In a Sentimental Mode: The Literary and Philosophical Strains of Dissent in Alexander Radishchev's *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*

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"Be my witness, kind traveler, be my witness before the world, with what a heavy heart I obey the sovereign will of custom" (Radishchev 109).

The act of traveling nearly always lends perspective. Be it a vacation, a work trip, aimless wanderlust or nomadic activity, traveling provides the sojourner with unexpected novelties that serve as useful points of comparison. In the case of Alexander Radishchev, the fictional written account of an anonymous traveler became a medium for political and literary expression. His most famous work, the travelogue *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow,* served as a form of critical examination, not just of the locations between two cities, but of the Imperial Russian political and social landscape during the twilight decades of the 18th century. Radishchev's *Journey* represented a combination of popular literary forms of the time, primarily sentimentalism and advice literature. From a philosophical standpoint, his *Journey* was unique, synthesizing ideals of duty and liberty from both the French and German enlightenments, while refuting many of the ambient ideas regarding natural law and subsequent natural rights. As for its effectiveness as a form of political critique, Radishchev's sentimental travelogue falls short. While emotionally compelling, the work fails to promulgate a cohesive and singular vision of a viable alternative that would have been applicable in the Russian empire at the time. Despite its flaws, the enlightenment-driven moral mission and humanitarian appeal put forth in Radishchev's work served as a mirror for a rapidly-transforming empire to better understand itself in the midst of the moral crisis of serfdom. Like most journeys, Radishchev's came at a high price.

Radishchev operated primarily within the mode of sentimentalism, a literary form popular in Europe at the time. By the middle of the eighteenth-century sentimentalism displaced classicism, the previously predominant literary mode. Classicism viewed the individual as a "Molecule within a particular hierarchically constructed social system (a hero in a tragedy, a gentle shepherd in an idyll, a military commander or ruler in an ode)" (Altshuller 94). Descriptive rather than normative, Sentimentalism asserted a new depiction of the individual, offering detailed depictions of the inner worlds of characters, who were often ordinary people concerned with romantic and intellectual experiences. A pioneer of this emergent literary form was Laurence Sterne, who published two interconnected novels – *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1760-7) and *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy* (1768) – in which he developed meticulous portraits of the inner lives of his characters. Sterne's elaborate investigations saw pages upon pages dedicated to the description of the slightest spiritual experience, feeling, or observation. Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* is the namesake of the genre and seems to have influenced Radishchev a great deal, as Radishchev's *Journey* also takes the form of a sentimental travelogue. Other early sentimentalist works include Samuel Richardson's works *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740) and *Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady* (1747-8), Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) and Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774) (Altshuller 94).

The philosophical stylings of sentimentalism elevated the importance of the individual, who was depicted as an independent personality "of value in and of itself…not acting under the influence of duty or its surroundings…defining its own fate and behavior" (Altshuller 94). Indeed, Sterne's characters generally disregard social rules and are beholden to their whims and moods. The prototypical sentimental hero is often a lonely one, whose constant attention to the inner life leaves such a character feeble and vulnerable in the face of an alienating external world. Such

gloomy depictions of a given external reality draw a sharp contrast to the oft-idyllic and peaceful internal reality of the individual. Such literary developments began to make their impression upon Russian literary circles toward the end of the eighteenth century, just as Western philosophical trends found their way into the minds of educated elites, and eventually the two coalesced in Radishchev's *Journey*. Sterne and Richardson were widely translated into Russian in 1790, and other sentimentalist writers were widely read as early as the 1780's (Altshuller 95-96).

While Radishchev's Journey falls squarely within the bounds of literary sentimentalism, it is also undoubtedly political. To understand how well-suited sentimental travelogues were for political critique, one must first consider the body of political discourse, advice literature, which preempted and influenced Radishchev's literary-philosophical project. During Catherine's reign, the advice literature exploded, with over three times more books published than during the previous century combined (Whittaker 143). This practice of advising monarchs through the medium of odes, plays, sermons, histories, and open letters represented a popular trend in Europe in the eighteenth century. This critical and didactic emphasis found expression in Radishchev's sentimental travelogue. The enlightenment sensibility present in advice literature established the need for a literarily-ordained moral guideline in the minds of readers. Catherine was privy to this type of political consciousness, as she read widely, and many writers issued their counsel to her through the form of advice literature. Catherine understood that politically-motivated authors of advice literature sought to "point out the defects of the present form of government and its vices" (Whittaker 143). Advice literature represented a viable channel of communication between ruler and ruled, and Catherine understood its necessity in molding a society mindful of new moral laws, and the principles of good governance. However, Catherine's nominal acceptance of political critique was short lived.

