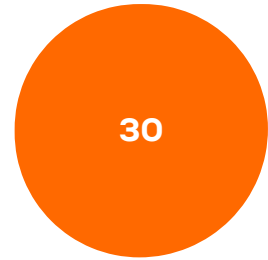




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## View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture

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**abstract:**

This article investigates the role played by images of the female peasantry in the late Soviet intelligentsia's questioning of developmental modernism. From the mid-1960s, Soviet culture was replete with mournful female peasants. Painter Viktor Popkov pioneered this trope in visual art with a series of canvases that portrayed old peasant women as wizened saints. Subsequent works, including Larisa Shepitko and Elem Klimov's 1981 film *Farewell* (based on Valentin Rasputin's novel *Farewell to Matyora*), adopted Popkov's techniques to more directly question the legacy of Soviet development. The article uses such images to examine what I call "patriarchal primitivism" as a common response to crises of modernity among imperial powers. It frames cultural nostalgia for an essentialized past as an attempt to resolve what the anthropologist Ernesto De Martino termed the "crisis of presence" in his studies of mourning and healing rituals in southern Italy. In the Soviet case, depictions of peasant women served to raise environmental consciousness while fueling a conservative nationalism that relegated women to subordinate roles. As in African colonial contexts, their posture of opposition was not only tolerated but cultivated by a state seeking to renew its claim to legitimacy as the authentic voice of the people.

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## **Patriarchal Primitivism. Dying Peasant Women and the Soviet Anti-Developmental Turn**

The major problem of modernity, according to Jonathan Flatley, is coming to terms with loss. The processes of modernization—industrialization, urbanization, new technologies—bring an endless succession of changes, as well as doubts about their cost.<sup>1</sup> “To be modern,” writes Marshall Berman, “is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1917, the Bolsheviks took over an empire of peasants and proclaimed it the dictatorship of the proletariat. Though the forecasted global revolution failed to materialize, the Soviet Union succeeded at transforming into an industrialized superpower that sent the first man into space. By the 1960s, the majority of the population was urban and educated, and the Soviet model of rapid development was attracting adherents among decolonizing countries in the Global South.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, some of that model’s beneficiaries sought to flee urban civilization and return to an idealized version of the rural past. While the revolutionary intelligentsia had championed industrial workers in the hope of eventually abolishing all classes, village prose authors and their fellow travelers turned to the peasantry in search of enduring truths.

Their quest found visual representation in images of wooden architecture, landscapes, and above all, rural women. From the mid-1960s, Soviet culture was replete with dying female peasants. The painter Viktor Popkov pioneered this trope in canvases that portrayed peasant women as wizened, otherworldly saints. For the artist—who was born in Moscow’s industrial outskirts in 1932 to peasants who had fled hunger in

the Kaluga region—these visions helped navigate his generation's break from the countryside, which entailed the death of their parents' social world.<sup>4</sup> Subsequent works, however, adopted Popkov's techniques to reject modernization altogether. Valentin Rasputin's apocalyptic novel *Farewell to Matyora* and its 1981 film adaptation by Larisa Shepit'ko portrayed the state's flooding of a village as an ecological and moral catastrophe, all seen through the eyes of elderly widows who choose to stay behind and drown.

Depictions of the late Soviet peasantry have typically been examined separately in literature and painting, in scholarship that has revealed much about particular works and authors but overlooked cross-fertilization across art forms and the political valence of gender.<sup>5</sup> This article unites different genres to examine what I call "patriarchal primitivism" as a common response to crises of modernity among imperial powers. Amidst a widespread search for roots, late Soviet painters, writers, and filmmakers drawn to village themes renewed the Slavophile tradition of idealizing the peasantry. I frame this cultural nostalgia for an essentialized past as an attempt to resolve what the anthropologist Ernesto De Martino termed the "crisis of presence" in his studies of mourning and healing rituals in southern Italy. If De Martino was both intrigued and alarmed by grieving rural women, Russian artists looked to them for models of faith and community in an increasingly atomized society that lacked a clear ideological horizon.

Russians' fascination with sorrowful peasants and disappearing traditions was in keeping with contemporary trends. Around the same time that Popkov began painting his widows, the American counterculture was embracing fantasy visions of "vanishing Indians" with similarly mournful gazes. The dying peasants of late Soviet culture were more revered than exoticized, and their creators tended to have recent village

roots themselves. Yet both figures served as “primitive” subjects who could be mobilized to question the excesses of the present while remaining reassuringly consigned to the past (and their proper place at the margins). When representatives of “civilization” long to escape from culture into nature, their search for authenticity often entails the strengthening of gender hierarchies, framed as the most natural boundary of all. Popkov’s depictions of female peasants—part of his generation’s wide-ranging attempts to restore the relationship between past and present, mother and child—ultimately fostered a chauvinist vision of community centered around ethnic nationalism and patriarchy.

## Patriarchal primitivism

Lenin had proposed an alliance between rebellious peasants and the “progressive vanguard” as the path to a Russian revolution. When the Bolsheviks came to power, however, members of the peasantry vastly outnumbered their tutors: at least 85 percent of the population still lived in villages. Canonical works of socialist realism depicted peasant women as symbols of fertility and abundance who assisted male workers in their struggle to master the land.<sup>6</sup> Elderly peasant women, meanwhile, were portrayed as dangerous purveyors of superstition.<sup>7</sup> In a 1930 poster, a wrinkled crone with one tooth and a wart yanks the braid of a little girl who reaches longingly in the direction of a Soviet school. A tottering wooden church and graveyard loom behind the old woman, whose all-black dress confirms her place in the dying old world.

