

INTRODUCTION

PUSHKIN IN THE TIME OF STALIN

Across the Soviet Union, the winter months of 1936 and 1937 ran their snowy course under the sign of Pushkin. In a literary festival of unprecedented scale, the Soviet people commemorated the centennial anniversary of the poet's death with feverish intensity. Again and again the public was reminded how remarkable the jubilee was. Though Pushkin had long been recognized as the Russian national poet, he had never been celebrated like this.¹ As the oft-repeated phrase went, reworking a line from Pushkin's poem "Exegi monumentum"—"The socialist revolution has turned the people's path [*narodnaia tropa*] to Pushkin into the wide road of millions."² All over the country, in libraries and schools, factories and collective farms, specially convened Pushkin committees organized events for the jubilee. Lecturers, films, and exhibits traveled to all urban and agricultural centers. Over 13 million volumes of the poet's works were printed; 6.5 million gramophone recordings were pressed; and yet, evidently, supply still fell short of demand.³ The poet's works were translated into all the major languages of the Union and many of the lesser ones, some of which had only recently made the leap to literacy.⁴ Streets and squares were renamed in Pushkin's honor from Baku to Magnitogorsk, as well as an untold number of libraries, houses of culture, schools, theaters, and museums.⁵ One would be hard-pressed to find a member of the intel-

ligentsia who did not make some effort to contribute to the celebrations. Myriad works of literature, drama, music, film, art, and scholarship were produced for the jubilee, not to mention speeches, essays, and responses to the ubiquitous survey questions: Why do we love Pushkin? Why is Pushkin dear to us?⁶ Everyone was mobilized, especially children. A sizable portion of the 1936–37 school year was devoted not just to the study of Pushkin, but to declaiming his poems from memory, performing plays and musical productions based on his life and works, producing artwork and texts for the school’s “Pushkin corner,” and making trips to local factories to promote the great writer’s legacy among workers.

An article in the newspaper *Labor* provides a good impression of the effect all this was meant to achieve. The article opens with an account of the different Pushkin-related entertainments in preparation and already on offer at a Moscow factory:

A giant is alive. Even the air seems suffused with a measured rhythm. Work-days. Kaganovich State Ball-Bearing Factory No. 1.

Huge posters hang at every crossing. In the workshops, in the corridors, in the entry hall, on the street, on the columns—posters with two-foot long letters: Pushkin, Pushkin, Pushkin. The posters invite you to evenings hosted by the different workshops. . . . Every day Pushkin’s poetry will be ringing and singing out in the windowed spaces among the lathes.

The factory screen is showing *The Collegiate Registrar*.

In the culture center the orchestra is playing the wedding march from *The Golden Cockerel*.

A deep, loud voice is heard behind the door of the neighboring room:

“You’ve got it wrong. Not every word is written down. Read: ‘catch him and hang him.’”

It’s the factory drama collective rehearsing *Boris Godunov*.

Singers have gotten together in a tucked-away room. A tenor’s voice can be heard:

“I remember a miraculous moment . . .”

Pushkin, Pushkin, everywhere Pushkin.⁷

The article goes on to detail the workers’ engaged response to the jubilee programming:

In the corridors of the factory library there is an exhibit, superbly designed using etchings, photos, and texts. . . . A young fellow is interested in Pushkin’s

connection to the Decembrists. He carefully examines the portraits of Ryleev, Küchelbeker, and jots something down in his notebook. . . .

In the factory council, a worker is heatedly making his point at one of the desks:

“Comrade Entsov, I’ve been to all the lectures. Give me a ticket to the last one—‘Pushkin in Music.’”

Comrade Entsov, a member of the factory Pushkin Committee, wearily repeats for the tenth time:

“Tickets are in the shop council.”

“I’ve asked there. Not a single one left. It means I can’t finish the lecture series.” . . .

Such love for our most beloved of poets! . . .

Vasya Sorokin recites “The Black Shawl.” He recites it with great feeling. With the emotion coming on stronger and stronger, he declaims “The Husar,” *The Robber Brothers*, “The Song of Oleg the Wise.”

Then, from nowhere, an argument flares up—a long, heated, principled argument.

“Is it or is it not possible for a type like Evgeny Onegin to exist in our socialist society?”

It turns out that they have all either read *Onegin* or seen it on the stage. And everyone has a critical opinion about the character. . . .

It’s already late. The night shift has long since begun. Some have gone off to the factory to work; others have returned from their shift, but the improvised Pushkin evening goes on.⁸

However exaggerated this article may be, the fervor it describes was by no means unusual for Stalinist culture. Public life in the Soviet 1930s revolved around campaigns like the Pushkin jubilee, with citizens called upon to navigate (and generate) an endless current of images and rhetoric, each symbolic wave overlapping the next. The goals of individual campaigns may have varied, but the overall ethos was constant. Organizing the Soviet people into a many-million-mouthed voice, the “performative culture” of Stalinist public life sought to match representations of total social unity to a manifest reality of total participation, joining all in the great chorus.⁹ Whatever characteristics were attributed to them by the shifting ideological tides, the Soviet people were themselves both subject and object of this symbolic flux.

Yet, as the *Labor* article clearly strives to show, the orientation on unity and totality did not mean resolving all voices into homogeneity. The din

of a factory provides a fitting backdrop for the clashing juxtaposition of so many different works from Pushkin's varied oeuvre in such different performative and critical interpretations. Indeed, despite the mind-numbing repetition of many sentiments, quotations, and images in the jubilee, the festival as a whole could hardly be described as drably uniform in content. The giant throbbed to a measured rhythm, but the giant was also alive. Arguably, it was this very tension between the impulse toward choral unity and the tolerance of certain types of discordance that gave Stalinist culture its energy. Public life in the 1930s was certainly regimented, but the institutions and values that gave this regimentation its structure were constantly shifting. There was always a chaotic volatility in the way campaigns were conducted, especially as they mixed and combined with one another. Consider, for example, the following passage from Yuri Trifonov's autobiographical novel *Disappearance*, describing the stylistic contrasts in the buildup to the jubilee in January 1937:

