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## **M. O. GERSHENZON AND THE PERCEPTION OF A LEADER IN RUSSIA'S SILVER-AGE CULTURE**

At least since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Russian cultural life has revolved around the intellectual "circle" or club in which members met to discuss their shared philosophies, ideals and moral visions. The many examples of intellectual circles in Russian culture include, "Beseda," "Arzamas," the "Lovers of Wisdom," the "Petrashevtsy," "The People's Will," all the way up to the "Moscow Conceptualists." From this historical experience have emerged structures of group organization with clear patterns of self-perception. Significantly, the circle's structure has often led to the idealization of one individual, who became perceived as the embodiment of the highest values cherished by the group. To this individual was given the sacred position of leader and he served as a model for imitation and emulation. In his article on Andrei I. Turgenev, the historian Marc Raeff describes the qualities which the leader had to possess: "The hero of the circle had to be someone whose promise had remained unfulfilled – be it because of early death or political persecution. It also had to be someone capable of inspiring enthusiasm and worship by his character and example. Finally, the hero had to be a "whole" (tsel'nyi) personality, that is, someone whose identity was perceived strongly enough to be the source of unquestionable moral authority."<sup>1</sup>

In the early twentieth century M.O. Gershenzon, historian, philosopher, literary critic and Pushkinist, asserted himself as the leader of his own literary circle. In his emotional attachment to his subject matter, his conversations and personal relationships, his studies of Aleksandr Pushkin and Russian intellectual history, Gershenzon consciously tried to embody the recognized values of a leader. Moreover, not only did he possess all the above prerequisites for the role, but he consciously cultivated the image of a leader by linking his identity with other "leaders" in the Russian past. Through his biographical monographs he became perceived as indelibly associated with Ivan Kireevskii, Aleksandr Herzen, Nikolai Stankevich, Nikolai Ogarev, Pushkin, Petr Chaadaev and Vladimir Pecherin. This association lent him the role he desired, that of intellectual "culture-bearer" and moral conscience of his epoch. Through his own efforts Gershenzon came to be seen in this light by his contemporaries and friends.

Gershenzon's circle was different from its prototype in the nineteenth century because his home was more a place to which intellectuals came for intimate visits than an acknowledged meeting-place of an official group. In addition, those who came to see Gershenzon were not conscious members of a circle, but were close friends, personal guests of the critic-historian. This informal relationship between Gershenzon and his friends reflects not only Gershenzon's open, sharing personality, but also corresponds to the state of the circle in the Silver Age. While in the nineteenth century the circle was held together by the ideological unanimity and personal fidelity of its members, in the twentieth century such demands were relaxed. Individuals could belong to many groups simultaneously, members could be ideologically independent or even intellectual rivals. In her memoirs Evgeniia Gertsyk explains the difference between the circle in the nineteenth century and its descendent in the twentieth century:

Но что же объединяло таких несхожих мыслителей, как Вяч[еслав] Иванов и Гершензон, Шестов и Бердяев? Это не группа союзников, как были в прошлом, например, кружки славянофилов и западников. И все же связывала их не причуда личного вкуса, а что-то более глубокое. Но то ли, что в каждом из них таилась взрывчатая сила, направленная против умственных предрассудков и ценностей старого мира, против иллюзий и либерализма, но вместе с тем и против декадентской мишуры, многим тогда казавшейся последним словом. Конечно что было анархическое бунтарство, — у каждого свое видение будущего, стройное, строгое, определяющее весь его творческий путь.<sup>2</sup>

Despite its new form, the circle was still perceived as linked with its original prototype through the self-conscious attitude of intellectuals towards the institution. Already by the end of the century the intelligentsia recorded a note of reflection and self-consciousness that their intellectual "circles" had antecedents: notably they realized their own attraction to the "circle" and the whole constellation of ideas, models and behavioral norms originating in the first third of the nineteenth century. While expressed self-consciousness may have lent a tint of irony or conventionality to statements about cultural life during the period, by viewing their age in terms of the past, intellectuals could see themselves as part of a historical continuum. Thus, overt and hidden references to historical precedents anchor the modern circle more firmly in the Russian tradition, creating a cultural dialogue with the past. In his autobiography Nikolai Berdiaev describes the self-consciousness of one member of Russian intellectual life (1949):

У нас в России, в период наших старых споров, дело шло о последних, предельных, жизненных проблемах, о первич-

чною, а не об отраженном, не о вторичном. Так было не только в религиозно-философских обществах, но и в спорах в частных домах, напоминавших споры западников и славянофилов 40-ых годов. Белинский говорил после спора, продолжавшегося целую ночь: нельзя расходиться – мы еще не решили вопроса о Боге. Так было и у нас, когда сходились С. Булгаков, М. Гершензон, Л. Шестов, В. Иванов, А. Белый, Г. Рачинский и др[угие].<sup>3</sup>

Due to the greater diversity of the constituent members of the intelligentsia and the diverse intellectual opportunities of modern cultural life, the monolithic circle was gradually replaced by something which resembled it formally, but differed from it internally. While intellectuals still met at private houses to share ideas, to read from their works or discuss cultural and political affairs, they no longer were bound to absolute personal or ideological commitment. Typical for the Silver Age was something akin to an "open house": intellectuals opened their homes or offices for visits from their intellectual friends and literary acquaintances.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, although the demands of the circle had changed, the historically grounded attitudes of intellectuals to their vocation and personal relationships remained intact. In this way, despite the fact that nobody ever acknowledged a "Gershenzon circle," Gershenzon's visitors could perceive the historian in images suitable to a "leader."

In her memoirs of the period Gershenzon's daughter adumbrates the contours of an intellectual circle which met in the historian's own home between the years 1910–1917. Natalia Mikhaïlovna Chegodaeva-Gershenzon describes its activities and lists its members:

В то время круг писателей и философов Москвы жил особенно напряженной умственной жизнью и общение их между собою было чрезвычайно интенсивным. Они часто собирались, горячо и много спорили, читали и обсуждали свои новые произведения. В 1913–1917 гг. у нас в доме особенно часто бывали Л. И. Шестов, В. И. Иванов, А. Белый, философы Г. Шпет, Эрн, Н. Бердяев, Д.Н. Жуковский, юрист Б.А. Кистяковский, историк Д.М. Петрушевский, пушкинист М.А. Цявловский, поэты Ю.Н. Верховский и В. Ф. Ходасевич, издатель М.Б. Сабашников, А. Ремизов, а также многие другие, приходившие реже. Из около литературных дам особенно близким человеком была А.Н. Чеботаревская.<sup>5</sup>

The members of this "circle" were Gershenzon's Symbolist friends, the contributors to *Vekhi*, fellow Pushkinists and younger poets. In their memoirs of the period so many individuals describe their "wonderful" visits to Gershenzon

that, as if unintentionally, Gershenzon's home became perceived as a center of Moscow's intellectual life. Andrei Belyi in his memoirs openly announces what others merely hint at, writing, "Квартира Никольского переулка стоит в ряде лет мне действительным символом яркой культурной работы Москвы; культурной работы, быть может, России."<sup>6</sup> Another piece of evidence pointing to the existence of a literary circle appears in a note in Andrei Belyi's archive announcing that Andrei Belyi read his 1917 lecture on Viacheslav Ivanov's poetry before an audience at Gershenzon's home.<sup>7</sup> In addition, in his three-volume unpublished correspondence with his wife Gershenzon dutifully catalogues the constant visits to his home by the Moscow literati.<sup>8</sup> In sum, weighing all the evidence together, we can conclusively assert that Gershenzon's home served as a meeting place for Moscow's intellectual elite.

Although Nataliia Chegodaeva-Gershenzon asserts the existence of a circle, she does not claim Gershenzon as its leader. From our study, however, it is clear that he wanted and made conscious efforts to play this role. According to a well-known literary critic of the time, Pavel Sakulin, Gershenzon wanted to be a representative of the Russian intelligentsia, and his aim was indeed achieved. Sakulin writes in his 1925 unpublished eulogy to Gershenzon, "Apologiya dukha: M. O. Gershenzon i russkaia intelligentsiia":

Свое 'дело' М.О. Гершензон считал общим для всей русской интеллигенции. Свои духовные интересы он всецело слил с интересами русской интеллигенции. 'Мы русские интеллигенты', – постоянно выражался он. Он знал, что в течение многих десятилетий лучшие представители [русской] интеллигенции упорно думали о том же, о чем думает он. Поэтому так любовно изучает историю русской интеллигенции, историю ее исканий и ошибок.<sup>9</sup>

Marc Raeff has pointed out that the leader must be perceived as worthy of veneration and worship. That Gershenzon was perceived in exactly this way is shown by a 1925 meeting of the Leningrad Society of Bibliophiles entirely dedicated to Gershenzon's memory, in which N.I. Pozharskii declared the following:

Странно, что М.О. Гершензон, человек второй половины XIX и первой четверти XX века, был типичным представителем славянофильства. Он был необычайно жизнеспособен, не приспособляясь к жизни, был неподкупен – был почти святой человек. Труды его – не вечные, не гениальные; но, как личность как фигура, он приобретает большое значение.<sup>10</sup>

Pozharskii, pointing out Gershenzon's positive values, intentionally emphasizes the contradictions of his person. He was not a genius, his works were not

classics, yet his culture pays tribute to his memory. He was not a creative writer per se, not a major figure, but still he occupies a central place in his culture's imagination. Pozharskii sees in Gershenzon's image the key to this conundrum; it is his symbolic figure which stimulates the imagination, motivating the unique view of his contemporaries.

