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## Memory and Identity in Russian Noblewomen's Francophone Travel Narratives (1790-1842)

This article demonstrates the numerous ways in which recollective and habit memory are used by Russian noblewomen as a device to shape social, cultural and national identity in their francophone travel narratives (1790-1842). Practices of collective memory are closely implicated with those of travel in women's leisured journeys to Western Europe and both memory and travel are allied with processes of personal and collective identity formation. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory, this article argues that the women use recollection to construct their identity as members of various social groups: trans-European high society, family, nation and religious and school communities. They draw on memory in diverse ways in their texts and recollections are expressed in spatial, emotional, historical, social, cultural, religious and national terms. Remembrance offers resources for the women's transformation from individuals into a group with a collective identity.

In Russia, as in other European cultures, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a boom in the production of life-writing which was particularly widely practised amongst elite francophone women. Memory plays a crucial role in life-writing practices as, drawing on experiences, the function of life-writing is to construct individual and collective selves. The present article demonstrates some of the numerous ways in which collective memory is used by Russian noblewomen as a device to shape their identity in their French-language travel narratives composed between 1790 and 1842.

Knowledge of French, the European *lingua franca* in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was considered as a sign of social status and was commonly used in Russian high society in both written and spoken transactions. Francophone writing accounts for a significant part of Russian textual production during this period and this was particularly the case amongst women<sup>1</sup>. This period of Russian francophonie coincides with the rise of the importance of the individual in literature associated with sentimentalism and encompasses the birth and key period of the development of life-writing as we know it today in both Western Europe and in Russia, which followed the publication, in 1782, of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*. Travel

narratives, a thematically delimited branch of life-writing, gained in popularity in Russia during the last third of the eighteenth century following the development of leisured travel which resulted from Peter III's Freedom of the Nobility decree in 1762 relieving the elite from obligations of state service.

The published and manuscript travel narratives under discussion, (epistolary) diaries, reminiscences and memoirs<sup>2</sup>, are first-person narratives proposed and received as non-fiction and which represent the author's encounter with foreign or unfamiliar surroundings. Russian noblewomen's French-language travel narratives, and particularly those recounting journeys to Western Europe, constitute the largest proportion of known female-authored life-writings in French produced during the period in question. They were authored by women who were either Russian by birth or subjects of the Russian Empire. Some of the women are well-known figures in Russian literature of the period, such as Ekaterina Dashkova, but the majority of them are more obscure, since they did not play a role in public life and have never had their work published.

The present article deals with narratives of travel to Western Europe where the women visited, and often made lengthy sojourns, in Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Poland, Spain,

<sup>1</sup> On French influence in Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries see Haumant 1913 and Gretchanaia 2010. On Russian women's French-language life-writing see Gretchanaia and Viollet 2008. The author is indebted to Elena Gretchanaia and Wendy Rosslyn for helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Some memoirs are not exclusively dedicated to travel but feature travel as a dominant theme or as an important event in the author's life.

Switzerland and Turkey. The most popular destinations were Italy and the German States. The type of travel undertaken was predominantly leisured tours. The women also embarked upon journeys with a curative purpose and official travel accompanying monarchs in the role of lady-in-waiting. It should be noted, however, that these latter two types of travel typically combined their primary focus with touristic activities and encompassed leisured elements.

Russian women's francophone travel narratives are particularly suitable candidates for a study of the role of memory in the construction of social, cultural and national identity during the period in question as the popularity of travel writing and increased opportunities of travel to Western Europe for the Russian nobility were accompanied by a Europe-wide rise of national consciousness, "a striving for a common identity, character and culture by the articulate members of a given community" (Rogger 1960: 3). A sense of nationhood became important in Russia as well and resulted not only from encounters of the elite with Western culture but from the sense of pride to which military victories and the creation and expansion of Empire gave rise in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries<sup>3</sup>.

Both memory and travel are allied with personal and collective identity formation. In any encounter with a new place a traveller's assessment of it implicitly involves an act of cultural recall, evoking and drawing on the content of cultural inheritance to situate and understand the present experience of a foreign place within existing knowledge. Continuity and stability are key during travel and one of the ways that travellers cope with the change of environment is by shoring up their identity.

This article considers recollective and habit memory. Recollective memory is episodic memory of autobiographical events of individuals or the social group to which they belong and that is associated with particular times, places and emotions. Habit memory refers to remembering how and when to perform a certain action. It is a form of knowledge and experience associated with the everyday. Previous experiences aid in the

performance of actions without explicit and conscious awareness of these previous experiences. Habit memory is achieved automatically without deliberate effort through repetition and does not require recollections of the moment particular actions were performed in the past<sup>4</sup>.