It was a Pushkin winter. . . . Every day, morning, and evening, something of Pushkin's came over the loudspeaker. In the newspapers, alongside the caricatures of Franco and Hitler, the photographs of award-winning writers and the Georgian dancers who had come to Moscow for the Ten Days of Georgian Art festival, next to the enraged headlines 'No Mercy for Traitors!' and 'Wipe All Traitors and Murderers from the Face of the Earth!' were printed portraits of a tender youth in curls or a gentleman in a top hat, sitting on a bench or strolling along the embankment of the Moika.¹⁰

Keeping in mind the degree to which active participation was required in the 1930s, it is difficult to imagine someone responding to such varied images and emotions in a purely "ritualized" manner—as Soviet culture is sometimes characterized. The performance would always be more or less improvised, caged, and edited on the fly.¹¹

What does this volatility reveal about Stalinist culture? Does it reflect the intrinsic weakness of a society established and maintained by violence? After all, it is easy to view the contrastive richness of cultural tableaux like the one Trifonov presents as profoundly unorganized and cacophonous. The jumbled hodge-podge of different types of Pushkiniana in the ball-bearing factory also suggests hasty planning as much as anything else. Was the discordant quality of public life in the 1930s in fact just a sign of cracks in the utopian project, papered over with conceptually haphazard propaganda campaigns? Was the dynamic tension of Stalinism simply

a product of the traumas it inflicted on its people and then struggled to repress?

For many, the particular incongruity of the Pushkin jubilee among concurrent Soviet campaigns offers a strong argument in favor of these suspicions, especially considering the massive outbreak of state violence in the summer of 1937.¹² One cannot deny that the choral performance of the jubilee rings somewhat false when considered in the context described by Trifonov. Amid displays of hate for external and internal enemies, alongside the celebration of contemporary Soviet heroes and the multicultural diversity of the Union, a tender love for a long-dead Russian imperial poet was also being proclaimed. One of the most jarring aspects of such juxtapositions is their temporal misalignment. While the Soviet capital in Moscow was being reconstructed to reflect the approaching glory of communism, the newspapers proudly displayed an aristocrat walking the cobbled streets of tsarist Petersburg in a top hat. The old world—so recently razed to make way for the new—appeared not to have been irrevocably buried. The Stalinist reevaluation of the past, increasingly common in the mid- to late 1930s and in many ways exemplified by the 1937 jubilee, certainly smacks of cynicism at first glance. It would seem that Pushkin, a battle-tested icon of cultural legitimacy, was being rescued from the scrap heap of history, dusted off, and returned to circulation to prop up a wobbling regime on the eve of war.

Yet, however natural these impressions may seem, they do not tell the whole story. Careful analysis of the jubilee's rhetoric and imagery reveals that its chaotic and discordant qualities represent more than fissures in the symbolic order of Stalinism. These qualities did not simply arise from the intellectual deficiencies of participants and haste on the part of the planners. For all the blind imitation of authoritative models, the censorship and invasive editing, the goal of the celebrations was not to corral everyone into a single point of view. Room was left for emergent meaning, and, in the end, the clashing juxtapositions of the jubilee went well beyond the ball-bearing factory's dizzy accumulation of Pushkiniana and occasional literary-historical disputes. The jubilee produced a range of deeply conceptual clashes as well. Real conflicts were tolerated, particularly in the different ways participants dealt with the temporal awkwardness of the celebrations. This aspect of the jubilee—the different attitudes to time—is the focus of this book. The return to Pushkin was not just a case of reinventing tradition in the interests of political legitimacy. It was also more than a simple modernization project, homogenizing the cultural values of

an imagined people. Finally and most importantly, it was not only a “return” to Pushkin. Rather, the 1937 Pushkin jubilee demonstrated, perhaps more clearly than any other event of the day, a complicated temporal logic that arose in the Soviet Union in the mid- to late 1930s—a contradictory attitude to time that could tolerate both warm affection for the past and its violent rejection.

To clarify what I mean by an attitude to time, it is worth considering the section of concluding remarks Mikhail Bakhtin appended in 1973 to his essay, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” (written in 1937–38), which examines the novelistic representation of time and space. The appended section begins with the following thesis:

A literary work’s artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope. . . . In literature and art . . . , temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values. Abstract thought can, of course, think time and space as separate entities and conceive them as things apart from the emotions and values that attach to them. But living artistic perception . . . makes no such divisions and permits no such segmentation. It seizes on the chronotope in all its wholeness and fullness.¹³

The chronotope thus aligns aesthetic problems with phenomenological ones. It is the “intention” embedded in the aesthetic construction of a “living perception” of actual reality. Time, space, and the emotions and values attached to them by the intending subject are fused into a holistic, indivisible form. Indeed, the importance of emotions and values suggests that any given chronotope is itself firmly oriented in time and space. Unlike the abstract spatiotemporal order of the Kantian critique, chronotopes are inextricable from their cultural historical context, evolving along with society, organizing its lifeworld according to different symbolic strategies.

Notably, as Bakhtin’s emphasis on temporal concerns throughout the essay reveals, the usefulness of chronotopic representation is most strongly felt with regard to time. The explanation for this is self-evident: at the phenomenological level, time is much more obscure than space, more frustratingly elusive to the senses. Chronotopes arise for this reason—because our time-consciousness requires spatial inputs to make up for a lack of its own. Any cursory perusal of Bakhtin’s essay shows that the chronotope is no balanced synthesis of time and space but an invariably unidirectional mapping of spatial forms onto the experience of time.¹⁴ What is not en-

tirely clear, however, is why this spatial incarnation of time is necessarily a representational boon. Could it not be that spatialized time is in some sense an illusory image, a false—or, indeed, abstract—representation of experience, concretizing into metaphor what resists symbolization on its own?¹⁵ Perhaps, and Bakhtin is quite clear in the body of his essay that some chronotopes are better (either more mimetically adequate or more socially progressive) than others. But from another perspective it is this abstract concretization of time that gives the chronotope its power. Emotions and values receive their widest application within the mappings of metaphor, maximizing their contribution to the symbolic shape of experience. Reflecting not time, but an attitude to time, the chronotope is sufficiently removed from raw reality to have an active role in the changes we effect upon it.