Although the last three citations indicate that Gershenzon was particularly venerated, they do not comment directly on his role as leader. In truth, we will not find any incontrovertible evidence that Gershenzon was the leader of his own intellectual circle. Nor will we fall upon direct testimony that he had a circle. At the same time, however, all the evidence affirms that M.O. Gershenzon was perceived in the category of a leader. Such proof is Gershenzon's own self-presentation, the role he played among the Moscow intelligentsia and the descriptions of Gershenzon by his contemporaries.

In two studies on the intellectual circle in Russian culture, Marc Raeff and Edward Brown describe two types of "leaders," passive and active. In his book, *Nikolai Stankevich and his Moscow Circle 1830-1840*, Brown depicts a passive leader. According to Brown, Stankevich was singled out as the ideal individual because he embodied the visionary yearnings and absolute virtues valued by the group. Whether Stankevich indeed possessed the ideal traits attributed to him was not important. What is significant was that he was perceived as having them. Edward Brown reveals the element of projection in the creation of Stankevich's image, writing, "They searched among themselves for heroic personalities whose influence would be salutary and whose memory would forever serve as inspiration and example: that is how they found – or created – Stankevich."<sup>11</sup> According to Brown, the ideal characteristics were thrust onto Stankevich almost against his will. He did nothing to encourage or dampen his friends' ardor.

In his account of Andrei I. Turgenev's circle, however, Marc Raeff describes an active leader. Turgenev is depicted as consciously refashioning his personality to correspond with his image of the ideal individual. He is shown as trying to achieve moral and physical purity, yearning for higher, spiritual knowledge with which he could perfect himself and inspire others. In addition, he aimed at being useful to society and to humanity in a global sense, and he valued above all the emotional ties of friendship, allowing himself personal happiness only in unison with the happiness of his comrades. Raeff's depiction of a leader is very different from Brown's in that his Turgenev is not a mere image for his comrades, serving as a fleshless projection of their ideal goals, but deliberately asserts his personal will; he eagerly participates in the group, directing the "spiritual development" of the members and helping in their "moral growth."<sup>12</sup> Because of his conscious involvement in the creation of himself and in leading the circle, Turgenev and not

Stankevich serves as the true predecessor for the leader in Russia's Silver Age. Contenders for the leadership position of their own circles, Valerii Briusov, Nikolai Berdiaev and Nikolai Gumilev had willful, powerful personalities; they not only actively led their circles, but often demanded utter submission from its members.

In his desire to be the leader of his own circle, M.O. Gershenzon resembles both Turgenev and Stankevich. Like Andrei Turgenev, Gershenzon consciously modeled his life to serve as a source of inspiration for others, and like Stankevich, he was perceived as possessing absolute traits which, perhaps, were only projections or exaggerations. In any case, Gershenzon consciously created himself in terms of the established tradition of "leader," and more importantly, he was perceived as embodying the highest moral and intellectual values of his generation.

### Gershenzon – Symbol of the Silver-Age Pushkin

In his synthetic and creative works on Pushkin,<sup>13</sup> Gershenzon established an indelible association between himself and the poet. From these works participants in the Silver-Age culture aligned Gershenzon with Pushkin. These identifications are broad. At once we find sympathetic juxtapositions and angry accusations that Gershenzon tried to usurp Pushkin's legacy by projecting his own person onto the poet.

To explain the significance of Pushkin in the cultural life of Gershenzon's time, I quote from Boris Gasparov's introduction to a collection of essays concerning the influence of the Russian Golden Age on the Silver Age. About the significance of the symbol of Pushkin for the latter Gasparov writes (1991):

Life seemed to be saturated with Pushkin's image; his various attributes glimmered, signs of his eternal, absolute presence were found in all aspects of art and life. He was everywhere: in the artistic monuments of the Modernist age, in philosophical and aesthetic debates, in historical events and in real-life situations, in the topographical signposts of the cultural scenery, in the symbolism of dates and names and, finally, in individuals' physical appearance and personality.<sup>14</sup>

In his spiritual characteristics and physical appearance the 20-century Pushkinist was perceived in terms of the nineteenth-century poet. Fedor Stepun observes for instance (1956), "М.О. Гершензон, маленький, коренастый, скромно одетый человек клокочущего темперамента, но ровного, светлого, на Пушкине окрепшего духа..."<sup>15</sup> Andrei Belyi also underscores the link between Gershenzon and Pushkin, referring to the idea of Gershenzon as a "black"

with an explosive, destructive temperament (this depiction corresponds to the popular image of Pushkin during the Silver Age, expressed originally by Vladimir Solov'ev in his 1897 essay, "Sud'ba Pushkina"). In his memoirs Belyi writes:

...и думал, у этого почтенного деятеля темперамент воистину негрский, и прыткость мальчишеская.  
 ...Вот тебе «Гершензон!»  
 То есть, — не тучный, не белобородный; а не-Натансон, а 'кофейник': вскипел, выплеснул кофейный свой кипяток...<sup>16</sup>

Mark Andreevich Natanson (1850–1919) (pseudonym Bobrov), populist revolutionary and later left-Socialist Revolutionary here symbolizes the boring and ineffectual Populists who ruled Russian culture only a decade earlier. By contrasting him with Gershenzon, Belyi underscores the latter's spiritual youth and vivaciousness.

Gershenzon himself established an identification with Pushkin by participating in the culture's "mythologization" of the poet, one aspect of which was the desire to resurrect and reanimate Pushkin. Among others, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Zinaida Gippius, Valerii Briusov, Marina Tsvetaeva and Andrei Belyi participated in this endeavor. In his posthumously published article, "Stat'ia dlia odnoi dnevnnoi gazety," Gershenzon describes his own attempts to get "closer" to the live person of Pushkin, emphasizing his relation to the living monuments connected with the poet (written 1924):

Мое поколение — вероятно последнее, которое еще видело в жизни хоть и слабые следы живого Пушкина. Мы еще знали людей, видевших Пушкина; познейшим осталось лишь то, что хранится в музеях, — его вещи и рукописи. Мне в юности мой дед, всю жизнь проживший в Кишиневе, рассказывал как он в городском саду во время гуляний видел Пушкина бегущим в клетчатых панталонах и с тростью. Позднее в Москве, студентом, я не раз встречал на бульваре А.А. Пушкина, старшего сына поэта, высокого, худощавого старика в генеральском сером пальто на красной площадке и проходил мимо его парадной двери с медной дощечкой: 'А.А. Пушкин...' ...мне было весело слушать эти Пушкинские имена, уже не книжные, а имена живых мест, где вот этот человек живет и ходит.<sup>17</sup>

To achieve his aim of "resurrection," Gershenzon developed a new method of reading Pushkin, "medlennoe chtenie" (slow reading). Its special advantage was its supposed quality of permitting penetration into Pushkin's actual intention. The critic, uncovering the Pushkin in himself, had the chance to revive mystically Pushkin's ideal vision and thus extract the meaning and purpose of his texts. In

this context people who had seen Pushkin were perceived as making the poet close. For this reason, Gershenzon strongly emphasizes his own contact with Pushkin through his grandfather, who had seen the poet, and through his own experiences of seeing the poet's descendents.

Given its unscientific foundation, "Slow Reading," was deplored by rigorous critics. Scholars from across the ideological spectrum found Gershenzon's scholarship about Pushkin merely a projection of the critic's own personality onto that of the poet. V. Veresaev wrote that Gershenzon was, "в науке больше поэт, чем исследователь."<sup>18</sup> V. Khodasevich found that, "его 'мудрость Пушкина' оказалась в известной мере 'мудростью Гершензона,'"<sup>19</sup> Pavel Shchegolev seconded, "Если о чьей мудрости можно получить представление по этому исследованию, то, конечно, о мудрости Гершензона."<sup>20</sup> If we ignore for a moment the destructive aim of these criticisms, we do see the inevitable conflation and perceived hypostasis between Gershenzon and Pushkin.