In recent years there has been a steady rise in academic interest in theories of memory and remembering and of their relevance for group formations and identities. We generally think of memory as an individual faculty, but, taking inspiration from Maurice Halbwachs's theory of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992), scholars have emphasised the connection between public, social or collective memory and collective identity. Their studies share an interest in collective memory's power to construct local, national and transnational identities<sup>5</sup>. For these scholars, recollection is an activity that brings collective identity into being and that is influenced by social frameworks. These frameworks pertain to the multiple social groups to which a person belongs, including nation, religion, social class and family. According to Halbwachs, social frameworks communicate and interpret the contents of collective memory, that is the supply of shared knowledge and experiences pertinent to the group. He believes that reference to social frameworks is an essential requirement for every act of remembering and that collective and individual memory are mutually dependent. As G. Mitchell Reyes explains:

In many studies of public memory identities emerge from the space of intersubjectivity – the commonplace values, practices, and experiences that serve as the grounds for identification [...]. The things people have in common comprise the space of intersubjectivity, and intersubjectivity figures as the condition for the possibility of collective identity (Reyes 2010: 227).

This article considers Russian noblewomen's francophone travel narratives as collective memory structures. It can be difficult to draw a

<sup>3</sup> See Offord 2005: 7.

<sup>4</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/memory/>, 9 April 2013.

<sup>5</sup> Amongst others, see, for example, Anderson 1991 and Assmann 1995.

line that separates individual from collective memory but while the narratives are, in one sense, the written remembrances of single individuals, the content of the texts is socially constructed and maintained and the texts are therefore products of collective memory formation. The individual travel writers and their addressees are part of the same social frameworks that influence their experiences. This article investigates in turn some of the various contexts in which collective memory is active in the women's constructions of identity in their travel narratives: the cultural practice of the Grand Tour; the narrative practice of recording the travel experience; artistic representations and literary descriptions of sites of travel; meaningful sounds, sights and places; comparisons between home and abroad; the perpetuation of Russian cultural custom; and the creation and collection of souvenirs. Analysis simultaneously demonstrates the ways in which remembrance is a key factor in the women's travel experience and serves to anchor their identity in a number of social groups, namely trans-European high society, family, nation, school community and religious community.

### *The Grand Tour*

In the context of the cultural practice of the Grand Tour, it is clear that collective memory is a crucial factor in anchoring Russian noblewomen travellers' identity in trans-European high society through their acknowledgement and perpetuation of the traditions associated with the practice. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Russians sought to imitate the Western European practice of leisured touring in Western Europe, the Grand Tour. The Grand Tour was a private practice of elite leisured travel that can be set within the overall collective memory of European high society, including Russia, between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Memory operative in travel was socially mediated by pedagogies of travel. The Russian social elite travelled according to rules emerging from explicitly or implicitly formulated ideas which taught them not only how to gaze at sites of interest, but also how to

interpret them, contextualise them and remember them.

Elite Russian leisured travel can be viewed as a set of assumptions and arguments about travel and these are identifiable within Russian women's francophone travel narratives. Collective memory of the Grand Tour determines routes and destinations, assuming, for example, that "the Tour entails a movement from the cold North of Europe towards the warm South (and back again) [...] and some sort of commitment to appropriating the foreign as a source of both pleasure and 'improvements'" (Chard 1997: 101). Collective memory also takes for granted the fact that the Tour "entails a formalized itinerary of sights – an itinerary which individual travellers may adapt and revise to suit their own interests, but which they need to acknowledge in some way in order to claim the authority and prestige that participation in the Tour is seen as conferring" (Chard 1997: 101).

In Russia, the tradition of the Grand Tour was passed down the generations of nobility by reading Western-European, as well as Russian, published and manuscript accounts of travel and by storytelling. Due to the fact that the Tour was a "ritualized procedure intended to familiarize young members of the nobility [...] with modern languages, contemporary society, and monuments of Western culture" (Dickinson 2006: 27), collective memory is an influential force in determining the activities the women engage in during travel and sites/sights they visit. While Russian noblewomen's travels in Western Europe do not have the same educational purpose as those of their male homologues who, in line with the practices of the traditional Grand Tour, studied in foreign institutions with the aim of finishing their education and returning to Russia to begin or advance a civil or military career, women nevertheless invested time in furthering their education by the study of different languages and visiting sites of cultural and educational importance, and so masculine discourse and behavioural models shaped the practice of women's travel. For example, when in Rome in 1842, Sof'ia Aleksandrovna Murav'eva<sup>6</sup> visits the ruins of Roman antiquity

6 Sof'ia Aleksandrovna Murav'eva (1825-1851). Murav'eva was the daughter of Decembrist Aleksandr Nikolaevich Murav'ev (1792-1863) and Praskov'ia

together with monuments of Renaissance and baroque architecture and art galleries. She also studies Italian and interacts with local high society. By engaging in these activities and recording them in her diary, she indicates her familiarity with elite Western activities and literary fashions and affirms her identity as a member of the trans-European social elite<sup>7</sup>.

