
The Existential Formula of Freidenberg's "Works and Days"

In 1984, while discussing the general principles of Semiotics of culture, Umberto Eco demonstrated how the Medieval Naturalists classified a unicorn within their "*systema naturae*": it would have been classified as viviparidae mammal, solidungulate, herbivore. Locating the species within their system with such a precise knowledge as they did, they consequently viewed the unicorn's actual presence amid the wide array of living things as an indisputable fact that would in no way rankle their minds with doubts.

Although three major monographs along with more than seventy of Ol'ga Mikhailovna Freidenberg's scholarly papers have recently become available for reassessment and fresh appreciation, an attempt to find a secure place for her ideas in our contemporary cultural context faces additional impediments unknown to medieval systematologists.¹

¹ For a concise summary of the publication of Freidenberg's works in Russian and English, see my "Ol'ga Freidenberg on Myth, Folklore, and Literature," *Slavic Review* 50: 2 (1991): 371–84. Since this summary, Nina Vladimirovna Braginskaia has produced non-abridged, revised, and annotated editions of Freidenberg's three major monographs: (1) *Poetika siuzheta i zhanra* (Moscow, Labirint, 1997; hereafter *Poetika siuzheta*); (2) *Vvedenie v teoriu antichnogo folklora. Lektsii, in Mif i literatura drevnosti* (Moscow: RAN, 1998; hereafter *ML*); and (3) *Obraz i poniatie*, *ibid.* She has also published fifteen more scholarly papers from Freidenberg's manuscripts. During the 1990s a collection of Freidenberg's articles and her fundamental study, *Obraz i poniatie*, appeared in English translation. See *Ol'ga Mikhailovna Freidenberg. Soviet Studies in Literature: A Journal of Translations* 27, nos. 1 and 2 (Winter 1990–91), guest ed. Nina Perlina, trans. and ed. Jean Laves Hellie (vol. 1); ed. Anna A. Tavis, trans. Roberta Reeder (vol. 2). Although vol. 2 names me as the guest editor of the collection, I was not consulted about the accuracy of translations and am not responsible for the errors and inaccurate translations that appear in this volume. For an English translation of *Obraz i poniatie*, see Olga Freidenberg, *Image and Concept: Mythopoetic Roots of Literature*, ed. Kevin M. Moss and Nina V. Braginskaia, trans. Kevin Moss (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997).

Freidenberg's biography is peculiar in that it consists of many disparate parts that can be joined together only with considerable difficulty, parts that do not easily lend themselves to a rigid, systemic classification when placed in the broader context of her intellectual life. Born into an assimilated Jewish family, Freidenberg was raised in an atmosphere of highly intellectual and tolerant cosmopolitanism, yet refused to convert to Christianity and therefore was not allowed to attend the famous Bestuzhev Courses, the only institution of higher education for women in pre-revolutionary Petersburg. In 1918, having no systematic education in Latin and no knowledge of Ancient Greek, she enrolled at Petrograd University in the Department of Classical Philology. Prior to then the department had not accepted women, and Freidenberg, with her unusual educational background, was treated as a dilettante and a half-scholar. She succeeded in learning Classical languages, but rather than ancient literatures, she chose preliterate archaic folklore as the major field for her specialization and therefore once again made herself appear eccentric (if not alien) in comparison to her university teachers and student colleagues. In addition, from the very beginning, her scholarship had been treated as a component of Nikolai Marr's theories, whose main principles she herself found difficult to accept. Because of her affiliation with Marrism, Freidenberg's scholarly ideas have been wrongly classified, the originality of her discoveries underestimated, and the entire history of her professional and administrative career misinterpreted. As Kevin Moss, the author of the Ph.D. thesis "Olga Mikhailovna Freidenberg: Soviet Mythologist in a Soviet Context," writes in the introduction to his translation of Freidenberg's *Image and Concept*, in 1950, when "Stalin denounced Marr and Marrism in *Pravda*, [t]he same association with Marr that had been a guarantee of Freidenberg's success now assured her downfall."² Finally, there are few documents and little factual material for an unbiased intellectual biography of Ol'ga Freidenberg, and one has to rely on and to select from her own meta-critical and meta-biographical texts, such as her unpublished memoirs³ and her correspondence with Boris Pasternak. The only documentary source available in translation is Freidenberg's correspondence with Boris

² Kevin Moss, introduction to Freidenberg, *Image and Concept*, 1.

