of the song, there was a clear emotional rapport between the singers and the audience. People started rising from their seats when Slaviane began the chorus line: “Officers, officers your hearts are a target // For Russia and freedom without end // Officers, Russians (*rossiiane*), let freedom shine // And make our hearts beat in unison.”⁵¹ It was hard not to follow this shared expression of mobilized sensibility. It was almost impossible to distance oneself from this collective impulse affectively orchestrated by the song. By the middle of the song, there were 300 or so people in the hall, standing and silently looking in unison at the stage.

It is precisely this binding social power of publicly performed war songs that veterans appeal to in their attempts to get their “message” to different groups. Providing “quotable” symbolic formulas, offering a graspable



Figs. 11.7–8. The cover of Slaviane's CD *Songs of Russian Squadrons* endorsed by the regional bishop.



Русская Православная Церковь всегда со святым народом, а в году нашествий многообразных иноплеменников благославляла российское воиство на одоление враги. Тысячелетие наши пастыри призывали с аманов к твердости и мужеству духа, к непоколебимой Вере в то, что с помощью Божией наши защитники выполнят святой долг по обороне Отечества.

Епископы: Евгенульский и Александр Максим

Диск выпущен при финансовой поддержке Фонда святого Всехвального апостола Андрея Первозванного, Центра национальной славы России, Западно-Сибирской железной дороги.

contour of discursive intonation, songs reshape, however temporarily and locally, practices of perception, and often result in gestures of respect for the military. Limited in their effect by time and space, songs nonetheless offset established social hierarchies by pointing to possibilities that have not been realized, or by negating those already implemented.

ITERABLE PAST

One of the crucial aspects of the postsocialist condition is a spectacular disintegration of the general cultural context within which actions and identities used to make sense. The downfall of socialist ideology in the 1990s cannot be limited to the collapse of a particular value system. It also rendered meaningless the existing rituals of recognition. One's social status, social achievements, and social biography suddenly became ostensibly devoid of familiar prescriptive clues.

Perhaps, most strikingly, the disintegration of established practices of signification and recognition manifested itself in the persistent individual and institutional failure to associate new forms of experience with new categories. The postsocialist uncertainty made especially hard the production of new symbolic hierarchies (typologies and classifications), which could provide some structuring effect in the changing conditions.⁵² The ambiguous status of the Chechen war, coupled with the state's persistent attempts to keep the war within a closely regulated symbolic context, added to the post-Soviet uncertainty yet another layer. As a result, in the absence of normative frameworks or routinized practices for making the Chechen war personally and socially meaningful, both people and institutions tended to resort to the strikingly mechanical application of Soviet-style symbols.

At times, the symbolic impact of such prosthetic reliance on Soviet signs could be chilling. For instance, a young Altai serviceman, severely wounded during the first Chechen war, described how in 1996, upon his return from Chechnya, the city's government issued an identification document to prove his entitlement to such benefits as free local transportation and reduced rent. The unclear legal status of the Chechen war, its participants, and its victims, however, resulted in a category impasse: the ID listed the soldier as "disabled (*invalid*) by the Great Patriotic War (*Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina*, the Russian name for World War II), with a second-degree injury."

While being literally out of sync with reality, the use of this term *Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina* by the local bureaucracy to describe the Chechen war veteran's status was by no means meaningless. From the economic point of view, this identity, granted by the state, equated the soldier with other generations of veterans entitled to welfare benefits. Inevitably, such an accent on the formal and the procedural created a tension. As the veteran observes, "Some people give me a crazy look when I show this ID. Once in a while, [someone] will sneer: 'So, how exactly did you manage to take part in [the Great Patriotic War]?'"⁵³

This failed exercise in historical iterability brings to light the uneasy nature of recognition. A “fundamental need” of the subject, recognition by others also has a crucial “supplementary dimension”—reciprocity.⁵⁴ However, reciprocity is not the same as mutuality. Rather it is a commitment to the same discourse; it is a commitment to the same set of imaginary positions from which the individual’s particular location and particular experience can be “seen,” described, and thus acknowledged.⁵⁵ Within this context, public indifference to the fate of Chechen war veterans (and to the signs of their presence) reveals a lack of a common vocabulary of public symbolism. Or, to put it somewhat differently, this refusal to recognize also demonstrates a deficit of media that could have successfully translated unknown experience into graspable narrative formulas and behavioral patterns.