### *The Narrative Record of the Travel Experience*

Records of the Grand Tour were fashionable and became a cultural phenomenon across Europe in the eighteenth century, their popularity enduring well into the nineteenth. A sub-genre of life-writing, travel narratives serve as repositories for conserving memory against the erosion of time as well as an aide to passing on memories. In line with contemporary prescriptions for female modesty in Russian society, a number of the women justify the act of writing as preserving their memory of their journey for friends and family and in so doing they affirm their membership in these social groups. For example, the diary Murav'eva kept of her stay in Rome with her aunts and cousins carries collective family memory and serves to anchor her identity in the family group. She keeps her diary as an educational practice which is overseen by her aunts, but she also sees her diary as a means of sharing the experience of her journey with her parents back in Russia on her return:

je suis fâchée seulement que Papa et Morette et tous ceux que j'aime ne puissent pas s'y trouver aussi; mais je tacherai de dépeindre aussi exactement, aussi fidèlement que possible tous les lieux que j'ai vus toutes les impressions par lesquelles je suis passée, et alors de cette manière je leur ferai part de tout ce que j'ai vu et ils croiront y avoir été avec moi. (Murav'eva 1842: 5-50b)<sup>8</sup>

Mikhailovna Shakhovskaia (1788-1826 or 1835). Murav'eva was unmarried when she died of tuberculosis.

<sup>7</sup> See Murav'eva 1842.

<sup>8</sup> The French in quotations is taken directly from the women's manuscripts. All underlining and strike-throughs are original.

In her travel diary Natal'ia Ivanovna Kurakina<sup>9</sup> reflects on the benefit of keeping a travel album for preserving memory but is aware of the potential for memory illusions. She shows awareness of faltering memory and the danger of giving false impression by her own writing and collecting practices in the future:

Mes souvenirs s'accroissent, et, lorsque la première existence nous abandonne, il faut tâcher de s'en créer une seconde, et je croirais presque que les illusions sont du partage de cette dernière. Si ce que j'avance est un paradoxe aux yeux de quelques-uns, ce n'en est point un aux yeux de bien d'autres, pour peu que l'on se donne la peine d'y réfléchir. (Kurakina 1903: 160)

Kurakina intends her diary and album to initiate a stream of associations, reproduce memories at a later date and thus compensate for the cumulative losses that accompany distance in time from an event and ageing. She is conscious, however, that in the retrospective recording of events in her travel narratives other events will have occurred that could alter her memory or perception and with the retrieval of memories, details of events can be forgotten, interpreted differently or re-imagined.

Elizaveta Vasil'eva<sup>10</sup> demonstrates, while the travellers do not always find pleasure in keeping their diary, they see creating memories of their journey, even if only for themselves, as a duty:

De jour en jour mon journal m'ennuie d'avantage, je ne puis souffrir de l'écrire voilà pourquoi il est si mal écrit

<sup>9</sup> Natal'ia Ivanovna Kurakina (1766-1831). Kurakina was an amateur composer and musician. Her parents were Collegiate Councillor Ivan Sergeevich Golovin and Ekaterina Alekseevna Golitsyna (1735-1802). In 1783, she married Prince Aleksei Borisovich Kurakin (1759-1829). Kurakina was made a Dame Lesser Cross of the Order of St Catherine in 1797 and became lady-in-waiting in 1826.

<sup>10</sup> Elizaveta Vasil'eva (dates unknown). The exact identity of this diarist is uncertain. A few details can, however, be gleaned from the diary itself. We know that she is called Elizaveta as an entry in her diary indicates her saint's name day. Her patronymic and surname are unknown. RGALI erroneously attributes the diary to Aleksei Vladimirovich Vasil'ev (1742-1807). It is possible that Elizaveta and Vasil'ev were related in some way which would explain the diary's attribution. Elizaveta was about eighteen years old at the time of writing and was educated in a boarding school in Odessa.

et le style en est si mauvais puisque je suis parasite, je ne pense qu'à m'en défaire et non à bien écrire. Au reste personne ne le lira, c'est pour me rappeler des choses que je l'écris. (Vasil'eva 1836-1837: 77)

Vasil'eva reveals that the travel narrative has genre requirements including a certain style. There were accepted ideas not only about what information should be recorded but also about ways of recording that information which Russian women adhered to, albeit within the constraints placed on women's writing by patriarchal society. Records of leisured travel "attempted to demonstrate that the desired social and cultural education had indeed been acquired by furnishing quantities of social, cultural, and historical data about visited territories" (Dickinson 2006: 27). The travel writers also adopt certain formal elements including, for example, sentimental turns of phrase and the verbal portrait, all of which demonstrate the author's familiarity with contemporary systems of taste. It should also be noted that the fact that the women wrote in French, the *lingua franca* of European high society, affirms their elite social status and their belonging to this group. And so, the women's travel narratives do not exist in isolation from each other and respond to a variety of contextual forces influenced by the collective memory of trans-European high society.