³ Freidenberg's multivolume retrospective diaries *Probeg zhizni* (*The Race of Life*; hereafter cited by volume and page number) is held in the Pasternak family collection (Pasternak Trust, Oxford, UK). Before perestroika, fragments from *The Race of Life* were published in Russian in Western editions; several more appeared in Russia after 1986. See M. Iu. Sorokina, "Kratkoe opisanie materialov lichnogo arkhiva O. M. Freidenberg" ("Concise Description of O. M. Freidenberg's Private Papers") in Freidenberg, *ML*, 781.

Pasternak.⁴ Thus as a biographical overview of an undeservedly forgotten foreign scholar, my book had, perforce, to limit its focus to elements of Freidenberg's personality and, instead, dwell on details that she herself deemed relevant over the course of her life. Yet as this critical study has been built into a cultural context, deviations from the genuine genre of biography became unavoidable. The contextual setting kept me from depicting Freidenberg in greater relief and prevented me from embarking on a discussion of the multifaceted surroundings that constituted the real cultural and historical backdrop for her works and days. This change of focus had the effect of blurring the individual traits of my central figure, Ol'ga Freidenberg, and so too did it prevent me from creating fuller portraits of her contemporaries.⁵

To ameliorate the deficiencies in the composition of both biographical and cultural overviews, I had to refocus my narrative and to substitute double-voiced exchanges for multivoiced discussions. I had to sacrifice complex configurations which otherwise could have been envisioned as symposia: Ol'ga Freidenberg – Vladimir Propp – Walter Ong – Carlo Ginzburg – Mikhail Bakhtin on orality and literacy; Freidenberg – Leo Spitzer – Erich Auerbach – Northrop Frye – Bakhtin on literary form and social development; Freidenberg – Lucien Lévy-Bruhl – Claude Lévi-Strauss – Vladimir Propp on folklore and cultural and philosophical anthropology. Similarly, my study purposely omitted a comparative treatment of the agonistic factor in culture as it was distinctively conceived of by Freidenberg, Huizinga and Bakhtin. Such was the fate of any problem which might incite polemics around the dominant trends in pre-and post-structuralist criticism. All of these contextual, intertextual, and intercultural discussions will hopefully attract scholarly attention once more texts representing the various periods of Freidenberg's life are published in English and larger segments of the severely damaged cultural context of her time are restored.



The principal events in the life of Ol'ga Mikhailovna Freidenberg (born 1890 in Odessa, died 1955 in Leningrad) could easily fit onto one page. Author of a fifteen-volume memoir *The Race of Life (Probeg zhizni)* and

⁴ Elliott Mossman, ed., *The Correspondence of Boris Pasternak and Olga Freidenberg 1910–1954*, trans. Mossman and Margaret Wettlin (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982). Hereafter cited as *Correspondence*.

⁵ In addition to Mossman's *Correspondence*, Freidenberg's "Personalalia" includes only seven biographical sources (memoirs, diaries, and letters) written by her contemporary colleagues, friends, and ideological opponents. See M. Iu. Sorokina, "Kratkoe opisanie," 771–75. References to these texts will be incorporated into the main body of my study.

nearly a hundred valuable scholarly studies on ancient folklore and literature, daughter of a self-taught Jewish engineer, inventor, and littérateur, Moisei Fillipovich/Mikhail Fedorovich Freidenberg, niece of the famous artist Leonid Osipovich Pasternak, she was only two months younger than her world-renowned cousin Boris, with whom she carried on a correspondence for forty-five years. During her youth, Ol'ga Mikhailovna had managed by 1914 to travel throughout the greater part of Western Europe and to master nearly a dozen foreign languages. The outbreak of World War I put an end to her peregrinations.