By reclaiming and reappropriating the legacy of Russia’s previous wars in their public rituals, veterans have managed to overcome this condition of nonrecognition. Songs have given them a literary framework that makes possible a narrative continuity with the past: a continuous link between the Great Patriotic War and the Chechen war, which seemed so strikingly out of place in the mid-1990s, became a rhetorical norm ten years later. Images of suffering soldiers of World War II were conflated with descriptions of veterans’ experience of the Chechen war. Attempts at citationality finally succeeded.

Such reiteration of the war trauma, foundational for Russia’s national self-perception after the collapse of the Soviet Union, generated instant sympathy. By appealing to the legacy of the Second World War, the current generation of veterans invoked memories of loss experienced in 1941–1945 almost by every family in Russia. Crucially, it was not the type or the purpose of a particular war that this newly created ritual of recognition acknowledged. Nor did it celebrate a victorious end. Rather, patriotic values were evoked as a particular state of emotions, as a repetition of a familiar configuration of painful events. The commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the Chechen war that was broadcast by NTV, a major Russian television network, is a good example of this patriotism of despair practiced by veterans in public.

The ceremony was aired on December 11, 2004, exactly ten years from the day when Boris Yeltsin signed a decree that called to restore “constitutional legality” in the breakaway Chechen Republic. Staged in a big concert hall filled with veterans and their families, the event drew attention to the “forgotten war,” to the sad plight of hostages, soldiers, and their relatives. Personal stories of officers and civilians and various award ceremonies were interspersed with performances of professional

and amateur singers. Newly written songs about the war in Chechnya were supplemented by the active recycling of songs about the Great Patriotic War. At the very end of the event, building up the emotional and symbolic coda, the two anchors of the ceremony tried to connect all historical dots in a linear narrative. As one of them put it, “The Great Patriotic War lasted four years; the war in Afghanistan—nine; the Chechen war just opened up its tenth-year page, and nobody knows how long this morbid book of war will last.” The ceremony, then, made an unpredictable move. Addressing the audience, the presenter continued: “There are no victories in civil wars, yet all of you—those who are here today, and those who are not with us anymore—all of you, have won your own victory. Selflessly and loyally, you served your Fatherland [*Otechestvo*], at the time when the Fatherland is not going through its best period.” The second host of the event followed the theme and praised the soldiers in the room, emphasizing the fact that they had done everything they could to ensure that “the country would regain its previous dignity and grandeur” (*dostoinstvo i velichie*). The presenter concluded by personalizing the historical link between different generations:

Veterans of the Great Patriotic War are looking at you. Because only to you could they entrust the country that they have saved from Fascism, along with the banner of the Victory that they carried throughout the Great Patriotic War from Ukraine to Germany. The banner that was raised on the top of the Imperial Chancellery in Berlin on May 2, 1945.

The banner was carried in, accompanied by an honor guard. Then followed a short video clip spelling out historical parallels that might have gone unnoticed otherwise. Black and white images of Soviet cities and Berlin, destroyed during World War II, were seamlessly blended with images of the devastated Chechnya. The footage of the Russian flag raised in Chechnya was carefully preceded *and* echoed by archival shots of a Soviet flag, waving above the Reichstag in Berlin. The effect of the video narrative was amplified by the soundtrack, the song “Despite It All, We’ve Won” (*I vse-taki my pobedili*) from the late Soviet film *Along the Main Street With an Orchestra* (*Po glavnoi ulitse s orkestrom*, dir. Petr Todorovskii, 1986):

Things weren’t easy at the start; I won’t lie about it.
Tugboats sat silent on that shore,
On the shore where we were, too.
We were abandoning our hometowns
Leaving our souls to stay there forever.

Despite it all, despite it all
 Despite it all we have won.
 The scarlet snow was blackened by lost hats
 And lips became numb on the shore.
 On the shore, where we stayed
 Where we stayed back then.
 There was a Stalingrad behind every back
 There was no retreat from frozen trenches.
 Despite it all, despite it all
 Despite it all we have won.
 The salt of sweat discolored soldiers' shirts
 That salt of return is like honey for us.
 On the shore, on the shore
 Where we stayed back then . . .
 Regardless of how many of us are still alive
 The voice of our dead buddies is here.
 Despite it all, despite it all
 Despite it all we have won.