Thus, in this book, my aim is to provide a chronotopic account of the 1937 Pushkin jubilee—an event whose goals included actively manipulating the temporal contour of experience. To understand the form this manipulation took, I will discuss a range of images and arguments from the rich material record of the jubilee, examining how each incarnates (conceptually integrates) temporal experience into more concrete (visible, spatial) images, semantic frames, and narratives.¹⁶ With Bakhtin, I argue that each of these acts of conceptual integration expresses a specific attitude to time through the metaphorical forms it generates. I will also argue that despite the significant heterogeneity of temporal attitudes expressed during the jubilee, it is possible to discern an overarching pattern or logic to the events as a whole.

My attention to the temporal issues at play in Stalinist culture's celebration of Pushkin is not new. Indeed, the historical periodization of the years surrounding the 1937 jubilee has traditionally adopted a chronotopic guise of its own, embracing a spatialized metaphor for time as its guiding principle. The jubilee is seen as one of the major manifestations of what, in an influential 1946 study, émigré sociologist Nicholas Timasheff called the "Great Retreat." For those historians who have followed Timasheff, the metaphor of retreat is used to characterize a turn in Stalinist culture, beginning in the early 1930s and culminating after the war, which led to the abandonment of many of the ideals and policies ushered in by the October Revolution and the cultural revolution that accompanied the first five-year plan (1928–32).¹⁷ Among the casualties of this "ideological about-face," as David Brandenberger has more recently characterized it, was the future-oriented dream of an international communist paradise, now over-

shadowed by a linguistic and cultural Russocentrism, which specifically valorized selected periods and figures from Russian history.¹⁸

According to Timasheff and his successors, this reorientation of values naturally included a renewed interest in the Russian national poet. Thus, for Terry Martin, the Pushkin jubilee exemplifies the marked change in Soviet nationalities policy that occurred in these years. Replacing what the historian calls the “affirmative action” of the first fifteen years of Soviet rule—which promoted the national identities of even the smallest ethnic groups to the detriment of “great Russian chauvinism”—the new “friendship of peoples” policy limited the number of national units and firmly positioned the Russians at the center of the Soviet polity as “first among equals.”¹⁹ As Martin writes, “the largest single celebration of the friendship was the massive Pushkin jubilee of February 1937. . . . Although the jubilees of [Ukrainian national poet, Taras] Shevchenko and [Georgian bard, Shota] Rustaveli were celebrated on an all-union basis, only the Russian poet Pushkin was declared the national poet of all the Soviet Union’s peoples.”²⁰ Brandenberger uses the jubilee as evidence for how sudden the backpedaling move toward Russocentrism was. In ways that “would have been inconceivable just several years earlier . . . , the tone of the eventual commemoration in February 1937 ran shrill with its accentuation of Pushkin’s Russian ethnicity.”²¹ Finally, for Timasheff, whose book at times reads like a nationalist apology for Stalin, the jubilee revealed how welcome the reversal was among the population. Pushkin’s “works were published in millions of copies, and a few days after their appearance in individual cities all the copies available were sold out, in contrast with Marx and Lenin, whose works stood in solid masses on the shelves of the bookstore or were used to wrap herrings.”²²

All herrings aside, Timasheff’s metaphor of retreat continues to dominate the historiography of the period and the interpretation of the jubilee. Fortunately, however, it has also become common to question the metaphor’s validity, and more recent discussions have proposed alternative chronotopic models of the Stalinist attitude to time.²³ Consider, for example, Katerina Clark’s effort to clarify the idea of the Great Retreat:

Much of Western historiography has seen the evolution of Soviet culture in terms of a battle between the avant-garde, as the force most committed to transforming culture, and traditionalists who sought to set the clock back rather than forward. . . . The scenario is valid, but also inadequate. . . . Much more fundamental in the formation of Soviet culture than the oppo-

sition between avant-gardists and traditionalists was another dichotomy that might be called monumentalist versus iconoclast. . . . The defining gesture in the cultural history of the 1930s is not the killing of the avant-garde per se, but the attempt at censoring out [iconoclasm . . .], leaving a more purely ritualized and sacralized culture such that cultural artifacts became acts of affirmation.²⁴

The categories of iconoclasm and monumentalism that Clark suggests in place of the older opposition of the avant-garde to traditionalism (orientation toward the future to orientation toward the past) express a more sophisticated temporal perspective. Instead of military retreats and offensives, monumentalism and iconoclasm represent culture in terms of accumulation and purgation, alternatively resisting temporal flux through the creation of enduring symbols or embracing time's power to wipe the slate of culture clean, making way for the radically new. Susan Buck-Morss advances a similar argument about the shift in Soviet culture's attitude to time, which she describes as a struggle between the temporal consciousness of avant-garde artists and the political "vanguard" of the Bolshevik party (a struggle the artists eventually lost):

The "time" of the cultural avant-garde is not the same as that of the vanguard party. These artists' practices interrupted the continuity of perceptions and estranged the familiar, severing historical tradition through the force of their fantasy. . . . The effect was to rupture the continuity of time, opening it up to new cognitive sensory experiences. In contrast, the party submitted to a historical cosmology that provided no such freedom of movement. . . . Once a certain cosmology of history was lodged in the imagination, even artists came to feel that it could not be otherwise. . . . Constrained by the historical goal, revolutionary culture became sedate, conserving a past that appeared to lead meaningfully into the present, eschewing new primitivisms that blurred the line of progress, appealing to the masses by means of conventional art forms in order to mobilize them for movement "forward" in time.²⁵

Buck-Morss is making essentially the same point as Clark, and her more obviously spatialized representation of Soviet time-consciousness reveals the conceptual frame underlying the two scholars' shared vision of Stalinist time. For both, the cultural origins of Stalinism (traced to trends already apparent in the 1920s) do not lie in a retreat from the future back to the past, but, rather, in a shift of attitude toward time's linear

continuity, something the retreat metaphor assumes as a universal given. From a radical temporal consciousness founded on ideals of historical rupture, discontinuity, negation, novelty, and revelatory estrangement (iconoclasm), Stalinism shifted its orientation to one founded on the opposing, conservative principles of historical progress, continuity, affirmation, convention, and the accumulation and preservation of cultural value (monumentalism).