Interestingly, Silver Age intellectuals constantly looked back to the Russian Golden Age to judge themselves.<sup>21</sup> Gershenzon participated in this attempt at self-definition through Pushkin, creating the annual journal, "Moskovskii Pushkinist," the aim of which was to investigate the events concerning Pushkin which had occurred exactly a century earlier. Mikhail Tsiavlovskii explains the purpose of the journal in the first issue:

Незадолго до своей кончины Михаилом Осиповичем Гершензоном было задумано издание сборника статей 'Пушкинский Ежегодник на 1925 г.', в котором, кроме разного рода статей и материалов о Пушкине, должны были быть часть 'мемориальная', посвященная жизни и творчеству Пушкина в 1825 году, и библиография литературы о Пушкине за 1924 год. Такой 'Ежегодник' Михаил Осипович предполагал издавать каждый год.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, the significance of Gershenzon's death, "the death of a Pushkinist," was also creatively interpreted as linked to Pushkin's. In each case, death symbolized the end of a creative epoch and the commencement of a cruel and materialistic age. According to Irina Paperno, we find this image in Khodasevich's article, "Krovavaia pishcha,"<sup>23</sup> in which Khodasevich describes Gershenzon's death "as an example of the death of the poet, a repeating symbolic event which has Pushkin's death as its original prototype."<sup>24</sup> In Ol'ga Forsh's novel, *Sumassheshdshii korabl'* (1931) we also find a similar interpretation of Gershenzon's death. Forsh describes a scene which has a real-life prototype. It seems that at Gershenzon's funeral, despite the fact that no speeches were to be made, a Communist began to talk, saying that although Gershenzon was not "ours," the



proletariat still pays tribute to this "survivor" of bourgeois culture. "He was useful, like a cog-wheel in a carriage, and hopefully he will soon be replaced by another." At this moment Aleksandra Nikolaevna Chebotarevskaja, the sister of Sologub's wife and a poet in her own right, couldn't control herself and expressed everything which had gathered in her soul, saying it was quite unlikely that such a one as Gershenzon could ever be replaced. When everyone had left the cemetery, she couldn't calm herself the whole day and in the evening, she went to the Bolshoi Kamennii Most and threw herself from the bridge into the icy waters.<sup>25</sup>

Gershenzon's funeral, decorated with the contrasting imagery of the two epochs, the pre-revolutionary and the Soviet, manifested in the conflict between the individual versus the collective, the human being versus the machine, plus the accompanying suicide of Chebotarevskaja, was perceived symbolically as a critical event. Gershenzon's death was seen in terms of Pushkin's death as carrying a tragic message; it signaled the end of the creative culture and the rise of a new and terrible era.

### Gershenzon – Symbol of Love for Russian Culture

In his works on Russian history Gershenzon displayed personal devotion and love for his subject. This love was a by-product of his intuitive historical method founded on personal empathy; Gershenzon thought that through personal identification with his heroes, he could mystically grasp their psychology and extract the religious essence of their ideas. At the same time, the scholar's empathy and love came to be seen as a virtue in itself, both by Gershenzon and by his contemporaries. For at least one section of the intelligentsia, spiritual identification with and personal commitment to Russian culture served as a genuine category of aesthetic judgment. Personal devotion to Russian literature became a virtue which redeems the faults in a writer's personality or the mistakes in his work. For example, in his review of N. O. Lerner's second edition of *Trudy i dni Pushkina* Gershenzon writes (1910):

Понятно, какое исчерпывающее знание предмета и какое неистощимое терпение были нужны, чтобы исполнить этот труд; такое знание и такое терпение даются только любовью и эта трогательная самоотверженная любовь к Пушкину придает книге г. Лернера, на мой взгляд, характер нравственно-прекрасного деяния. Личность и поэзии Пушкина – одно из явлений вечной красоты, луч солнца, упавший на землю; только человек, чья душа, может быть втайне и бессознательно для него самого, неодолимо влечется к солнцу, может так нежно и преданно полюбить поэта, как любит Пушкина г. Лернер.<sup>26</sup>

This passage indicates that love for Russian culture is a critical consideration in Gershenzon's evaluation of Lerner and his work, while objective truth takes a secondary place. This deemphasis of the value of objective truth and analytical examination reveals a particular value system: the focus of evaluation is turned towards the personal or subjective, rather than the scholarly or objective realm. The same principle can be seen in Gershenzon's judgment of Semen Vengerov's work. In a letter to Vengerov from July 23, 1919, Gershenzon extols the critic's love for Russian culture, although he completely disagrees with his opinions, basing his point of view on the idea that sentiments are far more important than ideas:

Благодарю Вас сердечно за Вашу книгу. Вы знаете, я не могу быть согласен с нею; но вот, разрезал я ее и опять читал знакомые страницы: что до того, что мы разных мыслей! главное то, что сердце у Вас на месте, болеет и любит как должно в этой серьезной жизни, – что главное. Мысли раздаются, борются, гибнут, – их судьба – судьба вещи; истинно-сущего в человеке только и есть что целостный дух его, и особенно сердце. Вы хороший, добрый человек, и то доброе, что от Вас входит в Вашу мысль, есть ее правда, ее правота. Оттого я любил не только Вас, но и Ваши книги, Ваши часто для моего разума неверные мысли. Так я всегда Вас читал, но никогда не чувствовал этого так ярко, как этот раз. Может быть потому, что стал старше, а может быть наученный опытом этих лет. Верные наблюдения, правильные мысли – как изделия: то, что сделал и умеет делать человек на пользу и употребления. А уже я смотрю не на изделия его рук, – Бог с ними! Столько накоплено изделий, и с каждым днем множатся столько напечатано верных и тонких наблюдений, остроумных сопоставлений, блистательных соображений! Смотрю на самого человека, на его лицо, слушаю его голос: каков он-то сам внутри себя? Это одно и важно. Оттого то Вас и люблю. И о себе самом так думаю, о своих изданиях, о самом себе. Умны мои мысли, заняты ли мои книги – не в этом их ценность; а вот – вошел ли от меня в них и дышит ли в них дух подлинной человечности, то есть серьезности, искренности, доброты: в этом все дело.<sup>27</sup>

Gershenzon's personal evaluation is not isolated instance, but reflects a general value system according to which judgments are made about literary scholarship. Sympathetic critics praised Gershenzon's work exactly because they perceived his love for Russian culture, as the following citations taken from reviews about Gershenzon's works clearly show:

About his *Zhizn' V.S. Pecherina* (1910) Vasilii Cheshikhin writes: "Как биография, книга г. Гершензона написана с необыкновенной теплотой и любовью..."<sup>28</sup>

A.S. Izgoev in his review of Gershenzon's *Dekabrist Krivtsov i ego brat'ia* (1914) writes, "В чем сила прекрасного и своеобразного таланта М.О. Гершензона? В его необыкновенной, глубокой, но ровной любви к культурному русскому обществу прошлого века. ...Своего любовью он оживляет старую жизнь."<sup>29</sup>

Leonid Grossman in his 1925 eulogy to Gershenzon also agrees, writing, "Глубокий художник в труднейшем искусстве живописи душ, замечательный артист слова, тончайший портретист упедших лиц и поколений, он не только умел с редкой отчетливостью обрисовать своих героев, но и внушить читателю весь запас заложенного в них очарования и заразить нас своей неистощимой влюбленностью в эти забытые образы прошлого."<sup>30</sup>

Despite the different ideological affiliations of these critics, in these passages we find a similar criterion for value judgments: Gershenzon's work is considered valuable and effective exactly because of his love for Russian culture. Personal commitment gives his work life, vigor and power. If he didn't love Russian culture, it follows that his work would be lifeless and weak. From these evaluations of Gershenzon's art, we can conclude that perceived passion for Russian culture became an aesthetic value for at least one part of the literary elite, and that Gershenzon, by virtue of his passion, was perceived as an ideal person worthy of reverence and imitation.