(Lyrics by Grigorii Pozhenian, music by Petr Todorovskii)

Written in the early 1980s, this song about the Great Patriotic War originally provided a striking contrast to the state-supported representations of the war. "Despite It All" lacked both the paralyzing melancholy, so typical for the Soviet war songs, and the ostentatious self-glorification that dominated the official (epic) version of the war during the Brezhnev period. Released during Perestroika, the song suggested a different way of remembering the war. It downplayed the overall scale of the war, focusing instead on disconnected details. The overall fragmentation of the song's narrative emphasized the "order of urgency," not the logical consequences of the war experience.⁵⁶ Providing neither striking metaphors, nor memorable images, it portrayed the war as an incoherent ensemble of everyday fragments of the war life; as a disjointed collection of metonyms of loss; as a "confused story of confusion."⁵⁷ It had none of the patriotic motivation that some songs written during the war had. Nor did it exploit the usual theme of family ties, which was supposed to inspire the soldiers. Suggesting no clear and complete narrative, the song presented the victory as a broken-up story of individual perseverance, as a result of personal ability not to give up, regardless of what was happening around. Anchored in multiple fragmented elements (tugboats, hats, lips, shirts), the war experience was, at the same time, disconnected from larger political and social aspects of the war.

In their studies of autobiographical documents and fiction written by Vietnam War veterans, many scholars have pointed out that fragmentation of personal narratives was one of the main discursive tools that veterans used to describe themselves. Ex-soldiers and literary critics often referred to this conscious aesthetic of disintegration as "fragging," using a term that during the Vietnam War described soldiers' assassination of their officers with fragmentation grenades. In soldiers' prose and poetry, stylistic and narrative disintegration was a way of exploding official representations of war. A controlling device of sorts, the discursive fragging worked both as a form of self-defense (self-distancing) and as an act of reclaiming language.⁵⁸

With its deliberate fragmentation and disintegration, "Despite It All" seemed to follow this general tendency to fragment in order to symbolically control the narrative of traumatic experience. I suggest that this historically specific focus on details made possible two crucial post-Soviet tendencies in memorializing the current war experience. First, the original stylistic and narrative fragmentation that was pioneered in late Soviet war songs emerges as one of the main narrative devices through which the late-Soviet and post-Soviet wars are experienced and represented today. Secondly, the avoidance of a dominant overarching symbolic framework in this type of song,⁵⁹ a deliberate escape from a clear ideological theme that could offer a unified vision of the war, resulted in a peculiar form of military ahistoricism during the post-Soviet period. Specific cultural and ideological components of different wars gave place to close-up images of objects and people.⁶⁰ What became crucial was the ability to typecast fragments of different wars into new classes. Similar contours (banners, rubble, trenches, etc.) were supposed to substitute for the missing whole.

In its post-Soviet incarnation, in the course of the commemorating event, "Despite It All" was suddenly imbued with a different significance. Reiterated within a different temporal and social context, the song lost its historical referentiality, providing not so much a historical example but a narrative template and emotional blueprint. Not only did the song reduce the war experience to the personalized ability not to give up, but also it endowed the post-Soviet disaster in Chechnya with some historical dignity of the victory in the Second World War ("one's own Stalingrad"). As a performative event, the song didn't so much remind the participants about the shared values, shared experience, and shared relations as enact this commonality in a totally new environment. The participatory nature of the song, taken together with its rigid—complete—semantic and rhythmic structure, turned it into a sociosymbolic medium that reformatted

experience into a tool that established a new sociosymbolic frame within which disjointed elements of social memory could be connected with (or disconnected from) each other.

The fragmented perception of war offered in the song provided a frame of comparison, but also a method of writing a new military history. In a similar way, newly written songs about the Chechen war foreshorten the historical distance by “fragging” the overall context. There is a difference, however. The renewed popularity of the metonymic remembering is accompanied now by a historically specific will to connect. The acoustic shell of the song has been appropriated for keeping together *similar* fragments of *incommensurable* wars. Stringing different wars in a seamless story, current songs recontextualize military experiences both in the past and in the present.

