Fiction as Mapmaking: Moscow as Ivan Bunin's Russian Memory Palace

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> Such things and deeds as are not written down are covered in darkness and given over to the sepulchre of oblivion, while those that are written down are like unto animate ones.
>
> —Ivan Bunin, *The Life of Arseniev: Youth*

> Jerusalem, Rome, Moscow in various texts perform precisely like the centers of certain worlds. The ideal embodiment of its country, the city can simultaneously act as a prototype of the heavenly city and become a holy place for the lands which surround it.
>
> —Iurii Lotman

Exile did not change Ivan Bunin as a writer. Fifty years old and already fully formed as an artist, he fled Russia in 1920 for a life in France, never to return to his homeland. Nonetheless, Bunin's work shows a remarkable continuity in style and subject matter on both sides of that moment of emigration; indeed, his Nobel Prize in Literature citation commends him "for the strict artistry with which he has carried on the classical Russian traditions in prose writing."[1] Introducing the prize in 1933, Professor Wilhelm Nordenson said, "You have, Mr. Bunin, thoroughly explored the soul of vanished Russia, and in doing so, you have most meritoriously continued the glorious traditions of the great Russian literature."[2]

The shock of emigration initially caused a "creative lull" for Bunin, but when that ended in 1924 he resumed writing rich and descriptive narratives, re-creating the Russian life he had known before the 1917 Revolution and the civil war.[3] His prose style seems not to have responded to the dramatically changed circumstances, either his own or those of his homeland. In many of

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1. "Nobel Prize in Literature 1933: Ivan Alekseyevich Bunin," at www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1933/ (last accessed 28 October 2013).

2. "Ivan Bunin—Banquet Speech," at www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1933/bunin-speech.html (last accessed 25 September 2013)

3. Gleb Struve, *Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1984), 82.

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these fictional works, beginning in 1924—from the lovingly drawn estate in the tragic "Mitia's Love" (1924), to the portrait of a Russian childhood in *The Life of Arsen'ev* (written 1927–38, published 1952), and beyond—Bunin continued to imagine the old life in a place where it was no longer possible.[4] While in exile Bunin wrote some of his very best work—and almost all of it on the theme of a lost Russia. Or so it would seem.

In fact, as I argue in this article, in his post-1920 fiction Bunin was engaged in something more complicated and ambiguous than the mere nostalgia of an aging artist for his lost home—that nostalgia Svetlana Boym has called "restorative."[5] As Olga Oboukhova has noted, there was one noticeable change in Bunin's work after he emigrated: he began to use the ancient city of Moscow as a location in his fiction.[6] Given that Bunin was by birth neither an urbanite nor a Muscovite, it is significant that he turned his writerly attention to the cultural capital of Russia after leaving the country, and the manner in which he does so presents a new way of looking across borders at the Russian homeland.

Indeed, Bunin used some of the stories he wrote in emigration to map Russian culture and history onto its geography from the double distance of time and place. He portrayed characters and spaces in ways that resonated for him and for his fellow Russian émigrés because they tapped into a shared cultural memory. Utilizing the medium of fiction, Bunin moved horizontally through space and vertically through time to create a diachronic topographical map of Russian culture, even as the essence of that culture was waning and its physical manifestations were being erased by Soviet policies and, later, Nazi bombings. Often seen as a chronicler of the countryside, in his writings in emigration Bunin frequently evoked Russia's central urban core, the city of Moscow, but unlike other Russian writers he never did so through juxtaposition with St. Petersburg or Leningrad.[7]

Instead, Bunin wrote about Moscow in the same way that some of his historical predecessors had depicted it: as an occupied city. Sara Dickinson has explained that reactions to the war with Napoleon over a century earlier were characterized by catalogues of "its lost, suppressed, or missing features" and a focus on "issues that arouse patriotic feeling, namely the desecration and destruction of religious shrines, historical monuments, ancestral traditions and normal daily life."[8] Writers in the first part of the nineteenth century had

4. See O. N. Mikhailov, "Bunin," in *Literatura russkogo zarubezh'ia, 1920–1940* (Moscow, 1993), 82, and Oleg Kling, "Prorocheskii znak," in I. A. Bunin, *Gegel', frak, metel'* (St. Petersburg, 2003), 19–20.

5. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York, 2001), xvii.

6. Olga Oboukhova, "Moskva—moskovskii tekst u Bunina emigrantskogo perioda," in Clair Hauchard, ed., *Bounine Revisité* (Paris, 1997), 107–14. See also G. K. Inovenkova, "Moskva v zhizni i tvorchestve I. A. Bunina," in I. A. Bunin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v XIII tomakh*, 16 vols. (Moscow, 2006–07; hereafter *PSS*), 15:242–80. Note that there are sixteen volumes in toto in this 13-volume collected works; the first fourteen came out in 2006, while volumes fifteen and sixteen were published in 2007.

7. See Oboukhova, "Moskva—moskovskii tekst," 113.

8. Sara Dickinson, "Representing Moscow in 1812: Sentimentalist Echoes in Accounts of the Napoleonic Occupation," in Ian K. Lilly, ed., *Moscow and Petersburg: The City in Russian Culture* (Nottingham, Eng., 2002), 9–11.

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identified Moscow as the repository of Russian cultural and historical memory, including both religious themes and buildings and the places and activities of daily life, and Bunin's portrayal of Moscow revived this idea, cataloguing place names and highlighting specific aspects of religious and secular life in Russia.

Just as important, especially after Bunin's emigration, Moscow began to function as the center of Russia: the place he had personally experienced the layers of Russian history; become acquainted with its cultural elite—including Aleksandr Ertel', Anton Chekhov, Lev Tolstoi, Konstantin Bal'mont, Maksim Gor'kii, and Nikolai Teleshov, among many others; met with his publishers and made his own literary fame. It was also the place that came to represent Russia for his fellow émigrés, even if they had never visited the ancient capital before leaving the country; and the place foreigners first thought of when conjuring the idea of Russia.

The constituent parts of the cultural memory Bunin shared with his fellow displaced Russians included specific streets, buildings, and views, as well as historical and religious places, events, and personages, ethnic color, food, drink, and cultural practices, all of which he depicted in his fiction in vivid detail. In so doing, Bunin attempted to sustain aspects of Russian culture, fixing them in permanent ways on the creative page by evoking this particular urban space.[9] In March 1919, for example, lamenting in his diary "Old Moscow, whose eternal demise is imminent," Bunin described the "turquoise sky crossed by a network of trees."[10] In his writing he inscribed Moscow against the background of that sky.

Over the next quarter-century Bunin created in his work a Russian "memory palace," thus doing his part to stave off Russia's imminent demise. Borrowing from the genre of the tour, a common device used by authors for their historical meditations, Bunin brought his readers along on his own walking tour through the layered history of Russia. This was the way in which Bunin engaged in "reflective nostalgia," in Boym's words, "a strategy of survival, a way of making sense of the impossibility of homecoming."[11] In Bunin's stories of the 1920s through 1940s, he described the smells, sounds, weather, and

9. Similarly, Ekaterina Yudina argues that in Soviet Petrograd/Leningrad "obsessive references to the city's landmarks ma[de] them the sole bearers of St. Petersburg's cultural memory." Kirill Postoutenko, introduction to Lilly, ed., *Moscow and Petersburg*, 4, citing Ekaterina Yudina, "'Looking Back in Extreme Anguish': St. Petersburg in the Autobiographic and Collective Memory of the 1920s," in Lilly, ed., *Moscow and Petersburg*, 89–101. Ian K. Lilly makes this point about Moscow and émigré authors as well, writing that "émigrés . . . continued to set [their] stories in the only Moscow [they] knew, that is, the prerevolutionary one. Despite their strong sense of nostalgia yet with the advantage of not seeing the radical changes which the Bolsheviks wrought to the medieval and eventually Soviet capital, these authors did much to preserve the collective memory of the city's physical appearance, as well as of Muscovite society, as they had existed up to 1917." Lilly, "Female Sexuality in the Pre-Revolutionary 'Moscow Text' of Russian Literature," in Lilly, ed., *Moscow and Petersburg*, 36–37. Bunin did personally witness the changing of some street names and removal of old monuments in 1918 and was incensed. See Inovenkova, "Moskva v zhizni i tvorchestve I. A. Bunina," in *PSS* 15:278–79.

10. See Bunin, *Okaiannye dni*, diary entry for 24 March 1919, *PSS* 6:299.

11. Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvii.