Gershenzon, placing less emphasis on the objective truth of his claims than on their subjective significance was led, however, to make grave errors. His mistakes in scholarship, one would think, would lower him in the eyes of his contemporaries. Strangely, his mistakes, besides eliciting criticism, also lent to him the aura of an ideal intellectual. Khodasevich writes (1936), "В некотором смысле ошибки Гершензона ценнее и глубже многих правд. Он угадал в Пушкине многое, 'что и не снилось нашим мудрецам.'"<sup>31</sup> We find the same idea expressed by Pushkin's biographer V. Veresaev (1929):

Метод его (Гершензона [В.Н.]) никуда не годится но сам он так умен и интересен, так знает Пушкина и так трогательно любит его, так много думал над ним, что читаешь любую его работу: не соглашаешься подчас ни с одним словом, всю статью испещришь вопросительными и восклицательными знаками, а прочтешь, – и столько в голове поднимается

вопросов, так по-новому начинаешь чувствовать Пушкина, так ярко начинаешь сознавать необходимость пристальнее, глубже, острее вчитываться в Пушкина, что больше получаешь от этой статьи, чем от иной, с которой соглашаешься вполне.<sup>32</sup>

In his historical writings, Gershenzon tried to form a indivisible link between the Russian past and himself. Closing the usual distance between the historian and his subject, Gershenzon tried to revive the past by attempting to experience it himself mystically.<sup>33</sup> In his 1926 critical article on Gershenzon's contribution to Russian culture, George Florovsky describes Gershenzon's historical method: "He (Gershenzon [B. H. ]) tries, as it were, to incarnate himself and to follow the growth of another's mind from the inside. He aspires to interpret every individual life in terms of its organic kernel."<sup>34</sup> In turn, his contemporaries understood that he was no mere historian, but rather an active participant in the subject he studied. For instance, contemporaries did not merely perceive Gershenzon as an historian of Slavophile thought, but labeled him a "Slavophile." Petr Struve emphasizing the identification between Gershenzon and his subject, argues, however, that the association was cultivated by Gershenzon himself. In his 1910 review of Gershenzon's *Istoricheskie zapiski* (1910) Struve writes:

Автор хочет быть больше чем историографом, он хочет быть философом – судьей нашего идейного прошлого и настоящего и соответственно этому он дает свою собственную философию, искусно вплетая ее в историческую характеристику духовного развития образованной России. Я не хочу сказать, чтобы г. Гершензон претендовал на оригинальность в качестве философа. Его философские положения заимствованы целиком у Киреевского и Самарина. Но он не просто исторически 'реферирует' этих учителей славянофильства, а излагает их мысли, как дорогие и заветные для него самого идеи, которые он разделяет всем своим существом.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the condemnation lodged in Struve's statement, the pertinent point for our investigation clearly emerges: Gershenzon was seen as linking himself with the Russian past, serving as its advocate in his own epoch.<sup>36</sup> Gershenzon's use of the past for his own "spiritual" needs, however, did not always lower him in the estimation of his contemporaries, but conversely raised his personal authority. Pavel Sakulin lauds Gershenzon for demanding from himself the same answers about the purpose of life, as those he demanded from the heroes of Russian history. In his unpublished essay Sakulin explains:

На одном заседании Н[аучно]-Иссл[едовательского] Института М.О. [Гершензон] в упор поставил молодым ученым вопрос: зачем они занимаются своей наукой? И ждал, что они

свяжут свою работу с общим вопросом о смысле жизни. Естественно, что к самому себе М.О. предъявлял те же требования, только в более ригористич[ной] форме. ...К каждому историч[ескому] деятелю М.О. Гершензон обращался с вопросом: чему он служит? каковы его верховные идеалы? С этим вопросом подходил он к деятельности декабристов, идеалистов 30–40-х годов, славянофилов, и социалистов.<sup>37</sup>

### Conversations as Cultural Artifacts

Personal conversations are culturally significant among Gershenzon's friends, crossing the borders of personal life and spilling into the public realm of collective creation. In this context Gershenzon's conversations are seen as genuine artifacts of culture, solidifying his role as an ideal intellectual. For example two of the epoch's most important works, *Vekhi* (1909), the collection of essays criticizing the Russian intelligentsia, and *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov* (1920) emerged from personal conversations.

Gershenzon was responsible for the creation of *Vekhi* by suggesting to his friends in 1908 that the time had come for idealist thinkers to make their views known concerning the revolutionary intelligentsia and its failed revolution of 1905.<sup>38</sup> The fact that Gershenzon was the organizer and editor of *Vekhi* and that he wrote the introduction, expressing the general ideological standpoint of all the writers, serves as strong evidence that he was, or at least wanted to be, the group's leader.<sup>39</sup>

The *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov* also emerged from personal conversations with a friend, this time with the poet Viacheslav Ivanov. Evgeniia Gertsyk explains the work's origins:

Есть маленькая книжечка «Переписка из двух углов», которая во всей свежести доносит до читателя дух и звучание тогдашних бесед. Составилась она из подлинных писем Гершензона и Вяч[еслава] Иванова, когда их, изголодавшихся в 19-м году приютил подмосковный дом отдыха: помещались они в одной комнате вместе с другими отдыхающими и — неугомонные разговорщики — чтобы не мешать соседям, не говорили, а писали, каждый сидя на своей койке.<sup>40</sup>

As *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov* displays, personal relationship did not remain confined in a separate category but became themselves the focus of artistic expression, and just as Russia's Golden Age, correspondences were often creative works in their own right. Parts of Andrei Belyi's correspondence with Alexandr Blok, for example, were published at the time they were written. In

Symbolist circles the poet or artist was supposed to live aesthetically, realizing in reality the theurgic principle of the artist as creator. Khodasevich alludes to this attitude writes in *Nekropol'*, "На первый взгляд странно то, что в ту пору и среди тех людей 'дар писать и 'дар жить' расценивались почти одинаково.<sup>41</sup> Life, then, is as, or even more essential or valuable than art, since art can never express or realize the personality fully. Although for the Symbolist the essence of life cannot in principle be expressed in words, in his close relationship Belyi managed to glimpse the most important aspect of Gershenzon, confessing in his memoirs, "Я любил его, как писателя; но главного своего он не выразил в книгах."<sup>42</sup> In life, then, more than in art Gershenzon better expressed the character and purpose of his being:

In addition, the very context of these important conversations, Gershenzon's home off the Arbat on Nikol'skii pereulok became a symbolic location representative of Russian culture. The symbolic image of Gershenzon's home is conjured up in the description of it as magical and mysterious. Belyi writes, "...надо было подняться по лестнице вверх; из передней – подняться вторично, чтобы очутиться в двух маленьких, чистых, светелочках, где Гершензон совершал свои волшебства, опрыскивая мертвые музейные данные им собираемые, живой водою; в этих действиях он мне казался каким-то Мерлином."<sup>43</sup> In Ol'ga Forsh's novel, *Sumasshedshii korabl'*, the hero describes her talks with the character drawn from Gershenzon as cultural events in their own right; in them she sees something mystical, unusual, creative a revival of the Silver Age during the days of Bolshevizm. Forsh writes (1931):

К халдею шли охотно и раньше, потому что он был богат талантами, эрудицией, культурой, и общение с ним обогащало. Но сейчас шли, когда он и не звал, эрудиции от него не вымогали, говорили сами свое, да так, как говорить совершенно отвыкли, или даже не знали, что можно так говорить. И он сейчас умел слушать особенно. Давал не интеллекту, не жажде познания, а казалось думать.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the furniture and decorations in Gershenzon's home also have a symbolic function, a metonymic resonance in connection with Russian culture. The writer Vladimir Lidin in his 1925 eulogy writes, "Полка книг, три портрета – Пушкина, Герцена, Чаадаева – в черных рамках на белых стенах, и ничего больше."<sup>45</sup> The chair on which Gershenzon sat also links him to the Russian intellectual tradition; it was a chair that had belonged to Chaadaev. Khodasevich certifies, "Оно – кресло – историческое, из кабинета Чаадаева."<sup>46</sup>

These symbolic images of Gershenzon's home point to more than mere decorative description, but to a reverential attitude towards Gershenzon. He was perceived as linked with Russian culture through a myriad of significant symbols, parallels and subtle indications. It is likely that this attitude was incited not only by Gershenzon's work, but by his commanding role within the group of Moscow intellectuals.

### **Gershenzon – Symbol of the Ethical Good**

In his private life Gershenzon had the reputation of being morally exemplary. In the memoirs of the time, his asceticism and altruism are emphasized, and this image of moral incorruptability allows him to be judged favorably against the strict criteria for the behavior of a Russian intellectual. It is factually true that Gershenzon lived simply, modestly, without luxuries. Partially this was the result of free choice, partially of economic realities, since his family, consisting of his wife and two children, lived solely on the earnings from his writings. In his oftentimes miserable poverty, however, many contemporaries saw in Gershenzon superior spiritual qualities worthy of emulation. Vladimir Lidin writes, glorifying Gershenzon, "Он жил просто, до скудности, как настоящий русский писатель."<sup>47</sup>

Gershenzon's altruism, his work in organizing the first Moscow writer's union after the revolution, his work in publishing and gaining state aid to writers, became legion in the memoirs about the epoch.<sup>48</sup> Khodasevich, usually a cruel judge of people, tenderly writes:

Те, кто прожил в Москве самые трудные годы – восемнадцатый, девятнадцатый и двадцатый, – никогда не забудут, каким хорошим товарищем оказался Гершензон. Именно ему первому пришла идея Союза Писателей, который так облегчил тогда нашу жизнь и без которого, думаю, многие писатели просто пропали бы. Он был самым деятельным из организаторов Союза и первым его председателем. Но, поставив Союз на ноги и пожертвовав этому делу огромное количество времени, труда и нервов, – он сложил с себя председательство и остался рядовым членом Союза.<sup>49</sup>

Gershenzon's self-sacrificing and generous actions correspond to a cultural model of the image of the ideal intellectual, which permits him to be perceived as a personage worthy of extreme respect. Poverty, suffering, but also selflessness and altruism are qualities considered obligatory for a Russian intellectual. In the context of this code of behavior, Gershenzon's contemporaries perceived his

activities in terms of the literary tradition, enabling him to "inspire enthusiasm and worship by his character and example."