Late Soviet depictions of elderly peasant women inverted the hierarchy of values in Bolshevik propaganda: the doomed world they represented was not spurned as backward baggage, but embraced as an endangered source of national and spiritual renewal. This recasting was rooted in the Russian intelligentsia’s longtime fascination with the peasantry. As Alexander Etkind has argued, in the nineteenth century the Russian peasant became

an object of internal missionary work, ethnographic study, and romantic idealization akin to the “primitive peoples” discovered by European empires overseas. Following the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, educated Russians were fixated on studying the country’s rural inhabitants, whom they viewed with a mixture of responsibility, fear, guilt, and admiration, especially as the empire began to industrialize. The Slavophiles’ veneration of the peasant commune as the seat of the Russian soul laid the foundation for the Populists of the 1870s, who saw it as a homegrown alternative to Western capitalism. Idealization of the peasantry reached its apogee in Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*, in which the landowner Levin finds transcendence by taking up a scythe.<sup>8</sup>

Obsession with the “primitive” was common among artists in late-nineteenth century empires losing confidence in their mission to bring civilization to the benighted. They included Paul Gauguin, who turned to Tahiti’s ancient Maori cult as an escape from the hollow materialism of the metropole.<sup>9</sup> The primitivist imagination that flourished among both European modern artists and the late Soviet intelligentsia is an example of what Nicholas Mirzoeff has labeled “Visuality 2.”<sup>10</sup> Mirzoeff defines Visuality 1 as the gaze of authority, a disciplining, ordering vision aimed at producing compliant laboring bodies. In the Soviet context, this was the imagery of workers fulfilling the plan and applauding at party meetings that was aired ad nauseum in the media and continued to appear in painting.<sup>11</sup> Visuality 2, in contrast, is “that picturing of the self or collective



“Religion is poison. Protect the children.”  
1930 poster, source: scholast.ru

that exceeds or precedes subjugation to centralized authority," typically figured as wild and uncivilized. Visuality 2 is enacted in "the blank spaces of the map"—such as vibrant Polynesian oases, in Gauguin's case, or the forested Russian North that populated late Soviet canvases. Visuality 2 tends to draw on subaltern artistic forms, such as the folk art and *lubki* (graphic prints) that served as inspiration for Popkov and other painters.<sup>12</sup>

Mirzoeff notes that Visuality 2 is not necessarily oppositional; its relationship with authority can range from hostility to neutrality.<sup>13</sup> Nostalgic depictions of the village existed in an uneasy alliance with the party-state; while they sometimes came under criticism, they were also displayed in major venues, reproduced in magazines, and awarded official prizes. They could challenge prevailing narratives of "progress" while effacing the marginalization of rural female workers and related hierarchies, especially the inferior position of collectivized agricultural labor in relation to other classes. Until the end of the Soviet era, women performed the vast majority of the country's unmechanized agricultural work. Social security payments for pensions, sick leave, and maternity provision were only introduced in the mid-1960s, and rural schooling and childcare received few resources at all.<sup>14</sup> By omitting the actual conditions of female labor in the countryside, depictions of old peasant women who appeared to exist outside time served the interests of both the state (which spent minimal amounts on improving rural conditions) and urbanized artists and their audiences (who saw the village as a site of cultural nostalgia rather than active struggle). Instead of supporting the expanded investment in social programs, infrastructure, and machinery that would have made women's lives in villages easier, dying widow imagery rendered their suffering as natural and inevitable.

The rising popularity of primitivism among Matisse, Picasso, and other artists presaged the shift of the British and French



empires after World War I from a universalizing, civilizing mission towards an alliance with tribal authorities in the name of protecting tradition. French colonial administrators in the 1920s, concerned by revolts in West Africa and increasingly circumspect about the promise of Western-style industrial modernity, began working through African institutions rather than trying to crush them.<sup>15</sup> Colonial administrators put women on a pedestal as the most primitive subjects, with the aim of empowering men as their protectors. In southern Rhodesia—following a backlash against laws intended to erode traditional authority, which included a ban on marrying women without their consent—the imperial state and local patriarchs collaborated in reasserting control over female mobility and sexuality.<sup>16</sup> For some members of the Russian intelligentsia, as with African tribal authorities, resistance to state-led modernization became synonymous with patriarchal restoration. In both cases, their posture of opposition was not only tolerated but cultivated by a state seeking to renew its claim to legitimacy as the authentic voice of the people.

## The gaze towards the village

Popkov began his career as an enthusiast of forward-looking developmental modernism.<sup>17</sup> As a student at Moscow's Surikov Institute in the mid-1950s, he produced energetic images of industrial laborers that updated classic socialist realist imagery with new influences including Italian neorealist cinema. His painting *The Builders of Bratsk* (1960), dedicated to the project to create the Bratsk Hydroelectric Power Station, became a classic image of the rugged, revitalized realism of the early post-Stalin years.<sup>18</sup> By the late '60s, however, massive construction sites represented a dream of progress that was rapidly fading. The Promethean spirit was extinguished by the Baikal-Amur Railway project (BAM). Intended to improve transportation links and tap natural resources in the Soviet Far

East, the project was a costly failure that became the butt of jokes.<sup>19</sup>

As some artists grew weary of industrial themes, the culture establishment was divided by fierce conflicts over socialist realism's limits. Popkov played a dual role in these discussions, defending the role of narrative and easel painting while resisting the control of the Stalinist old guard.<sup>20</sup> The artist went through a disorienting period of crisis. In drunken poems scrawled in pencil, he described a world that had lost its orientation and enduring values: "There's no stability anywhere now/There's belief in unbelief/Nothing's sacred, there's no trust." He struggled to find a sense of purpose: "You can't answer the question/of what we're living for."<sup>21</sup> Like a number of his peers, he looked to the village for answers.

Destalinization brought a mass exodus from the countryside: between 1959 and 1979, ten million people left farming for the cities. By the early '80s, the peasantry had fallen to 12.5 percent of the population.<sup>22</sup> As the actual rural population declined, artists and writers increasingly imagined it to be a site of timeless values. Since the early '50s, painters such as Vladimir Stozharov had begun turning to rural life to find the simplicity, freshness, and "sincerity" missing from what was now framed as the stiff pomposity and artificiality of Stalinist art.<sup>23</sup> From the mid-'60s, as Fedor Abramov and other writers criticized the impact of state social policy in the countryside, the larger, more conservative thrust of the village prose movement turned away from the present towards the "radiant past" of their rural childhoods. As Kathleen Parthé has shown, these late Soviet Slavophiles mourned the decline of the countryside and rejected a linear vision of human progress in favor of cyclical time, spirituality, and tradition.<sup>24</sup> Popkov joined other Moscow painters in traveling north to the Arkhangel'sk region, beloved for its abundant forests, rivers, and wooden churches.<sup>25</sup>

Raymond Williams, commenting on the dying village theme in English literature in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, noted that its “deep and melancholy consciousness of change and loss” was connected to the feeling of childhood.<sup>26</sup> This was also true of late Soviet depictions of the village, envisioned as a world of lost innocence centered around peasant matriarchs. Some of them exuded health and youth, like Viktor Ivanov’s full-breasted madonnas bathed in sunshine.<sup>27</sup> But village prose (and subsequently painting) became increasingly centered around elderly widows, seen as moral touchstones who stoically defended the old ways against the forces of modernization. In these stories, the widow’s death signifies social and moral disintegration: the protagonist of Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *Matryona’s Home* (1963) is crushed beneath a train after her home is uprooted. For Popkov, the dying widow theme was deeply tied to his mother. After his father died in World War II, Stepanida Popkova raised four children by herself while working in a bread factory.<sup>28</sup> In Popkov’s life and art, the peasant matriarch signified tradition, religiosity, and solace from physical and spiritual ailments. In the self-portrait *Sick Artist (Bol’noi khudozhnik, 1970–2)*, his mother reads to him from the bible while he lies in bed.