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seasons of Moscow, and he also named its landmarks, even in stories in which the real dramatic action takes place outside Moscow.[12] In the late stories alone we read about such famous Moscow places and people as the Arbat ("Caucasus," 1937); Tverskaia Street, the Eliseev store, Strel'na Restaurant, Loskutnii Hotel, and Brest Station ("Genrikh," 1940); the Praga restaurant, the Arbat "ringing with the sounds of trams," Prechistenskii Boulevard, and even the poet Valerii Briusov ("A River Inn," 1943); Tverskaia Street, the Madrid rented rooms, and Briansk Station ("Madrid," 1944); Presnia, and Kursk Station ("On a Familiar Street," 1944).[13]

But nowhere in Bunin's oeuvre is that tour of the landmarks of cultural memory more complex and interesting than in the 1944 story "Cleansing Monday" (*Chistyi ponedel'nik*).[14] This tale, ostensibly about a young couple in 1912 Moscow and their doomed affair, can be read on the surface and dismissed, as it was by one reviewer, as yet "another listless romance."[15] It can also be read in the context of early twentieth-century decadent sensuality and religiosity, à la Vladimir Solov'ev—as practiced by Zinaida Gippius, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and their followers—in which case it becomes a commentary on the Moscow (and émigré) atmosphere of what Olga Matich has called "decadent utopianism."[16]

In this article I propose another, more nuanced reading of "Cleansing Monday" which can deepen our understanding of Russian cultural memory and place-based history, one that explores the meaning of émigré nostalgia and sharpens our notion of how the need to represent Russia for both insiders and foreign audiences shaped Bunin's wartime prose. Set in 1912–14, during the last gasp of the old world, the story lacks any overt references to World War I, the looming revolution, or the civil disturbances of the final years of Tsar Nicholas's reign. The story also avoids looking forward to the horrors of World War II, even though Bunin completed it less than a month before D-day. Nonetheless, themes of war, revolution, and the Soviet transformation of Moscow and Russia as a whole echo throughout Bunin's memory palace in "Cleansing Monday."[17] The split of the Russian world into two—one Soviet

12. See Oboukhova, "Moskva i moskovskii tekst," 111.

13. In 1943, when Bal'mont died, Bunin recalled how he first made his acquaintance at the Madrid rooms, which, among other things, became infamous when Bal'mont threw himself out of a second-floor window in March 1890 while staying there with his first wife. See Inovenkova, "Moskva v zhizni i tvorchestve I. A. Bunina," in *PSS* 15:248.

14. I will be citing the story from Ivan Alekseevich Bunin, "Cleansing Monday," *The Elagin Affair and Other Stories*, trans. Graham Hettlinger (Chicago, 2005).

15. Thomas Karshan, "Between Tolstoy and Nabokov: Ivan Bunin Revisited. A Review Essay," *Modernism/Modernity* 14, no. 4 (November 2007), 768.

16. See Olga Matich's brilliant *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siècle* (Madison, 2005).

17. My project here focuses on Bunin as a writer addressing at least two different audiences while inserting his fiction into the Russian literary and historical narrative. In that sense, my work differs from Julie A. Buckler's in her magisterial *Mapping St. Petersburg: Imperial Text and Cityscape* (Princeton, 2004), where she explores the vast sweep of St. Petersburg's "textual map" (1) and illuminates its "sociocultural middle ground" (5). Bunin could not by himself accommodate in his prose, as Buckler writes, the vast "complexities of urban life" (8), nor did he strive to. But using as she does the "guiding metaphor of the map," I will walk along with Bunin's protagonists and reconstitute the cultural cityscape

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and one exilic—and the destruction of the Russian city and surrounding lands were the reasons Bunin needed to construct his Russian memory palace, and he found fellow visitors among his compatriots, many of whom longed for the split to be healed and the geography made whole again.

Like a number of Bunin's postrevolutionary Moscow stories, "Cleansing Monday" features protagonists who are not from Moscow. Alone in a crowded city, their motivations remain unknown, even as they wander through a knowable cityscape. As Oboukhova writes, in these stories "Moscow topographic realia are always very clearly named." She continues: "Behind these names stand the personal experience and real life impressions of the author, but they also represent Moscow's 'signs,' and the numerous and multilayered historical and cultural realia that the author wants to resurrect in the memory of the reader can be recognized and deciphered."[18] The fact that the protagonists have arrived from elsewhere facilitates an even clearer view of their surroundings: they explore the city with abandon but are always observers, always seeing it "from inside Russia."[19]

Read as a mapping of cultural memory, and as a historical meditation on the disparate elements of Russian culture across the centuries, the story becomes much more powerful. Bunin encoded within it his feelings about Russia and her history via a tour of physical spaces, cultural habits, and telling anecdotes. If, as Thomas C. Wolfe states, the Soviet Union as a whole did not participate in any process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* at the close of WWII, from 1920 Bunin was engaged in an effort to understand the numerous tragic events and irredeemable losses that occurred over those two and a half decades of Soviet power and the years of the second world war.[20]

Before the war, Bunin paid attention to street names being changed, establishments closed, and churches destroyed. When an external enemy emerged as well, the writer actually translated troop movements and other events of WWII onto a set of maps he kept in his house during the early days of the war, marking them according to the news he received from radio and newspaper reports and updating the maps to reflect the Nazi march into Russian territory. He followed as best he could the fighting of the Battle of Moscow, from October 1941 through January 1942, though he could not know in great detail the specific parts of the city or individual buildings and streets that were damaged or destroyed. In the final year of the war, as depicted in "Cleansing Monday," Bunin constructed an elaborate memory map of the city of Moscow, placing the streets and cathedrals in their historical locations and deliberately ignoring Soviet and Nazi damage to the city he had known.

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and its historical dimensions. Olga Matich has argued that maps "by definition picture geographic space from a bird's eye view," but here we will aim for a more three- and even four-dimensional sensation of motion and chronology in "Cleansing Monday." Matich, introduction to *Petersburg/Petersburg: Novel and City, 1900–1921*, ed. Olga Matich (Madison, 2010), 8.

18. Oboukhova, "Moskva i moskovskii tekst," 108.

19. Lotman, "Simvolika Peterburga," 14.

20. Thomas C. Wolfe, "Past as Present, Myth, or History? Discourses of Time and the Great Fatherland War," in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu, eds., *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham, 2006), 250.

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Bunin's mnemonic project, his construction of the Russian memory palace, took place on three levels, which we can trace in the story: the historical, that is to say, descriptions of the physical cityscape of old Moscow; the spiritual, pointing to religious spaces and their concomitant religious rituals; and finally the didactic, with the story becoming a guide to Russian culture for Bunin's foreign readers and critics, as he strove to delineate the true picture of Moscow and Russia itself. Thus, these three aspects of the memory project were directed at both a Russian audience—his compatriots abroad and potential (future) readers back home—and his foreign audience. Bunin's memory palace was an architectural, historical, and cultural structure in prose, with an agenda aiming to communicate to numerous audiences on multiple planes.

Dark Avenues and "Cleansing Monday"

Bunin and his wife spent the entire war in Grasse, under Nazi occupation for much of the time. Right on the Mediterranean coast, it was not the worst place to ride out the war. But in their haven the Bunins were impoverished and desperate, often hungry, sick, and cold. Bunin's letters from this period focus mainly on the need for money and the physical pains and discomfort he and Vera Nikolaevna were experiencing.[21] He wrote in one letter, "I was 'wealthy'—now, by the will of fate, I have suddenly become as poor as Job. I was 'world-famous'—now no one in the world needs me—the world has other concerns besides me! I am still writing—recently finished a whole book of new stories, but where can I send it now?"[22] Writing provided a kind of escape, but it did not provide a stable readership or income, and Bunin complained of the hardship: "If we had any money, I would buy firewood to combat the cold, but we don't."[23] The bodily discomfort caused Bunin to think more deeply about his spiritual state, and his correspondence with Archimandrite Kiprian (Kern) in the early 1940s gives some insight into his ability to rise above the petty cares of a difficult daily life.[24] For his part, Kiprian encouraged the Bunins to move to Paris, where they would at least have community; as he wrote, "It is so important to believe in the possibility of a better . . . existence, the possibility of spiritual and cultural exchange."[25] In another letter of 10 March 1944 Kiprian exhorted Bunin, "We must be together now, to 'jointly' ['*soborne*'] live through this terrible sorrow that has advanced on us like a storm cloud."[26] But Bunin feared the prospect of living in crowded circumstances and per-

21. For a sample of these letters, see "Pis'ma I. A. Bunina k S. A. Tsionu (1940–1947)," in Oleg Korostelev and Richard Davies, eds., vol. 1 of *I. A. Bunin: Novye materialy* (Moscow, 2004), 285–316.

22. I. A. Bunin to N. D. Teleshov, 8 May 1941, in Thomas Gaiton Marullo, ed. and trans., *Ivan Bunin*, vol. 3, *The Twilight of Émigré Russia, 1934–1953: A Portrait from Letters, Diaries, and Memoirs* (Chicago, 2002), 143–44.

23. I. A. Bunin to S. A. Tsion, 19 January 1942, *I. A. Bunin: Novye materialy*, 1:293.

24. See correspondence 1940–1948, especially May 1943 through July 1944. *PSS* 12:123–46.

25. Archimandrite Kiprian (Kern) to I. A. Bunin, 3 May 1943, *PSS* 12:126.

26. Kiprian to Bunin, 10 March 1944, *PSS* 12:127–28.

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haps wished to avoid those fellow émigrés who were collaborating with the Germans or whom he somehow blamed for Russia's fate in the twentieth century.[27] In the end, the Bunins chose to remain in Grasse, preferring cold to community.[28]

It was in the midst of these financial hardships and shabby circumstances that Bunin wrote *Dark Avenues*. Featuring stories written between November 1937 and April 1941, the collection was first published in 1943 in a Russian language edition in the United States. Bunin characterized it to another correspondent as a book of stories all "about love, i.e., not at all timely—people are not interested in love these days."[29] In its next iteration, published in France in 1946, *Dark Avenues* included several additional tales. One of the new ones was "Cleansing Monday," which Bunin finished on 12 May 1944, just a year before the European war ended.

