Moscow after the Apocalypse

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Introduction: The Rise of the Firebird from the Ashes

Cities and Thrones and Powers
Stand in Time's eye,
Almost as long as flowers
Which daily die:
But, as new buds put forth
To glad new men,
Out of the spent and unconsidered Earth
The Cities rise again.

—Rudyard Kipling, "Cities and Thrones and Powers"

In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's disintegration, one popular joke on the streets of Moscow suggested that, in a reworking of Iosif Stalin's thesis of achieving "socialism in one country," the people were now witnessing "apocalypse in one country."[1] The sense that people were losing both the foundations on which they had built their lives and the future toward which they were aiming was reflected in the turn of literature to dystopian and apocalyptic visions.[2] On occasion, these went further than an "apocalypse in one country" to depict an apocalypse in one city: Moscow. With the capital taken as a synecdoche for Russia, the secession of Soviet republics was symbolized by sending fissures through Moscow's streets. In Aleksandr Kabakov's *kinopovest'*, "Nevozvrashchenets," written from May to June 1988 and published the following year in the journal *Iskusstvo kino*, the reader is transported to Moscow in the near future—1993. Soviet Moscow has been effaced, warring factions wreak havoc, and anarchists populate the ruins of the bombed Peking Hotel.[3] Published three years later, Vladimir Makanin's *Laz* similarly epitomizes the lost past and rapidly changing present by focusing on

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1. Quoted in Mikhail N. Epstein, *After the Future: The Paradoxes of Postmodernism and Contemporary Russian Culture* (Amherst, 1995), 72.

2. For a study of Russian dystopian fiction in the late 1980s and early 1990s, see Sally Dalton-Brown, "Signposting the Way to the City of Night: Recent Russian Dystopian Fiction," *Modern Language Review* 90, no. 1 (January 1995): 103–19. For a broader overview, see Boris Lanin, *Russkaia literaturnaia antiutopiia* (Moscow, 1993).

3. Aleksandr Kabakov, "Nevozvrashchenets," *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 6 (June 1989): 150–75. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

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lawlessness in Moscow. With men hunting in packs, groups boarding buses to steal old ladies' shoes, and gangs raping women, Makanin's protagonist lives in constant fear of the mob.[4] These two pessimistic works are indicative of the widespread darkness in the literature of that time; they evoke a dying city at the center of a crumbling empire and link wider political upheaval to the collapsing of individuals' universes.

In the subsequent years, Moscow not only survived but rose again as the "phoenix-city" from the ashes of its former existence.[5] It came to be viewed geographically as the optimal building site for new skyscrapers, shops, and neon monuments to consumerism and symbolically as the spearhead for Russia's future direction. Yet, over a decade after the publication of Kabakov's kinopovest' and long after the immediate upheaval of the early 1990s, the apocalypse still continued to be written into fictional Moscow. Dystopian and apocalyptic images dripping with disillusionment and disaster remained important tropes for the literature of the 2000s.[6] This article will focus most closely on two of the bleaker narratives of postapocalyptic Moscow: Tat'iana Tolstaia's *Kys'* (2000) and Dmitrii Glukhovskii's *Metro 2033* (2005).[7] Tolstaia's "Moscow" is a stagnating village; Glukhovskii's "Moscow" exists in the bowels of the city due to radiation on the surface. The novels are connected by their portrayal of life after a nuclear blast, the spatial isolation and temporal stasis that such a future entails, and their narrative focus on a "little man" traveling from the geographic and social peripheries of postapocalyptic Moscow to its center.[8] Close readings of both allow us to consider how the topography of the apocalypse is mapped onto the topography of Moscow, how catastrophe is explored through its spatial impact, and how temporal disjuncture manifests spatially. They also illustrate how spatiality and temporality can be intertwined to offer hope, and how the postapocalyptic genre is used to investigate the long-standing center/periphery opposition even apart from times of immediate turbulence.

These novels are illuminating in their conceptualization of transformation—where further change is still possible after the initial transition of the "post-" period and where the structures of the city and society are reproduced.

4. Vladimir Makanin, *Laz: Povesti i rasskazy* (Moscow, 1998).

5. Svetlana Boym points out that there is a long-standing association of the firebird with Moscow, built into the city's mythology after its destruction in 1812. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2001), 100.

6. For an overview of recent Russian dystopian fiction, including apocalyptic visions, see Aleksandr Chantsev, "Fabrika antiutopii: Distonicheskii diskurs v rossiiskoi literature serediny 2000-kh," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 86, no. 4 (August 2007): 269–301.

7. *Kys'* was first conceived in 1986 in the wake of the Chernobyl' catastrophe, but Tolstaia returned to it in the late 1990s. *Metro 2033* was initially published online in 2002 but was reworked and extended for its publication in paper in 2005. As well as spawning a highly successful sequel, *Metro 2034*, the original novel has been transformed into an internationally acclaimed computer game and a film. This has inspired devotees to discuss Glukhovskii's fictional world and even write their own novels or short stories on www.metro2033.ru (last accessed 31 May 2013).

8. The "Blast" at the center of *Kys'* is never explicitly described as nuclear, but the widespread annihilation, the radiation poisoning that blights the local fauna and flora, and the unusual mutations that affect both survivors and their children all strongly imply a nuclear catastrophe.

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They go beyond the indiscriminate mass destruction of nuclear catastrophe to explore survival: they are "postapocalyptic" in the sense defined by Gary Wolfe, portraying "the end of a way of life [. . .] perhaps a system of beliefs—but not the actual destruction of the planet or its population."[9] They consider the ideological volte-face, mutated remainders, and haunting vestiges produced by catastrophe as well as their impact on society. There is a clear overlap between such gloomy images of a denigrated, post-nuclear-blast Moscow and the dystopian images of an undesirable future repeatedly appearing in twentieth-century Russian literature. There is an inherent apocalyptic moment, "the end of a way of life," in both utopian and dystopian literary fictions. Indeed, Tolstaia inserts her Moscow into the dystopian canon of isolated spaces, tormented by restrictive rules that receive no revision from the outside world. Glukhovskii equally considers a lonely underground universe, drawing heavily on the Strugatskii brothers' science fiction. Rather than concentrating on one paradigm taken to its paradisiacal or terrifying conclusion, however, both focus on the conjunction of beginning and end. They incorporate utopian hope and its dystopian failure, but question where society can go next or even if it still has anywhere to "go" at all. They link the loss of old aspirations created by the previous apocalyptic moment in Russia's history (1917) to the most recent post-Soviet transformations and then investigate the implications for the Putin period. Past catastrophes and their potential for future recurrence are inscribed into the present.

Working with the apocalyptic moment of 1991 rather than 1917, Tolstaia and Glukhovskii reimagine the traditional Russian symbol of the apocalypse, which David Bethea identifies as the horse and rider (or the train, the "iron horse") in his influential work on the apocalyptic thread running through Russian fiction, from Fedor Dostoevskii to Andrei Belyi, from Andrei Platonov to Mikhail Bulgakov and Boris Pasternak. While the horse and rider was once the "'Ursymbol' for Russian history at an epic crossroads," it has been transformed for the post-nuclear-blast atavistic world.[10] In *Kys'*, the horse has been replaced as the steed of choice by the mutated and enslaved human being. In *Metro 2033*, the urban metro train replaces the "iron horse," its breakdown symbolic of the Soviet project's failure. For Tolstaia, the harnessing of the irradiated human reflects the hopelessness of achieving progress. For Glukhovskii, the metro train's breakdown is catastrophic but can herald new possibilities. Fresh avenues are opened in a metro system that has a new raison d'être beyond transporting passengers.

The reconceptualization of the harbinger of doom, this "Ursymbol" of

9. Gary K. Wolfe, The Remaking of Zero: Beginning at the End," in Eric S. Rabkin et al., eds., *The End of the World* (Carbondale, 1983), 1. Some have shied away from the term *postapocalyptic*, as does the French scholar Samuel Minne, who prefers "post-cataclysmique" due to the biblical associations with the "apocalypse." Since "cataclysm" contains its own connotation of the deluge myth and writers continue to draw on the heritage of the biblical apocalypse, I use the terms that still pervade Anglophone scholarship. Samuel Minne, "*Yesterday Never Dies:* Perdre et retrouver l'Histoire dans quatre sociétés post-cataclysmiques," *Cynos* 22, no. 1 (October 2005): 2.

10. David M. Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton, 1989), 193.

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sudden transformation, leads us to the temporal angle so often simplified or marginalized in utopian/dystopian narratives by time's complete cessation. In *Kys'*, time, space, and apocalypse are all combined to show how the desired postapocalyptic transition is impossible in a society suffering widespread amnesia. Although the chapter titles—letters drawn in order from the old Russian alphabet—evoke the desire for linearity, the novel's dénouement offers anything but progress. Tolstaia's postapocalyptic Moscow is caught in cyclical time, unreflectively repeating the same old rituals. *Metro 2033,* on the other hand, has been chosen for analysis because it offers the reader both a vision of cyclicality and an alternative model. Allowing multiple regimes to prevail over one single order, Glukhovskii constructs a rhizomatic, node-based topography for Moscow beyond the strictures of its concentricity. An embracing of this spatial multiplicity seems to offer a path forward. Hope is not found in reassuringly familiar stability but springs from the unexplored fissures opened up by catastrophe. Glukhovskii's topography of chaos comprises multiple contexts and even opportunities.