The first painting in Popkov’s northern series, *Memories. Widows (Vospominaniia. Vdovy, 1965)*, shows five women in varying shades of red. After years of collectivization and war, they have entered an exhausted old age. They wear the celebratory garments of their youth, but with ghosts for partners. A bare lightbulb signifying modernization hangs by a portrait of Marx, who stares out from the place of the icon he has dislodged in the *krasnyi ugol* (the red or “beautiful” corner, as it is known in Russian). A photograph of a fallen man in uniform is tucked into the corner of the frame. The Communist project has come to the village, bringing with it only grief.<sup>29</sup> The widows’ gaunt, looming figures and distended hands are similar to the

bodies of saints, whose desiccation signifies their removal from the realm of the flesh. The painting's impact stemmed in part from its bold pairing of red and black, inspired by folk art as well as contemporary graphic art.<sup>30</sup> The Communist color red, when worn by peasant female elders, suggests the wisdom of Saint Sofia, who is always depicted in icons wearing red robes.<sup>31</sup> It also suggests the spilt blood of their husbands: Christ also sometimes appears in red, a reference to his crucifixion for humanity's salvation.<sup>32</sup> The swirling red dresses in Abram Arkhipov and Fillipp Maliavin's prerevolutionary peasant fantasias were another likely influence on the widows' attire.<sup>33</sup> The images of joyful fecundity in Maliavin's work, which was also popular in the late Soviet period, was an implied contrast to the absence of offspring among Popkov's widows. The widows' children, like their spouses, appear to have died in the war (or to have left irrevocably for the city); matriarchs without progeny, they have no one left to soothe.

While Soviet ideology imagined a teleological path to the Communist future, Popkov's subjects resisted forward progression. Their insistently frontal and flattened figures meet the viewer's gaze but also stop it, denying any movement into the interior. The widows' immersion in the sorrows of the past and distance from the viewer are heightened in *Alone (Odna, 1966-1968)*, which presents a woman by herself in her *izba* (peasant home). While the samovar reflects and opens out into the world, the widow's frozen gaze absorbs it, achieving a rebounding effect similar to that in *Memories*. *Alone* also suggests unity with the dead through facture: the subject's ashen, wooden face appears to be cut from the same material as the photos, the interior, and



Viktor Popkov, *Memories. Widows*, 1966. Oil on canvas. State Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow, source: [artpoisk.info](http://artpoisk.info)

the wooden church tower outside, which her body mimics on the level of form. In this inert realm of memory, the past is present but not fully accessible; the rural widow is suspended in her own world.

Popkov's series was a sensation. A viewer who identified himself as an architect wrote the artist a letter stating that though for years he had felt like a "depressed snob" at Soviet art exhibitions, his opinion changed when he saw Popkov's widows, who reminded him of *Matryona's*



Viktor Popkov, *Alone*, 1966-68. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Armenia, Yerevan, source: [artpoisk.info](http://artpoisk.info)

*Home* and his own travels in the North.<sup>34</sup> To fend off accusations of pessimism, Popkov and supportive critics emphasized the widows' heroic sacrifice of their husbands to the war.<sup>35</sup> However, their haunting appearance made them difficult to display: the series was acquired by the State Tretiakov Gallery but often relegated to storage.<sup>36</sup> Critics frequently labeled the widows' aging bodies "grotesque."<sup>37</sup>

Though some viewers deemed rural paintings gloomy, trite, or retrogressive, they found enthusiasts among the elite.<sup>38</sup> Yitzhak Brudny and other scholars have shown how the late Soviet state harnessed Russian nationalism (which became identified with artistic production about the village) to improve its popular support and serve as a strategic ally against other, potentially more threatening nationalisms, especially among non-Russian minorities in the Soviet republics.<sup>39</sup> Village artists including Stozharov and Ivanov advanced in the hierarchy of the RSFSR artists' union, which served as a bastion of conservative Russian nationalism. Painter Il'ia Glazunov brought together nationalist circles in the culture establishment and the party-state.<sup>40</sup> While Popkov was associated with village themes, he also painted

canvases that explored loneliness and alienation in the city.<sup>41</sup> Unlike Belov or Glazunov, the artist didn't advocate for a return to an ethnically exclusive world of yesterday. Rather, his rural fixation was part of a broader search for orientation in the present.

## Mourning and the crisis of presence

In the late 1940s and '50s, as large parts of Italy were industrializing, anthropologist Ernesto De Martino carried out fieldwork on grief and funeral rituals in the rural southern region of Lucania, where he focused on the wailing of the *lamentatrici* (female mourners). He subsequently traveled to Apulia to examine tarantism, a phenomenon then in the process of dying out. Attributed to the bite of the tarantula, tarantism presented psychological and physical maladies to the (usually female) sufferer that were exorcised by dancing. De Martino used his ethnographic observations to develop his theory of the "crisis of presence," associated with the loss of subjectivity, place in history, membership in a collective, and ultimately death. According to De Martino, rituals like codified weeping and ecstatic dance resolve the crisis of presence by placing participants in a realm of mythic archetypes that restores their sense of orientation and agency.<sup>42</sup>

De Martino was born in Naples, and his aim was for his research among subaltern groups to prompt critical reflection on socially dominant values.<sup>43</sup> His work was part of postwar Italian intellectuals' engagement with "the southern question," the relationship between the wealthier, more industrialized North and the rural areas associated with backwardness and superstition.<sup>44</sup> As a socialist activist involved with efforts to organize rural day laborers, De Martino looked with fearful fascination at rural performances of mourning and healing, which he saw as a sign of irrationality as well as a model for adrift moderns. He wrote in *The Land of Remorse (La Terra*