#### *Artistic Representations and Literary Descriptions of Sites of Travel*

The collective memory of European high society further impacts upon the women's travel experience at their destination as they have borrowed memories or preconceptions of the places they visit from the tales of friends and family, artistic representations and literary descriptions of sites of travel which become part of their own memory. Ekaterina Nikolaevna Liubomirskaia<sup>11</sup> is able to confirm

that the beauty of the view of Trieste from the mountains above is equally as stunning as in an engraving of the scene her father possesses<sup>12</sup>, while Vasil'eva has built up a romantic picture of Constantinople from reading but is disappointed when she discovers the reality:

Je croyais voir des fontaines à chaque pas et il n'y en a presque pas, les fruits sont aussi mauvais. Ah! comme les écrivains savent rendre tout beau et sublime, l'homme ne devrait jamais se faire une trop grande idée des choses qu'il n'a pas vus, car il est sûr d'être désappointé. (Vasil'eva 1836-1837: 3)

Fiction, a site of sharing and communication, heavily influences travellers' memories of a place before they see it for themselves. The reader identifies with the narrated event, takes part in it and makes it exist in his or her memory. The women visit sites in Western Europe featured in literature they have read and which are preserved in their memory. In so doing, they affirm their membership in the European elite by their shared knowledge and appreciation of literary canon and their identification with the values promoted in the literature. Stories of place, for example, are passed on to numerous readers through Jean-Jacques Rousseau's epistolary novel *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* and become part of the women's collective memory. Both Kurakina and Elizaveta Turkestanova<sup>13</sup> visit places featured in the novel, including the Meillerie rocks and the town of Vevey. Rather than the places themselves, what is important for the women is the emotions that the place embodies, which they experienced during reading and then recall at the site of the novel's action:

[...] nous entrâmes dans ce joli, dans cet intéressant Vevey, habité par l'héroïne de Rousseau [...] on voit un saule pleureur ombrager une fontaine charmante: on dirait que l'eau qu'elle répand sont autant de larmes qu'on

<sup>11</sup> Ekaterina Nikolaevna Liubomirskaia (1789-1870). Liubomirskaia was the daughter of Nikolai Aleksandrovich Tolstoi (1761-1816) and Anna Ivanovna Bariatinskaia (1774-1825). In 1812, she married Konstantin Stanislav Liubomirskii (1786-1870) with whom she had three daughters. Following her mother's lead, Liubomirskaia converted to Catholicism.

<sup>12</sup> Liubomirskaia 1805: 62.

<sup>13</sup> Elizaveta Turkestanova (1778-?). The exact identity of this diarist is uncertain. A few details can, however, be gleaned from the diary itself. We know that she is called Elizaveta as an entry in her diary indicates her saint's name day. Her husband was called Aleksandr.

verse pour cette intéressante et malheureuse Julie! – La ville est charmante, et les souvenirs qu'elle éveille dans l'âme des êtres sensibles sont inexprimables! (Kurakina 1903: 142)

## *Meaningful Sounds, Sights and Places*

In the travel narratives sounds, sights and places abroad evoke recollections of Russia and lead to expressions of belonging to various social groups, namely nation, school community and family.

Collective memory and identification with social groups is associated with auditory stimuli in the travel narratives. Vasil'eva 'hears' the past. Music is stored in her memory in association with its original context. For example, she has vivid aural memories of her time in a boarding school in Odessa. The sound of her school friend singing particular songs in Athens is imbued with strong associations within the school community and she demonstrates that sounds shared can become social memories shared by a group:

Quoique Nadine n'ose pas forcer sa voix, elle est toujours très jolie j'étais tout-à-fait heureuse de l'entendre; elle s'est rappelée divers airs de la pension et nous avons causé long tems de cet cher établissement. (Vasil'eva 1836-1837: 20-200b)

The aural cue of cannon fire in Genoa triggers recollections of festivities in Odessa for Vasil'eva. As well as being representative of place and time, the cannon fire is evocative of shared experience with members of her social, religious and national groups:

demain c'est un grand jour c'est Noël ici, il est minuit on tire du canon [...] Ah! que c'est triste d'entendre les canons, celà me rappelle les fêtes à Odessa, nous nous y amusons tant à cette époque; j'ai beaucoup pleuré ce soir, comme je n'ai pleuré depuis long tems [...]. (Vasil'eva 1836-1837: 490b-50)