Juxtaposing Center and Periphery in the Concentric City of Preapocalyptic Moscow

In the words of Susan Buck-Morss, the "modern city" contains an inherent tension between "heaven and hell, phantasmagoria and catastrophe."[11] The city as a closed, manageable, malleable space offers the perfect geography for explorations of utopia. As far back as Plato's *Laws,* utopia was envisaged as an urban space that "should be placed as nearly as possible in the center of the country," with the walled Acropolis (containing temples to the gods) at its sacred focal point.[12] Yet the city also has a dark side; a hellish dystopia lurks in the shadows. The large metropolis stands haunted by the legacies of its previous inhabitants.[13] It is a site of perversion and the devil, said to be living in its subterranean maw.[14] It facilitates the full spectrum of human existence yet creates a rupture between the haves and the have-nots. If, as David Harvey concludes, this "polarization of positives and negatives has its geography," then it is specifically the *concentric* city that seems to provide its perfected form.[15] The concentric city focuses power at its core, valorizing the "phantasmagoric" center while concealing "catastrophe" in its subterranean or peripheral cracks.

11. Susan Buck-Morss, "The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe," *October* 73 (Summer 1995): 9. I am grateful to Mark D. Steinberg for encouraging me to consider the relevance of this work to my analysis.

12. Plato, *Laws,* vol. 1, trans. R. G. Bury (London, 1926), 380–81.

13. In his seminal study of the city, Lewis Mumford describes how primordial man once made a claim to the land on which the graves of his forefathers were situated, concluding that "the city of the dead antedates the city of the living." Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (London, 1961), 7.

14. David L. Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx: The Underworlds of Modern Urban Culture, 1800–2001* (Ithaca, 2007), esp. 65–157. For more on the city's polis/perversion dichotomy, see Stephen Schneck, "City and Village," in George F. McLean and John Kromkowski, eds., *Urbanization and Values* (Washington, D.C., 1991), 169–79.

15. David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh, 2000), 158.

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With its ring structure and central Kremlin, Moscow stands as the epitome of concentric urbanity. It is, as Iurii Lotman posits, a city associated with elevation, the "mediator between heaven and earth," focused inward on its own walled central citadel.[16] Whereas "eccentric" St. Petersburg exists at the edge of cultural space and tends toward contact with outside cultures, "concentric" Moscow specifically lends itself to literary descriptions of hierarchy and isolation. From the nineteenth-century "Moscow Text" to Bulgakov's famous evocation of the three concentric cities cited by Lotman (Jerusalem, Rome, and Moscow) in *Master i Margarita,* the city's concentricity has been repeated in the cultural imagination.[17]

During the 1930s, utopian rhetoric, concentricity, and Moscow's cityscape were all fused in the project to create a socialist showcase capital. As the Union's synecdoche, the city was to be reimagined in accordance with the 1935 General Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow to become a beacon of hope for those toiling in the Soviet peripheries.[18] Drawing on light metaphors, Nikolai Bukharin described how Moscow would become the modern-day incarnation of Tommaso Campanella's concentric "City of the Sun," "a new Mecca" that would be "almost magical, almost a fairy tale."[19] Not only was Moscow's own concentricity strengthened in the plans, but the topography of the showcase capital was also transposed onto the map of the Soviet Union. "The entire country was organized in a hierarchy of relative sacredness."[20] The opposition between center and periphery was thus entwined with the series of binary oppositions constructed in political discourse between the old, dark, primitive, chaotic tsarist regime and the new, illuminating, carefully planned Soviet order.[21] The new city would even have a new sacred center—

16. Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture,* trans. Ann Shukman (London, 1990), 191–202. Joseph Brodsky expresses a similar idea in his description of Moscow's tendency to retreat "to its womblike, claustrophobic, and xenophobic condition." Joseph Brodsky, "A Guide to a Renamed City," *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (London, 1986), 88.

17. Although Vladimir Toporov rejects the existence of a "separate 'Moscow' text" (26) in his seminal elucidation of the "Petersburg Text," Ian Lilly points out that Moscow's repeated appearance in opposition to St. Petersburg ensures that "Toporov tacitly acknowledges the existence of a Moscow counterpart." V. N. Toporov, *Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury: Izbrannye trudy* (St. Petersburg, 2003), 7–118. Ian K. Lilly, "Female Sexuality in the Pre-Revolutionary 'Moscow Text' of Russian Literature," in Ian K. Lilly, ed., *Moscow and Petersburg: The City in Russian Literature* (Nottingham, 2002), 32. Grigorii Knabe's collection also offers excellent insight into the prerevolutionary Moscow metatext, G. S. Knabe, ed., *Moksva i "moskovskii tekst" russkoi kul'tury: Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1998).

18. Anon., *General'nyi plan rekonstruktsii goroda Moskvy: 1. Postanovleniia i materialy* (Moscow, 1936).

19. N. Bukharin, "Gorod solntsa," *Izvestiia,* 14 July 1935, 4. Tommaso Campanella's utopian, concentric city possesses a sacred heart surrounded by seven walled rings, named after the seven planets known to people at that time. Tommaso Campanella, *La Città del Sole: Dialogo Poetico/The City of the Sun: A Poetical Dialogue,* trans. Daniel J. Donno (Berkeley, 1981), 26–27.

20. Katerina Clark, "Socialist Realism and the Sacralizing of Space," in Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman, eds., *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space* (Seattle, 2003), 8.

21. I draw here on the binary model proposed by Iurii Lotman and Boris Uspenskii of the old replacing the new at important historic moments, initially intended to capture pre-

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the (ultimately unrealized) Palace of the Soviets—which would tower into the heavens on the site of the demolished Cathedral of Christ the Savior. The apocalyptic moment of 1917 was the pivot between the two worlds, but catastrophe was portrayed as the necessary destruction of the old world whose concentric paradigm was simply recontextualized and recycled by the new order.

When, however, the concentric city's sacred core proves rotten and the utopian dreams associated with it fail to materialize, negative connotations are easily attached to the city. First published abroad in 1986 and penned in his émigré home in Munich, Vladimir Voinovich's *Moskva 2042* is a good example of connecting a rotten vertical hierarchy to Moscow's concentricity. Voinovich selects Moscow as the center of his dystopian universe and reduces the rest of the world to three concentric circles: the Soviet republics in the first, the fraternal socialist states in the second, and finally the capitalist nations.[22] Rather than valorizing these circles, Voinovich exploits the topography to make a satirical sideswipe at the Stalinist imagery of greatness radiating from the center. When cast negatively, the isolation created by the center/periphery binary forces Moscow into totalitarian stagnation. Communism's "new" light of hope quickly fades, no technological progress can be made without outside inspiration, and the promised sacredness is profaned. Fifteen years previously, Venedikt Erofeev had similarly satirized the constricting rings of centralized power in *Moskva-Petushki*.[23] While the narrator and protagonist Venichka seeks to flee oppressive Moscow to the Edenic freedom of Petushki on a suburban train, he ultimately finds himself back in the city center. As Venichka's journey remains unrealized, his head is smashed against the Kremlin wall by a group of unnamed thugs.[24] Inserted into the dystopian context, spatial concentricity proves threatening, the center violently constricting.

Prior to the conception of *Kys'*, Tolstaia had already thematized this center/periphery spatial binary in her short story "Fakir," first published in 1986 and set in the same year. "Fakir" is an excellent example of how space can be used to raise questions of social hierarchy, marginalization, and elitist pretension. Investigating Tolstaia's early use of the center/periphery opposition also helps to elucidate the significance of the apocalypse's specific topography during the subsequent analysis of *Kys'*. In the opening scene, the reader

nineteenth-century Russian culture but subsequently applied to other periods. Yuri M. Lotman and Boris A. Uspensky, "Binary Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (to the End of the Eighteenth Century)," in Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, eds., *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History* (Ithaca, 1985), 30–66. For a more recent discussion of the nonlinear flow of time, see Tamara Kondrat'eva, "Sovremennoe gosudarstvo kak vlast' po 'Domostroiu'? (K sporam o sotsiokul'turnykh istokakh stalinizma)," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 81 (October 2006): 50–66.

22. Vladimir Voinovich, *Moskva 2042* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1987), 124–25.

23. *Moskva-Petushki* was first published in 1973 by the Israeli émigré journal *AMI*. Karen Ryan-Hayes concludes that, although some sources place the text in the late 1960s, *Moskva-Petushki* was written between 18 January and 7 March 1970, by "Erofeev's own account." Karen Ryan-Hayes, "Introduction," in Karen Ryan-Hayes, ed., *Venedikt Erofeev's "Moscow-Petushki": Critical Perspectives* (New York, 1997), 6.

