The Diaristic Form and Subjectivity under Khrushchev

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Under Nikita Khrushchev, the diaristic form assumed crucial importance for Soviet writers and literary critics who longed to reform Soviet socialism. Indeed, the form moved to the forefront of Soviet literature. In journals such as *Neva*, *Moskva*, *Znamia*, *Literaturnaia Moskva*, and especially *Novyi mir*, writers modeled their literary works after diaries and published late friends' and relatives' journals. They also affixed the diary label to essays, sketches, and poems to cloak these works in the diaristic form—that is, to cast them as first-person, diurnal accounts of individual experience. Writers kept their own journals, too, in which they asserted the diary's literary and social value, qualities closely linked in Soviet literature, since a work had aesthetic worth if it advanced the communist cause. Literary critics, for their part, endorsed writers' embrace of the form.

This article contends that Khrushchev-era writers and critics were attracted to the diaristic form because it reflected, and helped create, a new type of desired subjectivity.[1] For these writers and critics, normative selfhood

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1. Various scholars have written, if above all implicitly, of ideals of subjectivity with respect to the start of the post-Stalin period. I mention their work below only insofar as the ideals of subjectivity with which they are concerned are related to my own. By *subjectivity*, I mean a subject or individual created historically in dialogue with dominant and less-dominant political, social, and cultural institutions and phenomena. For a discussion of the use of the term *subject* as opposed to *self*, see Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (St. Leonards, 2000), in which he writes, "The word 'self' does not capture the sense of social and cultural entanglement that is implicit in the word 'subject': the way our immediate daily life is always already caught up in complex political, social and philosophical—that is, shared—concerns" (2–3). In addition to Mansfield, my starting points for this definition are Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 777–95; Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 9; and Choi Chatterjee and Karen Petrone, "Models of Selfhood and Subjectivity: The Soviet Case in Historical Perspective," *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 967–68. Unlike some of the above scholars, I have chosen, following Mansfield, not to use the terms *subject* and *self* interchangeably. When I use the latter (or a derivation thereof), it is to create at least some distinction (at times

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was crucially important given an inheritance that extended to the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia. For *intelligenty* such as Vissarion Belinskii and Nikolai Chernyshevskii, one's transformation into a particular type of self or personality (*lichnost'*) was an antidote to sociopolitical backwardness. In other words, a specific version of subjectivity was imagined to be an agent of historical progress. Russian culture placed further emphasis on this conceit in the Stalinist 1930s. According to Stalinist discourse, industrialization, collectivization, and the consequent end of class conflict meant that any remaining obstacles to socioeconomic progress lay within the person.[2]

Yet literary form, and by extension the ways in which form implicates subjectivity, has received little attention from scholars of the Khrushchev as well as the Stalin era. We continue to consider the novel the privileged genre of Soviet literature, from the 1930s into the late Soviet period, as Katerina Clark famously presented it in *The Soviet Novel* over three decades ago.[3] Implicit

impossible not to elide) between my conceptual apparatus and the views of the subjects of this article.

2. On the imperial period, see Lydia Ginzburg, *On Psychological Prose*, trans. Judson Rosengrant (Princeton, 1991); and Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, 1988), 37–38. On the imperial and Soviet eras, see Jochen Hellbeck, introduction and "Russian Autobiographical Practice," in Jochen Hellbeck and Klaus Heller, eds., *Autobiographical Practices in Russia / Autobiographische Praktiken in Russland* (Göttingen, 2004), esp. 13–14, 278–82, 284–85, 288–90, 296–97; and N. V. Mikhailov and I. Khell'bek, eds., *Chelovek i lichnost' v istorii Rossii, konets XIX–XX vek: Materialy mezhdunarodnogo kollokviuma, Sankt-Peterburg, 7–10 iunia 2010 goda* (St. Petersburg, 2013). On the Soviet period, see Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 7–8, 276–77, 297; Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh, 2000), 52, 63; and Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 10, 34, 65, 244.

3. "The novel is *the* privileged genre of Soviet Socialist Realism." Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, 1981; Bloomington, 2000), xiii. Emphasis in the original. Some scholars have maintained that different literary genres rose in prominence in different periods under Iosif Stalin. Yet such arguments do not appear to have changed the larger narrative about the dominance of the novel. See Katharine Hodgson, *Written with the Bayonet: Soviet Russian Poetry of World War Two* (Liverpool, 1996), which argues that "the status of poetry rose considerably in wartime" (15). In *Voicing the Soviet Experience: The Poetry of Ol'ga Berggol'ts* (Oxford, 2003), Hodgson discusses the "hierarchy of genres in Stalinist culture" (95). In her recent study, *Moscow, The Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), Katerina Clark herself writes of "the rise of poetry as the major genre of the late thirties" (329). Further complicating the picture presented in *The Soviet Novel* was the rise of "the short satirical or impassioned propagandistic sketch or article for the newspapers" and the "'tender' lyric" during the war. Ibid., 343.

Several scholars of the Khrushchev period have also complicated this history of Soviet literature in writing on the rise of short forms and lyric poetry. More specifically, some have argued that the Khrushchev era witnessed a rise of the *ocherk*, or sketch. See, for example, Deming Brown, "The Ocherk: Suggestions toward a Redefinition," in William Edward Harkins, ed., *American Contributions to the Sixth International Congress of Slavists II* (The Hague, 1968), 29–41; and Hans Elveson, *The Rural Ocherk in Russian Literature after the Second World War* (Gothenburg, 1975), cited in Kathleen F. Parthé, *Russian Village Prose: The Radiant Past* (Princeton, 1992), 14–16. Clark writes of the rise of short forms and the sketch in the "new prose" challenge to socialist realism in the later Khrushchev years. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 232–33. Emily Lygo, among others, has written of an "upsurge" of lyric poetry and the "unprecedented popularity" of poetry in general under Ni-

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in Clark's definitive study is that the formal characteristics of the novel lent themselves to capturing a capacious version of subjectivity defined by the move from *spontaneity* to *consciousness*. To continue to situate the novel at the center of Soviet literary history, then, is to discount the ways in which subjectivity changed over the course of an epoch marked by enormous ruptures. This article examines these changes and, above all, the ways in which literary form both reflected and helped shape them.[4]

As I have intimated, the larger contours of the subjectivity promoted by Khrushchev-era reformist writers and critics should be situated in a history that begins in the mid-nineteenth century.[5] Within this longer context, however, the subjectivity captured by the diary and advanced by these intellectuals stood apart. A first aspect of it was the post-Stalin Soviet person's obligation to engage in meticulous and critical empirical investigations of Soviet life.[6] As recently suggested by Anna Krylova, the Stalin-era background was by no means monolithic and thus laid the groundwork for this change. Krylova argues that as Soviet society modernized in the mid-1930s, Soviet discourse presented the normative individual not as having merged with the

kita Khrushchev. See her "The Need for New Voices: Writers' Union Policy towards Young Writers, 1953–1964," in Polly Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London, 2006), 193–208. This article moves beyond these short previous discussions of Khrushchev-era literary form in placing the relationship between form and subjectivity at its center. One work that does the same but to a limited extent is Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington, 2005), esp. chapter 2, "Agranovskii's Essays," 71–103.

4. There is in fact something of a tension in Clark's narrative, as she does note some ways in which subjectivity changed under Khrushchev. See Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 231.

5. Here I disagree with a recent article on postwar subjectivity, Benjamin Tromly, "Intelligentsia Self-Fashioning in the Postwar Soviet Union: Revol't Pimenov's Political Struggle, 1949–57," *Kritika* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 151–76, which is based on a misunderstanding of an important aspect of the Soviet subjectivity literature. "Rather than a clear rejection of Stalin-era mental strictures," Tromly writes, "Pimenov's self-fashioning continued the distinctly Soviet practice of treating the self as a politicized subject of history." Ibid., 154. In his work on subjectivity, however, Jochen Hellbeck situates the "Soviet practice of treating the self as a politicized subject of history" within a history that begins with the nineteenth-century intelligentsia. Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 7. The degree to which Tromly himself links Pimenov's "self-fashioning" project to emulating the nineteenth-century intelligentsia creates a dissonance in his characterization of the enterprise as "distinctly Soviet."