In his discussion of the main difference between writing poetry and writing history, Reinhart Koselleck, a German historian, pointed to the long-standing tradition of juxtaposing the synchronicity of events in poetry and the diachronic sequencing of events in history. Unlike a historian, who is concerned with the time-bound relationships and constellations of things, the poet “is able to cluster incidents as closely as he wishes.”⁶¹ Indeed, it was not the actual timeline that organized such clustering in war songs. What allowed keeping all these disconnected experiences and fragmented details of war together was a profound emotional investment in the idea of survival, in the experience of personal perseverance. By framing loss and suffering as a matter of everyday life, Chechen war veterans were able to turn the genre of the war song into a crucial cultural device that could reach a substantial audience.⁶²

By retrofitting the Chechen war experience into the inherited narrative of war, this poetic activity somewhat broke down the existing public indifference toward the war and its veterans. Performative and narrative at the same time, songs emerged not only as an “instrument” used by yet another generation of veterans to inform their audience about a forgotten or marginalized war.⁶³ Also, and more importantly, war songs were presented as an invitation to join the act of narration. The social and sociological importance of this genre is hard to overestimate. Suffice it to mention that *Bratstvo* (Brotherhood), the first organization of the Chechen war veterans in Barnaul, emerged precisely as an outcome of a festival of soldiers’ songs.⁶⁴

I finish with an example that highlights the transformative function of songs in a particularly striking way. In this song, the poetics of loss and the politics of iterability help to create a new temporal and spatial reality by restructuring recent and remote history. The song “Everything is Cool” (*Vse putem*, by Roman Bulgachev) is a part of the fourth volume of the CD series *Black Tulip*. The CD is dedicated to “those who have fought and who

still fight, carrying out the Motherland’s orders.” Using the accompaniment mostly as background, Andrei Vasil’ev, a singer with a husky baritone, narrates (rather than sings) the story in which the same situation is repeated in three different geographical places at three different periods of time:

Leaden snowstorms were finally over // And the time of war was ended, too.
Trains were running home from the west // Spring in May excited every head.
Often, in a local neighborhood // Brightened by the evening moon,
Veterans commemorated those // Who failed to return.
Sitting at the table outside // Slightly muted by a lack of noise
“It’s over,” everybody thought // And everything will be cool
In our postwar country.

Time is spinning quickly all its wheels // Time is setting pain and wounds apart.
The unusual word “Afghan” // Settles in our lives.
Carrying bitter scars in their souls // Foreign cities left behind,
Veterans commemorated those // Who failed to return.
Sitting at the table outside // Slightly muted by a lack of noise
“It’s over,” everybody thought // And everything will be cool.
In our postwar country.

Guys have not been born to look // At the world from their knees.
Dressed in a dusty T-shirt // Wearing soldier’s boots,
The son of the soldier // Who took Kabul
The grandson of the soldier // Who took Berlin
How did you celebrate the New Century // In the burnt-out Chechen land?
Sitting at the table outside // Slightly muted by a lack of noise
“It’s over,” everybody thought // And everything will be cool
In our postwar country. // Everything seemed so cool. (Bulgachev 2003)

The logic of poetic clustering is, certainly, fully employed in the song, demonstrating how the “postwar” is never realized, how “a lack of noise” is always interrupted. War emerges as a cyclical phenomenon, a fifth season of sorts—inescapable and never-ending. The joining of different episodes, the constructing of alternative chronotopes (Grozny–Kabul–Berlin, West–East–Caucasus) produces a generational continuity. To be more precise, this joining of generations transforms the horizontal unity of brothers-in-arms into a vertical unity of protecting ancestors. The symbolic restructuring of events and generations turns military brotherhood into a paradigmatic unit, into a pillar that supports a newly written war story. The double symbolic effect of this clustering not only allows for the

domesticating of wars, for making them into a part of everyday life (“at the table, outside”); more importantly, it locates them on the same plane. Continuity-as-repetition brackets off crucial differences and emphasizes instead the formal resemblance, the shared biographical “contour”: “Son of the soldier who took Kabul // Grandson of the soldier who took Berlin.”⁶⁵

• • •

Throughout this chapter, I have been suggesting that expressions of emotional states in public are often formed as citations of familiar narratives: songs and poetry provide a necessary vocabulary but also a certain rhythmic structure, a complete intonation map that helps to organize and modulate feelings. A ritual of sorts, such performances appeal to the audience’s knowledge of cultural scripts, suggesting that the listener view the experience of loss or trauma as an analogy, a repetition, an iteration of the already known. Songs, then, act as an emotional and narrative blueprint, as an affective medium that helps to convert feelings into recognizable stories and gestures.