24. Venedikt Erofeev, *Moskva-Petushki* (Moscow, 2005), 138.

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tracks Galia's journey from periphery to center, as Galia and her husband accept an acquaintance's (Filin's) dinner invitation to his centrally located apartment. Using free indirect speech, Tolstaia presents the reader with a dichotomized image of Moscow from the viewpoint of a resentful citizen of the distant *spal'nye raiony*. As Moscow's concentricity becomes the dominant trope, Tolstaia uses space to underline Galia's liminal position in late-Soviet society:

> Filin's palace was nestled in the middle of the capital, a pink mountain, decorated here and there [. . .] with all manner of architectural whatsits, thingamajigs, and thingamabobs [*so vsiakimi zodcheskimi edakostiami, shtukentsiiami i fintibriasami*]. There are towers on the plinths and on the towers, there are crenellations [*zubtsi*], and in-between the crenellations, there are ribbons and wreaths, and a book, the source of knowledge, pokes out from the garlands of laurel [. . .] The evening sky above Filin, above his ornate palace, plays with the light—terracotta and lilac: a genuine, Moscow, theatrical sky [*teatral'no-kontsertnoe nebo*].[25]

> Beyond the window, the Sadovoe kol'tso quietly yelped beneath the wheels and people cheerfully flocked through the streets. The city was alight with bundles of golden lamps, radiant frosty rings, multicolored crunching snow.[26]

Galia constructs a psychological wall around the Sadovoe kol'tso and elevates the center above the surrounding city via a "hierophany," the manifestation of the sacred in the chaos of the profane.[27] As Helena Goscilo asserts, the physical surroundings mold Galia's perceptions: the center is awash with color, the people flock "cheerfully," and even the sky adopts a theatrical air in Filin's performance.[28] The "stage" (the crenellated, protected Tower-of-Babel apartment in one of Stalin's *vysotki*, the seven elaborate skyscrapers scattered across Moscow) on which Filin "acts" endows him with authority, and, given Galia's ignorance, the reader is never even presented with the actual architectural features of his abode (*edakostiami, shtukentsiiami i fintibriasami*). Tolstaia carefully uses language (*tartaletki* rather than *pirozhki*), gastronomy (pâté), and music (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Johannes Brahms) to highlight geographical and cultural divisions. The periphery, on the other hand, possesses an "oily cold darkness," in which slum-like *khrushchevki* (low-cost, five-story, prefabricated cement-block apartments built in the 1960s and sometimes disparagingly labeled *khrushchoby* from *trushchoba*, slum) stand decaying:[29] "Dark-white cold, a crust of forest where the darkness is denser still, where, perhaps, an unfortunate wolf is forced to live; [. . .] gloomily, he

25. Tat'iana Tolstaia, "Fakir," *Reka Okkervil': Sbornik rasskazov* (Moscow, 2005), 206.
26. Ibid., 205.
27. I use here Mircea Eliade's term, *hierophany*, for, in his view, people have always sought to found their universe on stable, sacred space. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1959), 22.
28. Helena Goscilo, *The Explosive World of Tatyana N. Tolstaya's Fiction* (Armonk, N.Y., 1996), 100–104.
29. Tolstaia, "Fakir," 206.

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gazes with repugnance into the blind, windy distance, [. . .] his teeth are gritted in sorrow, a frozen tear hangs like a fetid bead on his woollen cheek, and to him anyone is the enemy and anyone is the killer."[30]

When Galia leaves the towering vysotka feeling deficient, she passes through Moscow's concentric circles and travels to the profane, hostile, natural world. The periphery is the outermost boundary of civilization, the Muscovite incarnation of Evgenii Zamiatin's famous Green Wall standing between (the last) human order and untamed nature.[31] The architectural *zubtsy* (crenellations/teeth) that fortify Filin's cocooned home are transformed into the savage *zuby* (teeth) of the miserable wolf. Anthropomorphized yet voiceless, this marginalized creature represents Moscow's "little people," crying soft tears that are never noticed or acknowledged by the center.

Galia's illusion shatters, however, when she discovers that Filin ordinarily lives in the suburb of Domodedovo and that "his" apartment is only a temporary sublet. This epiphany forces Galia not only to reevaluate this "clown in a Padishah's clothing" but also to reconsider her topographical image of Moscow.[32] The center no longer seems so bright, the suburbs not so gloomy. As Voinovich and Erofeev illustrate, utopian isolation can easily be recast as totalitarian oppression, and as Tolstaia shows, the colorful center can quickly become a grey disappointment when the mirage proves false. Moscow's topography contains inherent oppositions that can easily be turned upside down in the cultural imagination. Kabakov's anarchists, Makanin's mob, Erofeev's thugs, and Tolstaia's wolf are permanently poised to emerge from the dark spaces of Bukharin's "new Mecca."

Transporting Soviet Moscow into the Future: Postapocalyptic Moscow's Continued Concentricity

In *Kys'*, Tolstaia takes the late-Soviet, dichotomized Moscow constructed in "Fakir," *Moskva 2042,* and *Moskva-Petushki,* burns it to the ground and rebuilds it in grotesque, mutated form. With the Chernobyl' catastrophe and the collapse of the Soviet Union standing between her two depictions, *Kys'* is set in an almost unrecognizable Moscow 200 years after the "Blast" (*Vzryv*). The city survives but the remaining settlement has been ripped free of the majority of its historical roots and appears devoid of civilization. In honor of the ruling warlord, this isolated *sloboda* has even been renamed Fedor Kuz'michsk, mirroring the proposals to rename Moscow after Stalin during the 1930s.[33] The Stalinist vysotki and functional khrushchevki have disappeared, but the contrasts between center and periphery remain, molding the protagonist's (Benedikt's) perception of both his city and his life's trajectory.

Firmly situated within the tradition of isolated utopian/dystopian space,

30. Ibid., 207.

31. For Zamiatin's protagonist, D-503, prior to his epiphany, "Man ceased to be savage [*dikim chelovekom*] only when we constructed the Green Wall." Evgenii Zamiatin, *My* (New York, 1973), 81.

32. Tolstaia, "Fakir," 216–18.

33. Timothy J. Colton, *Moscow: Governing the Socialist Metropolis* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 249.

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going back to the description of disconnected and ephemeral Atlantis given by Plato's Critias, and within the concept of the concentric city, Tolstaia's post-apocalyptic Moscow is cut off from its surroundings and gazes in on itself.[34] As in Voinovich's vision of the Muscovite city-state, the city's rings are also explicitly evoked: the *Prezhnie*, those who survived the "Blast" and as a consequence no longer age, create a homemade Sadovoe kol'tso signpost. Although the apocalypse has mutated the street itself—the signpost now stands by a row of huts and not on an actual ring road—the Sadovoe kol'tso again marks the border between civilization and nature. Staring out over the city borders from the porch of his meagre dwelling, Benedikt finds nothing but darkness: "What darkness! To the north, to the south, toward the sunset, toward the sunrise—darkness, darkness without an end, without borders, and in the darkness, pieces of gloom; the other izby are like logs, like stones, like black holes in the black blackness, like fissures leading nowhere, to the icy silence, to the night, to oblivion, to death."[35]

Again employing the technique of free indirect speech, Tolstaia blinkers the reader's view to capture Benedikt's ignorance and underline the depressive mind-set created by confined, concentric existence. The "dark-white cold" and "windy distance" of "Fakir" are now associated with an even gloomier finality, with silent "oblivion" and "death." This is compounded by Tolstaia's remolding of Galia's wolf into the part-feline, part-folkloric Kys'. As the city's inhabitants invent wild myths, rumors abound of a beast that screeches mournfully, lingers among the trees, and waits for fresh prey. Tolstaia anthropomorphizes nature, enabling the snowy wastelands to emit a "howl," and fuses Moscow's peripheral space with the "other," the reimagined wolf/Kys'.[36]

With only darkness beyond the peripheries of his world, Benedikt turns away from the wailing wastelands and focuses on the sacred center where the powerful elite dwell. As Benedikt emerges from the nineteenth-century mold of the literary "little man" who dreams of social aggrandizement, the story becomes a Bildungsroman. Ashamed of his tail (a consequence of radiation poisoning) and pathetic existence, Benedikt progresses from being a copyist in the Work *Izba* to the son-in-law of the city's powerful secret police chief, Kudeiar Kudeiarych—*Glavnyi Sanitar*. His climb up the career ladder is mirrored spatially by his literal and metaphorical advance through the "seven gates" standing between his dark hut and the mansion of his new bride's family.[37] There, Benedikt retreats to his personal Tower of Babel—his father-in-law's library. After he has read every book, he stares out across the pitiful city below: "Benedikt ran out onto the gallery and gazed down from the top onto the sloboda [. . .] little people were hurrying and scurrying far below, running and rushing to the warmth of their stove, to their benches, to their soup, their wa-

34. Plato, "Timaeus," *Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles*, vol. 7, trans. R. G. Bury (London, 1926), 40–43. Tat'iana Tolstaia, *Kys'* (Moscow, 2001), 7–9.