6. I use the term *person* when referring to the average Soviet human being, as conceptualized by the intellectuals with whom I am concerned. I have chosen this word because it appears to me to be the least ideologically or historically charged. I refrain from using the term *subject* in this case because it is part of my conceptual apparatus and not that of my objects of analysis. I also refrain from using *self* (*ia*), *individual* (*individuum*), *personality* (*lichnost'*), or *citizen* (*grazhdanin*) because they were invoked by writers and critics to describe what the person ideally should become. The label *person* does carry its own problems. *Novyi sovetskii chelovek* is often translated as "new Soviet person," and some of the intellectuals I engage with in this article used the word *chelovek* to describe the person they hoped to become. Nevertheless, I find the term *person*, if not preceded by *new Soviet*, to be the most fitting one in this context. In fact, many of these intellectuals used it in the sense I do, as will become clear in this article. For reasons of readability—that is, to avoid repetition—there may be minor terminological slippage in this essay.

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collective but rather as distinct from, while not opposed to, this larger social body. At the same time, what appeared was a language of "individuality" and interiority and the need to somehow connect the inclinations of the newly distinct individual to the social good.[7] This emphasis on individuality, I would add, created a tension with the Stalin-era idea that the Soviet person was to see reality in its revolutionary development—to focus on those aspects of reality that provided evidence of history moving forward. The Khrushchev-era Soviet person was to depart further from this latter obligation and move closer to, and simultaneously deepen and redefine, the notion of individuality as examined by Krylova. The person was to approach reality more critically—to focus on so-called mistakes and shortcomings in Soviet life—and to bring that criticism to bear on both the present and the past.[8] This summons amounted not merely to a return to realism but to a focus on facts rather than narrative. It constituted the promotion of what I term an *empirical imperative*, which required that the Soviet person collect and highlight these mistakes and shortcomings rather than situate them immediately in narrative.

Closely related to the empirical imperative, the changed authority of the individual in relation to knowledge was a second component of the new subjectivity. This, too, amounted to a deepening and thus recasting of the earlier discourse of individuality. For reformist writers and critics under Khrushchev, the new subjectivity required that one advance one's own conclusions; that is, one could and should be critical of aspects of Soviet reality, even if the authorities did not sanction the specific criticism. Yet the goal was still to pursue the creation of communism; thus, the more general image of man inherent to socialist realism persisted.[9]

The first part of this article creates a background for the new meaning of the diaristic form and subjectivity by examining the contemporaneous rise of short and documentary genres and corresponding notions of subjectivity (many of the sources for which are writers' and critics' diaries). The second

7. See Anna Krylova, "Soviet Modernity: Stephen Kotkin and the Bolshevik Predicament," *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 2 (May 2014): 167–92.

8. Here I build on the work of Denis Kozlov, who has written of a "Soviet historical consciousness" in the late Soviet period (1953–91) characterized by an "obsession with historical minutiae" and a "collective search for origins and identities." Denis Kozlov, "The Historical Turn in Late Soviet Culture: Retrospectivism, Factography, Doubt, 1953–1991," *Kritika* 2, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 578.

9. See Geoffrey Hosking, *Beyond Socialist Realism: Soviet Fiction since Ivan Denisovich* (New York, 1980), 18, 20–22; Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 189–90, 195, 211–12, 214–15; Alexander V. Prokhorov, "Inherited Discourse: Stalinist Tropes in Thaw Culture" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2002), esp. 3, 13–14, 42, 99–101, 143, 174; Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism*, xix, 2, 16, 39–40, 45, 47; and Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009).

The post-Stalin literary intelligentsia's turn to the individual has often been misunderstood. Some scholars have cast this shift as an embrace of a liberal subjectivity. See, for example, George Gibian, *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature during the Thaw, 1954–1957* (Minneapolis, 1960), esp. 70–71, 73, 91, 105, 143. Others have posited a subjectivity nearly diametrically opposed to its Stalin-era counterpart(s). See, for example, Deming Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin* (Cambridge, Eng., 1978), 19, 153, 181–82, 296, 374; and Elena Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (Armonk, N.Y., 1998), esp. 15–16, 88–89, 156–59.

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and third parts investigate ideas about the diaristic form itself and related concepts of subjectivity, centering on the empirical imperative and the individual's changed authority in relation to truth, respectively.

The Rise of Short and Documentary Genres and the Empirical Imperative

In the early 1930s, when socialist realism was declared the official aesthetic of the USSR, neither political nor literary officials presented a privileged genre for the new Soviet literature. Like its content, socialist realism's formal preferences emerged in practice rather than from theoretical pronouncements.[10] The novel quickly became the privileged form, given the genre's historical preoccupation with the development of a particular individual over time. Crucial, too, was its formal ambition to realistically and comprehensively depict that development. The novel, then, became the favored form because of its ability to communicate a favored content. The relative ease with which it could be read by a little-educated public also contributed to its central place in Soviet letters.[11] In the late Stalin years, however, the emergence of the so-called no-conflict theory led many writers and critics to reevaluate the novel and its ability to impart a normative message. Reformist writers and critics asserted that their colleagues had misrepresented Soviet reality to such an extent that they needed a new summons: not so much to narrate finished stories as to learn and to document the problems of Soviet life, an argument made with greater force and regularity after the 1952 Nineteenth Party Congress and the September 1953 Central Committee plenum.[12] What emerged among writers and critics was an empirical imperative, a constituent component of subjectivity requiring that the Soviet person seek out and by implication aim to overcome the so-called mistakes and shortcomings of Soviet life.

In this context of a literary empirical imperative and corresponding form of subjectivity, writers turned to and critics championed the short form—the short story, tale (*povest'*), and sketch. For the literary intelligentsia, the short form's generic virtues would help writers learn the truth about Soviet life and thus craft more realistic works and strengthen these works' claims to literariness.[13] As one master of the short form, Anton Chekhov, maintained, brevity lent itself to objectivity.[14] For many of its past practitioners, the short form was also associated with inconclusiveness—an important quality for its Khrushchev-era champions given that much was unknown and needed

10. Hodgson, *Voicing the Soviet Experience*, 95.

11. On this idea with respect to the novel in general, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957; Berkeley, 2001), 15, 18, 22, 32.

12. Georgii Malenkov, *Otchetnyi doklad XIX s"ezdu partii o rabote tsentral'nogo komiteta VKP(b): 5 oktiabria 1953 g.* (Moscow, 1952), 113–15; N. S. Khrushchev, *O merakh dal'neishego razvitiia sel'skogo khoziastva SSSR: Doklad na Plenume TsK KPSS 3 sentiabria 1953 g.* (Moscow, 1953), 6.

13. As has been observed, short forms often become more prominent in times of change. See, for example, Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin*, 145–46.

14. Charles A. Moser, "Introduction: Pushkin and the Russian Short Story," in Charles A. Moser, ed., *The Russian Short Story: A Critical History* (Boston, Mass., 1986), xvi.

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to be learned about the post-Stalin Soviet Union; so much, in fact, that the writer did not have enough accurate data to craft a new, conclusive—let alone definitive—narrative.[15] It was not yet time, for example, to pen a *Virgin Soil Upturned* for the new era, even if Mikhail Sholokhov was literally trying to do just that. Indeed, he had begun publishing excerpts from its long-awaited second volume to mixed reviews.[16] As the writer Frank O'Connor has observed, the short form also tends to focus on "submerged population groups," be they "Gogol's officials, Turgenev's serfs, Maupassant's prostitutes, Chekhov's doctors and teachers, Sherwood Anderson's provincials," who are the objects of "defeat inflicted by a society that has no sign posts, a society that offers no goals and no answers."[17] When applied to the short forms of the post-Stalin Soviet Union, O'Connor's case is overstated; but what remains are groups (especially collective farmers) that have been defeated, albeit in a more limited sense, by a society that does have sign posts, but sign posts either neglected or misread.

If the short form had traditionally focused on "submerged population groups" and was considered objective and inconclusive, after Stalin it was also deemed the product of a tempered mind. This was considered an asset in an examination of reality that for the time being promised to be of indefinite duration. The idea is also captured in the converse, in that writers tied the long form to misplaced enthusiasm, vacuity, and silly excess. Valentin Ovechkin, an important contributor of short forms to *Novyi mir* and for a time a member of its editorial board, noted in his diary or personal notebooks sometime between 1954 and 1962, "Where there are many words there is little wisdom."[18] In his diary, in 1963, Aleksandr Tvardovskii, *Novyi mir*'s editor-in-chief, affirmed the "very true words of A. S. Berzer," a colleague at the journal, who had said that "when a person [*chelovek*] has something to say, he writes 2.3 [author's] sheets, like Solzhenitsyn [in *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*], but when he has nothing to say, only passion for authorship, then epics in several books are written."[19]

Perhaps even more than the short story and tale, the sketch—the short form in which Ovechkin worked above all and of which he was the foremost

15. On the short form's inconclusiveness, see Lyudmila Parts, "Introduction: The Short Story as the Genre of Cultural Transition," in Lyudmila Parts, ed., *The Russian Twentieth-Century Short Story: A Critical Companion* (Brighton, Mass., 2010), xvi.