It is precisely this quality of the popular song that has made the military chanson especially effective in today’s Russia. The formulaic nature of this genre provides a clear and repeatable semantic and syntactic structure for ordering disjointed historical experience and memory. Simultaneously, its participatory character ensures a constant production of community of performers and listeners. On the symbolic level, the primacy of the theme of loss and suffering creates a set of shared values and produces a certain affective attachment to the symbolic structures of songs. Solidarity emerges in the process of sharing losses, and communities are built around practices of incorporating past suffering into the present.

I do not want to overestimate the transformative impact of these (and other) rituals in re-shaping the public attitude toward the Chechen war veterans in particular and toward the war in Chechnya in general: the usual life span of these songs is quite short, and newly emerging commemorative rituals have not been routinized yet. Despite it all, these emerging public rituals were the very first successful attempts to break the silence and amnesia associated with the Chechen war. The breakthrough came at a price. New symbolic frameworks tend to be excessively sentimental. They are twisted in their chronology. They are dubious in their comparisons and overstretched in their implications. The choice of their symbols is restricted: moving from one war to another, they flatten and militarize history. Still, it was precisely these feelings best expressed in the words of war songs that managed to produce an effect of public recognition that veterans were denied for a decade.

NOTES

1. Theodor W. Adorno, “On Popular Music” (with the Assistance of George Simpson), in T. Adorno, *Essays on Music* (Berkeley, 2002), 460, 462.
2. Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” *Glyph 1* (1977): 184.
3. “Ceremonies Mark Fifth Anniversary of 9/11 Attacks,” official web site of PBS; originally aired on September 11, 2006 (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/terrorism/july-dec06/ceremonies_09-11.html).
4. For a detailed discussion of this tendency, see e.g., Ryuzo Uchido, “Memory and the Transformation of Social Experience in Modern Japan: Rethinking the Song ‘Home,’” *Media, Culture, and Society* 21, no. 2 (March 1999): 205–19.
5. Adorno, “On Popular Music,” 452.
6. Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” 185–86. Derrida traces the origin of the term “iterability” to *itara*, “other” in Sanskrit; iterability, then, is repetition tied to alterity; *ibid.*, 180.
7. Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York, 1988), 76–77.
8. On popular music and connectivity see Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (New York, 2006), 26–27; on emotion and narrativity see Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affects* (Ithaca, 2003), 48.
9. The genre of such military laments, of course, has a long tradition. *The Tale of Igor’s Campaign* is perhaps the most widely known example. And Slaviane dutifully acknowledged their precursors, performing in the concert Pushkin’s “Kak nyne sbiraetsia veshchii Oleg” set to the music of the song *Variag*, which was originally written by A. Turishchev to commemorate the heroes of a Russian cruiser sunk during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905. It was precisely this war’s songs that produced a lasting aesthetic and narrative effect on the contemporary genre of military laments. For a good example of such songs, see the CD *Gimn geroiam: K stoletiu russko-iaponskoi voiny* (Fortmedia, 2004). For a concise (if tendentious) review of the history of Russian military songs see *Pobeda: Pesni russkogo voina* (Moscow, 1999).
10. For the list of songs see the website of the project (<http://ura.9may.ru/>).
11. Bol’shaia troika zapuskaet besplatnyi nomer “1945.” Electronic document: <http://ura.9may.ru/news/20100226/209544892.html>.
12. For instance, in 2003 Dmitri Hvorostovsky, a soloist at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, recorded a CD with Soviet songs of the war under the title *Where Are You, My Brother?* (Delos, 2003).
13. See, for example, Aleksandr Shchuplov, “Idet mobilizatsiia pesni,” *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, January 20, 2001.
14. Proekt Pesni pobedy, <http://eskadron.narod.ru/news/09.05.2001.htm>.
15. Alina Keshokova, “Pobednyi klich Gazmanova,” *Moskovskii komsomolets*, May 5, 2005.
16. See Gerald Smith, *Songs to Seven Strings: Russian Guitar Poetry and Soviet “Mass Song,”* (Bloomington, 1984); see also: David MacFadyen, *Red Stars: Personality and the Soviet Popular Song, 1955–1991* (Montreal, 2001).
17. Nicholas Glossop, “On the Peculiarities of Soviet Rock and Roll,” in Andrew Wachtel, ed. *Intersections and Transpositions: Russian Music, Literature, and Society* (Evanston, 1998), 274.
18. Tatiana Cherednichenko, *Muzykal’nyi zapas: 70-e* (Moscow, 2002), 373. “Acoustic gesture” (*zvukovoi zhest*) is a term coined by the Russian linguist Evgenii Polivanov