*del Rimorso*, 1961) that the tarantula's bite was emblematic of the plight faced by a contemporary world in crisis: "precisely because our consciousness has never been so stricken by the wretched individual and collective past as it is today, and precisely because our minds are tormented by the search for operative symbols suitable to our humanism and our sense of history – including dangerous temptations to return to demons and gods – we are not indifferent to tarantism, almost as if it imposes itself upon us as a measure of the imperiled powers of our modernity."<sup>45</sup>

For Popkov and other members of the Soviet intelligentsia who came of age after Stalin, and especially those who were first-generation, depicting mourning, marginalized peasant female bodies became a way of navigating their own crisis of presence as they entered a modernizing society that lacked an apparent sense of purpose. By the late '60s, the majority of the Soviet population had moved to apartments in homogenized urban settlements, where they watched the same television shows, ate the same processed foods, and assumed increasingly sedentary jobs after earning degrees.<sup>46</sup> A variety of artists and intellectuals began to question what had been lost. They included (Jewish) "urban prose" writers such as Yuri Trifonov, who chronicled the lives of multiple generations of Moscow intelligentsia, and the painter Tat'iana Nazarenko, who created montages of historical figures and epochs in a detached, neoclassical key.<sup>47</sup> The longing for roots was not limited to ethnic Russians: in his novel *The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years*, Kyrgyz author Chingiz Aitmatov invented the figure of the "mankurt," a slave left to wander the desert after his hair is pulled out.<sup>48</sup> The mankurt represented the threat of losing knowledge of one's culture, ancestors, and place in history—in other words, the crisis of presence.

Like De Martino's studies of "the South," Popkov's depictions of peasants looked to women as essentialized bearers of fading

cultural traditions (while seeking to bear witness and learn rather than teach and convert). Similar to De Martino's critical reflections on his own position in relation to his subjects, Popkov's art demonstrated the awareness that he and his peers were descending on villages in which they were temporary outsiders from another world. In *Northern Song* (*Severnaia pesnia*, 1968), a row of women in pink dresses sit across a table from visitors in modern turtlenecks, jeans, and boots. Popkov wrote that the latter were student "physicists, musicians, or artists"—representatives of the educated urban intelligentsia who have sought out the village to "understand its sadness," as Popkov put it in one of his letters home.<sup>49</sup> The widows are joined by the ghostly image of a young girl, who stands in shadow to the side of the group. Her matrimonial future is already lost; prematurely "widowed," she keeps company with the world of the dead. As the widows sing a melody of grief for their husbands, complementary colors bring the canvas into harmony: the light blue of the landscape through the window is balanced by a bright red flower nicknamed "Women's Tears" (*babki slezy*). Marx has been banished from sight; the corner where icons are traditionally kept now holds its rightful occupant, an icon of the Holy Mother. Though different generations and eras achieve a momentary harmony, they cannot be fully united. The visitors will leave, retaining the memory of what they have witnessed.

De Martino's dancers and Popkov's widows operated in dramatically different contexts. While the sufferers of the spider bite were surrounded by male musicians, family members, and observers in a ritual with erotic overtones, the dying women of late

Soviet painting were the sole survivors of a lost epoch. In a world where all the men had perished in the war or the gulag, they



Viktor Popkov. *Northern Song*. 'All the Men Have Gone to War.' 1968. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow



united with their natural surroundings in an act of exhausted, hopeless resistance. For all the contrasts between their subjects, both men fixated on women in the (supposedly) vanishing premodern past to make sense of their own doubts about contemporary civilization. De Martino's study of tarantism was closely connected to his research on the lamentations of older rural women, whom he viewed through a shared frame. The anthropologist saw the crisis of presence as closely related to the crisis of grief, when the sufferer is overwhelmed by loss and faces the possibility of following the dead into oblivion.<sup>50</sup>

For Popkov, rural grief anchored the present in the realm of the eternal. In works like *Northern Song*, memory unites disparate places and people through a ritual to honor the dead. While Marx had foreseen the ineluctable motion of objective historical laws (a teleology that De Martino still strove to believe in), Popkov's widows created an alternative moral community by remembering what had been lost.

In his monumental conclusion to the widow series, *Granny Anis'ia Was a Good Person (Khoroshii chelovek byla babka Anis'ia)*, Popkov united the living and the dead in a vision of eternal kinship. The death of one of their own has released the widows from dark interiors into luminous nature. An oak tree fans out over a group of mourners assembled around a freshly dug grave. To the left are a group of widows (including Popkov's mother) dressed in black and dark green and wearing their characteristic gaze of otherworldly sorrow; to the right stand whispering young women in makeup and stylish tights. Below them, a fallen gravestone warns of the dangers of neglected memory. Red, the color of the widows' wisdom, explodes across the canvas and unifies the scene: a young woman's high-heeled rain boots match the crimson star on a veteran's grave. While state socialism decreed that bold mastery of the elements would free humanity from slavery, in the Russian Orthodox tradition, liberation arrives only with

*sobornost'*, the coming church that unites all creatures. Popkov's vision of communion is immanent: Christ does not appear before the people, and the dead stay below ground. But the funeral ritual serves as the basis for a multi-generational collective that dwells in harmony with nature and the ancestors.

Popkov's widow series provided a bridge between his sense of solitude and the world of his mother, which remained rooted in tradition as other utopias rose and faded away. While writers like Vasilii Belov responded to uprooting change by fleeing to an imagined past, the artist joined Trifonov, Aitmatov and Nazarenko in attempting to integrate then and now. The artist himself died in 1974, in an accidental shooting that would only become public in perestroika.<sup>51</sup> In the following years, dying rural widows proliferated in the works of Soviet painters like Ivanov, who began producing similar depictions of grieving older women.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, peasant widows spread to other genres and new causes.