16. See, for example, V. Ovechkin, "Vsesoiuznoe soveshchanie literatorov, pishushchikh na kolkhoznye temy: Novoe v kolkhoznoi derevne i zadachi khudozhestvennoi literatury," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 29 October 1955, 3.

17. Frank O'Connor, "The Lonely Voice," in Charles E. May, ed., *Short Story Theories* (Athens, Ohio, 1976), 86–87; discussed in Parts, "Introduction," xv.

18. Valentin Ovechkin, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh* (Moscow, 1989–90; hereafter *SS*), 3:208. It should be noted that the entries from Ovechkin's published diaries and personal notebooks (*zapisnye knizhki*) were published in this posthumous volume under one heading, "From [His] Personal Notebooks and Diaries." In addition, "a large part of the entries are not dated by the author and, for this reason, the time to which they relate is stated roughly—in the range of this or that period of the writer's life." Ovechkin, *SS*, 3:166n1. As a result of this peculiarity, the volume includes no exact dates, only ranges.

19. Aleksandr Tvardovskii, diary entry, 28 May 1963, *Novomirskii dnevnik*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 2009) 1:181.

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master—proved formally well suited to achieving the empirical imperative. As Hans Elveson has argued, the sketch has a protean quality that makes the borders between it and other genres impossible to establish.[20] This leads Elveson to settle on a capacious definition of the form as semi-fictional, semi-documentary, and in which a narrator is more or less present.[21] For my purposes, what is important is the sketch's documentary claims. The form had fallen from favor in the mid-1930s, in no small part because of the rise of the novel; but it reemerged because it added to the short form's virtues the quality of "documentariness," ostensibly unmediated attention to "real" life.[22] The fact that its temporal frame tended to be a single day enhanced this documentary quality, facilitating attention to detail and mimicking, as well as compensating for, the empirical shortcomings of another daily form—the newspaper.[23] Moreover, the sketch, being ostensibly about a "concrete event," allowed authors to be more critical than if they worked in a genre of more universal pretension.[24]

Yet many non-sketch short forms had documentary aspects as well. Here, too, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, arguably the most famous literary work of the period, is germane. The *Novyi mir* critic Vladimir Lakshin reflected in his diary on several occasions on its documentary quality. In December 1961 Lakshin wrote of the "complete artlessness in which there is great art" and cited *One Day*, then unpublished, as an example.[25] In February 1963 he noted that "in the last half-year or year a special movement [*techenie*] has formed and emerged in prose" and cited as examples the work of not only Solzhenitsyn but also Aleksandr Iashin, Aleksei Nekrasov, and Vladimir Voinovich. "Having tired of falsehood and timeserving 'invention' ['*vymysla*']," he continued, "literature has turned to a truth that is almost documentary, 'sketch-like,' ['*ocherkovoi*'] . . . and authentic."[26]

The documentary works of these writers remained fiction, but in the early 1960s *Novyi mir* published a variety of strictly documentary, memoiristic pieces, many by nonprofessional writers (further evidence of the degree to which the empirical outweighed narrative at the time).[27] In his diary, in July 1963, Lakshin wrote that during an editorial discussion Tvardovskii had proclaimed, "If we don't have good belles lettres, we'll publish memoirs and notes more widely. He spoke about what I was thinking, too: the reader is dissatis-

20. Elveson, *The Rural Ocherk*, 7, 14, 122–23.

21. Ibid., 14, 32.

22. For a history of the ocherk, see ibid., 33–47. On the relationship between the ocherk and "real" life, see ibid., 22, 122–23; and L. Vil'chek, "Vniz po techeniiu derevenskoi prozy," *Voprosy literatury*, 1985, no. 6: 41–43, cited in Parthé, *Russian Village Prose*, 14–16.

23. On the temporal frame as a single day, see Elveson, *The Rural Ocherk*, 12.

24. This is the implication of the discussion of the sketch in "Problemy sovremennoi literaturnoi kritiki," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 18 April 1957, 1–3; and Vladimir Lakshin, diary entry, 30 November 1958, *Novyi mir vo vremena Khrushcheva: Dnevnik i poputnoe, 1953–1964* (Moscow, 1991), 30.

25. Lakshin, diary entry, 22 December 1961, *Novyi mir vo vremena Khrushcheva*, 52.

26. Lakshin, diary entry, 8 February 1963, ibid., 102.

27. See, for example, A. Pobozhii, "Mertvaia doroga (Iz zapisok inzhenera-izyskatelia)," *Novyi mir*, 1964, no. 8: 89–181.

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fied with the level of today's prose. . . . And the reader—the engineer, pilot, geologist, and so on—himself picks up a pen to say: here's how it really was!" Tvardovskii had asked Lakshin to write an article about the phenomenon, but Lakshin declined. As he explained in his diary, he did not disagree with Tvardovskii; it was just that the best works of this documentary genre had been appearing in their own journal and he thus thought it would be immodest to review them.[28] In his own diary, in January 1963, Tvardovskii, having noted that *Novyi mir* had no good fiction in its portfolio, explained, "Fiction is living out its days—it cannot help but be spurious in our country if invention ('generalization') is feared more than a fact with a name and patronymic. . . . All the more important would be the development of the memoir-sketch genre [*memuarno-ocherkovogo zhanra*]. . . . And art would not vanish, just as long as the truth were in place."[29]

One virtue of the fictional as well as the nonfictional documentary form was its ostensible absence of didacticism, which let the reader participate in the empirical investigation alongside the writer. In other words, the documentary form allowed readers to gather data with which to begin formulating their own opinions; in contrast, a didactic form by definition related ready-made conclusions, anathema to the times. Writers longed for and praised nondidactic documentary forms. Ovechkin, for example, wrote in his diary that he wished an unnamed play had consisted of a "piece ripped from life," forcing audience members to think for themselves.[30] Solzhenitsyn crafted *One Day* not only as semi-documentary but also without including an explicit message. As Dariusz Tolczyk has argued, "Solzhenitsyn's literary strategy implies the reader's active role in providing philosophical terms capable of defining the nature of the ethical problem presented in the novella and in resolving it.

28. Lakshin, diary entry, 12 July 1963, *Novyi mir vo vremena Khrushcheva*, 141.

29. Tvardovskii, diary entry, 28 November 1963, *Novomirskii dnevnik*, 1:194–95. The significance of memoirs was noticed by other critics too. See, for example, S. Mashinskii, "O memuarno-avtobiograficheskom zhanre," *Voprosy literatury*, 1960, no. 6: 130. Jane Gary Harris writes that Mashinskii's article "essentially initiated the serious study of autobiography and documentary prose in Soviet literary scholarship." Jane Gary Harris, "Diversity of Discourse: Autobiographical Statements in Theory and Praxis," in Jane Gary Harris, ed., *Autobiographical Statements in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Princeton, 1990), 18–19. For further discussion of the rise of the documentary form, see "Literatura. Dokument. Fakt," *Inostrannaia literatura*, 1966, no. 8: 178–207; "Nasha anketa: Zhiznennyi material i khudozhestvennoe obobshchenie," *Voprosy literatury*, 1966, no. 9: 3–62; V. Subbotin and L. Lazarev, "Dialog," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 8 May 1967; and Iu. Mann, "K sporam o khudozhestvennom dokumente," *Novyi mir*, 1968, no. 8: 244–54, all cited in Harris, "Diversity of Discourse," 19n44. For other discussions of Khrushchev-era documentary forms, see, for example, Gibian, *Interval of Freedom*, 32–33. Scholars have also written of documentariness in relation to other artistic forms, which suggests the existence of a larger cultural phenomenon. On painting, see Susan Emily Reid, "Destalinization and the Remodernization of Soviet Art: The Search for a Contemporary Realism, 1953–1963" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1996), 163–65, 262, 289, 348–49, 369, 469. On film, see, among others, Prokhorov, "Inherited Discourse," 142, 203–4, 206, 261–62. (Prokhorov deals extensively with literature, too.) On an empirical imperative in the fields of linguistics and cybernetics, whose relationship to the trends discussed in the present article deserves further investigation, see Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 133–34, 139. I am indebted here to Diana West, whose work on cybernetics has compelled me to think more about the links between literature and science under Khrushchev.