On the whole, critics have agreed with Bunin's assessment that this collection meditated on themes of love and death, and "Cleansing Monday" does feature at its center the relationship between a man and a woman.[30] The narrator is in love with the young woman, and she allows him to visit and to escort her about town. They enjoy drinking, music, dancing, and foods at various Moscow hot spots. But she exhibits changeable, almost contradictory, traits: a glutton during their evenings of restaurant-hopping, she occasionally dines at a cheap vegetarian café and frequently visits the Kremlin cathedrals and local monasteries. One critic has written that in "Cleansing Monday" the author shows how two people can be drawn to each other but be utterly incompatible in their spiritual needs and life goals.[31] Mismatched lovers like these offer a melancholy view into human relationships.

But the failed love affair isn't really at the heart of the story. If we read

27. Bunin's disdain for Merezhkovskii and Gippius caused him to cross the street to avoid Gippius after the war. An anecdote about a photography session in 1915 highlights Bunin's concerns about Russia in the early years of the twentieth century: "'Russia is perishing,' 'she faces many dangers, the power of the dark masses from below and the darkness of power from above' . . . but what's happening in Moscow, in Petersburg? Celebrations every day." *PSS* 15:262.

28. The isolation Bunin felt in Grasse increased when Mark Aldanov relocated to the United States. Aldanov obtained visas and tickets for the Bunins in August 1942, but Bunin balked at the opportunity, thinking that given his age (then seventy-two) and his declining health further emigration would be an additional hardship. See Gabriel Simonoff, "La Vie des Bounine à Grasse pendant la Deuxième Guerre mondiale," in *Bounine Revisité*, 146–51.

29. Bunin to S. A. Tsion, 31 January 1941, *PSS* 12:289–90. Bunin published the abridged version of *Dark Avenues* in the United States rather than Europe in part to avoid collaborating with the Germans in any way. Publication of the fuller Russian language edition was repeatedly delayed because of paper shortages. When it came out in 1946 Bunin had added "Cleansing Monday," among other stories.

30. See, among others, Julian Connolly, *Ivan Bunin* (Boston, 1982), 66; Andrei Rogatchevski, "Ivan Bunin's Life," in Ivan Bunin, *Dark Avenues*, trans. Hugh Aplin (London, 2008), 289–308; Mikhail Roshchin, *Ivan Bunin* (Moscow, 2000), 206. Rogatchevski calls *Dark Avenues* a "veritable encyclopedia of heterosexual relationships." Rogatchevski, 303.

31. "A sharp incompatibility of spiritual tension, the requirements two people have toward life, are revealed." M. Iof'ev, quoted in O. N. Mikhailov, *Zhizn' Bunina: Lish' slovu zhizn' dana* . . . (Moscow, 2001), 438.

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the text as a deep and detailed historical and cultural map of a bygone Moscow, the main characters (and their conversations and escapades) function as stand-ins for real people buffeted by historical forces—for Bunin's compatriots, many of whom watched helplessly as change came to the world they had always known and some of whom acknowledged that their own prerevolutionary frivolity might have fed the fires of revolution and social change. Reading "Cleansing Monday" as a "mapping" project shines a light on those areas of Russian life, both the historical and deeply spiritual and the carefree frivolity of daily life in advance of cataclysm, that came to represent prerevolutionary Russia. The dark days that followed unfolded under Soviet skies and Nazi invasion, and by the 1940s Bunin saw his homeland occupied twice over.

Bunin felt that this story stood apart from many of the "romances" he had published and considered it one of his very best. The title refers to a Russian Orthodox holiday that, along with the day that precedes it, *Proshchenoe voskresen'e* (Forgiveness Sunday), would have spoken to Bunin's fellow exiles, redolent as these holidays are with the Orthodox traditions most carried as part of their cultural heritage. Bunin was certain that the title was culturally specific: despite his urgent desire to make some money during the mid-1940s, Bunin rejected his Swedish literary agent's suggested title, *Cleansing Monday,* to peddle a collection of stories in Swedish translation. Such a title, Bunin believed, would be "incomprehensible or boring for Swedes."[32] In other words, the story's title was in code—a cultural code that only Russians and the Russian Orthodox could decipher.

Moscow as Memory Palace: The Cityscape of Loss

We never learn the names of the couple in "Cleansing Monday," but their importance in some ways fades in comparison to a third main character: the city of Moscow, with its ancient traditions and everyday life. Bunin's narrator acts as our guide as we visit the landmarks with him and read their historical layers.

Cities—especially cities that serve as the settings for literary works—take on a cultural meaning that can transcend physicality. In his great work *The City in History* the American urbanist Lewis Mumford asserted that one of the principal functions of the city is "to serve as a museum: in its own right, the historic city retains, by reason of its amplitude and its long past, a larger and more various collection of cultural specimens than can be found elsewhere. Every variety of human function, every experiment in human association, every technological process, every mode of architecture and planning, can be found somewhere within its crowded area."[33] Mumford was particularly attuned to the layers of human history visible in the city and to the dialogue between past and present that takes place there. But for émigrés who can no longer cross the border, the relationship between the individual and the city changes: on the one hand, these Russian émigrés were physically distant from

32. 23 June 1947, *I. A. Bunin: Novye materialy,* 1:315–16.

33. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York, 1961), 562.

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their city, and their conversation with the past was growing fainter with that distance. On the other, they were perfectly well aware that the Moscow many of them had known—and some had not—was changing rapidly and dramatically under the new regime. When Bunin depicted Moscow he did so using the city map and its buildings, and he also evoked memory images that would speak to a larger audience, even to those who had emigrated from other parts of the empire and had never been to Moscow at all.

For exiled writers, as Andrew Wachtel has written, a "double nostalgic distance" of time and space emerges in narratives set in the historic past.[34] Bunin had used this distance in his pseudo-autobiography, *The Life of Arsen'ev,* in which, in the guise of a first-person narrator, he spent time on a Russian country estate. This literary visit—akin to Vladimir Nabokov's narrators' visits to Russia in *Podvig* (Glory, 1932) or "Poseshchenie muzeia" (A Visit to a Museum, 1938)—brought Bunin and his readers closer to their lost homeland. In "Cleansing Monday" the double distance in time and space is rendered irrelevant, as the landmarks loom in a vivid three dimensions; here Bunin embroidered his memories of a Moscow from more than two decades earlier to describe places and spaces that he could no longer visit, and not merely because of the regime change. His absence from the now-Sovietized Russia is made more poignant because virtually all of the places Bunin's narrator visits had been wiped from the cityscape by the 1940s. The result is a kind of geography of absence, a double dwelling on loss. Just as certain "guardians of landscape memory" in Simon Schama's exploration of this theme were so entwined with the spaces they inhabited that they became genii loci, Bunin chose for himself the role of custodian of the Moscow memory palace.[35]

In the days before leaving Moscow, Bunin wept bitter tears at the thought that he would never see these beloved landmarks again—landmarks that came to represent for him not just Moscow but all of Russia and her many-layered history, layers that he had himself personally explored.[36] For example, not long after the revolution, in February 1918, Bunin found himself barricaded in a central Moscow apartment. As the Bolsheviks prepared for a potential invasion by the German army, they mined the Kremlin walls, planning to blow up the space rather than cede it to the kaiser's forces. Bunin wrote: "At that moment I was looking at the surprisingly green sky over the Kremlin, at the old gold of its ancient cupolas. . . . The grand dukes, the terems of Spas na Boru, the Arkhangelsk Cathedral—how dear and vital it all was, and only now was I able to properly feel it all, understand it all. Would it be blown up? It was possible. Now everything was possible."[37] Though Bunin was not born a Muscovite, Moscow landmarks such as Spas na Boru had deep, resonant meaning

34. Wachtel, "Editor's Introduction," in Bunin, *The Life of Arseniev: Youth,* 8.

35. Schama's exploration of the layered past focuses more on the pastoral, rather than the urban archeology we investigate here. See Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, 1995), 16–17. On Bunin and the pastoral, see Georges Nivat, "The Russian Landscape as Myth," *Russian Studies In Literature* 39, no. 2 (March 2003): 51.

36. Diary excerpt, 19 May 1918, in A. Boboreko, "Novoe o Bunine," *Problemy realizma* 7 (Vologda, 1980), 157–8, quoted in Thomas Gaiton Marullo, introduction to Ivan Bunin, *Cursed Days: A Diary of Revolution* (Chicago, 1998), 7n8.

37. *Okaiannye dni,* 20 February 1918, *PSS* 6:288.

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for him. After his first trip to the capital in 1891 he marked its importance in his diary: "The Spas na Boru church. How good it is: the Savior in the woods! This and everything Russian like it stirs me, enchants me by its antiquity, by my blood kinship with it."[38] After he left Russia, Bunin became even more aware of how much of his non-Russian audience saw Moscow as representative of Russia as a whole. If he wanted to ensconce his memory images in a specific place, Moscow was a prime choice.