While this model is certainly more sophisticated than the Great Retreat, it still does not account for much of the actual chronotopic content produced in the Stalinist 1930s—in films, literature, and architecture, in the metaphors used by public speakers and journalists, and in sweeping campaigns like the Pushkin jubilee. Most notably, monumentalism cannot explain the popular chronotopic figure, which Sheila Fitzpatrick has called “the socialist-realist perspective in which the future and present are indistinguishable.”²⁶ As an example of this temporal compression Fitzpatrick cites the scene in Alexander Medvedkin’s 1938 film, *New Moscow*, in which a “living” architectural model of the reconstruction of Moscow is treated as a time machine, fusing representations of the capital’s past and present with the future reality being constructed. The film proceeds through a series of shots in which completed construction projects are displayed as miraculously transformative temporal leaps. Old buildings, churches, and unpaved roads are either demolished or simply disappear, to be replaced by the grandeur of the new city. The architects then present the construction projects of the future. First these appear as moving models, but eventually a more radical temporal leap is employed, as the planned buildings magically rise out of the earth with sketches and models superimposed over shots of the actual sites. The same principle of the superimposition of times (conceived dynamically as a temporal leap) can be applied to Stalinist representations of the heroic past in propaganda campaigns like the Pushkin jubilee.

One scholar who has expanded the scope of this Stalinist proclivity for temporal compression to include the past is Jeffrey Brooks. Commenting on the representation of time in Stalin-era journalism, Brooks draws the following conclusions: “The Stalinist conception of time . . . facilitated a reordering in which the past and future eclipsed the present. . . . The gaps between past, present, and future vanished in the press’s near mystical account of Soviet life. Time became a path through the present, not to the present . . . [in] an attempt to force past, present, and future into a single magic continuum.”²⁷ Brooks refers to Stalinist time here as a

path and a continuum, but his model of a chronotopic structure lacking divisions between past, present, and future is probably best captured by his first metaphor—the celestial convergence of an eclipse. For, if there is a temporal path here, it cannot be traversed linearly. Rather, all the different points along its span coexist and can be potentially superimposed one atop the other. Where the eclipse metaphor may be less appropriate, though, is in its suggestion that the present is occluded behind Stalinism's ideologically charged depictions of past and future. Here I would prefer to say that the possibility of temporal convergence alters the meaning of the present—precisely by freeing it from the linearity of time understood as a path. In such a linear model (i.e., the modern “social” chronotope of clocks and calendars), the present is nothing but an ever-disappearing and reappearing threshold, a space with no extension of its own, dividing the future from the past. In Stalinism's convergent or superimpositional model of time, the future and the past do not crowd out the present; rather, the threshold space of the present subsumes the entire temporal span, making all times equivalently “now.” This nonlinearity is quite different from a monumentalist chronotope. Here we do not find the smooth, continuous temporal flows of cosmological history, gradual, forward-marching progress, or the preservation and affirmation of traditional values across the passage of time. Such forms assume a unidirectional, linear progression to time and do not allow for superimposition.

In many ways the superimpositional model is closer to an eschatological chronotope, which assumes an evaluative perspective external to time itself, beyond the limits it places on our ability to touch the future or the past. Indeed, this is the time-consciousness Boris Groys ascribes to Stalinism in his own account of how it abandoned avant-garde iconoclasm.²⁸ For Groys, it was not monumentalist time that drove Stalinist culture's return to the traditional art forms and classic works (like Pushkin's) that avant-garde culture typically rejected but, rather, the freedom and limitlessness of a world located after time's end:

Stalinist culture looks upon itself as postapocalyptic culture—the final verdict on all human culture has already been passed, and all that was once temporally distinct has become forever simultaneous in the blinding light of the Final Judgment. . . . According to Stalinist aesthetics, everything is new in the new posthistorical reality—even the classics are new. . . . There is thus no reason to strive for formal innovation, since novelty is automatically guaranteed by the total novelty of superhistorical content and significance.²⁹

In his opposition of “total novelty” to formal innovation, Groys emphasizes the avant-garde’s dependence on a background of tradition. Always striving to defamiliarize and renew perception, avant-garde aesthetics requires a reservoir of automatized forms to “make strange” and newly perceptible. Consequently, “it becomes a prisoner of the very tradition it wants to overthrow.”³⁰ In other words, within the continuum of time, total novelty is impossible, since the acts of estrangement must be incessantly repeated. It is in this sense, Groys argues, that Stalinist culture both destroyed the avant-garde and realized its greatest dream. By defeating time, Stalinism rendered the act of “making new” irrelevant. After the end of time, everything is new and nothing will ever grow old.³¹

This model of a post-temporal Stalinist order raises other questions, however, since it would seem to suggest a static world, complete and consummated. If this is the case, how can it be reconciled with Stalinist culture’s endless depictions of progress and “achievements” along the path to communism? Although these representations often invoke nonlinear temporal structures, they still depend on a sense of movement and growth through time. If novelty was already permanent and universal, how could such movement be possible, what progress could remain? If time no longer existed, why does Stalinist culture persist in imagining a radically different future? Why should the chronotope of prophetic revelation continue to hold such power, with visionary rhetoric always transfiguring the present, suffusing its feats of labor, its radical plans, and its exultant aesthetic forms with the distant light of a world yet to come?

The answer to these questions is my argument in this book. At its conceptual core, the dominant chronotope of Stalinist culture in the mid- to late 1930s was a hybrid one, allowing for both the divisions of linearity and the superimpositions of convergence. It compressed all the moments of time into a total present, but it did so without losing a sense of the full, infinite span in which the boundaries between past, present, and future remained as impermeable as ever. Accounting for these different characteristics requires a model that can incorporate both the monumentalism Clark and Buck-Morss identify and the eschatology of which Groys writes. It requires a hybrid chronotope, a fusion of contradictory temporal attitudes. In the pages that follow, I will show how the 1937 Pushkin jubilee exhibited an impressive range of chronotopic forms, not all of which can be grouped into a single category of monumentalism or eschatology. These categories were certainly explored in isolation by different participants in the jubilee, but they were also at times allowed to overlap with one another in figures

of chronotopic hybridity. This fact suggests that the peaceful coexistence of the two chronotopes in the jubilee occurred not only because both were needed, but also because they produced a sum greater than the parts. Consequently, even though chronotopic hybridity does not always appear in the jubilee, the events create an overall impression of the complex mingling of these two general attitudes to time.³²