30. Ovechkin, *SS*, 3:179.

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At the same time, none of these resolutions can become the final, ultimate resolution of the ethical challenge so presented. It can only remain a testimony to a dialog between a particular reader and the text, while the text itself remains open to other dialogs."[31] Solzhenitsyn and other writers who worked in semi- or fully documentary forms were thus objectifying their readers or aiming to create a particular subjectivity—in this case a person who closely examined Soviet life and came to his or her own conclusions. The same is true of writers who worked in short forms. They sought to fashion a subject who accepted the premises of their form or who engaged in objective, ongoing, even-tempered, unmediated, and meticulous investigations of the problems in Soviet life.

The rise of short and documentary forms at the expense of the novel, however, did not mean a rejection of the novel. If the novel was removed from its pedestal, it was removed to be burnished by the friction of newly discovered facts. Put differently, the short-form and documentary project tended toward the revitalization of the novel. In his diary in 1963, after attending an international conference in Leningrad at which the "problem of the novel in literature" was discussed, Lakshin noted his position in relation to the attending Europeans, who had spoken of the novel's death and promoted the *nouveau roman*, or what Lakshin called the "anti-novel," which had risen to prominence in France beginning in the 1950s. "But we must prove to them," Lakshin wrote, "that the novel in its classical forms lives and prospers. We absolutely [*vo chto by to ni stalo*] must prove this."[32] Lakshin's urgency spoke to the need to create a subjectivity that moved beyond the empirical imperative as well as a second aspect of the new subjectivity, independence, which I discuss in the final section of this article. In the Soviet Union, after all, history was not to conclude with inconclusiveness. If short and documentary forms would help Lakshin and his peers in fashioning the new subjectivity, so, too, would the diary.

The Rise of the Diary and the Empirical Imperative

As Jochen Hellbeck has demonstrated, communists in the 1920s and 1930s held inconsistent views of the diary. Some maintained that due to the relative newness of the Soviet state, its citizens were not yet ready to keep a diary properly; others feared diary keeping would make Soviet citizens feminine and bourgeois; still others, like the writer Dmitrii Furmanov, wondered whether they themselves could put a diary to good use. The trouble was that diary writing demanded self-reflection, which threatened to distance the Soviet person from what was of ultimate importance: conscious action. Meanwhile, communists who supported diary keeping did so only when it promised to stimulate active engagement in Soviet life.[33] A practice as well as a literary form, the diary and subjectivity are inextricably linked. Hellbeck shows that

31. Dariusz Tolczyk, *See No Evil: Literary Cover-Ups and Discoveries of the Soviet Camp Experience* (New Haven, 1999), 258.

32. Lakshin, diary entry, 5 August 1963, *Novyi mir vo vremena Khrushcheva*, 146. On the nouveau roman, see Bruce Morrissette, "International Aspects of the 'Nouveau Roman,'" *Contemporary Literature* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1970): 155–68.

33. Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, 46–52.

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in the context of the ambiguity surrounding the diary, many Soviet people—party members and non-members alike—kept diaries and created their own diaristic culture.[34] They began "a dialogue between the self and the age in historical terms, and [thus raised] the self to the level of a historical subject."[35] With respect to literary value, the ostensible feminine content—"narcissism, hysteria, and socially useless chatter"—as well as subjectivism also served to undermine the form.[36]

Many of these ideas about the diaristic genre and the subjectivity to which it lent itself persisted into the early post-Stalin years.[37] Alongside the old ideas, however, emerged new ones that tilted the balance unambiguously in the diary's favor. A first set relate to the diary's virtues as an empirical tool, many of which it shared with the sketch. For example, like the sketch, the diary is open ended and thus facilitates indefinite empirical investigation; it concludes only with the diarist's death or choice to end the diary—the latter not being much of an ending, because diarists can of course change their minds.[38] In addition, whereas the sketch's temporal mode is diurnal, the diary is necessarily written this way.[39] If the sketch aimed to compensate for the shortcomings of the newspaper, then reformist newspapers sought to display added documentariness by including diaristic (or further diurnal) narratives in their pages.[40] One sees the social and aesthetic value with which writers invested knowledge about individual days in various nondiaristic works in addition to sketches. In Nina Ivanter's 1959 novella *It's August Again*, for example, one character says to another, "Imagine for yourself if one suddenly found some notes from a participant in the War of 1812. Well, any writer would jump through the roof! But after all, what people remember right now will also be very important at some time. So go ahead and record it. *Every day.* You know, like Zola, who engraved above his fireplace: 'Not a day without a line.' But what if—*not a day without a page?*"[41] Solzhenitsyn's decision to center his famous 1962 novella on one day in the life of Ivan Denisovich should be situated in this context. In this sense, *Ivan Denisovich* is the culmination of the rise of the diurnal as symptomized by texts such as Ivanter's.

34. Ibid., 8, 51–52.

35. Ibid., 55.

36. Ibid., 48. On the diary's subjectivism, see Boris Wolfson, "Escape from Literature: Constructing the Soviet Self in Yuri Olesha's Diary of the 1930s," *Russian Review* 63, no. 4 (October 2004): 609–20.

37. See, for example, Vera Panova, "Vremena goda: Iz letopisei goroda Enska," originally published in *Novyi mir* (November–December 1953), in Vera Panova, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* (Leningrad, 1987–89), 2:140–57, 2:209, 2:292.

38. On the diary's lack of a conclusion, see Lawrence Rosenwald, *Emerson and the Art of the Diary* (Oxford, 1988), 8n9.

39. Elveson, *The Rural Ocherk*, 12.

40. On diaries published in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, see Simon Huxtable, "A Compass in the Sea of Life: Soviet Journalism, the Public, and the Limits of Reform after Stalin, 1953–1968" (PhD diss., University of London, 2012), chapter 3, "Edited Subjects: 'Letters, Diaries and Notebooks of Our Contemporaries,' and the Rise and Fall of '*Romantika*.'" For another diurnal project, see the discussion of the *Izvestiia* publishing house's *Den' mira* project in Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism*, 48–70.

41. Nina Ivanter, "Snova avgust, povest'," *Novyi mir*, 1959, no. 8: 9–10. Emphasis added.

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The poet and editor Tvardovskii also saw the empirical merit of keeping a daily account and himself tried to keep one of social and literary value. Tvardovskii used *rabochie tetradi* (workbooks) as his diaries, in which he wrote and reflected on his poetry. More so than any of the other diaries discussed in this article, Tvardovskii's are a writer's workshop. At the same time, however, they are more than this. In relation to the Khrushchev era, Tvardovskii, who had become famous under Stalin as the author of poems such as "The Country of Muraviia" and "Vasilii Terkin," is most often discussed in his capacity as a journal editor. Yet he harbored his own literary ambitions, including the completion of an autobiographical prose work, *Pan Tvardovskii* (which he would never finish) and, importantly for my purposes, the writing of his diary. In October 1956, while reading the diary of the nineteenth-century critic and censor Aleksandr Nikitenko, Tvardovskii was prompted to reflect on his own diaristic practices. Published in three volumes in 1955–56, Nikitenko's diary is described by its editor, I. Ia. Aizenshtok, as "a mass of facts of paramount social interest and significance."[42] Tvardovskii lamented that, in contrast to Nikitenko, he was often too lazy to document days on which something out of the ordinary occurred, even though he considered it his duty, and added that he had never had the habit of recording "everything serious, what it is that interests—what is happening on the national stage [*v bol'shoi zhizni*], in the newspapers, and so forth." He continued:

> But just think what a book of a generation and epoch it would be if someone like Nikitenko just honestly recorded daily, or not even daily but to some extent regularly, everything that he saw, heard, and thought on the level of a civilized person [*intelligentnogo cheloveka*] of our time. Here would be the first Five-Year Plan; and still earlier, the discussions in the party; collectivization, '37, artistic phases, a chronicle of foreign affairs, the war, the postwar era, the "cult," its debunking, and our present day. We don't have such a diary, and we couldn't have had one until recent times; and if we did, it would only be that of a spiteful person, a person alien to our ideals [*zlopykhatelia, chuzhdogo nashim idealam cheloveka*], and then it would no longer be that interesting—although it would still be interesting, what kind of evolution of views, evaluations, and so on there would be even there.[43]

"Someone like Nikitenko" suggests a person closely connected to the worlds of literature and politics. However, "we couldn't have had [such a diary]," because Stalin-era fear would have prevented "a civilized person" from writing "honestly." Regardless of his self-doubts, Tvardovskii made the writing of such a diary his goal; yet, according to later entries, he felt he had not achieved it. In September 1960, for example, he wrote of having been "always unsatisfied both with [its] incompleteness and with its needless trivia and emptiness [*pustostrochiem*]."[44]

42. I. Aizenshtok, introduction to A. V. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik v trekh tomakh* (Leningrad, 1955–56), 1:vi.