By the 1770's and 1780's, Catherine's attempted portrait of enlightened rule had begun to disintegrate. The Pugachev rebellion, war with Poland and Turkey, and the failure to deliver a code of law all caused writers to begin to doubt the empress' commitment to the ideals of her early reign. As such, advice writers practiced some degree of self-censorship by writing about ideal kingdoms, as opposed to writing about Russia directly, or wrote privately (Whittaker 146). Radishchev, who published the *Journey* during the tail end of the era of acceptable advice literature, seems to have undertaken many of the same political dictates that other writers promulgated in their "mirrors" for monarchs. Both popular enlightenment philosophy and advice literature were concerned with political and moral issues, and Radishchev, in his portrayal of powerful individuals in different episodes, sought to facilitate a genuine dialogue between the ruler and the ruled, one that might have resulted in the abolition of serfdom. It was not to be. The ripples of the French Revolution made their way east. The potential for widespread peasant revolt disturbed Catherine, who began to denounce her critics and tighten her grip on the exchange of ideas. It was the unfortunate timing of the *Journey*'s publication that resulted in Radishchev's sentencing and subsequent banishment to Siberia.

Radishchev's timing placed him in the nexus of enlightenment philosophy, advice literature, and sentimentalism. His work represented an amalgamation of these multiple intellectual streams. Were he to have published too long before or after 1790, his *Journey* would have taken a completely different form. Born in Moscow in 1749, Radishchev would have read European literature and philosophy while he studied initially at the St. Petersburg School for Pages, then at the University of Leipzig in 1766-71, where Catherine sent him along with twelve other students to obtain a legal education (Altshuller 104). Radishchev read voraciously during his time in Leipzig, where he developed a fluency in Aristotle, Plutarch, Plato, Lucretius, Montesquieu, Locke, Milton, Shakespeare, Voltaire, Diderot, Mably, and

Rousseau, many of whom he credited for the "sweetness of elevated thoughts" (Clardy 38). He returned to Russia to work in the state Senate, then as a military procurator, and finally at the custom house of St. Petersburg, where he was a director (Altshuller 104). In his successful career working for the state, Radishchev likely formed strong opinions about Russian society and government, no doubt influenced by his education at Leipzig. Such ideas, combined with those present in advice literature, found expression in his literary work.

Radishchev's relatively disjointed and amateur literary career developed in parallel, and began with stylized letters and diaries. His earliest literary works, which date from the 1770's include, "Diary of a week" ("Dnevnik odnoy nedeli"), comprised of a sentimental recounting of his separation from his friends, and drew heavy stylistic influence from Sterne. Radishchev's early writing style represented what he knew, his language a "strange amalgam of the sentimental, archaic Church Slavic with civic-journalistic vocabulary" (Altshuller 104). This cobbled-together stylistic form became the cornerstone of Radishchev's writing, as his *Journey* is replete with archaisms, or old-fashioned linguistic mechanisms.

Radishchev's brand of sentimentalism contained obvious currents of advice literature and his unmistakable political consciousness assumed form in his early work. Most Russian sentimentalist writers, like Karamzin, weren't politically critical. Radishchev on the other hand, employed the advice literature mode as early as 1782, when he completed his work *Letter to a Friend Living in Tobolsk*. In his essay, Radishchev considered the significant role that Peter the Great played in the development of the Russian nation. He pointed out that this dynamic leader was rightly called great, for his personality and achievements "gave a purpose to so vast an empire" (Clardy 141). Radishchev went on to say that Peter could have been even more outstanding if he had "established individual liberty and... yet there is no example, and perhaps until the

end of the world there will be none, of a monarch voluntarily yielding up any part of his power" (Clardy 141). This critique of the monarchy is quite soft, but represents the nascent dissent that would later emerge in Radishchev's work, and would come to define his place within the Russian literary canon.