Before examining the abstract meanings of monumentalism and eschatology, let us first consider a concrete example of their hybridization. On the cape of Vasilevsky Island during the Pushkin days in Leningrad, a stone was laid to celebrate the renaming of Stock Exchange Square as Pushkin Square and to mark the planned site of a new monument to the poet.³³ The winning entry for the 1938 competition to design the monument was by Ivan Shadr, best known for his *Girl with an Oar*, which stood in the central fountain of Gorky Park until destroyed during the war. Shadr had been thinking about a statue of Pushkin since 1935, hoping to create something markedly different from the most famous monumental image of the poet—Alexander Opekushin’s in Moscow, unveiled for the original Pushkin jubilee of 1880. Opekushin’s Pushkin was “too calm, too elegaic” in Shadr’s view; his would be “more agitated and impassioned.”³⁴ If built, the statue would have been quite impressive in scale, competing with the other large structures that defined the space—the Rostral columns and the Stock Exchange building—and standing on a pedestal that would have descended from the high embankment wall down to the Neva River. The architectural tensions that would be produced by adding to the ensemble were at the center of the debate about the new monument.³⁵ Shadr’s solution was to make these tensions the theme of his sculpture, which, in its original form, depicted Pushkin standing triumphantly upon the capital of a toppled column. This design responded in a very literal way to the required motto for the monument, “Comrade, believe it: the star of captivating joy will rise . . . ,” taken from Pushkin’s 1818 epistle “To Chaadaev.”³⁶ As the poem continues: “Russia shall leap up from her slumber, and on the broken shards of autocracy they will write our names” (fig. I.1).³⁷

One reviewer celebrated the revolutionary spirit of Shadr’s model in specifically military terms: “The pedestal of the monument . . . , cut into the embankment barrier, descends with great steps down to the level of the river. At the foot of the pedestal is a pediment bearing the relics of tsarist autocracy, cut into the earth like pieces of shrapnel.”³⁸ The reviewer also recalls Pushkin’s epistle—read as a prophecy of the revolution—by referring to the poet’s visionary powers: “The poet is depicted in an ani-



FIGURE I.1. Ivan Shadr, model for Leningrad Pushkin monument, 1940. E. V. Pavlova, ed., *Pushkin: A Gallery of Portraits* (Moscow: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1989), 280.

mated state. He is casting the famous [*krylatye*, lit. “winged”] words of his prophecy into the future.”³⁹ As this reaction suggests, the monument powerfully compresses prophecy and fulfillment: Pushkin himself stands over the ruins of the old world. The result of this superimposition of the past upon the present is a feeling of temporal rupture, breaching the divisions of linear time to produce an image of convergence across them. Shadr’s Pushkin is not bound to a particular past; rather, he “presses into the now” as if via some otherworldly, atemporal connection.

This image of “pressing into the now” is further suggested by the almost inhuman pose in which Pushkin is depicted—chest out, head raised, stretching forward and upward to such a degree that his body appears unnaturally elongated.⁴⁰ But the explanations one finds for this pose are clad in different chronotopic terms, invoking figures of growth and continuity rather than rupture. Shadr himself described the planned monument as “inseparable from the soil of Leningrad, growing out of its depths like a cliff.”⁴¹ The sculptor’s mix of organic and geological metaphors actualizes the tension between animate motion and inert stasis, but it does so in a way that renders this tension complementary rather than contrastive. The biographical time of Pushkin’s life, much of which was spent in St. Petersburg, is mapped to an image of him “growing” out of the city’s soil. But this vegetative image is immediately refracted through a second “mineral” metaphor, as a cliff that “grows” (rises) out of the sea (represented by the river). Integrating these different figures, the monument thus evokes an overdetermined blend in which the organic growth of the poet—sustained by his native soil—both continues ever on (with the poet forever “striving”) and finds consummation as the record of a longer geological process.

So, how does the toppled column fit into this image? What is this strange wedge that cuts into the supposedly unbreakable link between the poet and his native soil? Are we also meant to read the smashed fragment of autocracy as a jutting rock formation, hewn over the course of millennia? Is the statue attempting somehow to compress the historical time of revolution with the geological time of tectonic movements, thus resolving the contradiction between revolutionary event and evolutionary progress, between the people’s liberation and their enduring spirit? There is no need to assume Shadr posed such a problem consciously. It arises in the discourse that generates, surrounds, and continues on after his monument. Most importantly, for all the apparent conceptual confusion in the statue, its logic depends on a single chronotopic tension between the desire to depict Pushkin as “ours” either in acquiescence or resistance to the flow

of linear time. Shadr's monument obstinately refuses to choose between these two chronotopes, attempting instead to subsist at once within the gap between time and eternity—where Pushkin presses into the now, swelling toward a temporal rupture—and outside it—where Pushkin grows steadily and infinitely toward symbolic immortality, just as culture flows steadily, infinitely on from the point of value that immortality represents.

What Shadr's statue tries to do, in other words, is inhabit the point at which monumentalism and eschatology collide, synthesizing their respective attributes. As it turns out, such a hubristic act of chronotopic hybridization was by no means unusual in the Pushkin jubilee. Again and again, the ideologues, artists, and common citizens who participated in the events found ways to straddle time and timelessness, division and convergence, monumentalism and eschatology.

To understand how such a thing was possible, it is necessary first to examine the conceptual content these two chronotopes share, allowing for their integration. Monumentalism and eschatology both form part of what may be called the discourse of modernity—that is, the tradition of representations (emotions and values) that relate the historical present to a range of variously conceived pasts and futures.⁴² Typically, all chronotopes within the discourse of modernity actualize and manipulate a tension between two foundational conditions. In his early phenomenological texts, Bakhtin articulates these conditions as the spatiotemporal horizon (*krugozor*) of a perceiving subject and the environment or “encirclement” (*okruzhenie*) within which the objects of perception are located. According to these two existential positions, the cognitive world of the self—bound to its ever-advancing perceptual horizon—remains forever incomplete, fraught with the risk of unforeseen changes in meaning, with all final words deferred into the future. For the self, life is “set as a task” (*zadan*), while consummation (*zavershenie*) is possible only in the other. Only spatiotemporal encirclement—a position external to and in the past of another perceiving subject—can bestow a full and stable meaning upon one's life. Only the other can be wholly “given” (*dan*) in being. This gap of noncorrespondence between the temporality of horizon and encirclement produces a dynamic tension that fuels the generation of chronotopes within the discourse of modernity. The modern—“our time,” reduced to the disruptive recurrence of a transitory threshold—is separated from any possibility of epochal fullness, and so consummation can never be experienced. One can only hope for (or dread) it in one's own future, or recognize and “remember” it in an alien past.⁴³