Viktor Popkov, *Granny Anis'ia Was a Good Person*, 1967-73. Oil and polyvinyl chloride tempera on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

## 'Noble savages' in defense of nature

In the late 1960s and early '70s, the tendency to view city life as inauthentic and look to "primitive" peoples and nature for deeper truths was a transnational phenomenon. While Popkov was depicting peasant widows, American hippies were embracing Native Americans as symbols of ancient wisdom and natural harmony. These romanticized visions, which included revisionist Westerns such as *Little Big Man* (1970), were heavily shaped by James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* and its imitators in nineteenth-century melodrama.<sup>53</sup> If for some Americans the flirtation with "Indian" imagery was restricted to

wearing beads or taking drugs, images of native identity were also incorporated in grassroots environmental activism. In Berkeley, the campaign against the destruction of People's Park created flyers featuring the Apache chief Geronimo.<sup>54</sup> An infamous 1971 TV advertisement for the American anti-litter organization Keep America Beautiful (in fact a consortium of beverage and packaging companies seeking to deflect attention from corporate polluting) capitalized on the popularity of "noble savage" imagery by featuring a figure in feather headdress who paddles into waters that are increasingly clogged by garbage. The final shot shows him in close-up, looking directly into the camera as a single tear slides down his face.<sup>55</sup>

Both "Indians" and peasant widows served as moral touchstones who defended the old ways through direct, sorrowful gazes. But unlike white American college students who put up posters of native chiefs and smoked peyote (or the companies that sought to coopt their interests), first-generation descendants from the peasantry in the Soviet intelligentsia had intimate knowledge of the figures they were idealizing: their subjects were their own revered mothers and grandmothers, whose world they had left behind or viewed through the fresh eyes of education. The longtime trope of Europeans "playing Indian" obscured a history of genocidal conquest while allowing selective appropriation of a rebellious identity.<sup>56</sup> Russian peasants were a closer Other, subjected to the violence of serfdom and forced collectivization yet part of the dominant Slavic community. This was especially true in the later Soviet period, when mass education and urbanization blurred traditional distinctions between urban and rural (while creating new hierarchies among rural groups).<sup>57</sup>

The American trope of the "Indian" was closest to the related Russian tradition of fetishizing the native peoples of the North. In Soviet literature of the 1960s, dying widows were joined by indigenous hunters radiating spiritual strength.<sup>58</sup> If American

hippies incorporated Native Americans in their search for diversity, the leading representatives of village prose and painting enlisted Russian peasants in their quest for a more monolithic vision of society. Other ethnic groups could appear in the struggle against modernization, but only as tertiary characters. This use of the indigenous “noble savage” appeared in the culmination of the dying widow theme, Rasputin’s *Farewell to Matyora* (1976). Rasputin was born in 1937 in a village along Siberia’s Angara River and attended university in Irkutsk. <sup>59</sup> *Farewell* was inspired by the flooding of his native village to create the Bratsk Hydroelectric Station. The project, which the young Popkov and other members of the Thaw-era intelligentsia had once celebrated as a proletarian victory over the elements, is seen as a tragedy by the old widow Daria. She tries to warn her grandson Andrei against the temptations of modernization: “Machines, you say. Machines do your work for you. For a long time now it’s been the other way around—you’re working for them.” <sup>60</sup>

The novel’s 1981 film adaptation, begun by the director Larisa Shepit’ko and completed by her husband Elem Klimov after her death in a car crash, captures Daria’s world with images strongly reminiscent of Popkov’s paintings. Daria (played by Stefaniia Staniuta) repeatedly appears alone in the dark interior of her peasant hut, standing near photographs and paintings of her departed ancestors. In one scene, when her grandson proposes a drunken toast to the wonders of electricity, he accidentally knocks out the bare lightbulb that hangs from the ceiling. As in *Widows*, the bulb evokes the empty promise of modernization, which claims to spread enlightenment but at the cost of destruction. Daria leads a group of widows occasionally joined by a mute young boy, who, like the child in Popkov’s *Northern Song*, is in tune with the spirit world.

Key moments of dispossession—the departure of the island’s children for a boarding school, the herding of livestock

onto a boat, the order to stop gathering the harvest—are paired with frontal, portrait-like shots of the widows, who bear solemn witness to the disturbance of natural rhythms. Like Popkov’s widows, these images confront the viewer with a collective that will soon cease to exist and resists forward movement. Unlike Popkov’s vision of northern villages, which is entirely Slavic, the widows of *Farewell* include a representative of the Evenk people native to Siberia (played by the Buryat actress Naidan Gendunova). The character never speaks and is given no name; the novel explains that she is deaf. Like American depictions of silent natives wearing grave expressions, her image serves as a passive symbol of moral condemnation, which lends extra pathos through an unspoken allusion to the forced collectivization and Russification of indigenous groups while staying on the margins.

The collective farm manager, a Mephistophelean figure charged with carrying out the community’s relocation, urges the villagers to relinquish the old ways: “Why do we have eyes not in the back of our heads but in front? In order to go forward! Forward, not backward.”

Daria appeals to the environment for assistance. The camera follows her through the trees as she chants prayers to “Mother Earth” and “King Father Fire” while running her hands through the soil. The island’s natural forces join her in resisting destruction: when men with chainsaws attempt to tear down a massive larch tree, the tree refuses to yield. The film’s tone grows increasingly apocalyptic as the island’s remaining buildings are set on fire and the evacuation process nears completion. As smoke billows in the background, Daria prostrates herself on her parents’ graves and begs them to forgive her for failing to save them. “Truth is in memory,” Daria declares.



*Farewell*, Mosfilm, 1981, source: [cinema.mosfilm.ru](http://cinema.mosfilm.ru)

“The person without memory is without life.” Dressed in black, she stages a funeral for her ancestral home, staying up all night to wash the interior and fill it with flowers. In the morning she is joined by her fellow widows, who confront the camera with a grief-stricken gaze. As they huddle together in the house’s dark interior, Daria’s son, sent on a rescue boat that gets lost in the fog, wails “Matyora” in a silent scream. The film’s final shot is a close-up of Daria’s face. Her eyes turn slowly towards the heavens as she waits for the flood.<sup>61</sup>

According to Fabrizio Ferrari, De Martino saw the crisis of presence as “the catastrophe of the meanings of any community project.” Human culture in general, he determined, is “a solemn exorcism against such a radical risk.”<sup>62</sup> For De Martino, codified



*Farewell*, Mosfilm, 1981, source: [cinema.mosfilm.ru](http://cinema.mosfilm.ru)