43. A. Tvardovskii, diary entry, 26 October 1956, "Iz rabochikh tetradei (1953–1960)," *Znamia*, 1989, no. 7: 187.

44. Tvardovskii, diary entry, 8 September 1960, ibid., 189. See also, for example, his diary entry for 30 September 1960, ibid., 199; and 8 March 1961, *Novomirskii dnevnik*, 1:25.

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If the diary shared some of the sketch's formal virtues, writers also argued that keeping a diary on a certain subject could help one write a sketch about it. This was why the one-time modernist and later socialist realist writer Marietta Shaginian kept a diary in the early 1950s which she published in 1953 as *The Diary of a Writer.* In an introductory "Note to Readers" Shaginian wrote that her intended audience was beginning sketch writers and explained that if they kept a diary in her own fashion, they could learn to see the facts of the world as the party did and to write a proper sketch. In *The Diary* Shaginian describes her daily activities; as presented, she is incredibly active, visiting parks, theaters, museums, universities, newspapers, mines, factories, logging enterprises, and collective farms. The facts she compiles, taken from the newspaper and her own observations, limn a Soviet Union moving headlong toward communist utopia. Almost all of them are symptoms of progress; everywhere she looks, Shaginian sees larger harvests, increased mechanization, urbanized district centers, higher levels of culture, and the reconstruction of cities destroyed during the war.[45] The significance with which writers invested diaries, and sketches too, is shown by the fact that *Novyi mir* published a review of *The Diary of a Writer* that, at twenty-five pages, was unusually long for the journal.[46] The review, written by the veteran critic Mikhail Lifshits, was extremely unfavorable. Opposed in the 1920s and early 1930s to the literary modernism of Shaginian, among many others, and the "vulgar sociology" of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), Lifshits had originally welcomed the establishment of socialist realism as the official aesthetic. As the 1930s wore on, however, he began to lament the romanticism that came to characterize Soviet literature. He thus had long desired the realist turn that literature appeared to have taken in the early and mid-1950s—and had devoted a great deal of theoretical attention to the way in which the writer was to approach reality in order to accurately capture it.[47] *The Diary of a Writer,* Lifshits argued, did not come close to capturing a writer who properly attended to reality; it did not embody the principles of realist writing in general or of diary keeping and sketch writing in particular. In effect, it demonstrated its author's disregard for the empirical imperative. At the root of the problem, he explained, was the hasty, feverish pace at which Shaginian worked. At every stage of the creative process, Shaginian skipped a step (to the extent that she even acknowledged its existence): she failed to conduct preliminary research before going on location; she failed to seek the detailed guidance of experts; she failed to turn to easily accessible textual sources to verify her ideas on subjects she knew nothing about; and she failed to give

45. Marietta Shaginian, *Dnevnik pisatelia (1950–1952)* (Moscow, 1953).

46. Mikhail Lifshits, "Dnevnik Marietty Shaginian," *Novyi mir,* 1954, no. 2: 206–31. Between Stalin's death, in March 1953, and February 1954, Lifshits's "Dnevnik Marietty Shaginian" was only the second review of a single title published in *Novyi mir*'s "Literaturnaia kritika" section. The other, V. Pankov's "Roman F. Panferova 'Volga-matushka reka'," was only ten pages long. See *Novyi mir,* 1954, no. 1: 247–57. Another book review section, "Knizhno-zhurnal'noe obozrenie," featured much shorter reviews.

47. Stanley Mitchell, "Mikhail Alexandrovich Lifshits (1905–1983)," *Oxford Art Journal* 20, no. 2 (1997): 24, 27–28, 33.

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herself enough time to think. The approach, Lifshits concluded, led Shaginian (and writers like her) to embellish reality.

As an empirical tool, the diary had a virtue of which the sketch and other documentary forms could not boast, at least not to the same extent: it could be used more actively and to better effect by a professional on the job. If professionals kept a diary, for example, they could look at their entries to understand and avoid repeating past mistakes. The novelist and critic Vladimir Pomerantsev suggested this in his famous essay "On Sincerity in Literature," in which he wrote of an *ocherkist* who had penned an unrealistic short story-cum-sketch about a collective farm. "The ocherkist fished his old diary out of his archive," Pomerantsev explained. "Reading these entries now, the ocherkist saw how falsely he had understood the topic of the day [*zlobodnevnost'*]."[48] Other writers wrote that diarists could document their professional lives and share them with colleagues or delinquent superiors, as the case may be. In "A Difficult Spring," the fifth and final installment of Ovechkin's *District Routine*, the Machine Tractor Station (MTS) director Dolgushin, during a meeting with regional-committee representatives, removes several thick notebooks from his desk drawer and says, "We at the MTS do not often see regional-committee secretaries. I would have a lot to tell you. These are my diaries. From my first day I began to record everything that I saw, learned, and thought."[49] As I show below, this feature of the diary also bolstered the form's claim to literariness.

The Rise of the Diary and Independence

The diary was not merely a tool the Khrushchev-era writer or professional could use to investigate reality, document that investigation to aesthetic effect, or help on the job. If post-Stalin writers had rejected the no-conflict theory and scrupulously perused Soviet life for mistakes and shortcomings, their most important discovery was a grave shortage of brave and independent people. Put another way, in their efforts to overcome one harmful theory, they discovered a second—the theory of the cult of personality, according to which a limited number of "historical personalities" shaped history, marginalizing the common people and sapping them of courage and independence.[50] The link between the empirical imperative and independence was thus more complex than a one-way causal relationship. Writers who lived the empirical imperative were themselves already brave and ostensibly independent, and these personal characteristics drove their embrace of the imperative. The two components of the subjectivity with which I am concerned in this article thus existed in a dialogical relationship. Before the Twentieth Party Congress, in February 1956, when Khrushchev delivered his so-called secret

48. V. Pomerantsev, "Ob iskrennosti v literature," *Novyi mir*, 1953, no. 12: 242.

49. Valentin Ovechkin, "Trudnaia vesna," *SS*, vol. 2, *Raionnye budni. P'esy* (Moscow, 1989), 250. This installment was originally published as V. Ovechkin, "Trudnaia vesna, chast' vtoraia," *Novyi mir*, 1956, no. 5: 37–68.

50. See, for example, B. Riurikov, "O bogatstve iskusstva," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 20 February 1954, 3–4.

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speech about Stalin's cult of personality, no one included Stalin among the personalities who had cults and feigned to propel the Soviet Union toward communist utopia. After the congress, of course, Stalin became an object of their analyses as well. Writers aimed to make the damaging impact of personality cults known to the public, to work to transform cowardly and passive people into courageous and independent citizens, and to demonstrate that ordinary men and women, not superhuman leaders, were the true engines of historical progress.

The diary was a form that could capture this aspect of the new subjectivity. This was a result at least partly of its relationship with German romanticism, which cast the diary as eminently personal, a text that contained thoughts entirely autonomous from external forces.[51] Insofar as they had first-person narrators, sketches and documentary works could also embody this idea of individuality; but, lacking the romanticist pedigree of the diary, they were formally outstripped.[52]

Diary keeping emerged as a trope that helped to relate this idea of independence. Consider, for example, Il'ia Erenburg's 1954 novella *The Thaw*, a story about residents of a Volga town who, as the last Stalin-era winter turns into the first post-Stalin thaw, actively work to unfreeze their hearts and minds and transform their society. Early in the novella, the retired school teacher Nadezhda Pukhova whimsically recalls having kept a diary during the revolution and civil war and having given it up around the time of the birth of her daughter Sonia, not coincidentally in the mid-1930s. The fact that it was the obligations of parenthood (becoming beholden to someone else) that compelled Pukhova to retire her diaristic pen suggests that her diary keeping was an independent choice and that the text was valuable as a result. Moreover, the temporal coincidence between her diary keeping and the revolution intimates that the pursuit of the personal in diaristic writing was a revolutionary practice.[53]

A twenty-one-year-old Anatolii Gladilin, then a student at the Gor'kii Literary Institute in Moscow, also included the theme of the diary's personal nature in his 1957 tale *A Chronicle of the Times of Viktor Podgurskii*. As indicated in the title, Gladilin's novella, one of the first works of so-called young prose, tells the story of its eponymous hero, who has graduated from high school in the summer of 1953 and been rejected admission to an engineering institute. Khrushchev-era popular culture featured a great number of young people as heroes, whom writers, filmmakers, and other artists presented as having their own hearts and selves and seeking their own values rather than the accomplishment of a great feat (*podvig*), a choice for which they often suffered. These characters are frequently fatherless youths to whom their elders turn for their

51. See, for example, Lorna Martens, *The Diary Novel* (Cambridge, Eng., 1985), 38, 91, 115–16.

52. On first-person narration in Khrushchev-era literature, see Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin*, 150–51, 183–84, 273. For a discussion of the sketch's relationship to this type of subjectivity, see again chapter 2 of Wolfe's *Governing Soviet Journalism*, "Agranovskii's Essays."