The ultimate task of chronotopes of modernity like monumentalism and eschatology is to organize these hopes, fears, and memories into a discursive strategy or method. The oldest of such methods rely heavily on sublimation, deferring and controlling the impulse toward consummation through veneration of some higher ideal—such as the exemplary past in imitative forms of monumentalism or the worldly order of salvation history in forms of eschatology that serve integrative political ends. Sublimating strategies ease the pressure of the gap between horizon and encirclement by appropriating epochal givenness from the other. To use another Bakhtinian term, imitative monumentalism borrows the chronotopic “rhythm” of the exemplary age, projecting the achieved consummation of the past into the future as a goal.⁴⁴ Anchored to this alien future, ordered by this alien rhythm, the present’s painful yearning for the unknowable threshold of consummation is sublimated into productive labor toward a meaning known in advance. As long as this labor goes on, the discontinuous temporal series of the modern horizon unfurls itself as the rhythm and continuity of a virtual encirclement. Eschatology similarly superimposes the givenness of an external other upon the risk-fraught being of the present, but it does so through a strategy of expectation rather than labor. Assuming that the veil of fragmentary reality hides a deeper truth, eschatology reads the movement of history for signs of prophetic rupture, weak hints of a consummation that is always already present, but which will only be fully revealed in the final days. Eschatology may project its own fantastical images of the millennial age or the New Jerusalem, but ultimately it accepts the unknowable future of the present horizon as a (for now) necessary evil. Left to its own devices, eschatology will never pursue surrogate fullness but will swell instead toward the annihilative rupture of true consummation. No doubt it is for this reason that eschatology has rarely been left to its own devices in the discourse and practices of modernity. Visionary activity has always been kept under tight control by state and religious authorities, and in the medieval period, the rock of the Church served as its own surrogate fullness, sublimating the desire for the End until the time was ripe, enabling a compensatory accumulation of worldly value, stability, and meaning through the End’s postponement.⁴⁵

Thus, both of these sublimating strategies make it possible to endure existence within the modern horizon. For sublimation to be successful, however, it must continually devalue the modern as not yet having arrived at the glory of the external ideal. This fact makes sublimating chronotopes susceptible to destabilization if the evaluation of the modern ever shifts

toward a more optimistic appraisal. Within the zone of monumentalism, such moments occur whenever imitation of the exemplary past grows so successful that the advent of a new golden age seems imminent.⁴⁶ In such cases, imitation grows ambivalent toward its model. The compromise of sublimation no longer seems necessary, and the present glories in the dynamic promise of resurrecting, completing, or even surpassing the past. Though tantalizingly close to its goal of epochal fullness, healing the rents of transient existence, such monumentalism begins instead to valorize the violent eruption of the now. Integrative eschatology can turn disintegrative for similar reasons. Whenever the practice of prophecy evades the control of the authorities, it threatens to expose the worldliness and corruption involved in Doomsday's deferral, potentially sparking an outbreak of purgative violence. The epochal sense of salvation history cannot abide an actual attempt to reach the ecstatic End. The closer to fullness eschatology comes, the more powerful the threshold-logic that breaks it apart. Thus, in both of these scenarios, monumentalist and eschatological, moments of chronotopic ambivalence lay bare the contradiction between horizon and encirclement, narrowing the gap and maximizing the tension between them. The encircling boundaries of givenness become, in a sense, fleshy and penetrable, as the sublimating withdrawal from consummation is annulled, and continuity seems paradoxically to require an eruption of discontinuity to come into being. The crisis of sublimation causes the idealized external other to leak back into the internal otherness of the modern to itself.

In the history of the discourse of modernity, the upheaval caused by such crises has generally been perceived as more of an opportunity than a catastrophe. An encroaching, impossible collision of horizon and encirclement, while always dangerous to vested powers, is also a source of great conceptual energy, the harnessing of which becomes something of an obsession for historical consciousness in the period most commonly characterized as modern. Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, monumentalism and eschatology diversify into a range of chronotopic strategies that do not efface the contradiction between epochal fullness and the threshold of the modern, but instead seek in different ways to expose and endure its volatile influence. The sense of time's unrelenting passage becomes an irrefutable principle, rather than a problem to be solved, and an ideal of productive historical movement—the Enlightenment ideology of progress—now eclipses the old ideal of a static fulfillment. Or, more precisely, fulfillment is now only possible as part of a continuing

progress; perfectibility must paradoxically accompany perfection.⁴⁷ This shift effectively establishes the ambivalent crisis of sublimation as a permanent feature of chronotopic form. Once it is accepted that time moves ever forward—and no great end or return awaits us—the modern can no longer draw normativity from the example or promise of an external ideal. Instead, it can only differ from itself.⁴⁸ Thus, where the sublimating chronotopes smoothed over the recurrent temporal break of the transitory moment, looking ever toward the threshold of consummation (the return of the golden age or the end of time), the new ambivalent chronotopes strive for an unlikely alignment of the one with the other.⁴⁹ The ideal is now an organized ambivalence, in which the temporal contradiction of modernity becomes a dialectical encounter. The point at which discontinuity and continuity, threshold and fullness, horizon and encirclement collide must become both perceptible and endurable at any moment. To achieve this goal requires a method—aesthetic, philosophical, political—founded on a new chronotopic logic that does not simply placate, imitate, or sublimate, but serves as a true engine of progress.