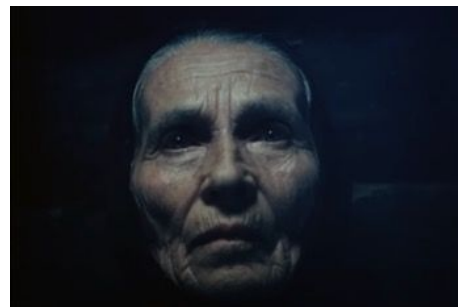
weeping and the tarantella were prototypical examples of how belief and ritual can function to reintegrate the lost individual with the group and the group with history. For Popkov and Shepit’ko, depicting rural protagonists was an attempt to find meaning through shared values (with a higher degree of self-identification than De Martino felt with the women of the Mezzogiorno). Visions of peasants who defend the place of spirits in a disenchanting world offered connection to the dead and the severed past, however imaginary. Shepit’ko grew up in eastern Ukraine before entering the cultural firmament in Moscow. She told the Soviet press that she saw Rasputin’s story as being about “the preservation of the past as a spiritual necessity”: “We can’t refuse what is inside us, what we’ve been given. We must keep it within us, because without it the soul is barren.”<sup>63</sup> For Trifonov, too, memory was the essential task.<sup>64</sup> Rasputin’s elderly

peasants gave warnings that fell on deaf ears; Trifonov's Old Bolsheviks had little to say to their children, or said little that they were able to hear. Popkov attempted to make his widows speak to a younger generation that couldn't "answer the question of what we're living for"—an endeavor shared by the director.

## Conclusion

While representing different artistic genres and political persuasions, Popkov, Rasputin, and Shepit'ko participated in a shared project to overcome the crisis of presence by envisioning a moral community centered around memory. While this community gained its legitimacy from women, it excluded them from full membership. The dying widows were poignant because they were powerless. As examples of *Visuality 2*, primitivist tropes punctuated the dominant imaginary of late socialism without openly contesting it, and sought contact with alterity while accepting gendered hierarchies. By the '80s, depictions of dying widows were fueling an increasingly conservative nationalism that called on Russia to return to an idealized version of the patriarchal past.

The image of the widow raised awareness about ecological destruction that relied on a particular vision of purity. Rasputin became one of the leaders of a movement that sought to protect Lake Baikal from a state plan to increase hydroelectric power by detonating explosives at the mouth of the Angara River and build cellulose combines near its shores. He framed the project as the ultimate act of human hubris: "This would have been not just one more boundary that the human race conquered and crossed but the final boundary: beyond Baikal there would be nothing that could stop



*Farewell*, Mosfilm, 1981, source: [cinema.mosfilm.ru](http://cinema.mosfilm.ru)

people from going too far in their efforts to transform nature.”<sup>65</sup>  
Rasputin framed environmental devastation as part of a greater perversion of the natural order that included the erosion of traditional gender roles. “After all,” Rasputin asked, “what kind of freedom can [woman] really have when she has liberated herself from precisely those obligations that nature herself has placed upon her?... It is more like desertion than liberation.”<sup>66</sup>

Patriarchy is often constructed as part of an order of stability, community, and what scholar of South Africa Jason Hickel calls “fruition,” in which abundant crops and babies are secured by keeping hierarchies, differentiations, and taboos intact.<sup>67</sup> In the late Soviet case, the dying widows were infirm and infertile; the trope of fecundity primarily belonged to Visuality 1. Gendered hierarchy served as a form of opposition to state ideology in principle (as the Soviet Union celebrated its supposed achievement of gender equality) but not in practice: women continued to be severely underrepresented in leadership and management positions and performed the “second shift” in the home, where the work of child-rearing often fell to grandmothers.<sup>68</sup>

This duality made patriarchal ideation highly compatible with state-allied conservative nationalism, which did not endorse developmental modernization but did support the preservation of a strong centralized state dominated by male ethnic Russians. Over the course of the '70s Rasputin and other village prose figures were increasingly drawn to Russian Orthodoxy, which buttressed their view of gendered hierarchy as righteous and natural with divine authority.<sup>69</sup> As in colonial Rhodesia, patriarchy was the glue that secured the nativist-state alliance.

When Gorbachev's perestroika enabled independent social organization and greater contact with the West, the conservative nationalist writers who had been encouraged by elite backers framed the destruction of the village as part of a “genocide” against the Russian people, led by Jews and accelerated by the opening of the Soviet Union to foreign



influence. Intellectuals including Rasputin signed a letter calling for the defense of Russia “from the absolute power of political adventurers [Gorbachev] who are rushing to turn Russia into a [Western] colony and a kingdom of the newest totalitarianism, flooded with our blood.”<sup>70</sup> These voices were marginalized after the failure of the coup against Gorbachev in August 1991 and the rise of support for an independent Russia under Boris Yeltsin. But the conservatives’ call for a return to traditional gender roles as a means of reversing national degeneration won broad popular support that continued in the coming years.<sup>71</sup>

The quest for nativist authenticity intensified in the wake of the Soviet Union’s disintegration, which many Russians experienced as a cosmic rupture.<sup>72</sup> As state-run factories and collective farms were closed or privatized, both worker and peasant identities were rapidly devalued in favor of membership in the middle class.<sup>73</sup>

Expressions of shared loss responded to this new, radically intensified crisis of presence with what Serguei Oushakine has called “the patriotism of despair.”<sup>74</sup> The mothers of combatants in the Afghan and Chechen Wars joined veterans, academics, and politicians in mourning the dying nation, coded ethnic Russian and male.<sup>75</sup> Lamenting widows played a minor role in the new narrative of victimization, which was focused on violent trauma and revenge.<sup>76</sup> As Soviet-style development became a specter of the past, only the grief—now paired with righteous anger—remained.

- 1 See Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).
- 2 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 15.