In the years before WWII, as Katerina Clark has recently reminded us, the capital was in the throes of construction and reconstruction.[39] The Soviet state strove to create a "new Moscow"—a modern city, central to the Soviet cultural order, a physical representation of the overt rejection and even erasure of the old regime and old cultural order, and the city was culturally and physically transformed into "both an exemplary text in its own right and the site where all authoritative texts would be generated."[40] Thus, what Mumford referred to as the "retentiveness" of the city, the "layer upon layer of human history and biography" that form the material life of a city and give it dimension, was in the new Soviet era to be nullified:[41] razed and excavated, Moscow was deliberately and literally made into a tabula rasa for the architectural and cultural construction of a new Soviet city and with it a new Soviet history and biography. Among the Moscow churches and monasteries destroyed by the Stalinist government as part of its antireligious campaigns were the Iverskaia Chapel, Spas na Boru, Chudov Monastery, and the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, to name just a few mentioned in the story.

The programmatic destruction of the 1920s and '30s yielded to wartime destruction in the '40s. Though Grasse was a long way from the eastern front, Bunin followed the war carefully, obsessively recording the events of the war in his diary as well as on his maps. For example, he noted the moment the Russian army recaptured Efremov, the town where his brother, sister, and mother remained buried. The places he knew were being decimated, and in response Bunin read and reread the first volumes of Lev Tolstoi's *War and Peace,* comparing the Napoleonic invasion with what he imagined was happening in his own time.[42] His memories of the mining of the Kremlin in 1918 had paralleled Russian reactions to Napoleon's approach in 1812 when Muscovites burned the city themselves, and now he tried to imagine what the new "patriotic" war was doing to the cityscape.

Thus, for Bunin, WWII was a participatory exercise, if only from a distance. We can understand the work of "Cleansing Monday" in this context of

38. 26 June 1891, *PSS* 9:242.

39. Katerina Clark, *Moscow, the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011).

40. Ibid., 94.

41. Mumford, 562.

42. Mikhailov, *Zhizn' Bunina,* 417–21. It is unlikely that Bunin knew that many in the Russian army, along with the blockaded citizens of Leningrad, were also rereading Tolstoi for hope and inspiration in these months. In the story the relationship between love, loss, and Tolstoi is highlighted when the young woman quotes Platon Karataev's simple maxim about the meaning of happiness. Bunin, *PSS* 6:350. For more on 1812, see Dickinson, "Representing Moscow in 1812."

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the destruction of Moscow by both Soviet and Nazi power. If Moscow had lost its "retentiveness," it fell to Ivan Bunin and other Russian émigrés to retain those layers that were so vulnerable to planners and construction equipment. For them, the slate could not be wiped clean: the history remained in all its diachronic and three-dimensional richness. Bunin might never again walk the streets of either the "new" Moscow or the "old," but he began to generate texts set in that city, including a number of the texts in *Dark Avenues*.

As Wolfe has written, "historical memory is a part of the network of discourses that constitute a culture."[43] When re-creating prerevolutionary Moscow, Bunin carefully selected the elements most emblematic of the aspects of Russian culture that were important to him, and in so doing mapped its network of discourses—linguistic, architectural and spatial, religious, and multiethnic. In the midst of that mapping project Bunin built a memory palace with specific memory images placed in the corners of its "reception hall."[44] Jonathan Spence has written of such memory images, and the notion is highly relevant to the story "Cleansing Monday," which features two important icons (the Iverskaia Mother of God and the Three-Handed Mother of God) as well as a vivid image of Elizaveta Fedorovna in her nun's habit, known to émigré readers from a famous photograph. A fourth image portraying Mary and Martha appears in *The Way of Mary and the Way of Martha* (1915), by British travel writer Stephen Graham, and ties that book—and the struggle for the right to describe the historical Moscow—to Bunin's story.[45] For his Russian audience at least—for himself and his compatriots—this network of discourses and these memory images represented their cultural heritage, and maintaining them was a vital task.

In "Cleansing Monday," layers of Russian history come to the fore in the commentary of the male protagonist, whose musings as narrator list landmarks almost like a guidebook and recall Bunin's diary entry quoted above: "'Such a strange city,' I said to myself, thinking of Moscow's old streets, thinking of St. Basil's Cathedral and Iverskaia Chapel, thinking of the church known as Spas na Boru, the Italian cathedrals inside the Kremlin—and then, those fortress walls before me, their guard towers and sharp points like something from Kirgiziia."[46] His focus on medieval times emphasizes Muscovite Russia, rooting the city in an earlier moment, so that even the Cathedral of Christ the Savior—consecrated in 1863, a mere half-century before the story's setting—looks "too new" to him. This cityscape, peppered with ancient cathedrals, lined with fortifications and eastern architectural motifs, forms a historical backdrop for Bunin's cryptic young characters, a set that enhances the meaning of their actions and feelings.

For Bunin, Russia was a "complex, thousand-layered space" in which the people and fields, the capital and the provinces were all melded together into corresponding worlds.[47] One of the world's great cities, Moscow had seen

43. Wolfe, 252.
44. Here again I am invoking Spence. See below and figures 1–4.
45. Stephen Graham, *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary* (London, 1915).
46. Bunin, 349.
47. *PSS* 6:402.

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centuries of imperial ambitions and religious and political history, all made manifest in buildings and spaces, and it fit Mumford's definition perfectly, displaying "a larger and more various collection of cultural specimens than can be found elsewhere." However, by the 1920s and 1930s those specimens were becoming rarer and in many cases survived only in memory. The threat of violence to those spaces, whether during the revolution or the world wars, turned the skies a deeper color and set off the buildings in a new light. Those ancient buildings making up the cityscape were themselves "holy relics."[48] For example, the Chudov Monastery in the Kremlin, founded in 1365, saw many formative events in the history of Russian culture: this was the location of the Slavic Greek Latin Academy, where Mikhail Lomonosov, among many others, was educated; Peter I was baptized in its church; and foreign books were translated behind its walls. Grand Prince Sergei Aleksandrovich was assassinated as he left the Chudov Monastery in 1905, but in 1930 it too was destroyed. By the time Bunin was writing "Cleansing Monday," neither Iverskaia Chapel nor the Chudov Monastery were present on the actual map of Moscow; not even the "new" Christ the Savior Cathedral remained.

Bunin thus had to conjure the cityscape of his memory and reconstruct it as if these sites still existed, contrasting his memory palace with the real city, now lacking both churches and the formerly near-constant sounds of their bells. Bunin knew from corresponding with friends and talking with Russians visiting abroad, and he guessed on his own, which of his former haunts—restaurants, bars, and dancehalls—had not survived in the new communist cityscape, as establishments formerly frequented by Moscow's elite began to be closed from 1918 onward. The Ermitazh, for example, had been closed in 1917; the Metropol′ as well, though it reopened in the 1930s; and the Iar restaurant ceased to exist in 1918, after almost a century of catering to Moscow's smart set. The destruction of secular landmarks mirrored the religious holes rent in the city's cultural fabric. Bunin's fictional mapmaking artistically rendered the memory of old Moscow while pointing to these gaping holes in the contemporary cityscape. Thus, for his émigré readers, the Moscow in the story is not only the prerevolutionary Moscow of Bunin's memory but also a ghostly representation of 1940s Moscow.

Current events changed the way Bunin's contemporaries read his work and invoked the violence whereby familiar places had been destroyed and continued to be in danger from the Soviet regime and the Nazi occupiers. Thus, for Bunin's Russian émigré audience three sets of lost cityscapes would have coexisted by 1944: the medieval and imperial churches and religious monuments deliberately destroyed by the Soviets; the landmark restaurants and bars of the merry prerevolutionary nightlife, now shuttered and dark; and the buildings, parks, and roadways indiscriminately destroyed by the Nazis. The evocation of obliterated places in Moscow served to map that cultural memory, the memory of a Moscow circa 1912 that Bunin had not seen in a quarter-century and that survived only in the minds of the émigré community: in the fictional memory palace.

In 1941 Bunin famously wrote in a letter to Nikolai Teleshov, "I want to come

48. Bunin referred to Iverskaia Chapel in precisely these words. *PSS* 6:277.

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home!"[49] He did so, in the end, only in his fiction through his memory palace. Like Arsen'ev, the eponymous narrator of that novel, Bunin "poeticiz[ed] loss, death, and destruction" by fondly rendering the former cityscape—walking its streets and wandering through its cemeteries, if in word only.[50] He and his readers were keenly aware of the vast physical distance between them and what remained of Moscow in the mid-1940s, and they were also aware that the only way to keep Moscow alive was to tend its memory, to walk the halls of the memory palace as custodians, and to evoke the memory images that defined the old Russia.