53. Il'ia Erenburg, *Ottepel': Povest'* (Moscow, 1954), 23.

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own development.[54] Gladilin's protagonist fits this pattern: he is a fatherless seeker whose search is captured in the metaphor of a longed-for romance. Podgurskii, the reader learns, was an excellent student but performed poorly on his entrance exams because of an obsession with Nina, a former classmate, who has lost whatever interest she once had in him. Podgurskii's love for Nina is the "spring" of his life, which has no sooner come than is gone. Gladilin includes excerpts from the character's diary which document his infatuation with Nina and his feeling that all is lost. Podgurskii is at times able not to think about her and to move on with his life. He finds a job at a factory and becomes an adept worker; he even comes in second place in a factory-wide chess tournament. His taking second place is, however, instructive: despite his efforts, he still has not achieved something. To be sure, he may have been trying not to think about Nina, but he has by no means forgotten her. Yet banishing Nina from his heart and mind is not what he has failed to achieve. Rather, her spectral presence gives him a certain vitality. The ailment from which he suffers is not the inability to overcome an unhealthy obsession; it is existence in a society that makes the realization of genuine longings painfully elusive. The diary that documents this pathos is no longer a document of femininity and passivity, as it would have been in the 1930s. Podgurskii's diary may capture a lost soul, but it is a soul whose goal, however seemingly unattainable, is nonetheless worthy.[55]

Ovechkin, whom scholars associate exclusively with the sketch, presented this link between diary keeping and individuality in his sketch series *District Routine*. Ovechkin's own diary reveals that what motivated him in exploiting diaries and sketches was a preoccupation with questions of form. As published, Ovechkin's Khrushchev-era diary is a collection of pithy statements and quotations on topics such as leadership in rural district committees and collective farms in addition to form. "How form weighs on, weighs on content, until in the end it completely crowds it out," Ovechkin wrote in 1946 or 1947. "This occurs with each person if he is not an artist in his work, an innovator."[56] Ovechkin's suggestion was that not only literary but also institutional forms as they had been developing in the postwar years had become stultifying. His experimentation with literary form was a metaphorical call for experimentation with its institutional counterpart as well. Soviet institutions were growing overly centralized and robbing the rank and file of their voices. Ordinary people were themselves not free from blame for this state of

54. Vitalii Troiankovskii, "Novye liudi shestidesiatykh godov," in Valerii Fomin, ed., *Kinomatograf ottepeli: Dokumenty i svidetel'stva*, bk. 2 (Moscow, 2002), 6, 10–12, 15, 20, 30, 51; Vladimir Semerchuk, "Smena vekh': Na iskhode ottepeli," in ibid., 128–29; and Alexander Prokhorov, "The Adolescent and the Child in the Cinema of the Thaw," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 1, no. 2 (March 2007): 115–29.

55. A. Gladilin, *Khronika vremen Viktora Podgurskogo: Sostavlennaia iz dnevnikov, letopisei, istoricheskikh sobytii i vospominanii sovremennikov* (Moscow, 1958). For background on Gladilin, see Anatoly Gladilin, *The Making and Unmaking of a Soviet Writer: My Story of the "Young Prose" of the Sixties and After*, trans. David Lapeza (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1979). I thank Ross Ufberg for bringing the novella to my attention.

56. Ovechkin, *SS*, 3:174.

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affairs; they needed to keep institutional forms lively and flexible by dint of their own initiative. "Living people [*Zhivye liudi*], creators [*tvortsy*], genuine artists in one's work," Ovechkin wrote around the same time, "never bow before form."[57] Given the extent to which this diary is saturated with such affirmative and often didactic statements, the editors could be supposed to have mined it for comments such as these, which would perhaps be of interest to an imagined late Soviet reader looking for such long-sought-after sign posts. On the other hand, there is a relationship between form and content on the micro-level in these short statements. Ovechkin is calling for proactivity at the same time that he is calling for inquiry. Brief affirmations such as these relate that he himself possesses that initiative, but their fragmentary nature suggests he is far from being the bearer of all of the answers.

In this context, Ovechkin's incorporation of diaries into *District Routine* signaled a challenge to overly centralized authority and his support for truly personal involvement in party-state institutions. In the series, Ovechkin argued that rural officials who implemented bad policies and suppressed criticism from below were the primary causes of the Soviet Union's agricultural woes. As a result of rural leaders' behavior, he suggested, collective farmers and other rural residents were reluctant to express their opinions of rural policy. Ovechkin fleshed out these ideas in "In the Same District," the third installment, published in 1954, in which he wrote of a meeting of district party activists that proved a useless, tedious affair because of the attendees' mindless speeches. The tone of the meeting changes, however, when the collective-farm chairman, Openkin, takes the stage, removes a notebook from his coat pocket, and announces, "'This here does not contain theses, comrades.' . . . 'This is the diary of a collective-farm chairman. That is, my personal diary. I make entries in it every day—about where I was, what I did."[58] Like the diaries of Pomerantsev's ocherkist and Ovechkin's Dolgushin, Openkin's diary is a professional's empirical implement. Indeed, he relates that his entries are not conclusive statements—"not theses"—and that the diary facilitates attention to detail—"where I was, what I did." Openkin then proceeds to read to the attendees an entry he made while listening to the earlier speeches; it recounts various meetings that he has endured over the previous two weeks and lists others he must attend before the end of the month, and in it he laments that they not only leave him no time to work on his collective farm but also are closed to the common people. In the middle of reading the entry, Openkin begins to address the assembled activists and the entry seamlessly becomes a speech. When Openkin finishes, the audience applauds, and some ten people are inspired to take the floor to echo his remarks. If Erenburg and Gladilin incorporated diaries into their works to underline the principle of independence, Ovechkin explicitly added to this the diary's power, by dint of its personal nature, to inspire others to express themselves. Indeed, in the same installment, the district-committee first secretary, Martynov, asserts that a party activist in his capacity as an orator is a writer, an "engineer of

57. Ibid., 174–75.
58. Ovechkin, "V tom zhe raione," *SS*, 2:111–12.

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human souls."[59] In his description of the reception of Openkin's speech, then, Ovechkin communicated the power of independence and the diary's ability to capture it; moreover, Martynov intimates that a diarist is no less a writer than, say, a novelist and, by extension, that a diary could be true literature.

The idea that diaries contained independent thought and thus had literary value was echoed by other writers, who presented their essays, sketches, and lyric poems as "diaries" to bolster the personal theme in their work. This was particularly true of Tvardovskii, in relation to both his own poetry and the essays and sketches he edited and published in *Novyi mir.* In the 1956 installment of his poem *Distance beyond Distance*, for example, Tvardovskii referred to the longer work, which he had begun publishing in 1953, as his "road diary." In the 1956 installment's first part, "The Lights of Siberia," Tvardovskii's narrator explains that a poet must be completely open with his readers. This imperative sets the stage for the second part, "A Childhood Friend," in which the narrator writes of a train trip to the Russian Far East during which he crossed paths with a childhood friend headed in the opposite direction, to Moscow—by implication, upon release from the gulag. Their encounter, the narrator confesses, made him feel terribly ashamed: expelled from society, his friend had become an inconvenience and he had tried to forget him as a result. Yet their meeting marks a new beginning, a return to and embrace of his own thoughts; it presents a picture of someone who learns not from a child but from his own childhood self.[60] The installment is in fact autobiographical and thus all the more dear. Tvardovskii began his literary career in the late 1920s and early 1930s in his native Smolenskaia oblast, where he befriended a number of people who met the same fate as his "childhood friend." As V. V. Ilin has pointed out, there are many candidates for the poem's prototype, but the text likely captures not a single person but a general phenomenon—no less personal, I would add, for its generality, and all the more powerful in its attempt to portray a wider experience.[61]

As far as Tvardovskii the editor is concerned, it was no accident that he placed the first installment of Ovechkin's *District Routine* and Pomerantsev's "On Sincerity in Literature" in a section of *Novyi mir* called "The Diary of a Writer." Tvardovskii once spoke of his intention to make this section—which he termed a forum for "free expression"—a regular feature of each issue.[62] In his diary in 1958, Tvardovskii noted that he was writing a piece for "The Diary of a Writer," a section he called "probably the best form for the 'non-

59. Ibid., 88.

60. A. Tvardovskii, "Za daliu dal' (Glavy iz knigi)," in M. N. Aliger et al., eds., *Literaturnaia Moskva: Literaturno-khudozhdestvennyi sbornik Moskovskikh pisatelei*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1956) 1:495.