that was actively used in literary analysis by Iurii Tynianov in his "O kompozitsii 'Evgeniia Onegina.'" Iurii Tynianov, *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino* (Moscow, 1977).

19. Famous songs about the Great Patriotic war were explicitly structured as dialogues: "Gde zhe vy teper', druž'ia odnopolchane?" (Where are you now, my combat friends?), by A. Fat'ianov and V. Solov'ev-Sedoi, and "Temnaia noch," by N. Bogoslovskii and V. Agatov ("V temnuu noch' ty, liubimaia, znaiu, ne spish"—I know, you cannot sleep at night, my beloved). B. Lee Cooper traces the same tendency in his analysis of wartime songs (1941–1945) in the United States. B. Lee Copper, "From 'Love Letters' to 'Miss You': Popular Recordings, Epistolary Imagery, and Romance during War-Time, 1941–1945," *Journal of American Culture* 19, no. 4 (1996).

20. Cherednichenko, *Muzykal'nyi zapas*, 499.

21. Osip Brik, "Ritm i syntaksis," *Novyi Lef*, 1927, no. 4:28.

22. Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power and Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, 1985), 120.

23. *Ibid.*, 154.

24. Christopher Small, "Why Doesn't the Whole World Love Chamber Music?" *American Music* 19, no. 3 (2001): 346–47.

25. For a discussion, see Peter Kivy, *Sound Sentiment: An Essay on the Musical Emotion* (Philadelphia, 1989), 77.

26. Comaroff, *Body of Power*, 197.

27. For a more detailed exploration of this idea, see my book *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss* (Ithaca, 2009).

28. While a few Altai veterans do compose and perform songs, I was not able to record them.

29. For an extensive list of war songs, see <http://www.avtomat2000.com/sbor.html>.

30. Timur, "My edem domoi," *Ot Afganistana do Dagestana: Pis'mo s fronta* (Fond Muzyka dushi, 1999).

31. *Ibid.*

32. Boris Dragilev, "V Chechne," *Chernyi Tiul'pan-4* (Kvadro-Disk, 2003).

33. Andrei Klimnuk, "I voine toi ne vidno kontsa," *Bratishka*, vol. 3 (OOO Staraia Ploshchad', 2003).

34. *Ibid.*

35. "Cargo 200" (*gruz dvesti*)—is a usual euphemism that refers to coffins with bodies of dead soldiers transported back to their homes. Aleksandr Khamov, "Zabytyi batal'on," *Chernyi Tiul'pan-4* (Kvadro-Disk, 2003).

36. Dragilev, "V Chechne."

37. A. Kudriavtsev, "Kodga zh sluchilos' im uspet'?" *Na Kavkaze bylo delo*, vol. 4 (Yaroslavl, n.d.).

38. Gruppya Rostov, *Soldatskaia pesnia* (DVD Land, 2007)

39. For a totally different dynamic during a different war in the Caucasus, see, e.g., Keziban Acar, "An Examination of Russian Imperialism: Russian Military and Intellectual Descriptions of the Caucasians during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878," *Nationalities Papers* 32, no. 1 (2004): 7–21. See also *Songs of the Caucasian War* (Russkaia lira, 2002).

40. Kudriavtsev, "Kodga zh sluchilos' im uspet'?"

41. Interview with Oleg K., November 2001, Barnaul.

42. Kaskad, "Rossiia," *Na Kavkaze bylo delo*, vol. 2 (Yaroslavl, n.d.).

43. Pskovskii Desant, *Bratishka*, vol. 3 (OOO Staraia Ploshchad', 2003)

44. "Za druzei-tovarishchei // Mstim vsegda bezzhalostno // I vsegda s protsentami /Krov' za krov' berem," Valerii Gorban', "Dnevnik ofitsera OMONa," in Iakov Gordin and Valerii Grigoriev, eds., *My byli na etikh voynakh: Svidetel'stva uchastnikov sobytii 1989–2000 godov* (St. Petersburg, 2003), 170.