Moscow as the Meeting of East and West

Bunin's spotlighting of the "towers of Kirgiziia" in his description of Moscow is particularly significant, since the city, and Russia itself, has for centuries marked a geographic and cultural overlapping of east and west. In the story this juxtaposition is imposed on the people as well. The male protagonist's interests include decadent literature (by figures such as Briusov, Stanisław Przybyszewski, and Arthur Schnitzler), popular Russian singers (such as Fedor Shaliapin), and traditional, rich Russian foods.[51] A gourmand and a man-about-town, the narrator seems to be genuinely captivated by the woman, who is characterized as bewitching, with "a complexion like dark amber, hair so black and full it seemed almost sinister in its magnificence."[52] Such exoticizing descriptions of the young woman offered by the male narrator evoke the "east," and by drawing on traditional tropes they add to the heroine's essential mystery. The narrator compares himself to her and finds her "as taciturn and introspective as I was voluble and blithe." She is "forever disappearing into her own thoughts, carefully exploring something deep inside her mind."[53] "Enigmatic, at times inscrutable," she plays the piano and frequently reads the books the protagonist brings her, but just as frequently she stares into the distance, lost in thought.[54] Born into a merchant family

49. On Bunin and postwar, pro-Soviet émigré literature, see David M. Bethea, "1944–1953: Ivan Bunin and the Time of Troubles in Russian Émigré Literature," *Slavic Review* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 1–16. Bunin to Teleshov, 8 May 1941, in Marullo, *Ivan Bunin*, 143–44. See also Bunin's diary entry of 2 April 1943, *PSS* 9:397. His wife Vera Muromtseva-Bunina reacted to Sergei Rachmaninoff's death thus: "He did not live to see the end of the war . . . or the possibility of returning to the homeland." Diary entry, 29 March 1943, in Marullo, *Ivan Bunin*, 216. On Bunin and rapprochement with the Soviet government, see Muromtseva-Bunina, diary entry of 3 May 1946, in Militsa Grin, ed., *Ustami Buninykh: Dnevniki Ivana Alekseevicha i Very Nikolaevnoi i drugie arkhivnye materialy*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1977–82), 3:181; Connolly, *Ivan Bunin*, 161; and Andrei Sedykh's memoirs, *Dalekie, blizkie* (New York, 1962), 213–20.

50. Wachtel, "Editor's Introduction," 14. In the early 1900s Bunin belonged to a "Wednesday" club in which the members were given nicknames based on Moscow streets. See Inovenkova, "Moskva v zhizni i tvorchestve I. A. Bunina," in *PSS* 15:252–53.

51. He has "a particular affection for burbot pasties with eel-pout stew and pink hazel grouse in heavily fried sour cream." Bunin, 347. See Elena Molokhovets's famous cookbook *A Gift for Young Housewives* (Bloomington, 1998) for recipes featuring burbot and hazel grouse.

52. Bunin, 348.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., 347.

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in Tver', she reveals surprisingly deep knowledge about ancient Russian legends, obscure Orthodox vocabulary and practices, and Old Church Slavonic prayers, demonstrating an interest in Orthodoxy generally and Old Believer ritual in particular.[55] She is fascinated by those sects and seems to long for "Old Rus'."[56] Here we see an overlapping of time and space, with Old Rus', and its religious elements in particular, figured as the east. With her black hair, furs, and mysterious silences, the heroine is an enigma whose solution remains inaccessible to rational thought or explanation.

In their tours of the city itself, the heroine prefers quiet streets, cemeteries, and churches, although she is not averse to drinking and dancing at crowded taverns. Her haunting of certain holy spots in the Moscow cityscape conflicts with the outward triviality of the couple's secular activities. Quietude and raucousness, calm and excitability, tranquility and frenetic behavior, religious seeking and secular concerns: the couple joins together all aspects of human activity, uniting the grand cultural constructions of east and west in the process. While her interests in holy places and stories demonstrate a spiritual seeking, the narrator—and the reader—remains utterly unprepared for the conclusion of the story, when, essentially without warning, the young woman suddenly takes religious vows at the Marfo-Mariinskii Convent.

The presence in "Cleansing Monday" of easy and broad generalizations about the silent, exotic east and shallow, materialistic west points to the conventionality of the characters and the deeper cultural significance of the setting, with Moscow as the place where east and west unite and where the "true" Russia is to be found. The very interests of the couple highlight that melding of east and west: Przybyszewski, after all, was Polish, wrote in Polish and German, and lived primarily in the portions of Poland outside the Russian empire, and the history of the Russian cuisine in which the couple indulges shows the influence of the French in many of its sauces and preparations. Thus, the couple embodies the complexities of Russian culture and history: in their contradictions they encompass Russian modernity, and in their decadent self-indulgence they represent those contemporaries who flirted with religious philosophy while ignoring the tragedies around them in the prerevolutionary period. In this way, the flaws of Russian culture are also on display in the memory palace. And although the sudden act of devout sacrifice on the part of the heroine remains unexplained, the story's religious and spiritual undercurrent suggests something more ancient, another layer to the story worthy of excavation.

After all, "Cleansing Monday" is set not simply in a prerevolutionary era but more specifically during the pre-Lenten season of 1912 and in 1914, just before the New Year. Both time periods in the calendar year are liminal, porten-

55. I. V. Rebrova contends that the description of the heroine's father identifies him as an "Old Believer." I. V. Rebrova, "Istoriko-kul'turnyi intertekst v rasskaze I.A. Bunina 'Chistyi ponedel'nik,'" in *Materialy kongressa "Russkaia literatura v mirovom kul'turnom i obrazovatel'nom prostranstve," Sankt-Peterburg, 15–17 oktiabria 2008 goda,* 2 vols., *Literatura XIX–nachalo XX vekov: novye vzgliady i kontseptsii* (St. Petersburg, 2008), part 1, 2:223–32. Mikhailov notes that the heroine "is searching for something sound, heroic, and self-sacrificial, and she finds her ideal in the religion of old. Contemporary life seems to her pathetic and untenable." Mikhailov, *Zhizn' Bunina,* 438.

56. Bunin, 354.

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tous moments, mixing the sadness of something ending with the bittersweet opportunity for new beginnings. As mentioned above, the title of the story assumes a significant amount of religious and cultural knowledge. With his tour of religious places and his memory images of holy figures, Bunin evoked the missing landmarks and their complex histories. Bunin expected his Russian readers to be able to supply the religious information he did not include in the story, and he knew they might be the only readers capable of doing so.

By the 1940s Bunin was thinking more seriously about the traditions and cultural resonance of Russian Orthodoxy. Though never as devout as his wife, Bunin found common ground in these years with Archimandrite Kiprian, the priest and theologian whose most famous written work is *The Eucharist* (1947), and Bunin expressed his almost unseemly love for his friend in a series of letters written during the war. Father Kiprian noted the "tormenting question" all writers asked themselves during the war (namely, what was all the writing for?), and his answer brought Bunin comfort. Quoting Kiprian's "beautifully expressed" thought back to him, Bunin wrote, "After all, 'we must work for the glory of God,' and I do continue to work."[57] It was precisely over the next two months that Bunin penned "Cleansing Monday," a work meant to bridge the geographical gap between himself and his compatriots in Paris as well as the "double distance" between the Moscow he had left in the teens and his current state of further exile in the occupied region of France.[58]

The tour of old Moscow includes visits to the Iverskaia Chapel, named for the Iverskaia Mother of God icon, and for those readers who knew the history and significance of the icon the visits prompted a long reflection on the Orthodox past (see figure 1).[59] This chapel was destroyed after the Bolshevik revolution and the icon disappeared altogether; thus, the place and the memory image remained only as a part of the cultural memory of Moscow, and readers would recognize Bunin's nod to Soviet antireligious actions. Bunin reclaimed a second memory image from a publication by English traveler Stephen Graham: the image of Mary and Martha, depicted at the Marfo-Mariinskii Convent (see figure 2). Of all the convents to which the female protagonist might have applied, she chose the Marfo-Mariinskii, perhaps because of these two Biblical figures, who united in themselves the maternal and the sensual nature of woman. Equally important, that convent was founded by Elizaveta Fedorovna, the former Grand Duchess and widow of Grand Duke Sergei

57. Ivan Bunin to Archimandrite Kiprian, 14 March 1944, *PSS* 12:128–29.

58. In 1915 Bunin had taken his nephew N. A. Pusheshnikov on a tour of religious places in and around Moscow: the Kremlin churches, Chudov, Novodevichii, and Zachat'evskii monasteries, the Marfo-Mariinskii Convent, and the Troitse-Sergeevskaia Lavra; by the 1940s a number of these sites had been destroyed. See Inovenkova, "Moskva v zhizni i tvorchestve I. A. Bunina," in *PSS* 15:278.

59. The original version of the icon, held at the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos in Greece, is said to have been painted by Luke the Evangelist, and during the ninth-century wars of iconoclasm it was allegedly stabbed by a soldier. According to religious tradition, blood then flowed from the icon, thus ending the wars. The first copy of this icon was commissioned for Russia in 1648 by the archimandrite destined to become Patriarch Nikon, who would in turn preside over the religious strife in Russia that resulted in the Raskol.