35. Tolstaia, *Kys'*, 92.

36. Ibid., 204.

37. The seven gates are a clear reference to Campanella's seven-walled City of the Sun.

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tery mouse broth . . . How do they eat such rubbish, is it not revolting? [. . .] If I had my wish, the entire city would be shaken up: give those books here!"[38]

The center of reconstructed Moscow appears to be a portal to a better life. It is associated with order, where Benedikt neatly categorizes his books; the light of Benedikt's mouse-tallow candle (and the golden street lamps in "Fakir"); human civilization; technology—the wheel has been "reinvented" even if the cars no longer speed down the streets; culture—the cult of the book; height—Benedikt gazes out from atop a tower (and Filin lives in a Stalinist vysotka); and the sacred—Benedikt worships the library's books as material idols (just as Galia is spellbound by the exoticism of Filin's tartaletki, pâté, and music).[39] The space beyond Moscow's borders is characterized by chaos, with no streets or regulated movement; the natural world; a primitive existence; the profane; and the illegible (Galia and Benedikt irrationally fear the externalized, unknown "other"). These spatial oppositions are further buttressed by the wall, both physical and psychological, the symbol of the primordial city that so importantly separated the urban from the rural and the tool of the concentric city focused on its own verticality.[40] Kudeiar Kudeiarych's library is physically protected within the mansion's seven walls and three checkpoints, while the knowledge contained within psychologically elevates this space and imbues its guardians with authority over the common citizen. The center/periphery binary is mapped onto the topography of the postapocalyptic city with all its accompanying associations and implications.

Locked away from society's woes, Benedikt has the privilege of dreaming of a distant, utopian Atlantis, formed from fragments of information gleaned through his vociferous reading and "postmemories" passed down from his mother.[41] Here, Tolstaia evokes Petia's dreams from another of her short stories, "Svidanie s ptitsei" (first published in *Oktiabr'* in 1983), and reminds the reader of Erofeev's descriptions of Petushki.[42] Where Benedikt envisages distant green islands bedecked with lilac and the "Princess Bird" (Kniazh'ia Ptitsa) yearning to kiss him, Erofeev's Venichka longs for Petushki, "where the birds never fall silent, not by day or night, where the jasmine never stops blossoming."[43] Like Venichka's Petushki, however, Benedikt's paradisiacal islands prove to be a drunken illusion, fueled by three barrels of locally brewed alcohol, and after a restorative nap his Atlantis sinks without a trace.[44]

38. Tolstaia, *Kys'*, 284–85.

39. Ibid., 169.

40. As Mumford informs us, the original cities were constructed to be a symbolic "world," a "walled urban container," at the center of which would be the citadel. Mumford, *The City in History*, 1, 34.

41. Tolstaia, *Kys'*, 201. "Postmemory" is used here in the sense in which Marianne Hirsch employs the term, as memories transmitted to the next generation. Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), esp. 22–23.

42. As in Bendikt's vision, Petia imagines a bright civilization, including "white palaces with emerald, scaly roofs, stepped temples with tall doorways, [. . .] enormous golden statues and marble staircases." Tat'iana Tolstaia, "Svidanie s ptitsei," *Liubish'—ne liubish'* (Moscow, 1997), 66–67.

43. Tolstaia, *Kys'*, 201–2; Erofeev, *Moskva-Petushki*, 34.

44. Tolstaia's evocation of the lost island of Atlantis is reminiscent of the moment when Zamiatin's D-503 finally breaks through the Green Wall. Surrounded by the beauty

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His dreams do, however, elucidate the significant divergence of *Kys'* from its predecessors and the specific temporal and spatial impact of the apocalypse. Tolstaia's Galia is confined by her social status and the location of her apartment. Voinovich's Kartsev is enclosed in a society he understands to be absurd but cannot escape due to the leader's all-pervasive cult of personality. Erofeev's Venichka is an intellectual repeatedly haunted by the Kremlin and the power it represents. Tolstaia's Petia is a daydreaming child, but the story's dénouement represents an epiphany that renders the fantastical universe forever lost. Benedikt, on the other hand, is *eternally* trapped in an infantilized world by his own lack of education or cultural roots. He can never escape from the cycle of destruction and degradation, not because the wider regime will never fall or the leader will never die (as in a dystopian hell) but because he personally lacks the necessary nous. Despite effectively traveling through time by accessing Moscow's past knowledge, Benedikt is unable to make sense of this information. He can never become an intellectual because the books he craves so desperately that he is willing to kill for are no more than meaningless objects. He mistakes the material for the spiritual and fails "to learn the alphabet of life."[45]

Moscow's concentric form and the accompanying lust for centralized power persist after the apocalypse, but all nuance and dialogue have been destroyed. Extrapolating from Benedikt to the future generation he embodies, Tolstaia warns against isolating the concentric city and, by extension, post-Soviet society, from Russia's past, high culture. Tolstaia's postapocalyptic generation live in a state of what Marshall Sahlins describes as "historylessness," experiencing culture "in practice," as "*habitus*."[46] Their lives are so basic that the passing of time becomes an irrelevance. With no future, the past is crystallized into a single version of events, dominated by the invented triumphs of the ruler. Discovering that no progress is made over hundreds of years, the Prezhnie attempt to educate the current generation of Muscovites. Their (hi)stories fall on deaf ears. When the city is once again gripped by revolution, renamed, and resubjugated by a new elite, no improvements are made.[47] Moscow's concentric structure is simply strengthened: its hierophanic citadel is protected by twice as many sentinels, the new regime's idol is guarded around the clock, and, in a nod to Moscow's ring roads and the Soviet internal passport system, three fences are erected requiring authorization to pass.

The loss of knowledge caused by the apocalypse ensures that the city's structure cannot be reinterpreted, reimagined, or reworked. Galia's epiphany

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of the natural world, D-503 conjures the analogy of stumbling upon "a sixth, a seventh continent in the ocean, some Atlantis." Zamiatin, *My*, 137.

45. Tolstaia, *Kys'*, 336.

46. Marshall Sahlins, "Other Times, Other Customs: The Anthropology of History," *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 85, no. 3 (September 1983): 525. Eliade posits that the elevating and ordering of profane space into transcendental space also results in the transformation of "concrete time into mythical time." Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1991), 21.

47. *Moskva 2042* concludes with a similar moment of revolution and regression. Effigies of the former ruler are burned, his supporters are mercilessly crucified, the Solzhenitsyn figure returns on a white steed, and a new set of medieval rules are put in place. Voinovich, *Moskva 2042*, 314–16, 325–26.

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is now impossible due to Benedikt's ignorance. As the center continues to expand and contract in a cycle beyond Benedikt's control, he finally realizes that the ostracized "other" is not external but internal. The Kys' does not exist *beyond* the city walls but *within* his very being. The apocalypse has permanently imprinted the constricting center/periphery division onto Moscow's topography because its inhabitants no longer contain the tools to alter the paradigm. Spatial concentricity and temporal cyclicality are crystalized by the apocalypse to such an extent that they trap individuals at the most basic level, within their own heads.

The *Kys'*-*Rus'* Pastiche: Mutated Space, Time, and Language

In an interview with *Afisha*, Tolstaia reveals that she has taken the word "*Kys'*" from the Komi language.[48] The obscure linguistic basis and unexplained meaning of the novel's eponymous villain emphasize not only the inhabitants' need for primordial myths but also the mutation of language following a break with the past. Believing "it is possible to extract [*vytianut'*] an entire world from one word," Tolstaia makes careful use of language, exaggerating the divisions in post-Soviet Russia by giving each societal level different forms of address (represented spatially by Moscow's concentric model).[49] Adopting medieval torture practices, while aping Soviet slogans, members of Tolstaia's elite use a mixture of colloquialisms and official bureaucratese to dictate to ordinary citizens. In Fedor Kuz'mich Kablukov's three decrees, Tolstaia parodies both tsarist decrees and Soviet propaganda, as the leader heaps praise upon himself and informs the people how they should behave.[50] Representing the intelligentsia, the Prezhnie frequently appear to be speaking a different language from Benedikt, who mispronounces unknown words (*mogozin, onervestetskoe abrazavanie, osfal'tom, entelegentsyi, troditsiiu, rinisansa, met, felosofiia*).[51] Items such as asphalt and honey, and facilities such as shops or museums, no longer exist and such words are no longer required. Tolstaia, however, puts greater emphasis on the loss of cultural concepts in the future generations' shrinking vocabulary (a university education, the intelligentsia, tradition, a renaissance, and philosophy).

In the face of linguistic play and temporal pastiche, critics have struggled to describe the novel's message or clearly define its genre. The wealth of peasant expressions, folk idioms, and mutated words imbues *Kys'* with a specifically Russian feel but poses the question of what lies behind Tolstaia's games. For Andrei Nemzer, *Kys'* is no more than empty playfulness with constant references to the literary canon, an "imitation" of Aleksei Remizov's tales and Zamiatin's dystopia, and the recontextualization of the Strugatskii brothers' mutants.[52] Others focus on the fact that *Kys'* was originally conceived in 1986 in the wake of the Chernobyl' crisis; Tolstaia only returned to the novel in the

48. Tolstaia, "Nepal'tsy," 419. In the novel's English translation, Jamey Gambrell emphasizes the association with *rys'* (lynx), entitling the work *The Slynx*.