45. Liubov' Tre'tiakova, "Chetyre raza gorel v tanke," *My zhdali vas, synov'ia* (Barnaul, 1999), 25.

46. Khamov, "Zabytyi batal'on."

47. The agreement was signed in August 1996 by Aleksandr Lebed, the head of Russia's Security Council, and Aslan Maskhadov, the leader of Chechnya; the document effectively ended all military operations in Chechnya and outlined a plan for peaceful negotiations.

48. Aleksandr Marshal, "Prikaz nazad," *Bratishka*, vol. 3 (OOO Staraia Ploshchad', 2003)

49. See Paul Robinson, "Nevol'niki chesti: Muzhestvennost' na pole boia v nachale XX veka," in Serguei Oushakine, ed., *O muzhe(N)stvennosti* (Moscow, 2002), 186–98.

50. Nikolai Somkov, "My zhe ofitsery," *Chernyi Tiul'pan-4* (Kvadro-Disk, 2003).

51. Gazmanov, Oleg, *Ofitsery*. Electronic document: <http://www.gazmanov.nm.ru/texts2.htm#%CE%F4%E8%F6%E5%F0%FB>, accessed August 18, 2010.

52. For a more detailed discussion, see my essays: "We're Nostalgic But We're Not Crazy': Retrofitting the Past in Russia," *Russian Review* 66, no. 3 (July 2007): 451–82; "In the State of Post-Soviet Aphasia: Symbolic Development in Contemporary Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no. 6 (September 2000): 991–1016.

53. *My zhdali vas, synov'ia*, 31.

54. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan*, Book I, *Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–1954* (New York, 1991), 247.

55. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan*, Book III, *The Psychoses, 1955–1956* (New York, 1997), 51.

56. On the order of urgency vs. the order of logic in survivors' narratives, see Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York, 1993), 9–10; for a discussion in a larger historical context, see James Tatum, *The Mourner's Song: War and Remembrance from the Iliad to Vietnam* (Chicago, 2003), 2–3.

57. Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York, 1997), 153.

58. See Michael Bibby, "Fragging the Chains of Command: GI Resistance Poetry and Mutilation," *Journal of American Culture* 16, no. 3 (1993): 30; Stephen Hidalgo, "Agendas for Vietnam War Poetry: Reading the War as Art, History, Therapy and Politics," *Journal of American Culture* 16, no. 3 (1993): 9; Vince Gotera, "The Fragging of Language: D. F. Brown's Vietnam War Poetry," *Journal of American Culture* 16, no. 3 (1993): 40.

59. War songs of Bulat Okudzhava, David Samoilov, and Yurii Levitanskii could be added here as well.

60. I explore this mnemonic trend in my essay "Totality Decomposed: Objectifying Late Socialism in Post-Soviet Biochronicles," *Russian Review* 69, no. 3 (July 2010): 638–69.

61. Lessing as quoted in Reinhart Koselleck, *Future Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 2004), 205.

62. This generation of veterans was not the first one that tried to follow this path. Starting in the 1960s, Soviet soldiers who participated in such military operations as

the Arab-Israel war (1967), the Soviet-led intervention in Czechoslovakia (1968), and the clash between the Soviet Union and China over Damanskii Island (1969) used the medium of the popular song to narrate their experiences, which were not otherwise represented by the press. During Perestroika, the genre went through a revival: the politics of openness provided veterans of the Afghan war with an unusually wide access to a large audience. For an extensive treatment of war songs in Russian culture see Vladislav Lipatov, *Soldat i pesnia: 300 let vmeste* (Ekaterinburg, 2006)

63. George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York, 1990), 20.

64. Marina Shaul'skaia, "I togda sozдалos' 'Bratstvo,'" *My zhdali vas, synov'ia*, 95–96.

65. Frolova traces a similar perception of war as a seasonal cycle in her analysis of Bulat Okudzhava's war songs. O. E. Frolova, "Voennye pesni B. Sh. Okudzhavy," *Russkaia rech'*, 2005, no. 3:36.

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