From 1917 to 1955, Freidenberg spent her time exclusively in Petrograd-Leningrad, leaving the city only for one vital two-day business trip to Moscow. From the time she became a student at Petrograd University her works and days were dedicated solely to her profession, save for the time and care which she devoted to her mother, Anna Osipovna, née Pasternak. A born non-conformist, a person of deep emotions and strong passions, Freidenberg never shared her bed with the men she loved, did not marry, did not bear children. To paraphrase the ancient poet Hesiod, whom Freidenberg studied for many years, "works" filled the "days" of her life, "works" gave meaning to her existence.

Comparing Freidenberg's biography with the lives of those few women who began their scholarly careers at Petrograd University at the same time as her, one could still naively consider her among the exceptional few who achieved success in the post-revolutionary period.⁶ Indeed, Freidenberg was the first woman to receive a master's degree and subsequently a Ph.D. in Classical Philology from a Soviet university. She had the singular fortune to maintain a long, active correspondence with the Pasternak family: with "Uncle Lenchik" and his family in Europe, and most significantly, with Boris in Moscow, which provided

⁶ Cf., for instance, Nina Viktorovna Pigulevskaia (née Stebnitskaia, 1894–1970), a Syriologist trained at Petrograd University, who was arrested in 1928 for participation in the meetings of the "Voskresen'e" circle and spent six years in labor camps and in exile. Pigulevskaia was given permission to resettle in Leningrad and work in the Public Library only in 1934. A graduate of the Bestuzhev courses, Elena Mikhailovna Tager (1894–1964), scholar, prose writer, translator, and author of memoirs on O. Mandel'shtam (*Novyi zhurnal* 81 [1965]: 172–99) spent a total of 20 years in prison camps, exile, and under the surveillance of the KGB. Although Tager was "rehabilitated" in 1955, her name and works were not included in *Kratkaia literaturnaia entsiklopediia* in 1972. For scattered information on Tager, see N. A. Zabolotskii, "Istoriia moego zakliucheniiia," ed. E. Etkind, *Minuvshee* 2 (1986): 319, 331; S. S. Gitovich, "Arest N. A. Zabolotskogo," *Pamiat'* 5 (1982): 338, 343–44; 350–52; and N. I. Gagen-Torn, *Memoria* (Moscow: Vozvrashchenie, 1994), 328–30.

her with much spiritual sustenance.⁷ Freidenberg escaped the purges and repressions, continuing to work in her field even after her elder brother's arrest and liquidation in 1937. For seventeen years she headed a scholarly collective that she had created, serving as the chair of the Department of Classical Languages at Leningrad University. In addition, she published more than thirty scholarly works, including one extensive monograph. She survived the horrors of the Siege of Leningrad and the anti-Semitic campaign against "rootless cosmopolitans" launched after World War II. Only in 1950, in connection with the linguistic campaign against Nikolai Iakovlevich Marr, did the University administration oust her from the chair and force her into retirement after she herself had virtually provoked her dismissal by refusing to denounce her former mentor. This was yet another example of Freidenberg's moral fortitude, for, during the days of Marr's ascendancy, she was one of the few who did not conceal her reservations about the validity of his "Novoe uchenie o iazyke" ("New Teachings on Language").

Outwardly, the misfortunes that befell her are common to many biographies contemporaneous to her own. In 1937 she lost the man she loved, Izrail' Grigor'evich Frank-Kamenetskii, who fell victim to a car accident, but was, nevertheless, spared the terrors of arrest and torture which befell so many of her other friends. During the war her eighty-four-year-old mother died from starvation and shock, but so too had millions of others. Despite complicated relations with her colleagues and students, she was nevertheless fortunate to have a few dedicated followers, and even those who disagreed with her have recently acknowledged her as a talented scholar.