The women recall a common national historical past to reinforce their sense of

belonging to the national group in the present. Remembrance of a common historical past gives the Russian Empire a present materiality in the minds of the travellers that it might otherwise lack during travel. On her tour of the Kingdom of Poland, the German States and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1818 as lady-in-waiting to Mariia Fedorovna, Varvara Il'inichna Turkestanova<sup>14</sup> visits several sites connected to the Napoleonic Wars. In her epistolary diary she reminisces directly with her addressees about what they felt as subjects of the Russian Empire when Napoleon's *Grande Armée* invaded Russia in 1812. V. Turkestanova's recall of historical events during lived memory reinforces her ties with her compatriots when she is far from home and also serves to buttress her sense of national identity:

Ce matin en quittant Kovno, lorsque je me suis trouvée sur le pont de Niémen, je me suis fait montrer le point par lequel Bonaparte fit déboucher ses troupes; j'ai voulu absolument en emporter le souvenir. Rappelez-vous notre effroi en apprenant cette nouvelle? Et que de réflexions pouvait-on faire sur ce pont fameux! Combien n'en ferait-on pas encore sur les révérences, les politesses et tous les compliments que nous adressent maintenant messieurs les Polonais! *Altri tempi*. (V. Turkestanova 1884: 14)

It is not only place that evokes memories of a common historical past and heritage during travel in Western Europe. In Lausanne, the sight of a comet takes E. Turkestanova's memory back to Napoleon's invasion of Russia. She makes reference to the great comet of 1811 that was said to be a sign from God sent to foretell misfortune and announce the invasion:

Depuis quelques-jours on voit une comète qui m'attriste et m'inquiète c'est une betise j'en convient Mais

14 Varvara Il'inichna Turkestanova (1775-1819). The eldest of five children, Turkestanova was born into an aristocratic Georgian family in Moscow in 1775. Turkestanova became lady-in-waiting to Dowager Empress Mariia Fedorovna in 1808 and was well-known in the literary circles of St Petersburg. She became associated with Alexander I and in 1819, gave birth to their illegitimate daughter Mariia (1819-1843). According to sources, Turkestanova died by taking poison in 1819. The 'official' version of her death was that she had died of cholera that same year.

depuis l'an 11. je ne puis voir une commette de sang-froid sa présence a gatée le temps il pleut, il fait, humide sombre, cela me rend toute triste et malade. (E. Turkestanova 1820-1824: 27ob)

The experience of the invasion has a strong emotional resonance for the women as well as an enduring influence on their collective memory and is central to forming the bonds that constitute the women's group identity as Russians.

Foreign places also trigger the travellers' memories of home. In 1836, on arrival at Bognor Regis, an exchange of living family memory takes place between Praskov'ia Ivanovna Miatleva<sup>15</sup> and her son Ivan. When Miatleva goes for a walk along the beach, the sight of the sea in the moonlight leads to the recollection of painful memories and powerful emotions and she is moved to tears. She mentally reconstructs the past within the present when she refers to her Znamenka estate at Peterhof which the family gave up in 1831. She remembers her loved ones now departed and the happy times they had there together:

nous avons été promener au bord de la mer par la plus beau Clair de Lune possible et que nous avons vu sortir de la surface de la mer à son levé avec toute la majesté d'un pareil spectacle. l'effet qu'a produit sur moi la vue de la mer au bord delaquelle est la maison où je me trouvois fut tel que je ne l'ai jamais éprouvé depuis que Znamensky n'est plus à moi. je m'y revoyois tout ce qui me manque, mon imagination travailloit sur moi avec tant de force que je pleurois sans pouvoir m'en empêcher et que ce matin j'en pleure encore. [...] mon fils a fait de très jolis vers sur ce que m'a fait éprouver hier l'aspect de la mer et tous les souvenirs qu'Elle a reveillés si vivement en moi. je vais les inserer ici. (Anonymous [on

internal evidence Miatleva] 1836: 43ob-44ob)

The emotional emphasis that Miatleva places on her family recollections serves to reinforce her sense of belonging to the family group. In this case it is the seascape that evokes the memory of Russia and her life there. Miatleva demonstrates that the travellers' collective family memories are not just cognitive by their nature. Many of them are highly emotional and affective. The sea is seen as a connecting medium rather than a separation and, with the aid of memory, sustains a lasting connection between Miatleva, her family and her estate. Recollection here also serves to reinforce her attachment to Russian territory and the home that it represents.