49. Ibid., 422.

50. Tolstaia, *Kys'*, 10, 95–96, 139–40, 376.

51. Ibid., 16, 19, 26, 35, 47, 69.

52. Andrei Nemzer, "Azbuka kak azbuka: Tat'iana Tolstaia nadeetsia obuchit' gramote vsekh buratin," at www.ruthenia.ru/nemzer/kys.html (last accessed 31 May 2013).

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late 1990s to incorporate Russia's upheaval during the first decade after perestroika. Nikita Eliseev, for example, concludes that the failure to realize the work upon its initial inception was "fatal," rendering it "irrelevant" by 2000.[53] Tolstaia herself, however, refuses to define the work as a comment on a single historical moment, emphasizing the individual aspect of the trope of the apocalypse: "everybody has their own blasts [*vzryvy*], cataclysms, wars and the destruction [*gibel'*] of familiar worlds."[54] Natal'ia Ivanova agrees that if *Kys'* is read as a straight dystopia, it appears superficial and the product of an age when that genre remained popular, but argues that if the novel is treated as a *parody* of dystopia, it accommodates both the Gorbachev and El'tsin eras and incorporates postmodern playfulness.[55]

Over a decade later, it is clear that the novel's significance lies in its commentary on the impact of repeated loss rather than the failings of the current teleology. Tolstaia recreates the helplessness of spatial isolation frequently problematized in dystopian literature but ultimately destroys the hope that exists beyond the dystopia's walls or within the usual protagonist's special, liberated personality. The apocalypse is not used to explore new ground but as a hyperbolizing force for the trope of seclusion Tolstaia scrutinizes in her short stories of the 1980s and for the theory of cultural degradation she expounds in her newspaper articles from the 1990s.[56] As Boris Paramonov notes, *Kys'* is connected to *brys'*, to *rys'*, and, by extension, to *Rus'*. The lynx-like (*rys'*) cat, which is "shooed" away (*brys'*) in people's minds, represents not only the marginalization of those on the periphery but, more widely, of Russia's past.[57] With Moscow thrust back to Kievan *Rus'*, the archive of the city's entire history has been obliterated.

53. Nikita Eliseev, review of *Kys'* by Tat'iana Tolstaia, *Novaia russkaia kniga*, no. 6 (Winter 2000), at www.guelman.ru/slava/nrk/nrk6/11.html (last accessed 31 May 2013). Boris Kuz'minskii similarly highlights the time between the novel's inception and publication, labeling *Kys'* a "retro-dystopia" (*retroantiutopiia*). Boris Kuz'minskii, review of *Kys'* by Tat'iana Tolstaia, *Shvedskaia lavka* 5 (18 October 2000), at old.russ.ru/krug/vybor/20001018.html#kn1 (last accessed 31 May 2013).

54. Tat'iana Tolstaia, "Miumziki i Nostradamus: Interv'iu gazete *Moskovskie novosti*," in Nataliia Tolstaia and Tat'iana Tolstaia, *Dvoe: Raznoe* (Moscow, 2001), 426. Tolstaia confesses that the work lay dormant for long stretches of time, once going untouched for four years, but she stresses how her ideas evolved while working as a university lecturer and commentator for American magazines. Tat'iana Tolstaia, "Nepal'tsy i miumziki: Interv'iu zhurnaly *Afisha*," in Tolstaia and Tolstaia, *Dvoe*, 419.

55. Natal'ia Ivanova, "I ptitsu *paulin* izrubit' na *kaklety*," *Znamia*, no. 3 (January 2001): 219–21. Mark Lipovetskii similarly posits that *Kys'* captures the crisis of post-Soviet language and should not be read as a prognosis for a "future" that had already occurred by the time of its publication. Mark Lipovetskii, "Sled *Kysi*," *Iskusstvo kino*, no. 2 (February 2001): 78. During the first decade of the new millennium, since the publication of Ivanova's article, the genre of dystopia has seen a strong resurgence.

56. Aleksandr Ageev highlights the overlap of the novel's ideas with Tolstaia's 1992 article in *The Guardian* on Russian nationalism and her review of Elena Molokhovets's nineteenth-century cookbook, *Podarok molodym khoziaikam* (Kursk, 1861), which he believes inspired the multiple culinary references found in *Kys'*. Aleksandr Ageev, "Golod 45," *Russkii zhurnal*, 2 August 2001, at old.russ.ru/krug/20010802.html (last accessed 31 May 2013). See Tatyana Tolstaya, "A Short Tour of the Russian Asylum," *The Guardian*, 19 March 1992, 25, and Tat'iana Tolstaia, "Zolotoi vek," *Den': Lichnoe* (Moscow, 2001), 450–68.

57. Boris Paramonov, "Vremia kul'tury: Russkaia istoriia nakonets opravdala sebia v literature," *Vremia MN*, 14 October 2000, 7.

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This intertwining of space, language, and time is perhaps best evidenced in *Kys'* by Nikita Ivanich's attempts to restore culture and revive memory through a new statue to Aleksandr Pushkin. As the majority of the community lack the necessary code for the statue to hold meaning and nobody can recall Pushkin's visage, the poorly sculptured block is rapidly profaned. It is reduced to a "pushkin," a lump of wood on which to hang laundry.[58] The statue is no more than a simulacrum, as elucidated by Jean Baudrillard in the sense that it substitutes a model of a cultural reality for reality itself because such a cultural reality no longer exists.[59] For Tolstaia, the dramatic break with the past has rendered the cultural sophistication and educational opportunities for which Galia yearns in "Fakir," not only unachievable, but even more distant by the year 2000 than they were in the mid-1980s. The apocalypse has strengthened the center/periphery divide and aggravated the situation for the ordinary Muscovite who can no longer even distinguish between sophistication and degradation. Catastrophe's impact on such an individual level kills hope and destroys potential avenues of escape.

Glukhovskii's *Metro 2033*: Deconstructing the "Palaces of the People"

Where Tolstaia uses the apocalypse to transform Moscow into a static village, Glukhovskii takes the trope of nuclear annihilation as the starting point for the deconstruction of Stalin's underground "palaces of the people." The year is 2033 and nuclear war has trapped the surviving human beings in Moscow's metro. Like Tolstaia, Glukhovskii conjures images of catastrophe to explore post-Soviet transformations, fuses travel from the periphery to the center with his protagonist's (Artem's) journey, and allows Moscow's concentric structure to play a role in plot development. Unlike Tolstaia, however, Glukhovskii presents the reader with a more immediately recognizable vision of Moscow. More concerned by the correlation between the extant city and the contours of his fictional universe, Glukhovskii uses online-forum feedback to rework his narratives and carefully considers the practical ramifications of nuclear war (including the likely impact on specific metro stations and the possible remaining weaponry).[60] The specificities of Moscow's metro system enable Glukhovskii to incorporate divergent paths beyond Tolstaia's cyclical tempo-

58. The forgetting of Pushkin and the ascribing of his works to the autocratic ruler echo a Soviet joke at the time of the centennial of Pushkin's death. It suggested that a monument of Pushkin reading Byron was rejected for being "politically false," another of Pushkin reading Stalin was "historically false," hence the final, "historically and politically accurate" monument simply showed Stalin reading Stalin. James von Geldern and Richard Stites, eds., *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917–1953* (Bloomington, 1995), 329.

59. Jean Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Cambridge, Eng., 2001), 170.

60. For his online site and forum, see www.metro2033.ru/forum/ (last accessed 31 May 2013). Rejected by ten different publishers, Glukhovskii's novel garnered such popularity on his Web site that its publication in paper became possible in 2005. The 2005 version of *Metro 2033* reflects the influences of the online community: in the face of popular demand, Glukhovskii altered the trajectory of a stray bullet that killed his protagonist and extended the work by eight additional chapters. Angus Kennedy inter-

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rality, a plurality that extends to Glukhovskii's wider online project, *Metro 2033 Universe*. As Glukhovskii encourages others to pen postapocalyptic novels set in their own cities, Moscow becomes one node in a global network of urban basements.[61]

During the 1930s, the metro became the centerpiece for Moscow's reconstruction, transporting Stalinism's aim to reach ever higher, ever lower beneath the Soviet capital.[62] In his study of metropolitan "underworlds," David Pike illustrates how London's Tube was perceived negatively prior to World War II as a threatening, otherworldly space, shedding light from its darkness on the crises of the world above.[63] The Moscow metro was aimed at achieving the opposite effect, racing ahead of the aboveground as the new ideology's spatial crystallization. Lazar' Kaganovich neatly captured the desired contrast, characterizing the western underground systems as "dark, monotonous, cheerless," while describing the new metro as the embodiment of "the sensation of the sun and joy of Moscow."[64] The metro was officially portrayed as an ideological challenge to the west; it offered a glimpse not of the problems of the aboveground (as in London) but of a bright new future, conceptualized as a completed whole and soon to be realized everywhere.[65]

As the site of heroic achievement, the underground—from the far-flung mines to the Moscow metro—was deeply embedded in Soviet cultural discourse. Playing linguistically with both the nocturnal owl, *sova*, and the Soviet person, *sovok*, Mikhail Epshtein goes so far as to suggest that the Soviet people grew so enamored by the construction of subterranean temples that they permanently came to live in underground darkness. For Epshtein, even when the Great Owl, the nocturnal higher power, proves to be imaginary and the underground temples' grandeur fades (when the dreams of a utopian future remain unrealized and the Soviet Union collapses), the people still continue to cling to their ideology. Having been thrust underground by promises of a glorious future, the people can no longer escape from the framework of their long-adopted rhetoric in the post-Owl/post-Soviet period.[66]

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view with Dmitrii Glukhovskii (interview given at the London Book Fair, London, 12 April 2011).