The above image of Gershenzon appears often in the memoirs of the time. In Belyi's memoirs Gershenzon is described as someone who aided those in need and put the interest of others before his own. For Belyi he is a personalization of the biblical maxim, "Bear fruit and multiply." Thus, Gershenzon was seen not only as charitable, but also as fecund and fertile, "...у Гершензона отсутствовало чувство собственности: он был бескорыстно даящим даже не мыслью, а семенами мыслительности. Он как бы говорил своим мыслям: «Плодитесь и множитесь» Другие хотели их стричь; он – растил."<sup>50</sup>

In his attitudes and behavior his friends perceived disciplined self-negation and generosity, and one might add, genuine asceticism. Khodasevich writes, "Минутные анекдоты, я думаю, что в его самоограничении был подлинный аскетизм."<sup>51</sup> Gershenzon, it is true, not only subordinated his own personal interests to those of his family and fellow writers, but in his intellectual life too he selflessly served others: as an historian of Jewish birth he dedicated his life to the study of a foreign culture (Russian), and to the interpretation of the ideas of other men. At the same time, in his writings on Russian culture Gershenzon's individual voice competes with those of his heroes. In his idiosyncratic interpretations Chaadaev, Kireevskii and Pushkin become transformed into Gershenzon's Chaadaev, Kireevskii, Pushkin.<sup>52</sup> Critics of his time noticed Gershenzon's unique and often controversial point of view. In his review of Gershenzon's biography of Chaadaev, G. Plekhanov comments about the historian's conclusions (1908), "Эти соображения свидетельствуют более о собственной религиозности г. Гершензона..."<sup>53</sup> V.I. Syromiatnikov in his review of *Istoricheskie zapiski* writes (1910), "Если бы г. Гершензон ограничился и на этот раз спокойной работой исследователя, мы приветствовали бы его на этом пути: но он не противостоял искушению и отдался «злобе дня», и вся его книга вдруг озарилась тенгениозной публицистикой."<sup>54</sup> Gershenzon's selflessness as a historian merges with self-assertion; in his writings it is as if the intentionally repressed "I" of the historian received expression by indirect means, through subtle interference, impertinently drowning out the voices of the heroes. Pavel Sakulin, however, does not condemn Gershenzon for expressing himself through his studies of history, explaining that Gershenzon is searching for his own truth:

Много книг написал М.О. Гершензон. Но в сущности это – одна книга: книга о себе, о своем 'душевном деле', о том, как странна жизнь. Его научное творчество – одна 'авторская проповедь' одни 'Confessions' и горячая апология духа. Насколько мы знаем, он твердо шел одним и тем же путем, как человек, уже обладающий истиной. Ему осталось лишь точнее



изучить этот путь к истине, чтобы предостеречь других об опасных местах и посоветовать как лучше идти.<sup>55</sup>

### Gershenzon's Appearance

One of the features which allows Gershenzon to be perceived as embodying his culture is his ability to mutate, be transformed and ceaselessly appear in association with contemporary trends, movements and ideas. Gershenzon is described as a synthesizer of contradictions and opposites: he is at once young, old, helpful and helpless, a genius and an imposter, Russian and non-Russian, a man of light and erudition and an underground man, an obscurantist. Strangely, these paradoxes, instead of dispelling the idea of Gershenzon as a "Kulturträger," reinforce and underscore that identification.

Although Gershenzon was described as an ugly old Jew, it is exactly this appearance which serves as evidence of his image as an ideal intellectual. In his memoirs Vladislav Khodasevich sketches Gershenzon's appearance as that of a Semitic monster: "...маленький, густобровый, усатый, пухлый рот, горбоватый нос, пенсне, типичный еврей."<sup>56</sup> But only pages later Khodasevich praises this Jew, "Он был одним из самых глубоких и тонких ценителей стихов, какие мне встречались."<sup>57</sup> Georgii Chulkov moreover describes Gershenzon's Judaism as an emblematic symbol of his high spiritual qualities. In an unpublished poem, "Ты волишь жить во тьме," dedicated to Gershenzon, written while both writers were relaxing in Gaspra in 1925, Chulkov ties the historian's exterior Semitic appearance to his interior image as an old-testament seeker of spiritual truths.

Потомок странников пустыни,  
Искатель истины! Во мрак  
Ты устремил свой взор – и ныне  
Во тьме ты ищешь вещей знак.  
Найдешь ли? Знает Бог, – но совесть  
Тебе – как верная жена,  
И жизнь твоя как сердца повесть:  
То отчей правды письмена.  
Ты в них увидел правду Божью, Как свет зарниц во мраке туч. . .  
И вот бредешь по придорожку,  
Лелея сердце веры ключ.<sup>58</sup>

Leonid Grossman attributes Gershenzon's success as an artist exactly to his Judaism, remarking that, by virtue of his race, he has become one of the great figures of Russian culture. In his article, "Gershenzon – pisatel'," (1926) Grossman writes, "Он принес в русскую литературу свое сердце еврея, влюблен-

ного в славянскую душу, и с подлинной праведностью в выполнении своего призвания, простодушно и ненамеренно, осуществил свое жизненное дело и оказался неожиданно для себя на вершинах русского творчества, рядом с его великими и незабываемыми именами."<sup>59</sup>

A strange and contradictory portrait, however, is created by Boris Zaitsev in his memoirs of the Moscow culture of the epoch. The whole chapter dedicated to Gershenzon is sundered by contradictions and oppositions. Although it is meant as a tribute, Zaitsev's merciless spite seems to undercut his aim. His eulogy, however, ends with conventional adoration, full of respect, admiration and nostalgia:

В эти тяжелые годы многое претерпел Михаил Осипович Гершензон. Много салазок волок собственным горбом, по многим горьким чужим лестницам подымался, много колол на морозе дров, чистил снег, даже голодал достаточно. Он упорно и благородно боролся за свою семью, как многие в то время. Семью любил, кажется, безмерно. Знал великие скорби болезни детей, их тяжелой жизни и преутомления. Стоически голодал, вместе со своею супругой отдавая лучшее детям, за тяготы этих лет заплатил ранней смертью. ... Гершензоновой могиле кланяюсь.<sup>60</sup>

But in the same article Zaitsev rabidly deplores Gershenzon as a self-castigating, craven, obsequious boor.

Что веселого было в восторженном волнении Гершензона, в его странном благоговении перед властью? В том, что мы, русские писатели, должны были ждать в приемной, подгоняемые голодом? В том, что Гершензон патетически курил, что Каменев принял нас с знакомой «благодушной» небрежностью, учтиво и покровительственно? Заикаясь и путаясь, Гершензон говорил вместо «здравствуйте» «дадуге», весь он был парадокс, противоречие, всегда склонное к самобичеванию, всегда готов запылать восторгом или смертельно обидеться.<sup>61</sup>

That we have a paradox is clearly expressed by Zaitsev in his description, "весь он был парадокс, противоречие." The web of paradoxes, however, becomes even thicker when we add this description of Gershenzon by Andrei Belyi. In contrast to the unsympathetic evaluations of Gershenzon's appearance, Belyi sees in his appearance an object of admiration, a veritable ideal of human beauty:

За неделю до смерти я был у покойного. Встретил меня как всегда – молодой и кипучий; взирая на эту фигуру в очках, с небольшою, но явственной лысинкой, вас обжигающей черным и огненным взглядом, выслушивая возбужденную речь, – я всегда любовался явлением невыразимейшей красоты человеческой.<sup>62</sup>

Belyi's description strongly deviates from the others. Seeing in Gershenzon his ideal of humanity, Belyi admires an inexpressible beauty.