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Figure 1. Iverskaia Mother of God

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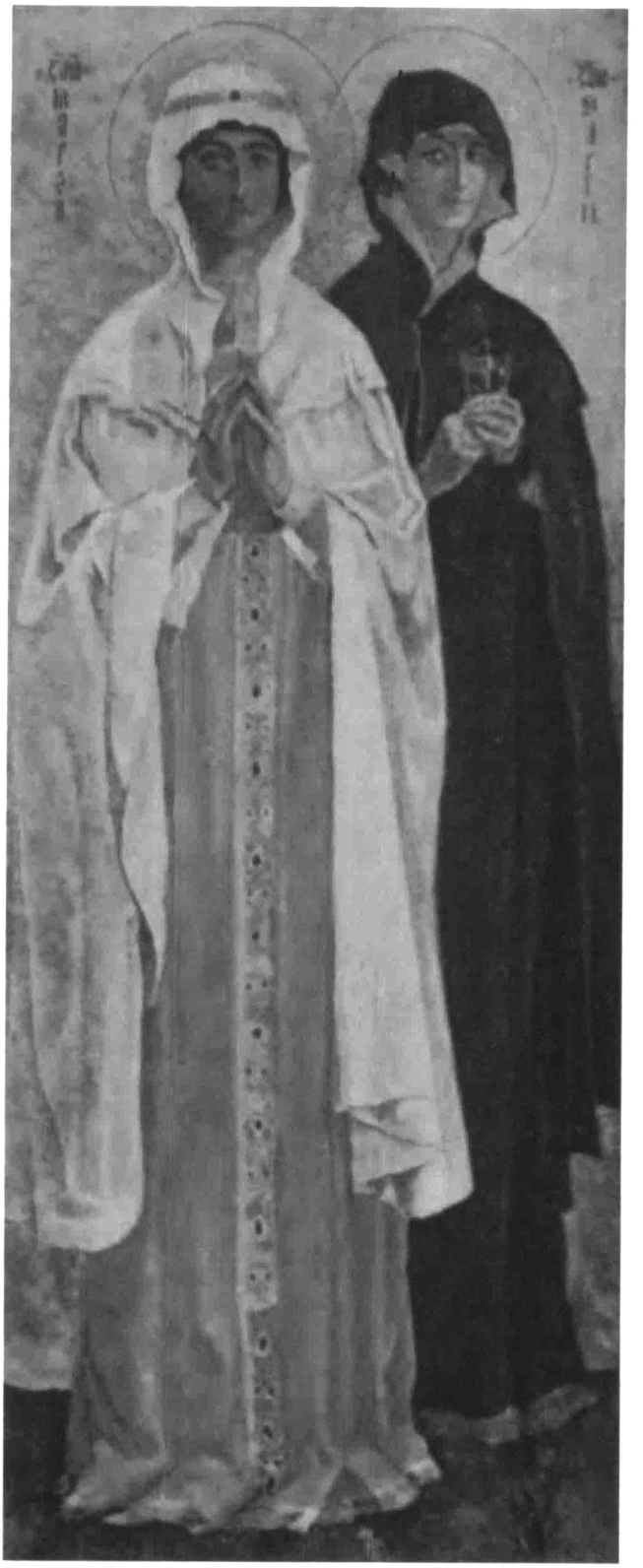


Figure 2. Mary and Martha. This image appears as the frontispiece to Stephen Graham's *The Way of Mary and the Way of Martha* (London, 1915).

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Aleksandrovich, who had been governor general and commander of Moscow for many years.[60]

Elizaveta Fedorovna's story—its inspiring as well as its tragic aspects—was very familiar to many Russians. When Sergei Aleksandrovich was assassinated by a terrorist's bomb in 1905, his wife became a nun and founded the convent that took as its patron saints Mary, representing the east, and Martha, representing the west.[61] The convent was placed specifically in the Old Believer quarter on the right bank of the Moscow River, on Ordynka Street, thus uniting old Russia and the east (*Ordynka* referring to the "Horde," or Mongol yoke, of the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries). The abbess appears in a third memory image, evoked tellingly in "Cleansing Monday": "Tall, thin-featured, she carried a large candle and walked slowly, devoutly, with lowered eyes."[62] This vivid description of her in her habit—specially designed for this convent by artist Mikhail Nesterov—recalls a photograph that was known in émigré circles (see figure 3). Russian readers, especially those in the émigré community, were aware that Elizaveta Fedorovna and her maid had been buried alive in 1918, victims of Bolshevik ruthlessness and martyrs to the new regime's ambition.[63] The convent is one of the most important religious locations discussed in the story: of the many monasteries and convents mentioned and visited—Zachat'evskii and Chudov, Novodevichii and Marfo-Mariinskii—it is this one that draws both protagonists to it.

The Marfo-Mariinskii is another way in which Moscow functioned to unite east and west, past and present, and in choosing this convent the female protagonist heals a split in herself as well. Her love of ancient Russian legends cut against her choice of an apartment facing the gold-crowned "new" Cathedral of Christ the Savior, rather than St. Basil's or one of the medieval churches, and her student vegetarianism was at odds with her love of Old Believer taverns and rich Slavic foods. She is a bundle of contradictions, and Bunin creates her thus as an emblem of the complex diversity of Russian history. Idle and changeable in her secular life, as a nun she will devote herself to a life of service, and her tasks at the Marfo-Mariinskii will center on caring for wounded soldiers—soldiers wounded in the (first world) war, the harbingers of which are so glaringly absent from the story.

The use of named places, and even named real personages such as

60. We might note that this union, between Elizabeth of Hesse and Sergei, son of Tsar Aleksandr III, like many royal marriages of the era, brought together the Germans, English, and Russians—Elizabeth was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. The violent disruption of that union in 1905 presaged the rupture between Germany and the rest of Europe that was World War I and the destruction of the world as Bunin and his contemporaries knew it.

61. As her biographer has it, "Elle ne conçoit plus, dans la vie, d'autre but, d'autre intérêt que la charité. . . . Alors, pour se mieux consacrer aux œuvres charitables, elle décide qu'elle va quitter le monde." Maurice Paléologue, *Aux portes du jugement dernier: Élisabeth-Féodorowna, Grande-Duchesse de Russie* (Paris, 1940), 62. See also Paléologue, 63. According to this and other sources, Elizaveta Fedorovna also forgave the assassin and strove (unsuccessfully) to have him pardoned. Paléologue, 41–46. It is entirely possible that Bunin was acquainted with this little book.

62. Bunin, 359.

63. *Aux portes du jugement dernier* describes in vivid and dramatic detail how the body of Elizaveta Fedorovna was recovered by Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak's troops and transported through Beijing to Jerusalem for burial. See Paléologue, 218–26.

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Figure 3. Elizaveta Fedorovna in her nun's habit

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Elizaveta Fedorovna, weaves a tapestry of historical Moscow against which the story unfolds. To recast Ol'ga Sedakova's formulation, Moscow in all its detail in Bunin's work "resembles resurrection," and Bunin's memory palace project aims to facilitate that rebirth.[64] Moscow's sacred landscape and its profane landscape are joined when the couple, having taken a walk through the Novodevichii Cemetery to visit the graves of writers Chekhov and Ertel', next drive "for some reason to Ordynka," where they are looking for the house where author Aleksandr Griboedov once lived.[65] Significantly, Ertel', Chekhov, and Bunin, among others, all moved to Moscow from their original homes in the Russian heartland, and Griboedov, too, spent summers at his uncle's estate deep in the countryside; their presence at the center reaffirms Moscow's role as the *Russian* memory palace, with room for all of Russian culture and history.

The telltale marker "for some reason" intrigues the reader, and while it is never explained why the couple is interested in Griboedov, the reader intuits a number of reasons.[66] First of all, Griboedov, as the author of the immortal comedy *Woe from Wit* (1825), represented nineteenth-century Moscow society in all of its shallowness, banality, and "conviviality."[67] "Famusov's Moscow" became an idiom thanks to Griboedov's portrayal of that society, and it is this Moscow in which the heroine immerses herself before leaving the secular world for religious life. Second, Griboedov is one of the most politicized of Russian writers and is tied to both internal revolution and war with foreign empires.[68] Third, his house was located in the very same quarter of the city where the Marfo-Mariinskii Convent was founded.

Since all the toponyms in the story are within three miles of each other in the Central Moscow and Zamoskvorech'e districts, Bunin has made it easy to visualize them as a map of old Moscow. This particular trip encapsulates the

64. Sedakova believes that Bunin portrayed life using the genre of elegy or requiem. See O. A. Sedakova, "Lux Aeterna: Ob I.A. Bunine," *Filologicheskie zapiski*, no. 20 (2003): 35–38, reprinted at www.olgasedakova.com/Poetica/222 (last accessed 31 October 2013).

65. Bunin, 353. In his memoiristic prose as well, Bunin recalled A. I. Ertel', writing in 1929 that "he is now almost forgotten, and to some utterly unknown." "Ertel'," reprinted in *Gegel', frak, metel'*, 457–65. Ertel' spent time in exile in Tver' between 1884 and 1888, and, as Bunin notes, experienced a "period of passionate religious fervor" in his youth. *Gegel', frak, metel'*, 460, 463. This cemetery outing on Forgiveness Sunday evokes the ritual that requires cemetery visitors to ask forgiveness of the dead. However, no specific meaning for the visit is imparted, and the young woman has visited a different Old Believer cemetery the day before. Bunin, 351.