A classicist by training, a person content by nature with limited social contacts, Freidenberg was hardly suited to the role of historiographer for the post-revolutionary epoch. However, a reading of *Race of Life* proves the opposite: even amidst the avalanche of recently published documents of the period, Freidenberg's notes preserve their

⁷ An essential portion of Freidenberg's epistolary legacy (26 May 1932–9 June 1937), held in the private collection Pasternak Trust (Oxford), includes letters by Ol'ga and her mother Anna Osipovna to members of Leonid Pasternak's family. The first letter, dated May 1932, describes the acknowledgment of her academic work and the promotion given to her in April; the last letter informs of the loss of her best friend and colleague, Izrail' Grigorievich Frank-Kamenetskii (see chapter 3, 83–96). In several letters (28 January 1933, summer 1933, 15 December 1936) Freidenberg dissuades her relatives from returning to Moscow, and, using Aesopian language, depicts the horrors of everyday life under the Soviet regime. Freidenberg's contacts with her relatives in the West were interrupted by the arrest of her sister-in-law Musia, and then by the imprisonment and execution of her elder brother Sasha.

uniqueness. In her memoirs she acknowledged the awesome power of the maelstrom into which each individual was drawn, yet she likewise makes every person responsible for their choice to swim with or against the current. In this regard, Freidenberg's *Race* shares many characteristic features with Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*. At first glance, perhaps, such a comparison may seem inappropriate due simply to the obvious psychological differences between the two authors. Herzen was an indefatigable social activist and political polemicist, and an admired friend of such European celebrities as Michelet, Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Victor Hugo; Freidenberg was a self-absorbed, pensive loner. Resisting his own philosophical pessimism, Herzen made himself into a fighter for the future, and in the darkness of the night (as he described the reign of Nicholas I) he strove for the dawn of the new day. For him, "with the Crimean war, with the death of Nicholas a new time came on.... Overwhelmed by a feeling so unusual for a Russian, I called to mind Kant taking off his velvet cap at the news of proclamation of the republic in 1792 and repeating, 'Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart.' Yes, it is good to fall asleep at dawn after a long night of bad weather, fully believing that a marvelous day is coming!"⁸ Wholly aware of Herzen's way of expressing his belief that the death of the tyrant had "cast up the highway for the people" (Isa. 62:10), Freidenberg did not enter the news on Stalin's death into *Race of Life*; for her, the nocturnal reality of Stalinism had no end, and "the day of vengeance was in [her] heart" (Isa. 63:4).

The more distinct the dissimilarity in their epistemological views, the clearer is the realization that in organizing the textural fabric of *The Race of Life* Freidenberg intentionally followed the composition of *My Past and Thoughts*. Freidenberg's memoirs consist of several interwoven themes, the most prominent of which are provided with individual subtitles: "The Siege of a Human Being," ("Osada cheloveka") "Recollections on My Own Self" ("Vospominaniia o samoi sebe"), "The Crown of Fresh Dill" ("Venok iz ukropa"); they are also given succinct introductory passages which function as epigraphs.⁹

⁸ Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 532. The quotation is from Luke 2:29.

⁹ The heading "A Wreath of Dill" originates in ancient history: the victors of the Nemean festivals were crowned with wreaths of dill (or wild celery). See Pindar, *The Odes*, trans. John Sandys (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), xxix, 353. Freidenberg's explanation of the title states: "And dill changes its semantics. The Greeks planted it at burial grounds. In the Soviet Pantheon, where laurel wreathed the headings of Zhirmunskii's and I. Tolstoi's monographs [Freidenberg's adversaries—N.P.], life crowned us only with dill," and she goes on to describe the inhuman conditions of life in the besieged city of Leningrad.

A typical autobiography, the first volume of *My Past and Thoughts* provides a varied cast of characters and family histories, and in several cases the titles of the individual subchapters in Herzen's memoirs can be easily transferred to Freidenberg. As in Herzen, her "Recollections on My Own Self" offers a mix of the personal and the historical, and attains a level of interpretation which Herzen characterized as the "assimilation of the historical to the personal" (*otrazhenie istorii v cheloveke*).¹⁰ Cataloguing the idiosyncratic features which characterize both Herzen and Freidenberg, one finds in their memoirs a combination of meditative self-reflections and ethical nonconformism, an almost religious veneration of history in which both recognized the manifestation of "an objective process above and beyond human beings" and the expression of their individual "materialistic outlook." Furthermore, both firmly believed that "the keeping of archives made [them—N. P.] members of the universal brotherhood of humanity",¹¹ and both preserved in their archives many valuable facts about the history of the humanities in Russia that were rescued from oblivion. From both *The Race of Life* and *My Past and Thoughts* one learns how history works its way into a human personality.