For all the diversity of the ambivalent chronotopes—several of which I discuss in this book—they can all for the most part be grouped according to the broad chronotopic categories of monumentalism and eschatology, taken in a generic sense. Monumentalist chronotopes treat consummation as a figure of epochal fullness, while eschatological ones are fixated on crossing the consummative threshold. The former thus tend more naturally toward an orientation on tradition and continuity, while the latter valorize novelty and revolt. But, again, as none of these forms finds stability in an external ideal, the tension between horizon and encirclement is never resolved. The ambivalent chronotopes of modernity must all accommodate in one way or another the dream of progress as a contradictory union of perfection and perfectibility. For each, the transitory moment tends to integrate continuous and discontinuous temporalities as a dual movement, at once progressive and iterative.⁵⁰ In the case of monumentalism, this means producing a virtual rhythm and encirclement for the modern that constantly returns to, and effectively reproduces, the very ruptures it seeks to overcome. The past is forever being processed and preserved in symbolic images of epochal givenness, not for imitation, but for the excitement of specific effects in the present. The modern subject turns toward these images to experience more powerfully her separation from them, propelling her forward into the exile of unending progress, while simultaneously defining and delimiting the trajectory of her task with these alien memories. The ambivalent mon-

umentalist lives in honor of the dead, preserving their images as a symbolic determinant for the meaning of her own actions, even as these ceaselessly reshape the meaning of the past. She may strive to equal the contribution of past epochs within the abstract narrative of a national or universal history. She may simply seek encounters with the ruins of the past in order to elaborate a sense of her own finitude. In all cases, however, the transitory moment is conceived simultaneously as a step out of the past into the open future and a return to the past, recovering some common ground stretched beneath the ontological divide between the living and the dead.⁵¹

If ambivalent monumentalism is forever stitching together the temporal fabric of the age only to return again and again to the rent across which those stitches extend, ambivalent eschatology seeks to tear the fabric of time apart but finds it can never complete the rupture. As mentioned above in the discussion of Groys, authentic novelty can only appear against a background of tradition and continuity. In fact, the release of this novelty is only one side of ambivalent eschatological practices like the avant-garde iconoclasm Groys describes. The other side is the accumulation of an inverted form of tradition, as today's innovations are forever fading into tomorrow's "classics." The impulse toward novelty revolts against a tradition it itself produces, and thus it must be renewed again and again. In this sense, the flash of the authentically new is not a light escaping the inert dust of the past, but an illumination of that dust, revealing the eternal freshness that every "true classic" once touched, if only in a momentary dawning and evanescence. Ultimately, the conflict between the old and the new is resolved into a self-perpetuating dialectic—the explosion of the new comes again and again, each moment opening, revealing itself, and then fading—not into oblivion, but into a tradition that is at once timeless and radically mutable.⁵² Hovering over this dialectic is the dream of some final synthesis—an authentic flash that does not fade—but the structure of ambivalent eschatology invariably imprisons this future within the virtual order of potentiality. Progress inhabits the body of prophecy and fulfillment as a finite temporal loop, but nonetheless it can never abandon the spirit of infinite perfectibility.

The emergence of ambivalence within the chronotopes of modernity does not automatically entail their hybridization. Rather, it follows only as a specific response to the ambivalent chronotopes' failure to seize the reins of progress in a fully satisfactory manner. While imitative monumentalism and integrative eschatology achieve stability by denigrating the present in favor of an external ideal, their ambivalent counterparts have nothing but

the modern horizon to work with, manipulating its contradictory relation to rhythmic encirclement in various ways. Maintaining the energy of progress under these conditions requires another compromise, polarizing the contradiction such that one of its terms is embraced while the other is merely endured. Monumentalism basks in a virtual consummative fullness while tolerating a persistent undercurrent of rupture. Eschatology swells toward the consummative threshold while accepting that the ecstatic moment is not singular but part of an ongoing accumulation of such moments, each dying as it is born. These necessary compromises are both the source of the new chronotopes' power and their principal weakness, spreading the ambivalence that determines their inner form to the conceptual spaces between them as well. Monumentalism and eschatology have always been mirror images of one another, a fact that no doubt explains their long coexistence as complementary forms of sublimation in the Middle Ages. But when these forms awaken to their internal ambivalence, the mirror relation ceases to be static and discriminatory. The two chronotopes' common concern with progress—as the raw exposure of the contradiction between horizon and encirclement—means that they inevitably come to occupy a shared conceptual territory. While the result of this collision is usually conflict, it need not be destructive. Potentially, if the external clash between monumentalism and eschatology can be tamed and endured, the internal temporal contradiction they share can be reconciled, “solving” the conceptual conundrum of modernity. Refraining from any decisive choice between the two chronotopes, pursuing instead a strategy of selective combination, the hybridization of monumentalism and eschatology suppresses all negativity in the system. It becomes possible to bask in consummative fullness and swell toward the consummative threshold at the same time—redeeming monumentalism's reliance on iterative temporal rupture with eschatology's ecstatic novelty, while redeeming eschatology's collapse into tradition with monumentalism's ability to deploy the classic as a persistent presence in the now. In this way, total novelty is achieved as a dynamic rather than a static condition, and monumental affirmation need not rest so fixedly upon a dead core of value. Shuttling back and forth between monumentalism and eschatology, allowing them to merge fortuitously whenever possible, chronotopic hybridity is ultimately the only “solution” to the cruel and impossible task of modernity.⁵³

Consider the following hypothetical reaction of a viewer to Shadr's statue. If the viewer begins with the figure of revolutionary rupture in the pedestal and the prophetic motto—“Comrade, believe it: the star of capti-

vating joy will rise . . .”—he will read the rising Pushkin as a sublime body, immune to transience, ecstatically perched at the consummative threshold of his prophecy’s fulfillment. The heroic depiction of the glorious past will resonate with the viewer’s own sense of the glorious present as a time of unheralded utopian promise. The statue not only celebrates the renewal of Pushkin’s legacy but also foretells his final “resurrection” with the advent of communism, and not as a simple revival of the golden age of Russian culture. When this moment comes, Pushkin will be delivered, along with all other members of the revolutionary elect, into a realm of pure culture, in which the creative impulses of mankind will meet no obstacles and know no distortion. A clear expression of this idea can be found in the closing words of a speech given by the poet Nikolai Tikhonov at the gala meeting of the All-Union Pushkin Committee in the Bolshoi Theatre that marked the anniversary date of the jubilee:

We want to live fully and happily. We fear nothing in life. No difficulties frighten us. Let Pushkin be our constant companion—not the one who stands in the bronze of a monument, not the academic one, wrapped in a toga of footnotes and commentaries, but the happy one, good and wise, who, from his distant time, uttered a word of greeting to the people of today: “Greetings, young and unfamiliar tribe . . .” And when finally we are victorious across the entire world, and all peoples bring the joyous names of their poets and writers of genius to the feast of friendship, we will remember you, Pushkin, first at our global celebration!⁵⁴

Shadr’s statue shares a great deal with these words. Much like the statue’s motto, Tikhonov recontextualizes a line from Pushkin to establish a link of convergence between the past and the present. The line “Greetings, young and unfamiliar tribe”—which in Pushkin’s original 1835 poem, “. . . Again I visited . . .,” is addressed only to an abstract future generation—now appears as a prophetic word of greeting extended specifically to the builders of communism. Ironically, Shadr’s statue also invokes the same current of iconoclastic utopianism that drives Tikhonov to reject bronze statues and historicizing scholarship. Depicting Pushkin in an explosion of prophetic power, bursting the bonds of his oppressive time to join the revolutionary age, Shadr effectively negates the very monumentalism of his monument.