### *Memory as a Tool for Comparison*

Another way in which the women express their identity as members of the Russian national group is by using memory as a tool for comparison. Moving in geographic space and coming into contact with alterity obliges the women to situate their present experience within familiar contexts to make sense of it. They associate particular meanings with geographical and social environments which serves to ground knowledge in the national group and create points of common understanding and identification with diary addressees, who are members of the same national group as the traveller. Vasil'eva, for example, understands Constantinople in terms of her native countryside:

C'est le second jour que nous sommes ici et je ne m'y plais pas encore, la ville est si triste, les rues si silencieuses. On dirait qu'on est dans Les Steppes et non dans une capitale, il n'y a point d'équipages, on ne rencontre que des arabas (chariots couverts) ornés de fleurs, de dorures et traînés par des bœufs. (Vasil'eva 1836-1837: 3)

While admiring Rome's ancient ruins, Murav'eva recalls her native Moscow in comparison. In so doing, although she never refers to them explicitly, she appears to associate herself with the contemporary

<sup>15</sup> Praskov'ia Ivanovna Miatleva (1772-1859). Daughter of Field Marshal General Count Ivan Petrovich Saltykov (1730-1805) and Countess Dar'ia Petrovna Chernysheva (1739-1802), Miatleva was the second of four children. In 1794, Miatleva married Petr Vasil'evich Miatlev (1756-1833), director of the Assignatsionnyi Bank and Privy Councillor. Together they had five children, the eldest of which was the humorist and poet Ivan (1796-1844).

Russian intellectual debates on national identity which saw Western Europe as a graveyard of greatness and civilization and Russia as a new country with a great future:

Rome paraît si imposante, si fière d'elle-même chaque fois que je la vois, je pense toujours à Moscou, je trouve qu'il y a beaucoup de rapports entres ces deux capitales, l'une celebre par ses grands hommes, ses faits, tout est éloquent à Rome, chaque pierre, chaque fleur, chaque mur, mais dégenéré maintenant, l'autre a eu certainement aussi ses beaux caractères, ses traits courageux, ~~mais elle n'~~ le russe aiment de preference cette ville, et la nomment notre mère Moscou, mais la difference entre ces deux villes, entre Rome et Moscou, est que Moscou va s'élever encore et Rome dégenère, l'une ~~est chaude, est enthousiaste,~~ l'autre vit du passé, l'autre parle de l'avenir. — (Murav'eva 1842: 130b)

Murav'eva identifies herself as part of the Russian national family which, in juxtaposition with the moribund West, represents youth, life and the renewal of civilization<sup>16</sup>.

## *The Perpetuation of Russian Cultural Custom*

Habit memory plays an important role in the women's constructions of group identity in the travel narratives. Russian cultural information is stored unconsciously and is represented through repetition in Western Europe, which results in the women's subconscious expression of membership in the national group on the pages of their texts. The women's identity is inherent in the things they take for granted, such as making tea 'the Russian way', playing Russian games and installing Russian heating systems. Eating typically Russian food is another way the women recall their Russian cultural identity. In Switzerland, for example, E. Turkestanova holds a *bliny* lunch for *Maslenitsa* and notes her joy at dining on

pickled cucumbers, black bread and saffron milk cap mushrooms with an Orthodox priest (E. Turkestanova 1820-1824: 17, 270b). The women demonstrate that everyday practices, familiar routines and mundane objects exemplify and serve to express their identity as members of the Russian national group.

While in Western Europe, the travellers celebrate important dates in the Russian calendar such as New Year, anniversaries of coronations, military victories and the birthdays of members of the imperial family. In Potsdam, for example, Princess Bariatinskaia<sup>17</sup> celebrates the birthday of Empress Alexandra Fedorovna (Bariatinskaia [date unknown]: 70b), while in Lausanne E. Turkestanova celebrates Russian New Year by holding a musical evening (E. Turkestanova 1820-1824: 250b-26). However, in Western Europe the women find that they derive little pleasure from local celebrations for Christmas, New Year's and Easter due to the difference in calendar which separates the Western European festivities from the event celebrated in Russia. Equally, Russian Orthodox celebrations are less joyful outside Russia far from loved ones:

### L'année 1837.

#### Le 1 Janvier VS le 13. NS Vendredi

En Russie et en Grèce on s'amuse aujourd'hui ce sont les seuls endroits où c'est Nouvel an, ailleurs ce jour est passé; que j'aimerais savoir ce que mes amies y font, il n'y a pas de doute qu'elles sont bien gaies, tandis que ~~que~~ c'est un jour comme les autres ici. Ce soir j'ai relu toutes les feuilles de mon album et les billets de mes compagnes, en les lisant j'ai cru être avec elles [...]. (Vasil'eva 1836-1837: 56)

As a result of the difference in calendar, Vasil'eva remains detached from her immediate surroundings in Florence and, with the aid of memory of the Russian calendar and her habitual activities on this day, transports herself mentally in order to feel closer to those at home. The temporal gap between Russia and

<sup>16</sup> On discourse on the nature of European civilization and the question of Russian national identity in Russian men's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing see Offord 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Princess (Ol'ga, Mariia or Leonilla Ivanovna) Bariatinskaia. The exact identity of this diarist is uncertain but details provided in the text enable us to be sure that she is one of three sisters born between 1814 and 1818 to Ivan Ivanovich Bariatinskii (1772-1825) and Mariia Fedorovna Keller (1793-1858).



the West triggers articulations of her identity as Russian, Orthodox and as a member of a group of high society friends.