61. V. V. Ilin, *Ne priacha glaz: Aleksandr Tvardovskii. Literaturnoe okruzhenie, tvorcheskie sviazi* (Smolensk, 2000), 77, 79, 82, 86–88, 91–94.

62. This occurred at a meeting of the editorial boards of Writers' Union publications on 25 January 1954. Stenogramma soveshchaniia, Tsentral'nyi arkhiv soiuz sovetskikh pisatelei SSP SSSR (Tsentr. arkhiv. SSP SSSR), opis (op.) 28 postoiannoe khranenie (p/kh.), delo (d.) 49, cited in R. M. Romanova, *Aleksandr Tvardovskii: Trudy i dni* (Moscow, 2006), 411–12.

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obligatoriness' [*'neobiazatel'nosti'*] of my reflections, memories, and so on."[63] With respect to "On Sincerity in Literature," Tvardovskii once remarked that it consisted of entries from Pomerantsev's diary (which the essay's content suggests, as Pomerantsev refers in the opening to the thoughts to follow as "notes" [*zametki*]).[64]

Tvardovskii did not stop at applying the diary moniker to essays, sketches, and poems; he also wanted to see works that, if not diaries themselves, at least resembled the form. In his own diary in October 1954 he posited that if one wished to write about the collective farm, one needed to live in the countryside for a year and keep something like a "diary" (the quotation marks are his own), recording one's impressions every day.[65] Two writers, Efim Dorosh and Vladimir Soloukhin, to some extent realized Tvardovskii's wish. Between 1956 and 1964 Dorosh published six installments of *A Village Diary*. A day-to-day account of Dorosh's various stays in a central Russian village in the 1950s and 1960s, *A Village Diary* is not an actual diary but simulates the genre. Dorosh did not date his "entries" but included section breaks and spaces to separate one day or one passage from another. He wrote in the present tense and did not create a plot or include dialogue, focusing the text instead on his own thoughts.[66] In his *Vladimir Country Roads*, an account of a trip he took through his native Vladimir province in the summer of 1956, Soloukhin also employs the diaristic form. In this work, published in late 1957, Soloukhin writes in the first person and divides his narrative into separate days, titling them "Day 1," "Day 2," "Day 3," and so on.[67]

Contemporaries noticed that Dorosh's and Soloukhin's works resembled diaries and thus captured the most intimate thoughts of their authors as well as the details of rural life. In his own diary in 1961 Aleksandr Iashin remarked, "It is interesting that recently noticeable successes in prose have occurred by complying with authenticity [*dostovernost'*], in documentariness. These are almost diaries without specially invented literary plots." Among the successes, Iashin noted, was Soloukhin's *Vladimir Country Roads*. "These works win one over with their authorial directness [*neposredstvennost'*]," Iashin continued, "with their desire to speak confidentially to the reader about everything as though to one's closest friend, and their conviction that everything that is one's *own*, and that is personal and frank, cannot be uninteresting to others."[68] In a 1966 article in *Novyi mir* Lakshin argued that the diary had recently become a more important genre. For example, Dorosh had embraced the diaristic form, Lakshin stated, because it brought the reader, long sub-

63. A. Tvardovskii, diary entry, 4 May 1958, "Iz rabochikh tetradei," *Znamia*, 1989, no. 8: 176.

64. This also occurred at the meeting of the editorial boards referenced above.

65. Tvardovskii, diary entry, 8 October 1954, "Iz rabochikh tetradei," *Znamia*, 1989, no. 7: 144.

66. See, for example, Efim Dorosh, "Derevenskii dnevnik," in Aliger et al., eds., *Literaturnaia Moskva*, 2:549–626.

67. Vladimir Soloukhin, "Vladimirskie proselki," *Novyi mir*, 1957, no. 9: 82–141, and *Novyi mir*, 1957, no. 10: 75–134.

68. Aleksandr Iashin, diary entry, 15 May 1961, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh* (Moscow, 1986; hereafter *SS*), 3:269. Emphasis in the original.

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jected to embellished rural prose, closer to unadulterated rural reality, and given its spontaneity and consciousness, it offered him more independence in coming to conclusions about the countryside. "The spirit of free and unprejudiced juxtaposition of facts," Lakshin wrote, "without the 'incorporation' ['*nataskivaniia*'] beforehand of definite conclusions, should make an impression on the reader, who loves to make sense of life by himself and has no patience for hints."[69] As I mention above, documentary forms that did not exploit the diary offered the reader the same advantage; but the diary might have been even more advantageous in this regard, as documentary works could and did contain narrative.

It was not only diaristic texts such as Dorosh's *A Village Diary* and Soloukhin's *Vladimir Country Roads* that appeared in print; real diaries were published as well. One of these was the diary of Nina Kosterina, a young Muscovite whose diary of the late 1930s and the 1940s was published in *Novyi mir* in December 1962.[70] Kosterina began her diary in 1936, when she was fifteen years old, and kept it until November 1941, when she left Moscow, having volunteered for a partisan detachment. As Kosterina presents it, the idea to keep a diary came to her out of the blue. The text that emerges is in great measure ordinary; indeed, in her first entry she calls the notebook "The Diary of an Ordinary Girl." She writes of dancing, books read, plays seen, exams taken, and friends made and lost and longed for. These normal teenage cares and activities fit seamlessly with her duties as a member of the Komsomol, which she joins almost immediately after beginning the diary. Her diary becomes her trusted friend, even if at times she neglects it or finds it full of trivia. More than (or perhaps related to) this, it becomes a space of truth and sincerity. In a crucial turn in the text, the terror and the arrest of her father enter her childhood as spontaneously as did her diary. She finds the charges against him extremely disorienting but quickly concludes that it must all be a terrible mistake. Her father's arrest tends to fall to the background of the text; it is almost as though it were overwhelmed by the ordinariness of this Ordinary Girl's life. Throughout, however, she remains convinced of his innocence. When the war came, she volunteered to fight, and in the diary she entertains the idea that her valor may save him; it is perhaps her childhood, too, that she aims to retrieve. Yet only a month after leaving for the front, in December 1941, she was killed. In the editorial introduction, her decision to enlist, and presumably her death, too, is called a podvig (feat); for the editors, the text appears to be about the strength and endurance of a young person who lived through the terror—about the extraordinariness of the ordinary Soviet citizen. Yet given the larger context of Soviet culture's discourse on childhood, a discourse that replaced feats with thoughts, this meaning is destabilized and fragmented, and the one that emerges through the cracks suggests the loss or even the elusiveness of what is pure. At least in this diary, a feat does not retrieve childhood.

Writers also articulated many of the above ideas about diaries in, and in relation to, their own diaries. They saw them as texts that were, if not more

69. Vladimir Lakshin, "Tri mery vremeni," *Novyi mir*, 1966, no. 3: 222.
70. "Dnevnik Niny Kosterinoi," *Novyi mir*, 1962, no. 12: 31–105.

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honest than their other works, then at least ones in which they should try to write honestly, or push themselves to do so in their published work. The Stalin Prize-winning poet Aleksandr Iashin used his diary (the published version of which begins in 1958) to do just this as well as to connect with an imagined, sincere childhood self much like Kosterina's. On the most basic level, Iashin used the text to record the details of his travels, often on assignment, to his native Vologodskaia oblast and village of Bludnovo. Many entries are quite mundane: he notes where he went, his chosen means of transportation, and often that he is not getting any writing done because of a regrettable laziness.[71] The reader is slowly given the sense, however, that Iashin kept a diary not simply to keep track of such goings, doings, and regrets but to establish and affirm an enduring connection with the locale of his birth and childhood.[72] Over time, he would more or less succeed at becoming a disciplined writer and would use the diary to set goals for himself, track his progress, and evaluate the quality of his work.[73] Increasingly, part of his writing process consisted of harnessing the diary to the empirical imperative, documenting mistakes and shortcomings on the collective farm in Bludnovo and elsewhere.[74] His diary captures well the dialogical relationship between the empirical imperative and independence; the more problems he notices, the more he turns inward to interrogate the content of his soul, and vice versa.[75] What is significant is that analysis of his world and his self ultimately leads him to regret having written weak, soulless poems under Stalin.[76] Here his use of his diary to connect with the place of his childhood combines with, or subtly transforms into, a use of the text to resurrect an imagined earlier, purer self, uncompromised by his Stalin-era prerogatives. The diary is thus about a return—physical in addition to spiritual, for Iashin decides to build himself an *izba* in his native village and uses the diary to record the progress of its construction. It is a torturous return because, even in Stalin's absence, it is difficult to permit his self to guide his pen, causing him to lose his earlier discipline and write nothing at all.[77] This becomes especially true after his sketch "Vologda Wedding," which appeared in *Novyi mir* in December 1962, began to be criticized in the press and elsewhere for, among other things, allegedly casting his native oblast as well as the entire Soviet Union in a harsh light.[78] The terminus, insofar as a

71. On his inability to write, see Iashin, diary entries, 29 and 30 July 1960, 31 July 1960, and 2 August 1960, *SS*, 3:263.