Placing all the images side by side, Gershenzon is simultaneously ugly and beautiful, ridiculous and venerable. Paradoxes indeed pursue the portrait of Gershenzon; he is constantly described as full of caprice and contradictions, and his lack of consistency is one of the main features noted by his contemporaries. Belyi attributes his contradictory personality to his unique capacity to conjoin the head and the heart, reason and emotions where usually people are forced to choose between them:

Антиномии жизни его объяснялись редчайшим, конкретнейшим перемещением сознания, сердце его было вложено в мысль: пылко мыслил; и – мыслил сердечно; в бияниях сердца, мгновенных порывах таился инстинкт прозорливейшей мудрости; действовал он, как мудрец; познавал же, как любящий; этим-то он отличался от всех, окружавших его, у которых встречаешь обычное в нас разделение рассудка и чувства.<sup>63</sup>

Part of the answer to the mystery of Gershenzon's unique, protean and contradictory posture lies in his ability to participate in a wide variety of qualitatively different intellectual arenas. Reviews of his work give a sense of Gershenzon's contribution to different intellectual fields simultaneously. Nikolai Losskii, describing Gershenzon's 1918 philosophical treatise, *Troistvennyi obraz sovershenstva*, writes, "Книга Гершензона принадлежит к прекрасному виду литературы, стоящей посредине между философией и художественным творчеством."<sup>64</sup> A. Kizevetter writes about Gershezon's work on Russian history, "М.О. Гершензон достиг высокого совершенства в особом роде произведений, которые стоят, можно сказать на рубеже научного исследования и художественного изображения общественных типов минувших времен. Таковы его труды о Печерине, о Чаадаеве, о грибоедовской Москве."<sup>65</sup> Thus, while usually a thinker belongs to one school with one credo, Gershenzon was credited with the ability to belong to many groups, while still remaining distanced and independent. In his bizarre omnipresence, he was seen to embrace all of Russian culture and more... Belyi asserts, "В различных разрезах культуры зажил он: материалистом – в

одном; идеалистом — в другом; реалистом в третьем; и символистом — в четвертом; он не был лишь «истом», он знал идеал, но без «изма»; и жил он в «реале» без «изма», прочитывая в материи символы жизни живой."<sup>66</sup>

His contemporaries applauded the contradictions in his personality. This attitude can be explained by the fact that the Silver-Age culture was itself characterized by contradictions. George Florovsky describes the period in these terms: "Это было время искания и соблазнов. Пути странно скреплялись и расходились. И всего больше было противоречий..."<sup>67</sup> The contradictions of the time are also reflected in the broad interest in mysticism and religion, linking Gershenzon with his culture, a culture which, in its search for spiritual purpose, often attacked reason and science.

Gershenzon in particular attacked reason head on. In his opinion it was responsible for the ills of modern society, the loss of organic wholeness in man. The needed cure was to decrease man's dependence on reason and encourage him to seek the purpose of his life in inner spirituality. In Gershenzon's 1909 article, "Tvorcheskoe samosoznanie," which appeared in *Vekhi*, Gershenzon denounced reason, arguing that it had caused a gaping rift between consciousness and will. "Мы калеки потому, что наша личность раздвоена, что мы утратили способность естественного развития, где сознание растет заодно с волею, что наше сознание, как паровоз, оторвавшийся от поезда, умчалось далеко и мчится впустую, оставив втуне нашу чувственно-волевою жизнь."<sup>68</sup> In an unpublished essay written in 1925 on Gershenzon's metaphysics, a student of philosophy, Mikhail Grigor'ev, describes Gershenzon's infinite antagonism toward reason: "... разум у М.О. Гершензона имеет какое-то самостоятельное онтологическое бытие, напоминающее злое начало (дьявола) религии, самое рождение разума обусловлено антиномией бытия, единого в своей основе, но разделено в формах существования."<sup>69</sup>

Gershenzon employed unscientific, intuitive methods in his historical researches and essays on literature as a positive attempt to end the reign of academic criticism founded solely on a rationalistic, philosophically materialistic basis. In his "Posleslovie" to his translation of *Metod v istorii literatury* by G. Lanson (1910), Gershezon criticized the positivist study of literature which made no distinction between methodological disciplines, lumping together ethnography, sociology, politics and literary history. Gershezon proposed instead the study of literary history through an investigation of literary form. He wanted to define the elements proper to literature and concentrate on the aesthetic merits of artistic works. In a 1910 letter to the literary critic Arkadii Gornfel'd, Gershenzon explains his disdain for the positivists, "...Надо же нам, когда-нибудь

наконец, покончить с этой схоластикой Пыпиных и пр[очих] и заговорить о живой душе человека. Ведь только и есть, а все остальное – произведение отсюда."<sup>70</sup> This statement reflects Gershenzon's belief that all literature emerges out of the author's mystical "vision" of a perfect world. The spirit, man's natural link with the whole of the universe, plays a much more important role in providing the poet with inspiration than does conscious knowledge. In his belief that art is a means of cognizing the religious essence of the universe, Gershenzon found himself aligned with the Symbolists, who attacked Pypin and other Positivists for their view of literature as merely a reflection of exterior, social life.

Although his symbolic identification is rooted in the ideals and motivations of that part of the intelligentsia which he reflects, his image becomes more complicated by his antagonistic and iconoclastic attitude toward culture, found in his later works and especially in the *Perepiska iz dvux uglov* (1920) in which he reverses his previous loving attitude toward culture, becoming its implacable enemy. Andrei Belyi, however, sees in Gershenzon's nihilism even more proof of his ability to remain a leader of his age:

Он в эти миги, далекий от злоб фельетонных, ключарь им изученной русской культуре, упорный, музейный работник, – он звал от гангрены, которой культура больна, – к революции, к «антикультурному» ниспровержению ценностей; и на фальшивые песни о том, что культура в опасности, он – утонченный знаток ее, крикнул:  
– «Культуру долой!»<sup>71</sup>

According to Belyi, *Perepiska iz dvukh uglov*, instead of detaching Gershenzon from his culture, actually had the opposite effect of attaching him more closely. In the figure of the nihilist condemning the cultural tradition as a series of impersonal constraints, one detects the utopian cries of a dreamer hoping for a better world. The ideal of overcoming culture to create a metaphysically perfect society is a unique part of the Russian literary tradition. George Florovsky interprets the *Perepiska* in exactly this way, writing, "В новых формах это был все тот-же типический русской спор об историзме и морализме."<sup>72</sup>

From all the examples brought forth, it is impossible to deny the special role ascribed to Gershenzon by his contemporaries. He was indeed perceived as a symbolic representative of Russian culture, despite the fact that he was not Russian at all, but Jewish. Although his colleagues recognized his contradictions and paradoxes, their value judgments of his life are exaggeratedly positive. Thus, we can conclude that in Gershenzon fellow intellectuals found a personification of

their ideal individual, a personality worthy of respect and homage. If we look at Raeff's list of the requirements of a leader and compare it with Gershenzon's qualities, we see that he possessed all of them. He had been persecuted by both the Tsarist government and the Bolsheviks, he was able to inspire and incite enthusiasm and he had such a personality that "he was the source of unquestionable moral authority." By virtue of the ideal aims and goals he expressed in his literary work and in his personal life, Gershenzon was perceived as a "leader," an ideal Russian intellectual.

The idealized perception of Gershenzon was motivated by concrete reasons and supported by the historical experience of the intelligentsia. The Russian intelligentsia has always seen itself in heroic categories, deeply venerating its members, as priests or saints in a quasi-religious organization. Moreover, self-consciousness, or the study of the consciousness of the intelligentsia itself has traditionally been the main subject matter of the Russian intelligentsia. In his article, "Russian Intellectual History and its Historiography, Marc Raeff, for instance, has written (1978):

The notion of intellectual history, as Isaiah Berlin has pointed out, is a particularly Russian one in the sense that it is not strictly speaking a history of ideas – i.e. an investigation of the inner relationships and filiations of ideas in specific fields such as philosophy, politics and the like. It is rather an account of the tradition by which succeeding generations of the intelligentsia defined themselves and which they used as their guide to action.<sup>73</sup>

In view of this emphasis on self-definition, Gershenzon deserved the role lent to him by fellow intellectuals, since he dedicated himself exactly to the idealization of Russian intellectuals. In a sense, Gershenzon as Russian intellectual was enormously self-referential: he fostered a certain view of the ideal intellectual (a spiritual seeker, exactingly moral, honest, etc...), and then he set about living out these codes in his own life. It is not at all suprising, then, that through a kind of metonymic displacement, Gershenzon came himself to represent the figures about whom he wrote.