66. Indeed, the narrator points to that missing explanation, asking, "What did Griboedov mean to them?" *Gegel', frak, metel'*, 353. Twice more in the story we hear the "for some reason," which marks revelatory moments. When, near the end of the story, the young man finds himself at the Marfo-Mariinskii Convent, he is compelled "for some reason" to enter the gates, whereupon he sees the abbess. Again, "for some reason" he carefully watches the procession of women dressed just like the abbess, and in that row he sees his beloved, thus finally discovering what happened to her when she disappeared.

67. On "conviviality," see Ian K. Lilly, "Conviviality in the Prerevolutionary 'Moscow Text' of Russian Culture," *Russian Review* 63, no. 3 (July 2004): 427–48.

68. Griboedov was arrested on suspicion of being a Decembrist, and he subsequently became a government official in the early years of Nicholas I's reign. As minister plenipotentiary to Teheran, in 1829, he perished in an attack on the mission, and it is possible to read his death as martyrdom to the conflict between Russia and the east.

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geography of loss that Bunin has sketched for his readers: the Marfo-Mariinskii Convent standing for Moscow's spiritual traditions and the writer's house for its secular history; sacred Elizaveta Fedorovna and profane Aleksandr Griboedov, both martyred in violent, political deaths. The two buildings bookend a golden century of Moscow—from the first part of the twentieth century back to the first third of the nineteenth—which Bunin evokes in his many-layered memory tour.

In addition to all the knowledge of religious history Bunin assumed of his readers, the title of the story implies the event that always precedes it in the religious calendar: "Forgiveness Sunday." In order to be cleansed, in the Orthodox tradition, one first has to ask for and to bestow forgiveness.[69] To any Orthodox believer, the events of that day in Bunin's story seem a caricature of fitting behavior: the characters immerse themselves in self-indulgence, going to an Old Believer tavern, where the woman invokes the Old Church Slavonic term for their orgy: "Let's order an *obed silen* . . . a 'mighty feast.'"[70] The carnivalesque atmosphere ends in sexual consummation, as the protagonists finally become lovers back at her apartment. As with her obed silen, the heroine uses ancient words to contextualize her actions, repeating the legend she has described earlier about a serpent sent to tempt the wife of the prince of Murom.[71]

This final sexual encounter caps the sinful behavior of the entire day, but it also functions as a farewell to secularity and as a ritual begging pardon of her paramour, whom she will abandon the next day forever to enter the convent. In a sexualized version of the Forgiveness Sunday ritual, the young woman ends the day with her own ceremony of forgiveness. Tempting though it is to connect her avoidance of sex at this point to Solov'evan ideas of "erotic celibacy," as Matich names it, her use of coitus and consummation on Forgiveness Sunday suggests a different reading of her earlier self-restraint.[72] Having teased her paramour for months, she now gives him what he wants, as she—and the Lord—no longer has need of it.

That union, coming as it does after the couple's blasphemous feast, also prefigures a miracle and gives us the fourth memory image in the memory palace. On the wall of the Old Believer tavern hangs a copy of the *Troeruchnitsa*, the Three-Handed Mother of God (see figure 4). The miracles of the Eastern Church imply that what has been severed can again be reattached, and with his vivid description of this icon Bunin places an emblem over the feast. According to legend, the original image was painted by an icon-painter who had had his hand chopped off during the wars of the iconoclasts. While painting, he prayed and placed the severed hand against his stump, where it miraculously reattached itself. In gratitude, the icon painter rendered a third hand—his own—at the bottom of the icon.[73]

69. On Orthodox traditions, see Timothy Ware, Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia, *The Orthodox Church* (New York, 1987).

70. Bunin, 353.

71. I.e., she tells a portion of the Life of Petr and Fevroniia. See Lyubomira Parpulova Gribble, "The Life of Peter and Fevroniia: Transformations and Interpretations in Modern Russian Literature and Music," *Russian Review* 52, no. 2 (April 1993): 184–97, esp. 186–87.

72. Matich, *Erotic Utopia*, 163.

73. The original of this popular icon resides at the Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, having arrived there, according to legend, in an unmanned boat. Later it served as

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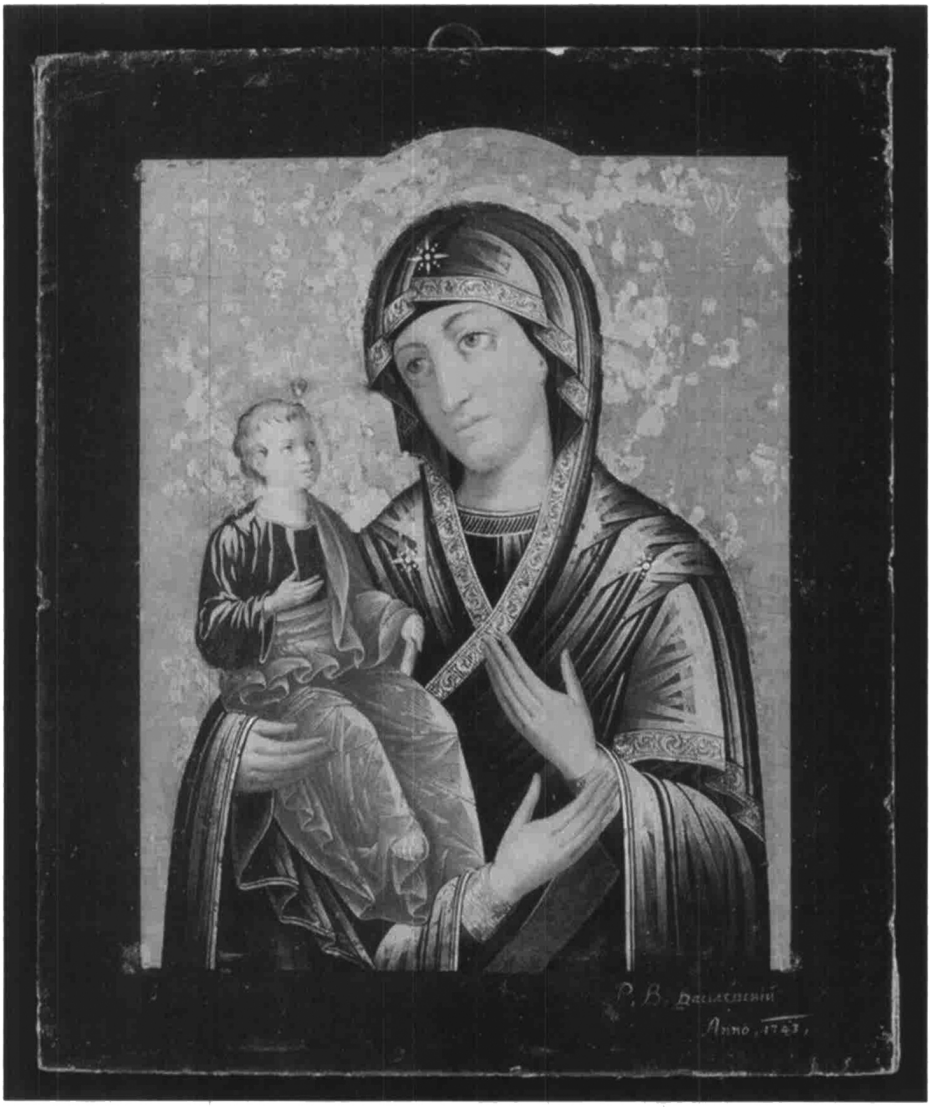


Figure 4. Three-Handed Mother of God (R. V. Vasilevsky, 1743). Collection of Hillwood Museum & Gardens. Bequest of Marjorie Merriweather Post. Reproduced with permission.

In the story, the icon signifies that devout Holy Rus' for which the female protagonist longs, but it also represents a miraculous reattaching of that which has been severed, a restoration of that which has been destroyed. In

the "abbot" of the monastery. One more detail from the history of the icon is important: donations from Russia flowed to the Hilandar and with them, in east Slavic tradition, the icon was "clothed" in a silver and semiprecious stone frame, a frame that now hides the third hand from sight. It is not clear whether Bunin would have known about the "clothing" of the original icon, but the copy he describes in the story remained uncovered, thus highlighting the miracle. Predrag Matejic, Curator of the Hilandar Collection at Ohio State University Thompson Library, personal communication.

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Bunin's mapping of Moscow, the toponyms of secular and religious Moscow remain present, as if their razing had never occurred. While it must have been clear to Bunin in 1944 that the past could not be miraculously retrieved, this story functioned as an artistic portrayal of that past and a reification of the historical continuum.

Russia Abroad, Russians Abroad: A Geography Lesson

Since so much of the story functions on the basis of a shared cultural knowledge among Russians, and Bunin felt that it would be too boring for the Swedes, it is worth asking if Bunin saw any other audience for the story. He first published "Cleansing Monday" in the New York émigré journal *Novyi zhurnal* in October 1945 after reading it at an invitation-only event on June 19 of that year before four hundred Russians in Paris, one hundred or so of whom were the Bunins' friends and acquaintances. These people were his primary audience: people who remembered Russia and believed that the Russian cultural landscape should be preserved. The memory of Moscow became the memory of Russia, and with his fiction Bunin drew the map of their shared cultural patrimony and advocated for its conservation.