61. Grant McMaster is the first international writer to join the project with *Metro 2033: Britannia*. His work tracks the adventures of Ewan, who survived the nuclear apocalypse in Glasgow's underground system.

62. The metro's first line opened on 14 May 1935, connecting Sokol'niki to Gor'kii Park.

63. Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx*, 1–16. I am grateful to Mark D. Steinberg for suggesting that I consider the similarities between Glukhovskii's vision of the metro and the imagery analyzed by Pike.

64. L. M. Kaganovich, "Pobeda metropolitena—pobeda sotsializma," in A. Kosarev, ed., *Kak my stroili metro* (Moscow, 1935), 34. Anon., "L. M. Kaganovich sredi passazhirov metro," *Pravda*, 16 May 1935, 3.

65. Anon., "Moskovskii metro—novaia stupen' v stroitel'stve sotsializma: Moskovskomu komitetu VKP (b)—tov. Khrushchevu," *Pravda*, 16 May 1935, 3. For more on the metro as a challenge to the west, see Mikhail Ryklin, "Luchshii v mire: Diskurs moskovskogo metro 30-kh godov," *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach* 38 (1996): 153–69.

66. Mikhail Epshtein, *Velikaia Sov': Filosofsko-mifologicheskii ocherk* (New York, 1994). In her study of Gor'kii Street in late Stalinism, Monica Rüthers considers the impact of darkness on aboveground space, positing that, "the rules of space and time were

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In *Metro 2033*, Glukhovksii takes the people who once dwelled aboveground but had come to believe the promulgations of the Great Owl and forces them to live permanently underground. Turning the symbolism of the metro project on its head, descent beneath Moscow no longer leads to paradise, but to hell. E. Gard's article in *Vecherniaia Moskva* on the day of the metro's unveiling in 1935 established a set of binary oppositions with the metro as the pivot between "old Moscow," "the city of pedestrians," and "new Moscow," a glorious model city in which "all are passengers."[67] In *Metro 2033*, Glukhovksii reevokes these oppositions but, seventy years later, transposes the temporalities onto one another. Distant memories of *old* (preapocalyptic) Moscow create an imagined metro in survivors' minds, where passengers can speed around the city. In the *new* (postapocalyptic) Moscow, however, not one of the inhabitants is a passenger and very few are pedestrians. Travel between even the closest neighboring metro stations is fraught with danger and difficulty. Old (imagined but lost) Moscow is the site of opportunity, new (real but futureless) Moscow is the space of despair. Where Kaganovich envisaged a joyful underground, Glukhovskii harks back to the Victorian and early twentieth-century images described by Pike of the inherently catastrophic "underworld."

Breaking through the Circles: Artem's Journey from Periphery to Center to Surface

The palatial metro system was originally conceived as a subterranean topography where ordinary Muscovites could encounter the Soviet metanarrative of history on a daily basis: "multiple phantasmagorias intervened habitually into their [Moscow residents'] daily life."[68] Yet, with this "dreamworld" transformed by Glukhovskii's apocalypse, the reader of *Metro 2033* traces one ordinary resident's repeated moments of shock as he confronts the phantasmagorias-cum-nightmares. A baby at the time of the nuclear war, Artem has grown up confined to a single station, VDNKh, existing in liminal space at the world's edge. Gripped by the opportunity for adventure, he is charged with traveling to the central Polis—the metro stations Biblioteka im. Lenina, Arbatskaia, Aleksandrovskii sad, and Borovitskaia —to bring the news that mutants are amassing in the peripheries. Searching for meaning in a world of alienation and loss of former values, Artem constructs future stability in spatial terms. As his long quest begins, Artem dreams of these central stations' lights and valorizes the knowledge contained in the library above Biblioteka im. Lenina. He thus echoes Benedikt's conceptualization of space, reconstructing Moscow's concentric topography and sacralizing the "hierophanic" center, which is once again physically and psychologically walled off from its surroundings.[69]

invalidated by nightlife." Monica Rüthers, "The Moscow Gorky Street in Late Stalinism: Space, History and *Lebenswelten*," in Juliane Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinist Russia: Society between Reconstruction and Reinvention* (London, 2006), 257.

67. E. Gard, "Istoriia moskovskogo peshekhoda," *Vecherniaia Moskva*, 14 May 1935, 4.

68. Buck-Morss, "City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe," 22.

69. Owing to a series of tunnel collapses, an internal passport system, and hostile stations, the Polis is physically difficult to reach.

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The naive, young metro inhabitant further embellishes the center/periphery model by adding the underground/aboveground dichotomy, imagining travel amid the ruins of the Kremlin. With the Soviet dreams of exploring the sky as a pilot or blasting off into space as a cosmonaut no longer applicable, the hope of one day becoming a "stalker," somebody authorized to roam aboveground, is the new generation's ultimate aspiration for exploration. Citing the Strugatskii brothers as his "Soviet idols" and a major influence on the science-fiction elements in his own works, Glukhovskii consciously lifts the image of the "stalker" from Arkadii and Boris Strugatskii's *Piknik na obochine* (1972) and the subsequent Andrei Tarkovskii film *Stalker* (1979).[70] But, whereas the Strugatskii brothers' "stalker" would guide others through the rural and liminal space of the *Zona*, Glukhovskii transposes this barren but compelling land onto the center. It is the post-Soviet capital that has become the dangerously alluring area beyond the borders of surviving civilization. The underground has been desacralized and the aboveground resacralized.

When Glukhovskii's "little person" does break through the physical barriers between Moscow's center and periphery and even reaches the surface above the Polis, he, like Benedikt, finds only darkness behind the wall. In the Polis, Artem unveils a restrictive society heavily influenced by those who, again like Benedikt, worship books as material objects. The wall is porous, the center is not transcendental, and there is no omnipotent or benevolent leader.[71] The surface is similarly disappointing. Moscow's Kremlin has been preserved as an "architectural monument" (*pamiatnik arkhitektury*), but instead of offering a beacon of hope, its irradiated ruby-red stars shine so brightly that they render prone any human who gazes at them.[72] The meaning behind the old symbols has been destroyed. The underground station names offer a visual connection to the preapocalyptic city yet prove to be no more than reminders of society's loss. As empty signifiers, the parks, theaters, squares, bridges, stations, boulevards, and *prospekty* they describe no longer exist, and the

70. Beyond the Strugatskii brothers, Glukhovskii consciously draws upon the post-apocalyptic and dystopian canons, stressing the importance of "global literature." Emphasizing his particular admiration for Gabriel García Márquez, Glukhovskii evokes in his own work the catastrophic "blast" (the cholera epidemic) at the heart of Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985). Dmitrii Glukhovskii, "Bestselling Genre Fiction in Russia" (seminar at the London Book Fair, London, 12 April 2011). For a reading of *Love in the Time of Cholera* as postapocalyptic, see David Buehrer, "A Second Chance on Earth': The Postmodern and the Post-Apocalyptic in García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*," *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 32, no. 1 (Fall 1990): 15–26.

71. In the revelation of the wall's porosity and the center's emptiness, there are echoes of Franz Kafka's short story "The Great Wall of China," in which the narrative of confinement is of greater significance than its actualization. Franz Kafka, "The Great Wall of China," *Description of a Struggle and The Great Wall of China*, trans. Willa Muir et al. (London, 1960), 76–82.

72. Dmitrii Glukhovskii, *Metro 2033* (Moscow, 2011), 312. Glukhovskii thus deconstructs not only the subterranean Soviet imagery but also the symbols aimed at projecting the ideology into the sky. For more on the construction and symbolism of the Kremlin stars, see Julia Bekman Chadaga, "Light in Captivity: Spectacular Glass and Soviet Power in the 1920s and 1930s," *Slavic Review* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 82–105.

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once "merry" (*veselo*) walls on which they used to hang are now "coated with a layer of soot and grease."[73]

With his childish dreams shattered, Artem concludes his quest by traveling from Moscow's deepest underground to its highest remaining point, the top of the Ostankino Tower. Here, he finally has the opportunity to stare into the eyes of the mutant "other," previously held at bay by the survivors' walls. It is at this point that he realizes, like Benedikt, that the true threat is not external but internal. While the surviving human beings struggle on in disunity, Artem understands that the *Homo novus* of Moscow's aboveground is actually far better adapted to postapocalyptic conditions. As the children of a new era, they pose no menace but extend the (mutated) hand of friendship.[74] Artem seeks to reciprocate the gesture, but his fellow survivors refuse to learn the lessons of the past; they, like Tolstaia's elite, resort to eliminating the "other" that they irrationally fear. Under a new barrage of nuclear weapons, the city burns once more and the phoenix-city's cycle of destruction and resurrection continues.