As his writing career progressed, Radishchev's technical ability remained relatively limited. During the 1780's Radishchev composed his principal work, which Mark Altshuller argues was a difficult process, as "[Radishchev] was not only devoid of any great artistic gift, but also had a feeble grasp of the rules of composition" (Altshuller 105). This difficulty is reflected in the work's structure. The book is fragmentary, divided into episodic vignettes, verses, sketches, meditations, and dream sequences. The titles of each section reflect the names of towns and posting stations between St. Petersburg and Moscow: Sofia, Lyubani, Novgorod, Zaytsovo, Gorodnya, Peshki, and others (Radishchev xi). These places indicate the progress of the traveler, yet they have no bearing on the content of each episode.

During this time, a specific tragic episode in Radishchev's life may have enlarged his capacity for sentimentality, his outlook, and his writing style. In 1783 his wife Anna died after giving birth to their third son, Paul. The death of his wife immediately plunged Radishchev into "grief and desolation" (Clardy 43). He felt himself helpless in what he considered to be a wicked society, an outlook which is reflected in his portrayal of his surroundings and society. Out of this despondency came his 1789 work, *Life of Fedor Vasilevich Ushakov*. The work represents a devout outpouring of the heart in which the life of Ushakov is refracted through Radishchev's own moods and mental state. This work, along with the *Journey*, are clear examples of the emotional sensitivity that Radishchev has become known for. In a tone that resembles Rousseau's *Confessions*, Radishchev said at the beginning of the *Life*, "I seek in this my own consolation and would like to unfold before you, dear

friend, the inmost recesses of my heart." (Clardy 43). Here, Radishchev employs a sentimental-confessional mode, which fuses sentimentality into the essence of the work. Radishchev's literary style is decidedly rooted in the detailed expression of real emotional states from the start. Such emotions certainly impacted the overall moral mission of his projects, and provided relatable avenues for his readers to better understand and sympathize with the problems at hand. This emphasis on real emotions indicates that his work is not a mere imitation of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey,* as some literary critics argue.

In terms of social protest and political satire, Radishchev went far beyond anything attempted by Sterne. Radishchev's *Journey* is at all points concerned with diagnosing societal ills in Russia. His tone is far more cynical and angst-ridden, perhaps influenced by the desolation in his soul following the death of his wife. Where the English writer makes his points by "subtle touches, persiflage, intimate conversation with the reader... Radishchev harangues his audience with passionate conviction, virtually bludgeoning him into acquiescence" (Lang 132). This is not to say that Radishchev's approach to social justice was entirely effective. The subjectivity and emotional affect present in Radishchev's work seem to qualify the rationality of any appeals he makes. His *Journey* is rife with emotional outbursts, like in the chapter "Zaytsovo," where the traveler narrates an argument with a local governor in which, "[the governor's] conceit I met with equanimity and calm; his show of power, with steadfastness; his arguments with my own…but finally my agitated heart poured out all that was pent up in it. The more subservience I saw in those who were standing around, the more impulsive my speech became" (Radishchev 102). Here, and in nearly every other chapter of the *Journey,* Radishchev is moved to tears or engages in some impulsive outburst. While these are natural effects of human passion, and Radishchev's emphatic defense of justice is admirable, the emotional quality of his critiques would not have endeared him to the people capable of making any real,

substantive changes in policy. As such, sentimental travelogue was not particularly well suited for effective political critique, but it was popular, and was widely read. Well aware of the popularity of the genre, and of the tradition of advice literature, Radishchev most likely recognized the disruptive potential of his work, and was well aware of the precarious publishing environment, reflected in his anonymous publication of the work.