Like *My Past and Thoughts*, *The Race of Life* was written over a number of years with substantial interruptions. Rather than fuse together her fragmented notes, Freidenberg preserved the imprint of time on each individual episode. Herzen's confessional biographical narrative was colored by a pessimistic tone, but the general metaphor determining the meaning of history did not lose its teleological nature: "We can foresee the future, because we are the premises on which its syllogism is based, but only in a general, abstract manner."¹² Freidenberg, who demonstrated in her scholarship that fatalism and cyclicity were essential to the idea of ancient time, applied the mythic, eschatological formula of the cataclysm to contemporary life. She epigraphed her memoirs with a line from Pindar's Nemean Ode IV: "Well I know that the lapse of time will achieve its preordained perfection."¹³ Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts* bears a dedication to his friend Nikolai Ogarev and is epigraphed with a fragment from his poem "Humor":

¹⁰ Dwight Macdonald, preface to Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, xi.

¹¹ Mossman, *Correspondence*, 271.

¹² A. I. Gertsen, *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1954–64), 3: 233.

¹³ In the epigraph Freidenberg quoted this line in the original Greek. In *The Race of Life* (4: 63–65), Freidenberg included a summary of her paper "The Teaching of the Greeks about the Upheaval" ("Uchenie grekov o perevorote"), delivered in January 1928 at a session of "The Society of Marxists" in LOKA (Leningrad Department of the Communist Academy).

When memories of the past return
 And the old road again we tread,
 Slowly the feelings of old days
 Come back to life within the soul...

Когда мы в памяти своей
 Проходим прежнюю дорогу,
 В душе все чувства прежних дней
 Вновь оживают понемногу...¹⁴

As memoirists, both Herzen and Freidenberg made their personal archives representative of their own particular views on history; they doubted the efficacy of any individual attempt to apprehend the future or to act with any significant degree of assurance in relation to it, yet charged humans with moral responsibility for their choices and how they enact them. With no hope left for an optimistic outcome of an individual existence, both maintained that a preordained superpersonal destiny finds its realization. The typological affinities between *The Race of Life* and *My Past and Thoughts* constitute two overlapping planes: the sensation of the appalling corruption of human and humane rights as testimony to the apocalyptic character of their epochs; and an inherent conviction about the extratemporal validity of the writer's own individual, personal existence. Both authors (Herzen and Freidenberg) treated this side of their personalities as an inherently existential feature rather than a distinctive quality acquired by them either through their family upbringing or education.

A thorough, comparative study of Freidenberg's and Herzen's memoirs and a discussion of the place the texts occupy in the cultural awareness of their epochs has yet to be undertaken. In this discussion, emphasis will be given to two groups of juxtapositions: one, political exile and internal emigration, or to be more precise, the common basis of socio-political and individual ethical nonconformism; and two, the universal and the specific as the foundation of participative philosophical thinking. Such a comparative interpretation might result in a re-enhanced notion of the private archive without ever obliterating the characteristic features of a literary and trans-historical genre without ever obliterating the archive's inherently individual and familial traits.

As in *My Past and Thoughts*, the personal and intimately biographical slant in *The Race of Life* is given an additional epigraphic foreword:

My life is described by Maupassant in *Mont Oriol* in the tale of a little donkey. It was from there that I laid the groundwork for

¹⁴ Gertsen, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 8: 13. For an English translation, see Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, 2.

the course that my life would take thereafter. Apparently that is why algebra exists, in order to be concretized by every individual arithmetical expression.