It should be remembered that this sympathetic identification was not shared by all Russian intellectuals, but only by a small group of writers, who for the most part lived in Moscow and befriended Gershenzon. The limited number of adherents does not, however, invalidate the fact nor reduce the importance of Gershenzon's image. In Gershenzon these intellectuals found the embodiment of their ideal individual and by studying their perception, we learn not only more about this unique man, but also about the value system of the age itself. There is much, if one were to study the question, that links the Silver Age to the other

spiritual movements in Russian culture, and the idealization of the "leader" is certainly a repeating ritual in Russian cultural life.

### Notes

- 1 Marc Raeff, "Russian Youth on the Eve of Romanticism: Andrei I. Turgenev and his Circle," *Revolution and Politics in Russia: Essays in Memory of B. I. Nikolaevsky*, Alexander and Janet Rabinovitch, editors (Bloomington: Indiana U. P., 1972), 52.
- 2 Evgeniia Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia*, (Paris: YMCA, 1973), 162.
- 3 Nikolai Berdiaev, *Samopoznanie*, 3rd. ed. (Paris: YMCA, 1989), 182.
- 4 Meetings of the intelligentsia often occurred in the editorial offices of the leading journals. In his memoirs Fedor Stepun describes such evenings in the offices of "Musaget": "Кроме почти ежедневных сборищ основного ядра сотрудников, в «Мусагете» устраивались и открытые вечера, на которых собиралось человек до пятидесяти, а может быть и больше." Stepun, *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia* 2 vols. (New York: Chekhov, 1956), 1: 272. In addition, Evgeniia Gertsyk describes her "open house," where the "intense life" of Moscow's intelligentsia took place. E. Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia* (Paris: YMCA, 1973), 145–165.
- 5 Nataliia Mikhailovna Gershenzon-Chegodaeva, Unpublished memoirs, Gershenzon-Chegodaeva papers located in the apartment of M.A. Chegodaeva, Moscow, 19. A small part of these memoirs has been published, see Brian Horowitz *La revue des études slaves* vol. 63, 1991, pps. 621–629. I would like to extend my thanks to Mariia Andreevna Chegodaeva for making available these papers to me.
- 6 Andrei Belyi, "M. O. Gershenzon," *Rossiia* 5 (14) (1925): 248. In her memoirs Evgeniia Gertsyk comments about Gershenzon's home, writing, "Не знаю, казалось ли мне или и в правду нигде так жарко не натоплено, нигде так не уютно, как в гершензоновской столовой, где мы сидим вечером за чаем." Gertsyk, *Vospominaniia*, 160. Gershenzon figures in the memoirs of V. Khodasevich, A. Belyi, E. Gertsyk, N. Valentinov, N. Beberova, V. Lidin, B. Zaitsev, M. Sabashnikov, N. Krandivskaia-Tolstaia, A. Batrakh, N. Gershenzon-Chegodaeva and F. Stepun.
- 7 The note reads, "В декабре 1917 г. Белый дважды читал в Москве доклад о поэзии Вячеслава Иванова – у М. О. Гершензона и у Б. П. и Н. А. Григоровых." A. Belyi, "Rabota i chtenie", Belyi papers in TsGALI, Moscow (fond 53, opis 1–96).

- 8 In a letter to his wife of July 8, 1915, for instance, Gershenzon describes one representative evening, "Вчера вечером пришел ко мне Лазурский, одесский; он здесь для работы над диссертацией; немного позже явились Вяч[еслав] Ив[анов] с поэтом С. Городецким, и М.М. Лазурский и Гор[одецкий] ушли рано; после этого Вяч[еслав] Ив[анов] до 2 час[ов] читал все вновь написанное в симфонии 'Человек' – много, и очень трудное. Городецкий молодежав и лицом и манерою очень мил. Он прочитал одно свое стих[отворение], так себе." Gershenzon, letters to Mariia Borisovna Gershenzon, Gershenzon papers located in the Chegodaev apartment, Moscow.
- 9 Pavel Sakulin, "Apologiia dukha: M. O. Gershenzon i russkaia intelligentsiia," Unpublished essay. Pavel Sakulin Papers located at TsGALI: 444-1-14, Moscow.
- 10 N. Pozharskii, Unpublished notes from meeting on March 20, 1925. A. G. Bisnek Papers 247, (Leningradskoe obshchestvo bibliofilov Protokoly [1-51] obshchikh sobranii [1923-1927] 368 pgs.), located at the Public Library, Petersburg, fond 76 no. 65.
- 11 Edward Brown, *Stankevich and His Moscow Circle 1830-1840* (Stanford, 1966), 16.
- 12 See Raeff, "Russian Youth on the Eve of Romanticism," 45-52.
- 13 See, *Mudrost' Pushkina* (1919), *Gol'fstrem* (1919) and *Star'i o Pushkine* (1926).
- 14 Boris Gasparov, "Introduction: The "Golden Age" and its Role in the Cultural Mythology of Russian Modernism," *From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*, ed. by B. Gasparov, Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, California Slavic Studies ser. 15 (Berkeley: U. of California Press), forthcoming.
- 15 Fedor Stepun, *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia* 2 vols., (New York: Chekhov, 1956), 1: 265-66.
- 16 Andrei Belyi, "M.O. Gershenzon," *Rossia* 5 (14) (1925): 248. In her article, "Pushkin v zhizni cheloveka serebriannogo veka" Irina Paperno sees a link between Andrei Belyi's description of Gershenzon and the description of "Dudkin" in the novel, *Peterburg*, writing, "Андрей Белый в мемуарах 'Между двух революций', описывает в виде негра пушкиниста Гершензона: 'Африканец', с 'темнокоричневым носом', 'на коричневом, смуглом личике перепучились на губы – сливы'. (Неожиданный визит к нему Гершензона он описывает в терминах, очень близких к описанию явления Дудкину Медного всадника в романе 'Петербург': 'Фыркающая парки паровоз', 'обдавая жаром из широких ноздрей'..." Irina Paperno, "Pushkin v zhizni cheloveka Serebriannogo veka," *From the Golden Age to the Silver Age* ed. by Boris Gas-



parov, Robert P. Hughes and Irina Paperno, California Slavic Studies ser. 15 (Berkeley: U. of California Press) forthcoming.

- <sup>17</sup> M.O. Gershenzon, "Stat'ia dlia odnoi dnevnoi gazety," *Stat'i o Pushkine* (Leningrad, 1926), 111.
- <sup>18</sup> V. Veresaev, "Ob avtografichnosti Pushkina," *V dvukh planax nedra* (Moscow, 1929), 33.
- <sup>19</sup> V. Khodasevich, *Nekropol'* (Brussels, 1939), 155.
- <sup>20</sup> P.E. Shchegolev, rev. of *Mudrost' Pushkina*, by M. O. Gershenzon, *Kniga i revoliutsiia* 2 (1920): 58.
- <sup>21</sup> In the same introduction Gasparov writes, "The Pushkin myth' served as a constant symbolic background against which the age of Modernism saw itself, tested its ideas and aspirations, and recognized and comprehended its ideal, transcendent essence and destiny." Gasparov, *From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*.
- <sup>22</sup> Mikhail Tsiavlovskii, *Moskovskii Pushkinist*, (Moscow, 1927), 3.
- <sup>23</sup> Vladislav Khodasevich, "Krovavaia pishcha," *Belyi koridor: Vospominaniia* (New York, 1982), 285–291.
- <sup>24</sup> Paperno, "Pushkin v zhizni cheloveka Serebrianogo veka".
- <sup>25</sup> For the description of this scene in Olga Forsh's novel, see *Sumasshedshii korabl'* (Washington D.C.: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1964), 202. I am indebbtd to Irina Paperno for directing me to Forsh's novel. In her article, "Pushkin v zhizni cheloveka Serebrianogo veka," Paperno writes, "...Одна из центральных сцен романа – похороны пушкиниста (прототип – Гершензон), а центральные его идеи выражены во вставном тексте – записках главного героя посвященных рассуждениям о Пушкине и о конце петербургской культуры. 'Изумительно', – пишет герой, – 'как у нас все исходит от Пушкина и все возвращается к Пушкину'."
- <sup>26</sup> M.O. Gershenzon, rev. of *Trudy i Dni Pushkina* by N. Lerner, *Russkaia Mysl'* 10 (1910): 328.
- <sup>27</sup> M.O. Gershenzon, letter to Semen Vengerov of 23 July, 1919, Vengerov Papers located at Pushkinskii dom (fond 377), Petersburg.
- <sup>28</sup> Sh. Betrinskii (Vasilii E. Cheshikhin), rev. of *Zhizn' V. S. Pecherina* by M. O. Gershenzon, *Nizhegorodskii listok* (132) (1910): 4.