When Catherine II ascended to the throne she issued numerous liberalizing laws, *ukases*, one of which allowed for individual citizens to establish printing presses for the publication of nearly any topic with only "nominal censorship" (Altshuller 109). As such, in 1789 Radishchev established such a printing press, printing and publishing 650 copies of his *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* in 1790. When the St. Petersburg Chief of Police and official censor, Major-General Nikita Ryleev, received for inspection the manuscript of an anonymous work *A Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*, the text seemed harmless enough. At first glance the book appeared to consist of travel sketches collected on the road between the two cities. This dismissal of the seemingly innocuous medium of travelogue makes sense, especially when the critiques of the state and monarch are broad-based and cloaked in allegory. Although Radishchev attempted to tackle the sufferings of mankind, the bogus pedigrees of nobility, the alarming vision of abuse of labor under serfdom, his work ultimately did not contain any especially subversive ideas, save for its discussions of peasant rebellion and its defense of the execution of Charles I by Oliver Cromwell, both of which lack political tact. The print run of the *Journey* sold well, and was most likely read in the drawing rooms and salons of St. Petersburg or Moscow. His bookseller Zotov, wanted him to publish more (Altshuller 109). The major topics that Radishchev explored in the *Journey*, namely state power, serfdom, governmental reform, and literary problems, must have all weighed heavily on the minds of the intelligentsia at the time.

Why sentimental travelogue? Radishchev likely understood the inflammatory nature of his work as he did not include his name in the publication, and staggered the releases of his work. This awareness of the precarious publishing environment indicates that Radishchev exercised some degree of self-censorship in the undertaking of his project. It seems unlikely that he published his *Journey* due to the trendiness of the genre, or for expressly commercial purposes. His moral mission was too strong, and he already enjoyed a relatively successful career working for the custom house. It follows that he used the genre of sentimental travelogue to soften or mask his critique of the state. Moreover, Sentimentalism was particularly well-suited to express the depth of his moral and emotional conviction. Whether intentional or not, Radishchev struck at the foundations of autocratic rule and its self-perceived eternal verities. The *Journey* uses the medium of sentimental travelogue to oppose "the evils of despotism, slavery and serfdom, outmoded laws, religious persecution, disgraceful prison conditions, and the severity of military service...it is therefore quite understandable why Catherine was so incensed at its flood of eloquence" (Clardy 46). Radishchev's *Journey* emphasizes subjective discussions of personal experience and sentiments, of manners and morals, and repetitively employs these modes to make an evocative, yet shielded criticism of the existing structures of power in Russia.

The *Journey* also represents an encapsulation of various philosophical trends of the day. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the Russian nobility adopted the philosophical and literary modes of Western Europe. Yet only a minority of literary works embodied the major intellectual values of the enlightenment, and still fewer advocated for an assimilation of those values into public life, namely the abolition of serfdom and solidification of individual rights. In terms of its representations of natural law and the application of enlightenment philosophy, Radishchev's work is unique, and represents a divergence from contemporary thinkers, namely Rousseau. Radishchev's concept of natural law had a philosophical-theological foundation as it

proceeded immediately from the author's belief in man's reasoning ability, but ultimately depended upon the will of God. His concept of natural law sets forth, in short, "an eternal law which is the exemplar of God's law, and it is by this divine standard that all human law is to be judged and accepted or rejected" (Clardy 68). Radishchev interpreted natural law as being that law which conforms to the natural order of the universe, which is grounded innately within the nature of man, and which is independent of man's creation.

Radishchev's characterization of the divine throughout the *Journey* establishes his belief that God is the eternal creator and preserver of the universe, the first truth and origin of natural law. In the chapter "Torzhok," Radishchev states how "God will ever be God, perceived even by those who do not believe in Him" (Radishchev 167). He goes on to criticize those who attempt to apply crude anthropomorphic qualities to God, in this case governments who act on behalf of the divine, stating that "The real offender against God is he who imagines that he can sit in judgement on an offense against Him. Is it he who will be answerable before Him " (Radishchev 168). As such, Radishchev indicates that individuals are endowed by God with their natural rights. Considering this argument for the existence of and primacy of God, Radishchev's concept of natural law and right is not in harmony with the natural rights defined by thinkers like Mably and Rousseau, who ascribe a great deal of natural freedoms to the individual. The opening lines of Rousseau's *The Social Contract* read, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau 156). In the chapter "Zaytsovo," Radishchev makes his own proclamation about how man is born into the world, stating how, "Every man is born into the world equal to all others. All have the same bodily parts, all have reason and will. Consequently, apart from society, man is a being that depends on no one in his actions" (Radishchev 102). While the two descriptions of birth seem similar at first, Radishchev only indicates that all men are equal, not that all men are free. Radishchev's assessment supports his critique of

serfdom, but indicates that man is always beholden to some authority, be it God or an enlightened benevolent monarch.