- 3 See David C. Engerman, *The Price of Aid: The Economic Cold War in India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018); Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *Laboratory of Socialist Development: Cold War Politics and Decolonization in Soviet Tajikistan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018); and James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung, *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2020).
- 4 Iurii Popkov, *Khudozhnik Viktor Popkov* (Moscow: Inforkom–press, 1998), 24.
- 5 On village prose see Kathleen Parthé, *Russian Village Prose: The Radiant Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Anna Razuvalova, *Pisateli–"derevenshchiki": literatura i konservativnaia ideologiiia1970-kh godov* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2015); David Gillespie, *Valentin Rasputin and Soviet Russian Village Prose* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1986); Erin M. Hutchinson, "The Cultural Politics of the Nation in the Soviet Union after Stalin, 1953–1991" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2020). On painting see Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Aleksandr Morozov, *Sovetskaia zhivopis' 70-kh: Nekotorye grani razvitiia* (Moscow: Znanie, 1979); A.I. Morozov, *Sotsrealizm i realizm* (Moscow: Galart, 2007), Liudmila Bondarenko, "Tema derevni v tvorchestve sovetskikh zhivopitsev 1960–1970kh godov" (PhD diss., Surikov Institute of Fine Arts, 2005). Many exhibition catalogues have been devoted to the work of individual artists. See, for example, Nadezhda Stepanova and Andy Potts, eds., *Viktor Ivanov: Paintings and Graphics from the Collection of the Institute of Russian Realist Art, State Museums and Private Collections* (Moscow: The Institute of Russian Realist Art, 2016).
- 6 Victoria Bonnell, "The Iconography of the Worker in Soviet Political Art" in Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Ronald Grigor Suny, eds., *Making Workers Soviet: Power, Class, and Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 342–69.
- 7 Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 154.
- 8 Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2011), 137–98. See also Cathy A. Frierson, *Peasant Icons: Representations of Rural People in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 9 Jean-Francois Staszak, "Primitivism and the Other: History of Art and Cultural Geography," *GeoJournal* 60, no. 4 (2004), 353–64.

- 10 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 22-24.
- 11 Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 431. On the calcification of authoritative discourse in late socialism see Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
- 12 Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 24.
- 13 Ibid, 22-24, 146-7.
- 14 Liubov Denisova, "The Daily Life of Russian Peasant Women" in Melanie Ilic, ed., *The Palgrave Handbook on Women and Gender in Twentieth-Century Russia and the Soviet Union* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 152-162.
- 15 See Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
- 16 Elizabeth Schmidt, "Negotiated Spaces and Contested Terrain: Men, Women, and the Law in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1939," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16, no. 4 (1990): 622-48.
- 17 Popkov, *Khudozhnik Viktor Popkov*, 24-33.
- 18 Matthew Cullerne Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 389-99; see Susan E. Reid, "Destalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art: The Search for a Contemporary Realism, 1953-1963" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996).
- 19 See Christopher Ward, *Brezhnev's Folly: The Building of BAM and Late Soviet Socialism* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009).
- 20 P. P. Kozorezenko, A. V. Storozhev, I. V. Pulikova, and I. Iu. Zasytkin, eds., *Viktor Popkov* (Moscow: P.P. Kozorezenko ml, 2012), 51-52; Popkov, *Khudozhnik Viktor Popkov*, 92. On conflicts in the '60s art establishment see Susan Emily Reid, "'In the Name of the People': The Manège Affair Revisited," *Kritika* 6 no. 4 (2005): 673-716.
- 21 Otdel rukopisei Gosudarstvennoi Tret'iakovskoi galerei (Manuscripts division of the State Tret'iakov Gallery, ORGTG), f. 152 d. 1 l. 14.
- 22 Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 971.

- 23 Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 341-44; Reid, "Destalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art," 360-1. This tendency appeared from the '40s in the work of Andrei Plastov, who is considered the father of late Soviet painting about the village. Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 424; Bondarenko, "Tema derevni," 41-3.
- 24 Parthé, *Russian Village Prose*, 21.
- 25 Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 345.
- 26 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 297.
- 27 For example, *Na Oke* (1972). See Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 424; Bondarenko, "Tema derevni," 47-8. On Ivanov see Stepanova and Potts, eds., *Viktor Ivanov*.
- 28 Popkov, *Khudozhnik Viktor Popkov*, 25.
- 29 Popkov claimed that the Marx portrait was the treasured possession of a woman who maintained her dead husband's faith in the party. Vitalii Manin, *Viktor Popkov* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1989). This unlikely assertion helped ensure the painting's ideological acceptability. Popkov's friend Karl Fridman, who accompanied him on the trip, said that he invented the Marx portrait. Popkov, *Khudozhnik Viktor Popkov*, 163.
- 30 Popkov wrote that his primary influences in the series were icons, the black and white graphic works of Gurii Zakharov, and the paintings of El Greco, an influence clearly visible in the figures' distended hands. Popkov, "Raboty poslednikh let," *Tvorchestvo* no. 7, July 1968, 11.
- 31 E.N. Trubetskoi, *Icons: Theology in Color* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 21, 51-2.
- 32 Ivan Stasiuk, "Color as an Expressive Instrument of the Icon," *Historical and Cultural Studies* 2 no. 1 (2015), 94. Red is also associated with glorious saintly warriors such as St. George (ibid, 94). In addition, it colors the flames of Elijah and the fiery cherubs at the gates of paradise. Trubetskoi, *Icons*, 51. On interest in icons among late Soviet painters see Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 437-446.
- 33 Both artists came from peasant backgrounds. On their role in Serge Diaghilev's *World of Art* see Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 22.
- 34 ORGTG f. 152 d. 92 l. 1.