The Rhizomatic Metro: Converging Lines, Diverging Narratives, and the Interweaving of Temporal Fragmentation into Metro Space

During a question-and-answer session at the London Book Fair, Glukhovskii maintained that *Metro 2033* is not a warning about nuclear weaponry. He asserted instead that he is in favor of technological progress and that nuclear annihilation offers a convenient metaphor for Soviet collapse: "the great advantage of the [postapocalyptic] genre" is that "it reflects current experience."[75] As captured by Russian authors in the early 1990s, the gloomy underground can offer an apt location for life after a regime's disappearance. In Viktor Pelevin's *Omon Ra* (1992), both the Soviet space program and the construction of the "places of the people" are shown to be empty simulacra: space travel proves to be a crudely crafted sham taking place in abandoned metro tunnels under Moscow.[76] Iurii Andrukhovych's *Moskoviada* (1993) goes even further in its portrayal of Moscow's metro as inherently apocalyptic, with Moscow consuming other cities in its underground maw.[77] These early post-Soviet works focus on a crumbling empire that was deceptive at best and devouring at worst, but Glukhovskii goes beyond the immediate annihilation to raise questions about the potential for stability, the risks of another catastrophe, and the future of the next generation. The discovery of the Soviet symbols' meaninglessness—the immediate apocalypse—is only the starting point from which to construct a more intricate "post-Moscow."

73. Here, Glukhovskii evokes Stalin's language (*zhit' stalo veselee*) to emphasize the continued resonance of broken dreams. Glukhovskii, *Metro 2033*, 94.

74. Ibid., 502–6.

75. Glukhovskii explicitly expressed the belief that one "apocalypse" has already occurred in Russia with the loss of the Soviet system of values. Angus Kennedy interview with Dmitrii Glukhovskii.

76. *Omon Ra* was written in Moscow in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and first published in 1992. Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra: Povest'* (Moscow, 1992).

77. *Moskoviada* was first published in Ukrainian in 1993, a year after *Omon Ra*. Iurii Andrukhovych, *Moskoviada*, trans. A. Brazhkina (Moscow, 2001).

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Writing on the Soviet Union's collapse from a more distant perspective than Tolstaia, Pelevin, and Andrukhovych, Glukhovskii incorporates the uncertainty surrounding both the destination for Putinism's new path at the beginning of the 2000s and the symbolic opportunity offered by the start of a new millennium. Asserting Russia's existence "on the threshold of epochs" and that "we all fear [another] apocalypse," Glukhovskii diverges from the stagnation, atavism, and "historylessness" of *Kys'*.[78] Whereas Tolstaia fuses post-1917 with post-1991 and highlights the dominance of an autocratic ruler's hegemonic narrative, Glukhovskii treats a return to a single metanarrative as only one potential outcome. Not only does he show the center to be empty and centripetal forces to be dangerous, he also unveils a panoply of disparate regimes on different metro lines: "The stations became independent and self-sufficient, distinctive dwarf-states, with their own ideologies and regimes, their own leaders and armies. They fought one another, [. . .] today they became the metropolitan centers [*metropoliiami*] of rising empires, only to be subjugated and colonized tomorrow by their former friends or slaves."[79]

The trope of chaotic division is frequently repeated in postapocalyptic literature, with Paul Auster's *In the Country of Last Things* (1987) offering an excellent example outside Russian literature of urban space atomizing according to the reactions of different groups. Auster's *unnamed* city rives along the lines of lifestyle choice or profession, from the Runners racing through the streets to the Fecalists collecting human waste.[80] What Glukhovskii achieves, however, is a novel of decay rooted in the contours of a *specific* city. With the shattering of Artem's initial eulogy to the center, disorientation and deracination are mapped onto the topography of Moscow's underground. Nazis have a Fourth Reich; communists control the Sokol'nicheskaia liniia and emphasize the symbolic significance of its color (red) on the map; Trotskyites have a base at Avtozavodskaia; merchants have established a loose confederation; and a subterranean collective farm has been set up to the northeast.

Where Kaganovich's vision of the metro is homogenizing in its utopian aspiration and Tolstaia's descriptions of dark periphery and empty center are unrelenting in their bleakness, Glukhovksii portrays the metro as a site of *difference*. As Pike demonstrates, the underground has long been bemoaned for its inability to remain homogenous, and the nineteenth-century obsession with this catastrophic space continues to seep into modern-day thought.[81] Situated within this long-standing tradition of a heterogeneous underground, Glukhovskii's labyrinth of "troglodytic kingdoms" has much greater postmodern fragmentation than Tolstaia's center/periphery model.[82] It, rather, resembles the distinction made by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari between the modernist arbor and the postmodernist rhizome. Like the rhizome, myriad connecting roots/routes sprout out of nodes/interchange stations in all directions and, when severed, appear afresh elsewhere/beyond collapsed

78. Angus Kennedy interview with Dmitrii Glukhovskii.

79. Glukhovskii, *Metro 2033*, 14.

80. Paul Auster, *In the Country of Last Things* (London, 2005), esp. 11–35.

81. Pike, *Metropolis on the Styx*, esp. 312–15.

82. I use here Walter Benjamin's description of the Parisian Métro, whose "labyrinthine halls" give rise to "troglodytic kingdoms." Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 519.

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tunnels.[83] This is a nonunified network of tubes, pipes, conduits, and passageways, criss-crossing beneath the city. It is not the dichotomized opposite of the aboveground, but its heterotopic counterpart.[84] It distorts, refracts, and twists aboveground existence, revealing conflict and generating fresh meanings based on its alienation.

Amid this flux, surviving maps depict stations since detached from the remaining structure and tunnels not yet completed in the post-Soviet extension of the metro, a vision of a future that never came into being. With the permanence of post-Soviet development brought into question, the metro map becomes a form of hyperreality, defined by Baudrillard as "a map that precedes the territory."[85] Thanks to the "generation by models of a real without origin or reality [. . .] it is the map that engenders the territory." It is not the map that subsequently disintegrates but "the real [. . .] whose vestiges subsist here and there."[86] Following the moment of apocalypse in *Metro 2033*, people's sense of the "real" has been destroyed and it is *postapocalyptic* reality that now obviates the map. The concept of looking down on the entire system and depicting a connected whole on a single sheet of paper has become mere fantasy. The standpoint of the god above who can mold the city as a city planner or politician has been rendered obsolete.[87]

The shattering of the "real" forces Glukhovskii's survivors to gaze back beyond the temporal break. As the survivors seek hope in (hi)stories of the past, rumors abound that Moscow's former glories remain accessible through the fabled *Metro-2*, the secret, Stalinist, second underground said to contain golden rails and subterranean gods.[88] Artem himself vaguely recalls the "flying, tooting [metro] trains with bright squares for windows," which shoot along the tracks from the other life of his childhood.[89] Mythologized as a "comfortable and safe capsule," the metro train represents a protective cocoon whose destination was reassuringly predetermined.[90] When Artem attempts to remember the specificities of the train, however, he discovers that

83. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London, 1988), esp. 3–28.

84. I use here the concept of the "heterotopia" as defined in spatial terms by Michel Foucault. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 22–27.

85. In modern-day Moscow, the Filevskaia liniia has recently been extended, with new stations at Delovoi tsentr and Mezhdunarodnaia, facilitating access to the growing "Moscow-City" business district. Glukhovskii, however, envisages the opposite fate for this line, which is irradiated by its close proximity to the surface. He thus harks back to fears during World War II, when a Nazi bomb damaged Arbatskaia, and during the Cold War, when the line's effectiveness as a bomb shelter was queried. Glukhovskii, *Metro 2033*, 11. Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 166.

86. Baudrillard, *Selected Writings*, 166.

87. The metro map resembles Michel de Certeau's image of the modernist city from the viewpoint of the voyeur-god who treats the space as a totalized, mappable whole. From this elevated vantage point, momentum is arrested, time ceases, and historical complexities are transformed into a transparent, legible text. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1984), 91–110.

88. Glukhovskii, *Metro 2033*, 271–74, 431.

89. Ibid., 186.

90. Ibid., 14.

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"nothing remains before his eyes." His half-forgotten memories quickly dissipate; they are a fleeting glimpse of a past Atlantis slipping through his grasp "like water."[91] The train has stalled and the past it symbolizes is irretrievable, forcing Artem to relinquish all hopes of what Svetlana Boym has described in reference to popular post-Soviet cultural yearnings as "restorative nostalgia," a longing for the totalizing reconstruction of a lost, golden past.[92]

Like Benedikt, Artem initially seeks solace in the center and, like Tolstaia's Prezhnie, he subsequently turns to the past. Amid the ruins, the lack of plausible answers, and the faded memories, he must, however, uncover a fresh solution. Rejecting the narratives created by old power structures and unshackling himself from the trauma of abandonment, Artem internalizes change and finds the strength within to welcome difference. With the demonized "other" offering a new perspective outside humanity's destructiveness, Glukhovskii stresses the need to discard constrictive ideology and investigate unorthodox opportunities. He does not rail against a loss of knowledge (like Tolstaia), but, rather, highlights the vulnerability of the civilizations such knowledge has been used to construct. The conclusion that the man-made center does not lead to heaven reflects a different vision of Moscow's post-Soviet space and offers hope for a path out of Tolstaia's cycle. The apocalypse that separates Tolstaia's "Fakir" and *Kys'* brings only further extremes to the center/periphery paradigm. For Glukhovskii, however, there are fresh possibilities on the margins of concentric space and new futures away from the center's stasis.