But while "Russia abroad" had become a full-fledged community in exile, with a large population spread across several continents and its own cultural infrastructure—newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, supportive organizations and unions of writers, journalists, and so on—there was also a growing awareness of Russian culture among local populations in Europe, from which Bunin himself had benefitted greatly.[74] Published and reviewed in the United Kingdom, for example, in 1922 (*Gentleman from San Francisco*) and again in 1935 (*Grammar of Love*), Bunin would see *Dark Avenues* reviewed in 1949 when it came out in English.[75] Bunin's Nobel Prize in 1933 helped convince him that his secondary audience was the reading public of Europe, especially England and Sweden, and the United States, and throughout the 1930s and even during the war he counted on royalties from translated editions of his works, the assistance of such organizations as the Swedish academy, and even loans and donations from individual non-Russian patrons in order to feed his household.

For English readers, perhaps more than anyone else, it was traveler, journalist, and writer Stephen Graham who shaped opinions about Russia in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1915 Graham published an extensive meditation on Russians and Russian culture titled *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary*, from which I quoted above, a work that explored the contradictions of prerevolutionary Russia and situated them in the difference be-

74. As Michael Hughes has written, there were several books published in 1915 that attempted to highlight Russian culture and thus influence Anglo-Russian relations on the eve of the revolution. The *Ballets Russes* and their annual British tours also contributed to English perceptions that there was such a thing as "Russian culture." See Michael Hughes, "Searching for the Soul of Russia: British Perceptions of Russia during the First World War," *Twentieth Century British History* 20, no. 2 (June 2009): 198–226.

75. See unsigned review of *Gentleman from San Francisco*, by Ivan Bunin, *The Times* (London), 17 May 1922, 16; unsigned review of *Grammar of Love*, by Ivan Bunin, *The Times* (London), 8 March 1935, 11.

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tween eastern Orthodoxy and western Christianity, particularly the practical Protestantism that he contrasts to Russia's love of—in his words—"mystery."[76] He wrote: "The purely Eastern aspect of the Church is the way of Mary, the spiritual, meditative, introspective, mystical way."[77] By educating his fellow Englishmen about Russia, Graham hoped to bring about a merging of the two "ways," an understanding of Russia as the home of Fedor Dostoevskii and the Slavophiles but also of the hard-working Russian peasant. Graham saw in Russia, "instead of the simplification of life, a love of its complexity. The Russian says 'yes' to the multiplicity of doctrines."[78]

Before the revolution Graham's almost three-hundred-page treatise was slated for publication in Russia at the Sytin publishing house, but that effort was derailed by the social upheaval. Bunin knew about the book; he even knew Graham personally and might very well have cringed at Graham's generalizations about Russian culture in this and other tomes, speeches, and essays, all written, as Graham asserted, "with the view of making Russia and especially Russian Christianity better known in England."[79] At the same time, Graham's evocation of the Kremlin in 1914 surely spoke to Bunin's own memories of the places he had left behind: "A holy city standing above a merely worldly city . . . beautifully starry and peaceful nights, . . . the churches . . . the toothed battlements and antediluvian old towers of the Kremlin walls seemed gigantically exaggerated in silhouette . . . The single liquid melody of the Kremlin chime broke out and poured away—*ding, ding, ding, ding, dong, dell, dell.* Holy Russia was watching."[80] Those bells ring out in Bunin's fiction of the 1920s through 1940s as well, and Bunin may have been thinking of them when Graham came to Paris in 1925 to interview him. The interview became the basis for the first of Graham's two essays for *The Times,* both called "Russian Writers in Exile."[81]

In "Cleansing Monday" Bunin seems to be going over the same territory as the English traveller, shaping the Moscow he remembered with his own lavishly descriptive prose and presenting a view into the Marfo-Mariinskii Convent which formed a contrast with Graham's depiction. In 1915 the English traveller described the landmark thus:

> One Sunday I went to the convent of St. Martha and St. Mary in the Bolshaya Ordinka on the other side of the Moscow river. It is a wonderful institution, belonging to the new Russia and yet being part of the old, a young dainty stem with leaves sprung from the rugged many-wintered tree of the Russian Church. Like St. Vladimir's Cathedral at Kie[v], its beauty lies not in any antiquity or ruin. It is a new institution; it is served by young people; and has new life, new interest, and ideals.[82]

76. "The Russian has an extraordinary capacity for belief," he opines. Graham, 291. In this work he also narrates events which took place during the Easter season. Graham, 206–14.

77. Ibid., 200.

78. Ibid., 103.

79. Ibid., 217.

80. Ibid., 267–68. Emphasis in the original.

81. See Stephen Graham, "Russian Writers in Exile I: Ivan Bunin," *The Times* (London), 3 April 1925, 17, and "Russian Writers in Exile II: Alexey Remizof," 28 April 1925, 17.

82. Graham, *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary,* 267–68. According to Graham, women who joined the order had to be physically strong and under the age of 40.

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Bunin's portrayal of the Marfo-Mariinskii emphasized precisely the ritual, ancient aspects of the convent: its silent nuns with their burning candles; its dark church; the wordless, blind communication between the novice and her devastated, secular beau. The mystery of the story's ending belies Graham's practical representation of the new convent's function in the world. The similarities between Graham's book and Bunin's story suggest that each was narrating the Russia he knew, with the Englishman wanting to represent Russia to Europe and the Russian émigré countering his portrayal with an insider's map of the disappeared nation. It seems that Bunin may have been taking back the Russian cultural patrimony of Martha and Mary, with that second memory image. After all, Bunin was the cartographer of Russian cultural memory; no foreigner had the right to map Bunin's homeland, no matter how much time he had spent travelling there.

The setting of the story and the moment of its writing were divided by thirty years, and history had circled around, from the first year of a Russian-German conflict in 1914 to the final year of a second Russian-German conflict in 1944. Bunin continued to write in 1944, "for the glory of God" and to sustain his cultural patrimony in the face of Soviet destruction, Nazi wartime damage, and appropriation by foreign commentators. The three aspects of "Cleansing Monday" discussed here—historical and religious dimensions for the Russian audience as well as the cultural geography for the foreign audience—draw on historical personages and Bunin's own memories of space and place to map the many-layered personal and political histories of the city. Revisiting the holy spaces of Moscow and keeping them alive in this story, Bunin builds on a geography of absence to restore those buildings deliberately destroyed by the Stalinist government or by war and to superimpose the complex cultural history of Russia upon the cityscape in creating a memory palace.[83]

Absences notwithstanding, "Cleansing Monday" portends a new beginning, while lingering on that which was lost to everything but memory. Across the physical and historical space of Moscow, Bunin mapped a layered cityscape that juxtaposed the medieval, the prerevolutionary, and the Soviet city, enabling all of them to coexist at the same moment. The final scene of the story, also circling back, remains inconclusive, an ambiguous portrayal of a lost generation. In a reiteration of the avenues' "darkness" in the collection, the story's final lines describe the two characters, unable to connect with each other and yet strangely congenial: "Shielding the flame of her candle with one hand, she aimed her dark eyes into the darkness, as if staring straight at me. . . . What could she see in the darkness? How could she have felt my presence there? I turned. I went quietly back through the gate."[84] This mystic communication, seemingly two-way, reaches across the two moments within

83. Marina Romanenkova writes: "This, in essence, was a thought characteristic of the émigré consciousness of the artist's responsibility for the fate of his homeland and, looking back, Bunin establishes with bitterness that in the bustle and whirlwind of bohemian life his generation missed the looming threat." Marina Romanenkova, "Antroponimy kak kul'turnyi komponent struktury rasskaza Ivana Bunina 'Chistyi ponedel'nik,'" *Žmogus ir žodis / People and the World* 2, no. 4 (2002): 83.

84. Bunin, 359.

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the time frame of the story and suggests a higher plane on which these Russian characters, and the Russia they exemplify, exist.

In writing the story, Bunin positioned himself to be the custodian and curator of the Russian memory palace. But it would be an oversimplification to see this as purely a nostalgic act. Bunin also used this story as a way of thinking about new beginnings. The very title of the story implies the religious rituals associated with forgiveness and moving forward, and the story is set both during that Lenten season leading to resurrection in the Christian calendar and at the new year that leads to a starting-out in the secular calendar. Down and out though he was in Grasse, Bunin felt almost exhilarated upon completion of this story, and his journal reflects that feeling:

> It is 1 a.m. I got up from the table. I still have to finish the last few pages for ["Cleansing Monday"]. I turned off the light and opened the window to ventilate the room. The evening was perfectly still. There was a full moon out, the most delicate fog had enveloped the entire valley, and the sea had a muted rose-colored shine. Everything there was quiet. The leaves of the trees were young, soft, and fresh; here and there one could hear the trilling of the first nightingales. . . . Oh God, let me continue my lonely, poor life to enjoy this beauty and my work![85]

It is both literally and figuratively a darkness-before-the-dawn moment for Bunin. And in that sense we can see that Bunin was not attempting to curate the memory palace as a collection of desiccated and dusty relics. Written in 1944 and set in 1914, the story bookended a period of turmoil and destruction that, as the war drew to a close, might now be ending. Looking at the past for Bunin became a way of sustaining the present and imagining a future.

85. Quoted in Marullo, *Ivan Bunin,* 238–39. The translator calls the story "The First Monday in Lent"; I have changed that title here to avoid confusion.

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