- 35 Viktor Popkov, "Raboty poslednikh let," *Tvorchestvo* no. 7, July 1968, 9-10; E. Zhidkova, "Bol'shoe polotno: o tvorchestve Viktora Popkova," *Iskusstvo* no. 11 1969, 27, 29.
- 36 According to critic Alexander Morozov, the then-director of the Tretiakov Gallery, P.I. Lebedev said that "in those years it was easier to display Kandinsky's abstractions than Popkov's widows." When they were spotted on display by the head of the Soviet Artists' Union, F.P. Reshetnikov (a member of the Stalinist old guard), he called a member of the Central Committee, who requested that the gallery take them down. A.I. Morozov, *Sotsrealizm i realism*, 159-60.
- 37 Iu. Nekhoroshev, "Poeticheskii mir Viktora Popkova," *Khudozhnik* no. 1, January 1977, 23. Another critic noted their "tragically sharpened faces" and "almost grotesque" movements. G. Pletneva, "O strukture poeticheskogo obraza v siuzhetnoi kartine," *Iskusstvo* no. 7, July 1969, 35.
- 38 "There are so many landscapes of the North at this exhibition that I'm simply tired of them," one critic complained at a January 1967 discussion of the seventh young artists exhibition. RGALI (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva) f. 2943 op. 2 d. 320 l. 29.
- 39 Yisztak M. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953-1991* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); N. Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia: dvizhenie russkikh natsionalistov v SSSR, 1953-1985 gody* (Moscow: NLO, 2003); Hutchinson, "The Cultural Politics of the Nation"; Hilary Lynd, "Living Together, Living Apart: South Africa, the Soviet Union, and the National Question" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, forthcoming 2022).
- 40 The RSFSR writers' union had a similar function. On the RSFSR artists' union see Reid, "Destalinization," 304-15, 477-8; on Glazunov and his circles see Mitrokhin, *Russkaia partiia*, 374-384.
- 41 These included *Sunday* (Voskresen'e, 1967), *A Brick Factory in Cheliuskintsy* ( *Kirpichnyi zavod v Cheliuskintsakh* 1968), and *Work Is Done* (Rabota okonchena, 1970). See paintings in Kozorezenko et al, eds., *Viktor Popkov*.
- 42 Ernesto De Martino, *Land of Remorse: A Study of Southern Italian Tarantism*, trans. Dorothy Louise Zinn (London: Free Association, 2005). See also Fabrizio M. Ferrari, *Ernesto de Martino on Religion: The Crisis and the Presence* (Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub., 2012).

- 43 George R. Saunders, "'Critical Ethnocentrism' and the Ethnology of Ernesto De Martino," *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 4 (1993): 875-893.
- 44 Ibid, 886.
- 45 De Martino, *Land of Remorse*, 248.
- 46 Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 463-5.
- 47 David Gillespie, *Iurii Trifonov: Unity through Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Susan E. Reid, "The 'art of memory': retrospectivism in Soviet painting of the Brezhnev era" in Matthew Cullerne Bown and Brandon Taylor, eds., *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture in a One-Party State, 1917-1992* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 172-80.
- 48 On the *mankurt* see Hutchinson, "Cultural Politics of the Nation," and Lynd, "Living Together, Living Apart."
- 49 Popkov, "Raboty poslednikh let," 10; 1969 letter to wife Klara, ORGTG f. 152 d. 54 ll. 1-2.
- 50 Saunders, "Critical Ethnocentrism," 883.
- 51 I. Obrosov, "Ved' my vse tol'ko gosti na zemle...", *Tvorchestvo* no. 4, April 1989, 12-13.
- 52 For example, *Funeral. Eternal Memory to Those Killed in War (Pokhorony. Vechnaia pamiat' na voine pogibshikh...*, 1971) and *Darya Ivanovna Pimkina* (1980).
- 53 See Miriam Hahn, "Playing Hippies and Indians: Acts of Cultural Colonization in the Theatre of the American Counterculture," (PhD diss., Bowling Green State University, 2014). On nineteenth-century melodrama see Gerald Bordman and Thomas S. Hischak, eds., *The Oxford Companion to American Theater* (New York: The Oxford University Press, 2004), 453.
- 54 Dunaway, *Seeing Green*, accessed December 16, 2020, [https://press.uchicago.edu/books/excerpt/2015/Dunaway\\_Seeing\\_Green.html](https://press.uchicago.edu/books/excerpt/2015/Dunaway_Seeing_Green.html).
- 55 Iron Eyes Cody, the actor in the ad, was of Italian descent. Finis Dunaway, "The 'Crying Indian' ad that fooled the US environmental movement," *The Chicago Tribune*, November 21, 2017, accessed December 16, 2020, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/opinion/commentary/ct-perspec-indian-crying-environment-ads-pollution-1123-20171113-story.html>. Also see Finis Dunaway, *Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015). On the "noble savage" trope see Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*

- (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 150-2.
- 56 See Elizabeth S. Bird, *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).
- 57 On the transformation of the peasantry see Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: A Study of Collectivization*, trans. Irene Nove and John Biggart (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) and Moshe Lewin, *The Soviet Century*, ed. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2005). Recent research highlights the interconnection between cities and villages in the 1970s; many of those who “left” frequently returned and moved fluidly between the two. See Simon Belokowsky, “Youth Is To Live in the City!: Rural Out-Migration in the Black Earth Region under Khrushchev and Brezhnev” (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2020).
- 58 On the latter see Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 360-1.
- 59 Foreword to Valentin Rasputin, *Farewell to Matyora: A Novel*, trans. Antonina W. Bouis (New York: Macmillan, 1979), xvi.
- 60 Translation in Gillespie, *Rasputin and Soviet Russian Village Prose*, 45.
- 61 *Proshchanie*, dir. Larisa Shepit’ko and Elem Klimov (Moscow: Mosfilm, 1981).
- 62 Fabrizio M. Ferrari, *Ernesto De Martino on Religion*, 52.
- 63 E.G. Klimov, ed., *Larisa. Kn. o L. Shepit’ko: Vospominaniia, vystupleniia, interv’iu, kinostsenarii, stat’i* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1987), 193.
- 64 “To live and to remember are the same thing. You can’t destroy one without destroying the other.” Quoted in Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 961.
- 65 Quoted in Nicholas B. Breyfogle, “At the Watershed: 1958 and the Beginnings of Lake Baikal Environmentalism,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 93 (1), 148.
- 66 Quoted in Gillespie, *Rasputin and Soviet Russian Village Prose*, 34.
- 67 Jason Hickel, *Democracy as Death: The Moral Order of Anti-Liberal Politics in South Africa* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).
- 68 Barbara Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700-2000* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 235.

- 69 Rasputin was baptized in 1980. V.I. Ivanova, "Khudozhestvennoe i biograficheskoe vremia Valentina Rasputina: Put' k vere" in *Pravoslavie i obshchestvo: grani vzaimodeistviia* (Chita: Zabaikal'skii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2017), 156-8.
- 70 Brudny, *Reinventing Russia*, 247.
- 71 Engel, *Women in Russia*, 253-4.
- 72 See Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 35-41.
- 73 See Jeremy Morris, *Everyday Postsocialism: Working-Class Communities in the Russian Margins* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 19-20.
- 74 Serguei A. Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).
- 75 Engel, *Women in Russia*, 264.
- 76 Epitomized by the movie *Brother* (*Brat*, dir. Aleksei Balabanov, 1997), whose hero takes up redemptive violence after returning from Chechnya.



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