Glukhovskii's rupture-ridden underground thus becomes the postapocalyptic incarnation of "splintering urbanism," a process defined by Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin in relation to other major metropolises but one that seems particularly applicable to post-Soviet Moscow.[93] In the above-ground space of Moscow during the 1990s, the economically, politically, and socially prosperous excluded themselves from their surroundings. They formed pockets of inward-gazing gated communities and a wider network of secured spaces (the air-conditioned office block, the expensive gym, the luxury department store, and the sanitized mall). By the early 2000s, one could identify power residing beyond the outer limits of the MKAD (outer ring road). Important meetings were held at Vladimir Putin's dacha in Novo-Ogarevo, and money accumulated in the luxurious "cottage" communities along Rublevo-Uspenskoe shosse. Reflecting this post-Soviet significance of being spatially mobile across a network of exclusive locations, the truly blessed in *Metro 2033* are not those holed up in the central Polis but the "stalkers." Like the busy urban elite, the "stalkers" may be *temporally* poor—constantly racing against the clock to avert further catastrophe—but they derive power from being *spatially* liberated. The nomad moving between the nodes (the "stalker" moving between stations or the businessman traveling from one global city to another) is privileged over those too poor to travel beyond a

91. Ibid., 186.

92. Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 49.

93. Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* (London, 2001).

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particular area/station or those chained too tightly to the arbor of a strict ideology.

> The day has come when we shall tear down this Wall—all walls—so that the green wind can blow free from end to end, across the whole world.
>
> —Evgenii Zamiatin, *My*, 134

> It is not the present that turns out to be behind us, but the future itself.
>
> —Mikhail Epstein, *After the Future*, xi

Given the long-standing associations between the city and the apocalypse—from Babylon to Gotham—and the Soviet imagery of the showcase capital, it is perhaps unsurprising that the city of Moscow has been singled out in narratives of postapocalyptic metamorphosis. Moscow's dramatic reimaginings, from the centralized plan of 1935 to the "wild" capitalist reshaping of the 1990s, make the city an excellent locale for studying the interconnections between urban space and large-scale transformation. A city can be molded to project imagery of a "dreamworld," but its cracks and nuances hold the key to deconstructing such a totalizing vision. Russia's "growing spatial inequality," Moscow's own internal social divisions, and the continued conflict surrounding Moscow's symbolic sites further render the capital an apt setting in which to explore potential future paths following this deconstruction process.[94]

In both *Kys'* and *Metro 2033*, catastrophe, time, and space are interlinked. The symbols of progress written into the showcase capital no longer resonate for the postapocalyptic inhabitant, who is confronted by temporal uncertainty and spatial confinement. As the reader follows the protagonists around these postapocalyptic spaces, the reshaping of a familiar cityscape creates repeated shocks. Elements of medieval Muscovy, tsarist Russia, and the Soviet Union disorientingly form a pastiche that also contains post-Soviet transformations and western influences. At certain sites, the past crystallizes, taking the shape of a monument to Pushkin and a Sadovoe kol'tso signpost (*Kys'*), surface ruins and names hanging on station walls (*Metro 2033*). The apocalypse has, however, forever altered these places and erased society's shared memories: Pushkin's works are recalled by a tiny minority, no lamps illuminate the dark Sadovoe kol'tso, the damaged Soviet star is blinding, and the ruined Cathedral of Christ the Saviour a mutants' lair. A sense of loss seeps through the novels' pages, a nostalgia not just for what was, but for what might have been.

One feature that nonetheless spans across these turbulent changes, in-

94. Isolde Brade and Robert Rudolph, "Moscow, the Global City? The Position of the Russian Capital within the European System of Metropolitan Areas," *Area* 36, no. 1 (March 2004): 70.

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cluding throughout the post-Soviet period, is Moscow's concentricity. The MKAD was renovated and extended to five lanes in each direction during the 1990s, with the latest city plan (2011) promising to construct double-decker sections to ease the notorious congestion.[95] The Third Ring Road, initially envisaged in 1935, was finally completed in 2003. This continuing spatial thread has been noted in literature, with Tolstaia preserving the concentric structure throughout her novel. Given the widespread destruction, it is Moscow's single remaining recognizable feature, tying Tolstaia's pitiful postapocalyptic locale to her wider comments on Russia's history. As Soviet practices are repeated and the Stalinist reconstruction of Moscow continues to inform thinking, Tolstaia's postapocalyptic Moscow becomes a "fossil of time future."[96] It is trapped in repetitive periods of thaw and freeze over the *longue durée* from Muscovy to the beginning of Putinism, spiralling in ever-diminishing circles of cultural degradation. Tolstaia's fusion of spatial and temporal circles is reinforced in the present day by the fact that its concentricity renders the city an apposite synecdoche for a nationalistic Russia focused on greater autarky. With a powerful center stifling dialogue and creating a self-serving elite, Tolstaia warns of the dangers this route holds and rejects the center/periphery binary with all its political, social, and economic implications.

Glukhovskii, on the other hand, shows that the apocalypse does not solely reinforce past structures, but can break them down or offer alternatives. Where Tolstaia focuses on the apocalypse as a hyperbolizing force, Glukhovskii transposes the topography of the *shattering* apocalypse onto the topography of Moscow. He splinters the concentric paradigm and shows the ideology of the center to be no more or less applicable than those at the rhizomatic system's other nodes. The catastrophe of time is manifested in a catastrophe of space, producing factions spatially rooted in different metro lines with competing worldviews. Highlighting the demand for overall stability during the early years of Putin's presidency, Glukhovskii illustrates that those best placed to capitalize on such uncertainty are the spatially liberated elite. Walling off segments of the city in the utopian vein of excluding the unwanted "other," however, simply recreates the trap so thoroughly elucidated by Tolstaia. Isolation breeds stagnation, openness facilitates innovation. The inequalities of "splintering urbanism" are undesirable, creating inward-gazing narrow-mindedness. Focusing power or wealth in fortified pockets hinders an overview of the entire system and an appreciation of difference.

Both novels thus capture how societies can shape cities and how urban space can affect people's impressions of their universe. Inhabitants must possess the necessary keys to unlock the intended meanings stored within the

95. Elena Egorova, "Moskva razygraet novuiu dorozhnuiu kartu," *Moskovskii komsomolets* 29 (11 February 2011): 15; Liubov' Protsenko, "Kol'tsevaia zavisimost'," *Rossiiskaia gazeta* 258 (16 November 2010): 3; Nikita Mironov, "Pervyi dubler MKAD postoriat riadom s 'Krokus Siti,'" *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, 7 April 2011, at www.kp.ru/daily/25665.4/827004/ (last accessed 31 May 2013).

96. I use here J. G. Ballard's description of a postapocalyptic Pacific island. J. G. Ballard, "The Terminal Beach," in Walter M. Miller Jr. and Martin H. Greenberg, eds., *Beyond Armageddon: Survivors of the Megawar* (London, 1987), 129.

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cityscape. The apocalyptic moment severs access to these tools, hyperbolizing the impact of protagonists' surroundings on their lives. Its excesses cast in stark relief the problems of both the center/periphery model and "splintering urbanism." Inadequate education or the propagation of a single triumphal metanarrative produces widespread ignorance of cultural nuance. Excessive fragmentation ensures that only a minority of the city-dwellers acquire the required codes. In both cases, only a tiny, enwalled elite prosper, while the remaining inhabitants suffer from atavism and a dearth of fruitful reconstruction. The specificities of Moscow's extremes, magnified further through the prism of the apocalypse, thus underline the more general need for spatial solutions somewhere between an excessively strong center and chaotic splintering.

For a city to be successful, temporality and spatiality must be considered together, with future direction shaped through inclusion. Glukhovskii, therefore, suggests that space is constructed in such a way that it brings in the demonized "other" from behind the wall or beneath the fissure. The anachronistic and spatially marginalized periphery can be welcomed from beyond the pale to produce a more cooperative future. Here, catastrophe not only proves destructive but also creates fresh hope, resulting in mutations and divergences that signal a new temporal route through a world of loss and disappointment. Both authors highlight the risks of failing to capitalize on this hope, of (re)erecting walls, valorizing isolation, and avoiding dialogue with the "other." A consuming torpor still lurks around the corner, whether it bubbles up from the underground or lies temporarily dormant within the peripheral "little man." If there is an "apocalypse," a revelation, in these works, it is the unveiling of the persistence of this temporal and spatial void.

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