Моя жизнь описана Мопассаном в «Монт Ориоле» в истории ослика. Я спланировала ее жизненный процесс оттуда. Повидимому, алгебра для того и существует, чтоб каждый из арифметических случаев конкретизировал ее. (1: i)

The aphorism that Freidenberg inserted into the preface to her memoirs refers to the picnic episode in Maupassant, which she interprets as a metaphor for the burden of living.¹⁵ With this aphorism then attached to her manuscript (on 6 August 1947) she was to continue her memoirs as a kind of retrospective diary for three more years. On 10 December 1950, with the entire work completed, she epigraphed the text with the line from Pindar's Ode. One feels puzzled by the linkage of the two aphorisms, for, if the meanings of the inscripts dovetail, the algebraic expression of Freidenberg's life should read: the story of a donkey = fulfillment of human destiny.¹⁶

The Mont Oriol episode in Maupassant provides the metaphor for the burden of living:

The merry little donkey, with his big head and a pair of big shining eyes, clumsy and good-tempered, with his rough hair and his long ears, gamboling about, still free, close to his mother's legs; then the first cart, the first uphill journey, the first blows; and after that, the ceaseless, dreadful dragging along interminable roads; the overpowering heat of the sun, and nothing for food save a little straw, a little hay or some branches ... and the frightful martyrdom of the animal, worn out, bereft of breath, bruised, always dragging after him excessive loads... And then the death, the beneficent death, three paces away from

¹⁵ For an English translation, see Guy de Maupassant, *Mont Oriol and Other Stories* (New York: National Library, 1909), 247.

¹⁶ Similarly, in his "Dedication to Nikolai Platonovich Ogarev," looking back to their "works and days," Herzen writes: "Life ... lives, peoples, revolutions, beloved faces have appeared, changed, and vanished between the Sparrow Hills [in Moscow, where he and Ogarev were born—N. P.] and Primrose Hill [in London, where they lived in exile—N. P.]; already their traces have almost been swept away by the pitiless whirlwind of events. Everything round me is changed: the Thames flows instead of the Moscow River, and I am surrounded by a strange people ... and there is no more a way for us back to our country.... May my *Past and Thoughts* settle my account with personal life and be its summary." Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, xlix.

the grass-grown ditch, to which a man, passing by, drags him with oaths, in order to clear the road.¹⁷

Thus, rather than fitting together to form one piece, the epigraphs frame the narrative and represent ultimate landmarks of the allegorical space. The existential formula of Freidenberg's "works and days" can be rendered as "The obligation to fulfill human destiny despite the blows of fate and unspeakable sufferings." One finds this expression in her diary entry for 28 March 1947, the date of her fifty-seventh birthday, when, in a state of a deep depression, she listened to a radio program about Beethoven, who endured even when he became totally deaf...

Suddenly I heard the phrase: "Despite his sufferings, Beethoven fulfilled his human destiny." I stopped, shaken. Yes, this is pure space talking through a megaphone. This I understood. This was not the will to live, this was the dignity of a human. The human follows his path to the end. He remains himself despite everything, as if he were to state: "I do what I must, the way I understand my duty. The rest does not concern me. You may strike me down, but I am still a human being..." Why was it impossible for me to live up to this?

Вдруг я услышала фразу: «Бетховен, несмотря на свои страдания, осуществлял человеческое значение». Я остановилась, потрясенная. Да, так говорит в рупор чистое пространство. Это я поняла. Это не добродетель, не сила жизни, а гордость человека. Он идет своим путем. Он остается собой, не глядя ни на что. Я делаю свое дело, так, как понимаю его. Остальное меня не касается. Бей меня в грудь. Я продолжаю быть человеком. Почему же я не могла воспрянуть? (12: 2: 23)

And Freidenberg lists the blows of fate and the "ultimate depth of despair" of her own existence: the arrest of her brother Alexander; the *valenki* (felt boots) and rubber boots purchased for him—"the admonition before his deportation" (*naputstvie pered ugonom po etapu*) which remained undelivered, and then the siege:

No, only a living soul can rise up. Those who are dead are not resurrected. Deaf, as he was, Beethoven heard harmonies within him.... From childhood, ardor for the Absolute was my element—ardor for great love, for life, for truth, for God. The tragedy is that the siege killed this passion... Deafness from within! Was Beethoven aware of the ultimate depth of despair?