A far cry from Rousseau's conception of natural freedom, Radishchev's idea of natural law is much closer to that of Russian theologian Theophan Prokopovich, who argued that natural law is ordained by God alone. In his sermons, Prokopovich argued that "The highest authority comes from nature, thus from God since He created nature. The first authority comes from the human agreement; since the natural law written by God in the human heart requires a strong defender, and conscience prompts us to seek him, we must see God as the cause of authority. Therefore, people should submit to the authority; disobedience is a violation of the natural law. Not wanting authority is wanting the destruction of humankind. Disobedience to authority is disobedience to God" (Прокопович 1.245). Representative of early enlightenment thought in Russia and Germany, Prokopovich's interpretation of natural rights is decidedly more restrictive than Rousseau's as it deifies authority and condemns any individual who would act in defiance of God's will, which would in this case manifest as the Tsar's will.

The predominant thinkers of the French enlightenment asserted that what is proper is determined exclusively by society, a concept best encapsulated by Rousseau's 1762 treatise, *The Social Contract*. In the text, Rousseau aimed to set out an alternative to the stratified class state guided by the common interest of the rich and propertied who impose unfreedom and subordination on the poor and weak. In such an alternative society, Rousseau claims:

> "So that the social pact not be a pointless device, it tacitly includes this engagement, which can alone give force to the others—that whoever re-fuses to obey the general will shall be constrained to do so by the whole body; which means nothing else than that he shall be forced to be free; for such is the

> condition which, uniting every citizen to the fatherland, protects him from all personal dependency, a condition that ensures the control and working of the political machine, and alone renders legitimate civil engagements, which, without it, would be absurd, tyrannical, and subject to the most enormous abuses." (Rousseau 166).

As such, each person will enjoy the protection of the common force while remaining as free as they were in the state of nature. This concept of the general will, the collective will of the citizen body taken as a whole, represents the source of legitimacy in society and is willed by all citizens. Jesse Clardy writes that, "One never finds in the French philosopher's work the idea that there is a law of God which justifies disobedience to the general will of the people" (Clardy 69). Perhaps because of an absence of the divine, Radishchev felt that such a philosophy would lead ultimately to a tyranny similar to that which existed in the state of nature.

Radishchev had a more pessimistic view of man in the state of nature than Rousseau. He presented his unease with the concept of man's inherent reason as the sole moral guide in the chapter "Kresttsy," where he described a father's education of his child, in which, "Leaving [the child's] reason free to guide [his] steps in the paths of learning, [the father] was even more anxiously concerned for [the child's] morals" (Radishchev 115). Later in the work Radishchev argues against Rousseau's vision of man in the state of nature asking, "What are man's rights in the state of nature? Look at him. He is naked, hungry, and thirsty. He appropriates everything he can seize for the satisfaction of his needs. If anything tries to stand in his way, he removes the obstacle, destroys it, and takes what he wants. If, on the way to satisfy his needs, he meets his like, if for example, two hungry men try to satisfy their appetite with the same food, which one of them has the greater right to it? The one who takes it. Who

takes the food? The stronger one" (Radishchev 146). Rousseau's concept of natural rights was clearly present in Radishchev's thinking, but relating to sensibility only, as Radishchev's characterization of man in the state of nature denotes a definitive break with the French philosopher. Radishchev's philosophical and stylistic borrowings from the west were therefore selective; he considered many of the same philosophical questions, but came to different conclusions.

This is not to say that Radishchev's consideration of natural law represents a wholesale rejection of French enlightenment thought. He adopted points from thinkers like Montesquieu and Voltaire, who also protested against intolerance, injustice, and irrational despotism. Radishchev's protests against irrational despotism are clearly present in chapters like "Tver," where he describes despotism through an allegorical iambic verse, called "Liberty: An Ode." In the verse, Radishchev characterizes a despot as, "A horrible monster, hydra-like, with a hundred heads…it tramples upon the earthly powers, and stretches its head up toward Heaven, which it claims as its native home. It sows false phantoms and darkness everywhere, it knows how to deceive and flatter, and commands all to behave blindly…[Tyrannous] power calls this monster Revelation; reason calls it Deceit…religious and political superstition, each supporting the other" (Radishchev 196). Here, Radishchev's mythic allegory indicates a once-removed critique of despotic rule, its deception of the people based in self-affirming religious and political superstition. Radishchev's allegorical critique is similar to Montesquieu's view of tyranny in his 1748 work *The Spirit of the Laws*, in which he argues that, "When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty; because apprehensions may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner" (Montesquieu 163). Here, a similar concept of self-affirming tyranny is present. Montesquieu's critique is emblematic of the enlightenment efforts to establish social and political relationships