The Russian Orthodox Church is an important social framework of collective memory within which the women assert their belonging in the travel narratives. With their practice of Orthodoxy in Western Europe the women maintain the living tradition of their religion which acts as an ongoing process of memory articulation and creation. The practice establishes a sense of continuity for the travellers and one of the ways that they cope with the change of environment is by shoring up their religious identity. The women perpetuate social memory by religious custom as a means of ensuring shared morality and social cohesion. Continuing their religious traditions abroad ensures that traditional beliefs, values and norms are maintained. The women's expression of faith creates ties with the Russian community at home, both affectionate and spiritual. The women use their Orthodox faith as an emotional space and a means of remembering and feeling closer to their friends and loved ones during the long separation occasioned by travel. Particularly during festivals the Orthodox religion provides the link between the individuals' beliefs and the social structure. In her epistolary diary, V. Turkestanova, for example, draws on recollections of celebrating her saint's name day in Russia with her addressees, and, in so doing, expresses her belonging to the high society social group which she feels the need to reinforce outside Russia:

Si j'avais été à Pétersbourg aujourd'hui, je suis presque sûre que j'aurais dîné chez vous, car bien souvent il m'est arrivé de passer le jour de ma fête dans votre maison. Peut-être aurez-vous eu la bonté de penser à moi et que parmi les personnes qui portent mon nom je me suis présentée également à votre pensée. (V. Turkestanova 1884: 100)

It should be noted, however, that in the absence of an Orthodox church the women attended Protestant or, more often, Catholic ones. There had been a number of conversions to Catholicism amongst Russian noblewomen in Russia, including authors of travel narratives, some of whom participated in

Catholic religious life during travel in Western Europe.

### *The Creation and Collection of Souvenirs*

It is not only the narrative record of travel that is important for the women in remembering their journeys, but the creation and collection of souvenirs. Memorabilia create memory, act as evidence of their journey and serve to supplement, or replace, written narrative. Souvenirs make the travel experience tangible and act as a means of prolonging the recollection of it. Vasil'eva's experience of visiting the Casa Buonarroti museum dedicated to Michelangelo in Florence is represented by the souvenir of a shell she takes away, an object deemed significant and that creates a connection between herself, her travelling companions and the place:

En commençant par le palais Buonarroti L'habitation de Michel-Ange, on y voit encore quelques uns de ses ouvrages, son atelier où sont ses couleurs, les pinceaux, des flacons d'huile, des coquilles sur lesquelles ils frottait ses couleurs nous en avons pris chacune une pour souvenir [...]. (Vasil'eva 1836-1837: 700b)

The inanimate object freezes the experience and impressions of the site are preserved. The memory becomes collective because each member of the travelling party acquires a shell which will serve to reinforce the authenticity of their memories as a group in time to come. Souvenirs may also later be used as memory triggers of a particular event or place for stories travellers tell of their journeys on return home or be presented as gifts to friends or loved ones. In this way they are destined to become objects of collective memory of the journey undertaken. With their travel gifts, the women are constructing borrowed memories for their friends and families.

The creation, giving and receiving of symbols of friendship is important for the women during travel. Their texts reveal the importance of the absent friend's body in memory. Tangible objects represent the absent body and embody friendship. Since during long absences

occasioned by travel they could no longer see or touch each other, women relied, for example, on a picture, a lock of hair or an item of clothing to ignite their memory. These objects were “metonyms for the heart” (Stabile 2004: 189). The commission of souvenir portraits during the Grand Tour was not unusual. Anna Ivanovna Tolstaia<sup>18</sup>, for example, had a family portrait commissioned by Angelica Kauffman in Rome in the early 1790s (Tolstaia 1790-1792: 140b). Portraits were created as souvenirs of the journey not only for oneself but for others. They were made for posterity. Portrait miniatures were social creations. They anticipated and implicated future viewers in the subject’s memory preservation and acted as a material link to the absent other. The miniature is a mnemonic object that captures a moment in time and so, for the Russian travellers, it “transcended place and time” and “made absence presence” (Stabile 2004: 164). For the recipient, the portrait miniature embodied the beloved’s image offering an enduring and fixed representation of the beloved in her absence. In Florence, Vasil’eva has her portrait miniature painted for her friend Nadine (Vasil’eva 1836-1837: 70) and while in Venice Liubomirskaia has hers done for her brother Aleksandr. She attends a number of sittings but is anxious that the miniature is too big and of questionable likeness (Liubomirskaia 1805: 50). In Carlsbad in 1821, E. Turkestanova receives bracelets made from her friend’s hair as a birthday gift (E. Turkestanova 1820-1824: 400b). The importance of the gift is conveyed by the affection she feels for Gagarina: “il y a peut de personne dans le monde que j’aime mieux qu’elle, et surtout avec qui je me plaise autant” (E. Turkestanova 1820-1824: 40). Worn on Turkestanova’s body, the jewellery connects her physically with her absent friend and becomes a site of memory of Turkestanova’s intimacy with Gagarina (Stabile 2004: 223). For Russian women travellers, portrait miniatures