¹⁷ Maupassant, *Mont Oriol*, 247.

Нет, подняться может живая душа, мертвые не воскресают. Бетховен и глухой слышал вокруг себя созвучья. Страсть к абсолютному была моей главной сутью с детства – к любви; но большой, к Жизни, к подлинному, к Богу. Моя главная драма в том и состоит, что осада убила ее.... Изнутри глухота! Знал ли Бетховен последние пределы отчаянья? (12: 2: 23–24)

In Freidenberg the “siege” covers time, space and experience in a sense far wider than anything encompassed or comprehended by any single survivor of the Leningrad blockade. The title *Osada cheloveka*, given to volumes 7–12 (June 1941–summer 1945) means both “The Siege of a Human Being” and “The Siege of Being.” The siege on the lives of those who were doomed to endure Stalinism had been declared prior to the onset of the war and was never to be lifted. On the last page of her notes Freidenberg states that the most terrible thing that she had witnessed was “the siege, the scalping of a living human being which not a single soul can endure.... I don’t know when and how I will die. I only know that if I am conscious, two images will stand before my eyes, that of my mother and of the Moscow Nuremberg” (15: 154).

Freidenberg envisioned “The Moscow Nuremberg Trial” as an image-concept comparable only to the day of the Last Judgment, when “the lapse of time will achieve its preordained perfection.” Wholly aware of the significance of this super-historical context, Freidenberg treated her memoir notes as the fulfillment of an idea conceived by history itself. Like Herzen, whose memoirs were also motivated by his understanding of preordained fulfillment in history and time, Ol’ga Freidenberg chose to incorporate into her autobiographical notes a wide range of discrete texts: humorous domestic verse and intimate letters; summaries of her presentations at various academic meetings; appeals addressing the top figures among the “apparatchiks”; information on the prices of rationed bread in blockaded Leningrad; letters from relatives and from former school friends, and, of course, ample information on ideological purges, political campaigns, their instigators, executioners, and victims. Like Herzen, Freidenberg chose to build these sundry documents into her *Race of Life* in order to settle her account with history and to provide its summary through an overview of her personal life. She had bequeathed to posterity her writings, which were, in her words, “no less terrifying than the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.”

It might appear at first glance that Ol’ga Freidenberg’s attitude towards her own writings (both her biographical notes and professional scholarship) differed remarkably from that of Boris Pasternak towards his own materials for creative writing. In a letter to Maria Markova, his and Freidenberg’s cousin in Leningrad who was with Ol’ga Mikhailovna at her death bed, Pasternak wrote: “Olya was the keeper of family tra-

ditions, of letters and mementos.... I personally do not keep heirlooms, archives, collections of any kind, including books and furniture. I do not save letter or draft copies of my work. Nothing piles up in my room; it is easier to clean than a hotel room. My life resembles a student's."¹⁸ In his poem "Byt' znamenitym nekrasivo" Pasternak wrote caustically about the redundantly overestimated values ascribed to the archives and creative legacy of poets: "Ne nado zavodit' arkhiva, nad rukopisiami triastis'."¹⁹ Pasternak by no means utterly adhered to this poetic credo; as Evgenii Borisovich Pasternak has proven, many valuable documents and poetic drafts were preserved in his father's archive.²⁰ Thus the problem of common familial features cannot be treated in a straightforward, normative fashion. Biographically, Ol'ga Freidenberg and Boris Pasternak hardly share many common familial features; their perception of reality, however, can be characterized by Goethe's definition "*Wahlverwandtschaften*," or "elective affinities."

¹⁸ Mossman, *Correspondence*, 12.

¹⁹ Boris Pasternak, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989; hereafter *SS*), 2: 74.

²⁰ E. B. Pasternak, *Boris Pasternak: Materialy dlia biografii* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1989), 6–8.