on as rational a basis as possible. Radishchev and Montesquieu share this condemnation of despotism and the advocate for the emancipatory development of the individual's relationship to the world, and to fellow individuals.

These writers and thinkers employed reason as a new basis for social organization, and created a directive for change that derided superstition, tradition, irrationality, and arbitrariness. Yet despite the popularity of advice literature, few Russian writers and thinkers directly challenged the sovereign. Indeed, the Russian elite lacked the motivation or the gumption to transform the diffuse values of the enlightenment into a cohesive program that might be implemented, nor did they see the monarchy as particularly problematic. Radishchev's particular brand of sentimentalism was therefore a response to the strict empiricism of the enlightenment, perhaps even verging on romanticism. Laying aside the radical French philosophers' argument that all ideas are derived empirically, Radishchev retained the principle that certain ideas are innate. In the chapter "Kresttsy," Radishchev describes a man giving his son a lecture about morality before his departure to join the military. The father says to the son: "Work with your mind…and the quest for truth or facts, and reason will rule your will and passions. But do not imagine…that one can crush the roots of the passions…planted by nature itself in our sensuous organism" (Radishchev 118). Here, Radishchev indicates that despite the appeal of rationalism and empiricism, the passions are always within the individual, and are somehow beyond the individual's control. The concept of pure rationality mastery of the passions being a power reserved for God alone.

Many of Radishchev's criticisms of serfdom are based upon the inalienable value put on the individual's dignity and worth, what he calls "the inviolable human rights of a fellow being" (Radishchev 99). It was the individual, in his view, who was responsible for the functioning of society. In the chapter "Chudovo," the narrator

talks to a serf working on a Sunday and remarks how the serf is, "Dead to the law, except perhaps in criminal cases. A member of society [a serf] becomes known to the government protecting him, only when he breaks the social bonds, when he becomes a criminal! This thought made my blood boil. Tremble, cruelhearted landlord! On the brow of each of your peasants I see your condemnation written" (Radishchev 48). Here, Radishchev does not seem as concerned with the nature of the toil than with the lack of civil representation that the serf has, indicating Radishchev's insistence upon the rights of the individual. Clardy writes that of all the Russian writers in the eighteenth century there are "none more outstanding in his demand for the abolition of serfdom than Radishchev. He undertook a study of Russian society and government, which led to the publication of a bitter condemnation of serfdom...Radishchev presents, therefore, political ideas which effectively challenged the scientific aspirations of his time and the ensuing disruptions of society. (Clardy 87). As a result of such philosophical steadfastness, Radishchev lost his fortune, his civil service career, jeopardized his family's welfare, and eventually lost his life itself. His work represents a genuine attempt to write a comprehensive political philosophy with universality and necessity, not merely a study of affairs as they existed in Russia.

The Western European socio-political environment was so different than in Russia, that the political implications of such eighteenth-century "enlightenments" were largely theoretical, as the majority of the population did not and could not take part in any significant change. By the end of the eighteenth century however, such transformations began to foment, as expressed in Radishchev's work. Radishchev and other Russian elites wanted to leverage Western ideas to create what Marc Raeff describes as, "A new social reality and a new type of man" (Raeff, Origins, 154). In any case, Radishchev, whose existential framework was determined by his education in Leipzig and personal tragedy, adapted Western ideas in his *Journey* in hopes of developing a nation free of the moral failings of state authority and serfdom.