and hairwork “worn and held by one subject and representing another, permit the realization of self within the familial and social structures” of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century elite society (Pointon: 68). Russian noblewomen kept albums, or remembrance books, during their travels to Western Europe which were, above all, a material means of collecting the present that would later allow them to commemorate their journey. This feminine art of collecting exemplifies the modes of learning based on accumulation, order and classification introduced by the Enlightenment (Stabile 2004: 223). While the albums’ contents were intended to initiate a stream of associations and reproduce memories to be shared with friends and family on return, they also served to affirm the travellers’ membership in educated European high society as they display mementoes associated with traditional routes and activities of the Grand Tour and knowledge of contemporary educational practices. Among other things, the albums kept by Praskov’ia Nikolaevna Fredro<sup>19</sup> during her travels in the 1820s feature hand-drawn or painted and black and white and colour printed pictures of places she visited, people she met and her travelling party (Fredro 1823; 1823-1825; 1825-1829). Her albums also contain pressed flowers and leaves, which are often accompanied by labels or commentaries indicating from where and on what occasion she collected them. In Fiesole, for example, Fredro conserves flowers “de la porte antique”, “de la muraille antique”, “du palais Episcopal”, “de l’amphithéâtre et de l’endroit où l’on gardoit les betes” (Fredro 1823-1825: 22). The numerous visiting cards her albums contain, received from callers and collected at social events she attended such as balls, are socially significant. Other than acting as a reminder of new acquaintances and visits needed, they are a physical manifestation of the trans-European high society community to which Fredro belonged. Another way in which albums are objects of collective memory is that a number of people, both fellow travellers and locals, contributed to their compilation with, for

<sup>18</sup> Anna Ivanovna Tolstaia (1774-1825). Tolstaia was the daughter of Ivan Sergeevich Bariatinskii (1740-1811) and Ekaterina Petrovna Holstein-Beck (1750-1811). In 1787, she married Nikolai Aleksandrovich Tolstoi (1761-1816) with whom she had three children. Tolstaia became lady-in-waiting to Catherine II in 1784. She was one of the first Russian women to convert to Catholicism (in about 1802) and spent the last years of her life abroad in France and Italy. She died in Paris.

<sup>19</sup> Praskov’ia Nikolaevna Fredro (1790-1869). Daughter of Nikolai Nikolaevich Golovin and memoirist Varvara Nikolaevna Golovina (1766-1819). She converted to Catholicism in 1814 and, in 1819, married Pole Maximilian Fredro.

example, notes, poems or drawings. And so we see that the creation and collection of souvenirs during travel shaped and expressed the women's identity as members of different social groups.

In conclusion, recollective and habit memory are used in numerous ways by Russian noblewomen to shape their identity as members of various social groups in their francophone travel narratives. The processes of collective memory are closely implicated with those of travel and both memory and travel are allied with processes of personal and collective identity formation. For the Russian women travellers, memory is a way of knowing by which they recognise themselves in foreign locations by situating themselves in a familiar social and cultural context. Memory provides the women with a sense of identity, stability and cohesion that binds them to social groups to which they belong locally and across borders and offers the reiterated experience of a coherent identity that endures despite spatial

dislocation. Recollections are expressed in spatial, emotional, social, cultural, religious and national terms.

Memory is an integral facet of the women's individual and social identity as represented in the texts. They define themselves through the social groups to which they belong and so private recollections offer themselves as determinants of collective selfhood. The travellers' recollections correspond to the self-image and the interests of the group to which they affirm their belonging. Coherence and stability for the Russian women travellers in Western Europe derives from repetition and reiteration of social, cultural and national identity in different contexts. In the travel narratives remembrance offers resources for the women's transformation from individuals into a community with a collective identity.

## Abbreviations

NIOR RGB	Nauchno-issledovatel'skii otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi gosudarstvennoi biblioteki (Manuscript Division of the Russian State Library)
RGADA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (Russian State Archive of Ancient Acts)
RGALI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art)
RGIA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Russian State Historical Archive)
RNB OR	Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, Otdel rukopisei (Manuscript Division of the Russian National Library)
ed. khr.	edinita khraneniia (individual file)
f.	fond (collection)
k.	karton (carton)
ob.	oborot (verso)
op.	opis' (inventory)
razd.	razdel (division)

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