As exhilarating as such sentiments may have been at the end of a fiery speech, they are somewhat problematic in a statue—designed to stand for

centuries, oriented toward the tension between the teeming urban environs and the image's enduring stasis. This fixity amid flux is alien to the ecstatic ruptures of eschatology—as Tikhonov clearly indicates—and the juxtaposition of the two temporalities in a statue might easily have had negative consequences. Even if the utopian age was fast approaching, persistent imperfections could not be denied. If an everyday viewer approached Shadr's statue from an eschatological perspective, she might have felt threatened by its impossible sublimity, which remained alien to the world around her and was certainly beyond her own individual grasp. Confronted with this static body of revolutionary perfection, she might be led to despise the manifestly imperfect present of transient flux or, even worse, to deride the impossible and ultimately hollow ideal before her with a black cynicism.

This is where the monumentalist reading of Shadr's statue comes into play. By alloying the representation of prophetic temporal rupture with one of growth through the ages, the statue gives the viewer a crucial breathing space. She need not race to compete with the image before her. For all the power it attributes to the poet and his prophecy, this Pushkin remains a hunk of metal and stone—an inert symbol dependent on the viewer for its “life,” which is in any case only a metaphor for the poet's enduring significance. The growth of Pushkin through the ages, nourished by his native soil, is a figure for the constant return of the people to their bard—ever renewing and preserving the sacred value of his legacy, much as one keeps a grave clean. In other words, in the monumentalist reading, the ontological distance between the living viewer and the sublime image is not an obstacle to be overcome, but a productive tension to be manipulated and controlled. In either case, the gap separating the living Pushkin from his colossus is projected onto the relationship between the poet and the people. But, while the eschatological viewer is caught inside this gap, set the task of achieving the same consummative threshold the statue depicts, the monumentalist viewer remains outside, keeping a safe distance. This distance is essential, for, from the perspective of monumentalism, it is precisely the viewer's encircling gaze that guarantees Pushkin's enduring consummation, reestablishing the link between man and monument again and again with every viewer's cautious approach. Without this tension, the statue would only be so much inert matter; and Pushkin, but the dust of his decomposed body.

So which is it? Where does the viewer in fact stand in relation to the colossus? The impossible logic of chronotopic hybridity means that she stands at once inside and outside the gap between man and monument, horizon

and encirclement, both greeting the prophetic Pushkin and nourishing the Pushkin who grows through the ages. She stands simultaneously with Pushkin at the consummative threshold and on the other side, occupying the external position required to establish the fullness that threshold demarcates. The viewer may draw power from this fullness, considering her own contribution to the growth and progress of the people's history. Or, she may glory in Pushkin's colossal vitality as a sign of the global rejuvenation in which she is also taking part. One could say simply that the image is multivalent and overdetermined, allowing different viewers to emphasize different meanings. In the final analysis, this explanation is the simplest for examples of chronotopic hybridity like Shadr's statue. But, at the same time, the statue's multivalence could also allow a certain type of viewer, sufficiently tolerant of logical contradiction, to overcome the negativity of the ambivalent chronotopes and reject the position of compromise this negativity forces them to take. The inertia of the monumental form, which the iconoclast detests, would be countered by the image of Pushkin ecstatically pressing into the now. The threat of an unfavorable comparison between sublime statue and imperfect viewer, tormenting the utopian mind, would disappear into the dialectic of the living and the dead that informs the mixed metaphor of Pushkin's geological growth through the ages, nourished by his native soil. While it would seem impossible to have it both ways—reliance on one method to rectify flaws in the other should create a negative feedback loop—the pervasiveness of such collisions in the jubilee suggests this is precisely what many participants tried to do. When successful, the result was a genuine hybridity, bringing eschatology and monumentalism together as the impossible solution to an impossible task.

I will elaborate the different forms and implications of such hybridity at length in the following chapters. After a general account of the jubilee's planning and execution, its diverse attitudes to time, and its awkward Russocentrism in chapter one, the remaining four chapters present selected analyses of different aesthetic and discursive forms. In each chapter my aim will be, on the one hand, to present the diverse chronotopic strategies available in these different cultural spheres, and on the other hand, to show how in each the impulse toward chronotopic hybridity is detectable amid the diversity. Chapters two and three examine, respectively, pedagogical texts and practices and academic and essayistic writing. These chapters also provide historical background on the attitudes of Soviet intellectuals to Pushkin in the twenty years preceding the 1937 jubilee. Chapters four and five turn to jubilee depictions of the Russian poet's life, death, and

physical image, first in works of visual art and related texts and then in literature, drama, and film. Here I focus on the jubilee's various negotiations of the divide between the present and the past in terms of the aesthetic categories of "life" and "form."

A final introductory note is necessary here. Despite the powerful association of the jubilee with the *ezhovshchina* or Great Purge of 1937–1938 in popular memory (and much scholarly reception), I will not analyze this connection in great detail, as I believe it is peripheral to the actual content of the celebrations. Preparations for the jubilee began in academic, pedagogical, and party circles in 1933–1934, while the jubilee campaign itself ran from December 1935 until February 1937. While the anniversary date fell squarely between the second Moscow Trial and the opening of the infamous February–March plenum of the party Central Committee, the majority of jubilee statements and texts were formulated earlier. The increasingly paranoid and aggressive atmosphere that accompanied this preliminary phase of the Purge was certainly felt, but, overall, its main impact was to disrupt the Pushkin campaign and delay implementation of the cultural policies associated with it. This is not to say, of course, that the underlying tensions in Stalinist culture that led to the Purge cannot be observed in a different form in the discourse of the jubilee. However, to examine these tensions primarily in terms of "terror" would surely push the jubilee itself into the background.