In the work, Radishchev is also critical of state authority. In the chapter "Spasskaya Polest" he describes in vivid detail, a ruler who is literally blinded by opulence and by the flattery of his subordinates. His directives are not carried out by his deceptive officials, and his subjects suffer in poverty. The author offers a solution fitting the spirit of the enlightenment- the wanderer Pryamovzora, or Truth, removes the cataracts from the Tsar's eyes, and the deceit is resolved (Radishchev 73). In the author's view, if the monarch will seek the truth, a natural and proper order will emerge in the state. This commentary contains an encoded portrayal of Catherine II and her circle of sycophantic favorites like Count Potemkin. Such descriptions represent the most overt criticisms of the monarch, but Radishchev also describes the abuse of authority by local officials, such as in "Chudovo" where a local commander refuses to assist in a maritime rescue operation, where he could easily intercede and save the lives of innocent people (Radishchev 51). Only at the last second does the stubborn, reluctant officer decide to help. While critical, neither episode really advocates for a transformation of the system, and Radishchev seems to be more concerned with reforming or un-blinding the powers that be than establishing entirely new forms of administrative power by force, or at least not yet.

Despite his reformist tendencies, one cannot deny the utopian element present in Radischev's work, reflective of eighteenth-century thought at large. Radishchev's work was utopian in the sense that he believed in the possibility of creating a new social reality as part of a comprehensive rational system with God as the first truth and source of natural law. This was perhaps nurtured by the legacy of Peter the Great, who influenced many Russians eager to transform their immediate reality, thinking, and selves. Radishchev describes utopia as inevitable in "Tver," specifically in "Liberty: An Ode," where he concludes the allegory with a vision of the future in which, "Humanity will roar in its fetters, and, moved by the hope of freedom and the indestructible law of nature, will push on…And tyranny will be dismayed. Then the

united force of all despotism, of all oppressive power will in a moment be dispersed. O chosen day of days" (Radishchev 201). This utopian element imparted a sense of naïveté and didacticism to his writing style and further detracted from the effectiveness of any latent political critique, as those capable of implementing any meaningful reform would have most likely felt threatened by Radishchev's vision.

Given its placement within the broader trajectory of dissent in Russia, Radishchev's work is unique. Unlike other contemporary works that condemn the cruelty and monstrosity of the system of serfdom in eighteenth-century literature such as Fonvizin's *The Minor*, Novikov's satirical journals, or Krylov's *Spirit Post*, Radishchev pays a great deal of attention to the practical consequences of unnecessarily cruel exploitation. He argues that serfdom is harmful to the state for moral, practical, economic and other reasons. In the chapter "Gorodnya," he hints at the threat of the wrath of the peasantry and prophesizes active rebellion in which, "The slaves weighted down with fetters, raging in their despair, would, with the iron that bars their freedom, crush...the heads of their inhuman masters, and redden the fields with [their] blood" (Radishchev 209). In Radishchev's view, the oppressed would be justified in doing so, as such an institution violates natural law, and the new leaders that would arise out of such a rebellion would "be of another mind and without the right to oppress others" (Radishchev 209). Under serfdom, the peasant, "dead to the law," is not entitled to legal protection and has the right to rise up against laws that only protect the masters. This is not to say that Radishchev advocated for an immediate, widespread popular revolution. On the contrary, he considered the best possible resolution of political problems to be an improvement of the existing autocracy, a reduction of the abuses of power that he describes and attempts to rectify in his anecdotal policy prescriptions in the *Journey*.

Alexander Radishchev was a man with a moral mission, a reformer, a humanitarian. He envisioned the grand potential of the enlightenment project, and his *Journey* served to condemn those elements impeding its actualization. Other practitioners of Sentimentalism, advice literature, and the enlightenment philosophy of West Europe certainly impacted his work, but the mélange of literary influences coalesced into a style entirely his own. As for the effectiveness of its political critique, the *Journey* was limited. To a great extent, the democratic potential of Sentimentalism is due to its celebration of equality on an emotional basis. Unfortunately, the emotions of common people are not typically taken into account in matters of policy and statecraft. While his impassioned critiques of serfdom and irrational despotism are compelling, Radishchev failed to deliver a specific path forward, only a diagnosis and a vague appeal for reform. Did Radishchev realize how critical he was, and was he naïve to believe that a monarch would listen to moralistic advice literature that was so popular at the time? Yes, but he did see himself as an agent of change, and he did leave us with a comprehensive diagnosis of the moral turpitude of his day. Perhaps if he had written a *Journey from Moscow to Siberia*, his travelogue may have been less than sentimental.

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