72. On his native village and region as they relate to his childhood (some of the discussion implicit), see, for example, diary entries, 11 June 1958, ibid., 3:246; 14 July 1958, ibid., 3:247; and 10 April 1959, ibid., 3:256.

73. See, for example, diary entries, 10 May 1960, ibid., 3:267; 9 January 1962, ibid., 3:271; and 21 February 1962, ibid., 3:278.

74. See, for example, diary entries, 14 June 1958, ibid., 3:247; 23 August 1963, ibid., 3:302; and 15 August 1964, ibid., 3:306.

75. See, for example, diary entries, 14 December 1958, ibid., 3:254; 9 March 1959, ibid., 3:256; and 25 May 1962, ibid., 3:280.

76. Diary entry, 12 November 1962, ibid., 3:288–89.

77. See, for example, diary entries, 11 May 1962, ibid., 3:279; 5 February 1963, ibid., 3:289–90; and 12 May 1963, ibid., 3:291.

78. A. Iashin, "Vologodskaia svad'ba," *Novyi mir*, 1962, no. 12: 3–26. For this particular criticism of the sketch, see Aleksei Petrov, "Vologzhane o 'Vologodskoi svad'be,'" *Vologodskii komsomolets*, 8 February 1963, reproduced in S. A. Tikhomirova, ed., *Krai dobra*

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diary contains one, is not a return to the place and space of his childhood but a refuge in the diaristic text; attacked for his more or less "honest" published writing, he is descended upon by a diffuse fear and turns to his diary for support.[79] "Die, internal editor; otherwise, I will not be able to write anything," he writes in the midst of all of this in 1963. "I am interested only in my internal 'self' [*vnutrennee 'ia'*]."[80]

The critic and novelist Fedor Abramov, who in the 1960s would become a leading writer of so-called Russian village prose, saw the diary not only as a repository of truth but also, as a result, as likely the most genuine work of contemporary literature. Like Iashin's, Abramov's diary, which begins in 1954, captures the dialogic relationship between the empirical imperative and independence. Abramov quite clearly used his diary to gather data for two novels he hoped to write: one based on his native village, Verkola, in Arkhangel'skaia oblast, and another about the Leningrad intelligentsia, based on his own experiences as an associate professor (*dotsent*) in the philology department at Leningrad State University. The rural novel, *Brothers and Sisters*, was published in the journal *Neva* in 1958; the intelligentsia novel would never be published as such but instead appeared as a play, *One God for All*, in *Neva* in 1962. While working on both pieces, Abramov reflected in his diary on the literary and social value of the diaristic form. In September 1957, for example, he cast diaries as more suitable to depicting the times than other forms, in part because of their ability to portray authentic personal experience. "For more than two months I have not picked up my 'diaristic' pen," Abramov wrote. "And I should have. No newspapers, no books can establish a true picture of the lived-through time. In diary entries there is a freshness of feeling, an attention to those facts that occupied you and your contemporaries."[81] In October 1957 he presented diaries as the true works of contemporary literature: "Literature in our time has moved from [literary journals] to diaries. Later they will study our epoch using diaries."[82]

What I have described above is a turn among Khrushchev-era writers and critics to short forms and documentary forms in order to articulate and realize an empirical imperative. These intellectuals embraced the diaristic form for the same reason and, no less importantly, because it was also able to impart the significance of independent expression. For the reformist wing of the literary intelligentsia, both the empirical imperative and independent expression became constituent elements of their own desired subjectivity as well as the subjectivity they wished to be adopted by their readers. Among these writers

i chudes: Iubileinoe vozvrashchenie Aleksandra Iashina, Literaturnaia kritika, Istoricheskii portret (Vologda, 2008), 139. For his response to criticism of the sketch, see various entries for 1963 in Iashin, *SS*, vol. 3.

79. On this fear, see Iashin, diary entry, 2 November 1963, *SS*, 3:305.

80. Diary entry, 28 November 1963, ibid., 3:305.

81. Fedor Abramov, diary entry, 24 September 1957. The version of the diary I have consulted is the original, located in the personal archive of Liudmila Krutikova-Abramova, Abramov's widow, in her St. Petersburg apartment. For in-depth analysis of the diary, see Anatoly Pinsky, "The Individual after Stalin: Fedor Abramov, Russian Intellectuals, and the Revitalization of Soviet Socialism, 1953–1962" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2011).

82. Abramov, diary entry, 5 October 1957.

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and critics the diaristic form thus displaced both the novel as the privileged genre of Soviet literature and its corresponding notion of subjectivity.

In closing, I would ask, how could writers such as Tvardovskii and Abramov consider their own diaries to be socially useful if they remained unpublished and thus without much of an audience? I would suggest, first, that the diaries helped their authors maintain an attachment to the two elements of the subjectivity discussed in this article. In his diary in 1955 Tvardovskii wrote that he had always been proud to have been unable to write anything unpublishable or "for himself": "But now something else, at least in the given case: *I believe* that one cannot not write 'for oneself' . . . , *'for posterity,' for reserve; otherwise one would have to deny oneself a lot and limit oneself to the extreme, suicidally.*"[83] If the ultimate goal in Soviet letters was still the creation of novels—both Tvardovskii and Iashin, known primarily as poets, wrote in their diaries of their desire to switch to the novella and novel, respectively—writers remaining tied to these components, for their true assimilation on a later, better day was of crucial importance. Yet when that day would come was unclear, as Gladilin's novella and Kosterina's and Iashin's diaries suggest. If the ultimate goal in Soviet letters remained the writing of novels, it is no less important that this was the goal in theory; neither Tvardovskii nor Iashin wrote his long prose work, and the sociopolitical context and its attendant subjectivity was no less significant than their ostensible laziness in making them not novelists but diarists.

Second, these intellectuals' assertion of their diaries' value appears to have been based on a fundamental optimism, albeit muted and diffuse if compared with the often more hopeful notes they struck in their published works. That is, their claims are founded on the idea that a day eventually would come when, if not they themselves, then their biological or spiritual heirs could publish their diaries, or at the least scholars would be able to examine them in archives. Abramov suggested as much: "Later they will study our epoch using diaries." This and similar statements are essentially optimistic, but they embody a much more tempered optimism than is typically associated with the Khrushchev-era thaw.

Such attenuated optimism is another aspect of this period's subjectivity worth examining, alongside the ideas invested in other literary forms in which reformist writers and critics worked. In this article, I have not argued that a single literary form was more significant than all others among these intellectuals *at each stage* of the Khrushchev era; like any historical period, this one was characterized by a great deal of diversity and flux. Just as I do not maintain that one literary genre was privileged above all others throughout the period, I do not propose the promotion of a single significant ideal subjectivity on the part of these writers and critics. Subjectivity is inextricably linked, in a dialogic relationship, with the forms in which it is expressed.[84] Form, after all, is also content.

83. Tvardovskii, diary entry, 19 March 1955, "Iz rabochikh tetradi," *Znamia*, 1989, no. 7: 159. Emphasis in the original.

84. This conclusion is inspired by but not entirely based on Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987).

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An obvious question that emerges from this article is, what was the fate of the diaristic form in the later 1960s and 1970s? Did this genre and the corresponding subjectivity fade from prominence, or did they remain important? Was this late Soviet period perhaps marked by more (privileged) formal diversity than earlier periods, with corresponding consequences for the Soviet project? These are just some of the questions to be asked given the intervention this article has made. More generally, further attention to the neglected history of literary form in the Soviet Union offers scholars a new way of uncovering ideals of subjectivity, their creation, and their dissemination. Such an agenda would also help uncover the variety of subjectivities promoted by the different literary cohorts of the Khrushchev era and Soviet period generally. The agenda might also include microanalyses of how the historically constituted features of literary forms shape the subjectivities of their individual authors. To paraphrase Abramov, and to revise and thus to deepen his meaning, such approaches would allow scholars to study the Soviet epoch not simply by using diaries and other literary forms but by investigating the ideas invested in the forms themselves.

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