- 29 A.S. Izgoev, rev. of *Dekabrist Krivtsov*, by M. Gershenzon, *Rech'* 100, 14 Apr. (1914): 3.
- 30 Leonid Grossman, "M.O. Gershenzon," *Iskusstvo trudiashchimsia*, 14 (1925): 12.
- 31 Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 155.
- 32 V. Veresaev. "Ob avtobiografichnosti Pushkina," *Pechat' i revoliuciia* 5–6 (1925): 30.
- 33 An historian of our time, Vera Praskurina, describes Gershenzon's desire to participate in the past this way: "М. Гершензон писал о судьбах русской интеллигенции, будучи сам духовно связанным с ней: как врач-экспериментатор, он исследовал ее моральные болезни, прививая их себе." Praskurina, "M.O. Gershenzon – istorik kul'tury," *Griboedovskaia Moskva* by M. Gershenzon (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1989), 3.
- 34 G. Florovsky, "Michael Gerschensohn," *The Slavonic Review* 14 vol. V (1926): 317.
- 35 P. Struve, *Patriotica: sbornik statei za piat' let 1905–1910* (St. Peterburg, 1911), 470.
- 36 Sakulin, "Edinaia dusha," Unpublished essay. Pavel Sakulin Papers located at TsGALI: 444–1–14, Moscow.
- 37 Pavel Sakulin, "Edinaia dusha," Unpublished essay.
- 38 In a letter to his brother Avram from November 15, 1908 Gershenzon explains how the idea to make *Vekhi* came into being: "...Расскажу под секретом. Мне пришло в голову, что теперь надо сказать русской интеллигенции горькую правду о ней; я составил план книжки, и недавно, когда Струве приезжал в Москву, мы собрались (с Кистяковским и Булгаковым), обсудили дело и распределили темы." Gershenzon, letter to Avram Gershenzon, Gershenzon letters Manuscript Division Lenin Library, Moscow (746–20–9). Significantly Gershenzon describes the contributors of *Vekhi* as his "literary acquaintances."
- 39 In his biography of Petr Struve, Semen Frank, a contributor to *Vekhi*, complains of Gershenzon's high-handed manner in organizing the volume: "Самая возможность сотрудничества основного ядра «Вех» с их инициатором Гершензоном была определена тем, что Гершензон – вообще человек чудаковатый и капризный – решил в интересах независимости суждения отдельных соучастников не знакомить никого из нас до напечатания со статьями остальных сотрудников, так каждый из нас ознакомился с содержанием «Вех» только после

опубликования, не было и никакого предварительного редакционного сговора и обмена мнениями." S. Frank, *Biografiia P. B. Struve* (New York, 1956), 82.

<sup>40</sup> Evgeniia Gertsyuk, *Vospominaniia*, (Paris: YMCA, 1973), 161.

<sup>41</sup> Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Belyi, *Rossiiia*, 212.

<sup>43</sup> Belyi, *Mezhdue dvukh revoliutsii* (Leningrad: Izd-vo Pisatelei o Leningrade, 1934), 284.

<sup>44</sup> Forsh, *Sumasshedshii korabl'*, 200–201.

<sup>45</sup> Vladimir Lidin, *Rossiiia* 5(14) (1925), 249.

<sup>46</sup> Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 144.

<sup>47</sup> Lidin, *Rossiiia*, 259.

<sup>48</sup> About Gershenzon's efforts in publishing the works of writers and creating income for them Christopher Reed writes (1990), "In 1918, over half of the titles published came from private publishers. The largest such enterprise was the Writers' Publishers House (Knigoizdatel'stvo pisatelei) set up by Gershenzon on co-operative lines similar to the Writers' Bookshop... It lasted from 1918 to 1923. In the first year of the revolution it published 111 titles, ranging from works by A. A. Bogdanov to Rabindranath Tagore. This was by far the highest output of any private or co-operative publisher." Reed, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia* (London: Macmillan, 1990), 75.

<sup>49</sup> Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 150–151.

<sup>50</sup> Belyi, *Mezhdue dvukh revoliutsii*, 292–293.

<sup>51</sup> Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 150.

<sup>52</sup> In my review of the republication of Gershenzon's *Griboedovskaia Moskva*, I describe Gershenzon's mutation of the heroes of Russian cultural history (1991), "Finding the universal ideal (for Gershenzon it is the ideal of the Russians he studies as well as that of his own generation) in an organic unity between the way one thinks and lives, Gershenzon exclusively depicts his heroes in their struggle to achieve this advantageous psychological condition. Thus, in Gershenzon's treatment the Decembrists appear less as political reformers than as seekers of personal equilibrium and the Slavophiles are less social conservatives than metaphysical philosophers of universal harmony."

Horowitz, rev. of Gershenzon's *Griboedovskaia Moskva*, *The Russian Review* vol. 50/no. 3, July (1991): 361.

- 53 G.V. Plekhanov, rev. of Gershenzon's *Chaadadev: Zizn' i myshlenie*, *Sovremennyi mir* 1 (1908): 188.
- 54 B.I. Syromiatnikov, rev. of Gershenzon's *Istoricheskie zapiski, Utro Rossii* 52-19 (1910): 7.
- 55 Sakulin, "Apologiya dukha," Unpublished essay.
- 56 Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 154.
- 57 Khodasevich, *Nekropol'*, 154.
- 58 G. Chulkov, "Ty volish' zhit' vo t'me," an unpublished poem dedicated to M. O. Gershenzon, Gershenzon's papers, TsGALI (130-1-115). In his memoirs, *Gody stranstvii* (1930) Chulkov describes Gershenzon, though not always sympathetically. Interestingly, Gershenzon playfully answered Chulkov's poem with one of his own:

Я не ропщу на тьму и придорожье  
И с совестью моей законный брак!  
Мой дар, мой путь, все это — дело Божье...  
Лишь одного я не пойму никак,  
И тем одним я огорчен без меры:  
Как родником стал ключ замковый веры?

Gershenzon, unpublished letter to Mariia Borisovna Gershenzon from October 7, 1924.

- 59 Leonid Grossman, "Gershenzon - pisatel'," published in M. O. Gershenzon's *Stat'i o Pushkine* (Moscow, 1926), 12.
- 60 B. Zaitsev, *Moskva*, (Moscow, 1939), 235.
- 61 Zaitsev, *Moskva*, 234.
- 62 Belyi, *Rossia*, 252.
- 63 Belyi, *Mezhdv dvukh revoliutsii*, 282.
- 64 Nikolai Losskii, rev. of M. Gershenzon's "Troistvennyi obraz sovershenstva", *Kniga i revoliutsiia* 2 (1920): 62.
- 65 A. Kizevetter, rev. of M. Gershenzon's *Brat'ia Krivtsovy*, *Russkie vedomosti* 2 Apr. (1914): 6.

- <sup>66</sup> Belyi, *Rossiia*, 246.
- <sup>67</sup> G. Florovskii, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia* 3rd. ed. (Paris: YMCA, 1982), 452–453.
- <sup>68</sup> Gershenzon, *Vekhi* 2nd. ed. (Moscow, 1909), 70.
- <sup>69</sup> Mikhail Grigor'ev, unpublished essay, "Filosofiia Gershenzona," E.F. Nikitin Papers located at TsGALI (341–1–420), Moscow.
- <sup>70</sup> M.O. Gershenzon, letter to Arkadii Gornfel'd of 12 of Jan., 1908, Gornfel'd Papers (211–455) located at Public Library, Petersburg.
- <sup>71</sup> Belyi, *Rossiia*, 249.
- <sup>72</sup> Florovsky, *Puti russkogo bogosloviia*, 452. Robert Louis Jackson, the American slavist, for instance observes Gershenzon as an epitome of Russian culture, the last in a line of underground men. He writes, "Gershenzon in a striking way sums up for us the strengths and weaknesses of the nineteenth-century intellectual as he roamed much of Russian literature and life. If we assemble all that seems to define him in his letters: his self-proclaimed ambivalence, his anguish, his mistrust of reason, his disillusionment with a world whose lofty idealism has collapsed but whose materialism he cannot accept; his metaphysical boredom; his view of man – and himself – as poisoned with reflection, as distorted and impotent; his feeling of a surfeit of knowledge; and finally, his yearnings for the idyll of primeval, so-called 'natural freedom;' if we bring all these features together, then the distinguished literary scholar of nineteenth-century Russian literature himself seems to emerge as a last and living example of these unhappy Russian Hamlets and Fausts, intellectuals, dreamers and superfluous men who inhabit Russian literature and about whom he wrote so keenly and so well." Robert Louis Jackson, *Vyacheslav Ivanov: Poet, Critic and Philosopher*, ed. Robert Louis Jackson, (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1986), 352.
- <sup>73</sup> Marc Raeff, "Russian Intellectual History and its Historiography," *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte* 25 (Berlin, 1978), 279.